



Probation Services

and the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act
A California Voter Initiative — November 2000

The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act will have a significant impact on the California probation system. The act will appropriate \$120 million annually to divert non-violent drug possession offenders to supervised probation and drug treatment. In 1998, there were 10,415 offenders on probation for felony drug charges. Many of these probationers would meet the criteria of diversion under the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act and qualify for the treatment that would be available under this measure. Overloaded probation departments will be able to access these new treatment opportunities for offenders, as well as receive needed funding from the monies appropriated to cover the costs of monitoring diverted offenders.

The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act defines the terms of probation so that many of the monitoring tasks are shared between probation departments and local treatment providers. According to the Act:

“Within 7 days of an order imposing probation under subdivision (a), the probation department shall notify the drug treatment provider designated to provide drug treatment under subdivision (a). Within 30 days of receiving that notice, the treatment provider shall prepare a treatment plan and forward it to the probation department. On a quarterly basis after the defendant begins the drug treatment program, the treatment provider shall prepare and forward a progress report to the probation department.”

Thus, the monitoring work load for individual probation officers may be significantly decreased.

Finally, in the long-term, treatment provisions of the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act will reduce criminality. According to the 1994 California Drug and Alcohol Treatment Assessment, the level of criminal activity among study participants declined by two-thirds after treatment. The greater the length of time spent in treatment, the greater the reduction in criminal activity. Probation departments will see a reduction in repeat offenders revolving through the system needing extensive supervision and other probationary measures.

“Probation will reduce the human toll that imprisonment exacts on those incarcerated and reserve scarce resources to ensure that truly violent offenders remain in prison ... if provided with adequate financial resources to deliver treatment programs that have been shown to work.”

— *Probation in the United States: Practices and Challenges*, National Institute of Justice, '97

All research references are available upon request.

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