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Experiencing the ISP Movement

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

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Editor's Introduction: Professor Wodahl worked in community corrections as an intensive supervision program (ISP) agent. Intensive supervision is a more restrictive type of control placed mostly on probationers and parolees considered to be at higher risk of reoffending. Using a creative offender typology that he devised—"the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly"—Wodahl assesses the effectiveness of his ISP in achieving the goals of reducing prison overcrowding, saving money, providing more appropriate punishment, improving public safety, and promoting rehabilitation. He found the ISP to be successful in achieving many of its goals but that this success varied according to type of offender. Wodahl's analysis shows the importance of accounting for several contingencies when judging programs and gives reasons to be optimistic about ISP and community corrections.

❖ INTRODUCTION

The final decades of the 20th century witnessed the development and mass implementation of intensive supervision programs (ISPs) across the country. These programs were marketed as the panacea for a correctional system experiencing massive overcrowding and budget shortfalls. Two decades later, however, it has become evident that ISP has largely failed to deliver on the promises of its advocates. This essay offers one perspective on this phenomenon by intertwining important ISP research with my personal experiences in the field.

My experiences in the corrections field began in the 1990s following the completion of my undergraduate degree in criminal justice. My first "real job" was as a youth worker in a juvenile correctional facility. It was in this position that I first realized that academic study, while important, cannot take the place of practical experience. I learned more about the criminal justice system and interacting with offenders in the 15 months on this job than in my previous 4 years of college.

I later applied for and was hired as a probation and parole officer responsible for the supervision of adult felony offenders. I would remain in this position for the next 7 years. During this time, I had the opportunity to gain a variety of experiences, including supervising traditional caseloads, writing presentence investigation reports, and overseeing offenders in a halfway house facility. My most memorable experiences, however, came during the 4 years I spent as an ISP agent. It is these experiences that I draw upon for this essay.

❖ OVERVIEW OF THE AGENCY AND PROGRAM

My experiences in community corrections, including my time as an intensive supervision program agent, came during my employment with the Wyoming Department of Corrections. The Wyoming Department of Corrections (WDOC) is a state-level agency responsible for carrying out the sentences of adult offenders convicted in the state of Wyoming. The agency comprises two main divisions, the Division of Prisons and the Division of Field Services. The Division of Prisons, as the name suggests, is charged with managing offenders incarcerated in the state's various correctional institutions, while the Division of Field Services is responsible for the supervision and management of offenders in the community.

Consistent with national trends, the vast majority (over 75%) of offenders under correctional custody in Wyoming are managed in the

community under probation or parole supervision. This supervision is carried out by probation and parole agents, who are assigned to various field offices located throughout the state. Most offenders under community supervision through the WDOC are under traditional probation or parole supervision, which generally consists of monthly or bimonthly meetings with their supervising agent and sporadic home visits. Agents who supervise traditional caseloads are responsible for managing caseloads of 60 to 100 offenders. In addition, many agents also have the responsibility of writing presentence investigation reports for newly convicted felony defendants.

Up until the mid-1990s, aside from a few privately operated halfway house facilities, traditional supervision was the only method of supervision used to manage offenders in the community. In 1996, however, the Wyoming Department of Corrections' Intensive Supervision Program (WDOC ISP) was created. As in many other states, one of the primary motivations behind the creation of the WDOC ISP was to slow prison growth by targeting prison-bound offenders. This was not the only reason for its development. The department also recognized a need to broaden its continuum of sanctions and provide cost-effective alternatives to prison for certain high-risk offenders.

The WDOC ISP is a program primarily for adult felony-level offenders. The program accepts both probationers and parolees, and there are no restrictions based on gender. To be considered for placement, the offender must be classified as high risk and/or high need as determined by the department's risk and need assessment instrument. Three types of offenders have been identified as priority offenders due to their historically poor performance under traditional supervision and their overall threat to public safety. These include youthful offenders who have graduated from the WDOC's boot camp program, sexual offenders, and methamphetamine users.

Offenders can be placed into the WDOC ISP by one of three methods: court diversion, parole, and enhancement. *Court diversion* is considered a front-door placement. This occurs when the sentencing judge directly orders the offender to complete the ISP. *Parole placement* occurs when an offender is placed on ISP as a condition of their release from incarceration. In this instance, the parole board rather than the sentencing judge is considered the release-granting authority and maintains jurisdiction over the offender until completion of his sentence. *Enhancement* involves the movement of a probationer or parolee from traditional supervision into the ISP. Wyoming probation and parole agents, with the approval of their supervisor, can enhance noncompliant offenders into ISP as an alternative to revocation.

The WDOC ISP is designed to last approximately 1 year, during which time offenders progress their way through a series of three levels that vary in supervision intensity. While on the program, they are subjected to intense supervision, including frequent home visits, random drug testing, and electronic monitoring. Participants are expected to abide by a broad array of supervision conditions. In addition to the standard conditions of community supervision, such as abstaining from drugs and alcohol and maintaining employment, they are required to abide by additional rules and regulations, which include curfews, restrictions on visitors, and adherence to a weekly schedule. The ISP also places a heavy emphasis on treatment and programming. Offenders are required to attend a broad array of treatment programs such as substance abuse and sex offender treatment to address their criminogenic needs.

My particular experience as an ISP agent occurred in the Cheyenne field office. Cheyenne is the largest city in the state and also serves as the state's capital. While Cheyenne is the most populated city in the state, its population is just over 50,000, which can hardly be considered an urban environment. My caseload as an ISP agent typically ranged between 12 and 15 offenders. This low caseload afforded me the opportunity to give each offender a substantial amount of attention. It was not uncommon to have daily visits with offenders, especially when they first entered the program. Most contacts with my caseload occurred in the field through home visits and schedule checks rather than office visits. These visits were intended in part to ensure that ISP participants were following the rules of the program as well as to gain a better perspective into how the individual was coping under supervision.

There was no typical workday or workweek during my time as an ISP agent. I was given broad freedom in determining my schedule, which often included night and weekend hours. It was common to be out until 1 or 2 in the morning doing home visits, as well as to come in early in the day to call offenders in for random urinalysis drug testing. In addition to the surveillance aspects of being an ISP agent, there were therapeutic aspects as well. I maintained close communication with counselors and other treatment providers to ensure that offenders were attending required therapy sessions. In addition, I was responsible for administering criminal-thinking and cognitive-behavioral groups to ISP offenders. These groups are designed to assist offenders in identifying and disrupting distorted thinking patterns and assist them in learning new ways of interacting in their environments.

❖ THE GOALS OF ISP

The main purpose of this essay is to critically reflect on my experiences as an ISP agent in order to explore the ways in which my supervision of offenders either contributed to or detracted from program success. Accomplishing this task, however, requires that a framework be developed by which both success and failure can be judged. During my time as an ISP agent, I had a very narrow and incomplete view of this issue. Successes and failures were judged exclusively by individual outcomes. The program was successful when offenders completed the WDOC ISP without committing a new crime or being revoked, while the program was deemed unsuccessful when offenders were revoked or arrested for a new offense. The limitation of this perspective is that it fails to take into account the varied goals ISPs are meant to accomplish that may or may not be directly related to whether or not an offender completes the program. Thus, to develop a framework for determining the success of ISP, it is important to first ask, What goals are ISPs intended to achieve?

A primary goal of ISPs is to reduce prison crowding and correctional spending (Clear & Hardyman, 1990; Petersilia, 1998). ISPs swept across the country during the 1980s and 1990s due largely to the belief that these programs could ease the financial costs and burdens associated with massive prison growth and crowding experienced by many correctional systems in the final decades of the 20th century. It was believed that strict conditions of supervision coupled with intense monitoring practices would allow ISPs to supervise even high-risk offenders in the community who would otherwise be in prison. Since the cost of supervising offenders in the community under ISP supervision is substantially lower than the cost of incarceration, ISPs have the potential to both reduce prison growth and save taxpayer money.

A second goal of ISP is to expand the continuum of sanctions available for law violators (Tonry, 1996). Prior to the development of intermediate sanction programs, such as ISP, the two primary options available to the court for punishing offenders was probation and prison, which are viewed at opposite ends of the punishment continuum. Probation is regarded as suitable response for low-risk offenders involved with minimal crimes, while prison is often considered an appropriate sentence for serious offenders who deserve severe punishment for their transgressions. The problem, however, is the lack of options available for offenders whose actions do not readily justify a

prison sentence but who deserve more than a probation sentence. ISPs were developed in part to fill this gap in the sentencing continuum by providing a sentencing option that is more punitive than traditional community supervision but less severe than incarceration.

The ISP movement was also fueled by a desire to enhance public safety by ratcheting up the supervision of offenders in the community. Influential research conducted in the 1980s revealed that serious offenders were sentenced to probation supervision and that many of these offenders were responsible for a substantial amount of new offending, which included many serious offences (Petersilia, Turner, Kahan, & Peterson, 1985). This research led many to question the capacity of traditional probation services to handle high-risk offenders without jeopardizing public safety. ISP proponents claimed that unlike traditional supervision, ISP supervision could manage these offenders in the community and limit risks to the community (Erwin, 1986). ISP supervision is intended to promote public safety in two ways. First, the restrictive structure of ISP was meant to incapacitate offenders by limiting their access to the community. Second, the intense supervision practices were meant to act as a specific deterrent by sending the message that offenders who violated would be caught and punished (Petersilia & Turner, 1993).

A final goal of at least certain ISPs is to promote the rehabilitation of offenders. The vast majority of the early ISPs implemented in the 1980s lacked a rehabilitative focus and concentrated exclusively on surveillance and incapacitation aspects of supervision. Other programs, however, combined intensive supervision practices within a framework that also recognized the need for offenders to address underlying problems that contributed to their criminality. The merger of ISP with the goal of rehabilitation gained legitimacy with research revealing that programs that incorporated a therapeutic component were more effective in reducing recidivism than those that relied solely on close monitoring of offenders (Paparozzi & Gendreau, 2005).

❖ A TYPOLOGY OF ISP OFFENDERS: *THE GOOD*, *THE BAD*, AND *THE UGLY*

As I reflect on my experiences as an ISP agent to explore the ways in which my supervision of offenders contributed to or detracted from the program goals, I find there is an inherent complexity associated with this task. This complexity emanates from two sources. First, as we saw in the previous section, the goals of ISP are diverse, ranging from

punishment to rehabilitation. Not only are the goals of ISP diverse, but in certain cases, they are also conflicting. In other words, sometimes achieving one goal such as enhancing public safety detracts from other goals such as diverting offenders from incarceration or promoting rehabilitation.

A second and perhaps more formidable obstacle associated with the task of assessing program success stems from the realization that the ISP offenders themselves are very diverse. During my time as an ISP agent, I supervised a varied group of offenders with offenses ranging from murder to shoplifting. I supervised offenders as young as 17 to as old as 75. I supervised some individuals who couldn't read and others who were college educated. Some persons on my caseload had deep-seated issues with mental illness and addiction, while others appeared rational and calculated. This lack of uniformity makes any general discussions of program success very difficult. The program, for example, may have been very effective in promoting rehabilitation for certain offenders but very ineffective with others.

Thus, before beginning any general discussion about my successes and shortcomings as a WDOC ISP agent, I will first reflect on my experiences to develop categories, or a typology, of ISP offenders. The majority of offenders I supervised as an ISP agent can be grouped into one of three categories, which I refer to as *the Good, the Bad,* and *the Ugly.*

The Good refers to the group of ISP offenders who presented the lowest threat to public safety. They were most commonly involved in lower level, nonviolent criminal offenses, such as property crimes or drug-related offenses. While this group of offenders did not represent a substantial threat to the public, they did present a substantial risk to themselves as well as to those close to them, such as their close friends and families. Their self-destructive behavior, which included their criminal behavior, stemmed from some type of underlying issue such as an addiction to drugs or alcohol or severe mental health problems. I refer to this group as the Good largely because of their potential to become contributing members of society. The Good were typically compliant and likable individuals who had the greatest capacity to lead productive, law-abiding lives if they could get a handle on their addictions and other underlying problems. Despite their potential, the Good were often persistent offenders who cycled in and out of the system. They often found their way into the WDOC ISP after having been unsuccessful under traditional supervision and were placed on ISP because it was believed that they would benefit from the added structure of the program.

While I supervised many individuals who fit the Good type, one individual stands out who personifies this type. I will refer to her as Lucy. Lucy was in her early to mid-40s and had been in the criminal justice system much of her adult life. Her involvement with the legal system stemmed almost exclusively from her heroin addiction. Lucy's most recent conviction, which led to her placement in the WDOC ISP, involved forging checks. The profits from her crime were used to support her drug habit. In addition to her problems with heroin, Lucy had long-standing problems with depression and anxiety that stemmed from the sexual abuse she suffered as a child. Lucy had made several suicide attempts in the past and, as a result, had spent time in several mental health facilities. Lucy was a pleasant and likable individual who sincerely wanted to change and get her life on track. Her motivation for change was driven largely by a desire to regain custody of her two children, who were placed in foster care after her most recent arrest. She was very compliant with the rules of the ISP and seemed to thrive under the structure of the program. Much of her supervision focused on addressing her addiction and mental health issues, which included frequent contact with her counselors and monitoring her medications.

The group of offenders most commonly supervised under the WDOC ISP was *the Bad*. These individuals, unlike the previous group of offenders, presented at a more substantial risk to public safety due both to the seriousness and frequency of their offending. Their criminal activities varied but often included offenses such as burglary, assault, and drug dealing. While drug and alcohol use was common among the Bad, most were not considered addicts. We often referred to them as criminals who liked to use, as opposed to addicts who committed crimes. These individuals were typically younger offenders who often had little impulse control. Many of their problems involved their peers, who also tended to be young and impulsive. Not surprisingly, the Bad were often a challenge to supervise. They were not strongly committed to changing their lifestyles and often pushed the boundaries of the program to see how much they could get away with, which often resulted in an antagonistic relationship between the agent and offender. The Bad were typically placed into ISP for one of two reasons, the first being that they failed under traditional supervision and were placed in ISP as a response to that failure. Second, it was felt that the nature of their offense coupled with their prior criminal history warranted a punishment that was more severe than traditional probation, but they were spared a prison sentence through their placement in ISP.

"Bill" is a prime example of an offender who could be classified as Bad. Bill was 19 years of age when he was placed on the WDOC ISP. Bill was sentenced to ISP following his conviction for his involvement in a string of home burglaries. While this was his first adult-level felony offense, Bill was well-known to local law enforcement and court personnel due to his extensive juvenile court history. He had spent a large portion of his teenage years locked up in various juvenile facilities. Bill liked to drink and smoke a little pot, but his main problems stemmed from his impulsiveness and temper, which hampered his ability to function in the community. He struggled maintaining a job and had very poor relationships with his family. Bill's impulsive nature also affected his capacity to function on ISP. He accumulated a number of technical violations on the program for things such as staying out past curfew, drinking, and not following his weekly schedule. Bill was required to attend counseling to address his problems with impulsiveness and anger but had a hard time making it to his appointments on a consistent basis.

The third group of offenders under ISP supervision was *the Ugly. The Ugly* refer to the ISP offenders who presented the greatest risk to public safety. These individuals are most often violent and sexual offenders who were placed on ISP after spending considerable time in prison. Their placement in ISP typically came as they neared the end of their prison sentences, and it was believed that ISP would offer the best environment to assist them in their reintegration into the community, while also limiting the threat to public safety. Individuals in this group often had a difficult time readjusting to life outside of prison. These offenders often found it difficult to find a job due to their limited job skills and the stigma of their conviction. The Ugly were often subject to more intense levels of supervision than other ISP offenders because of the risk they presented to the public. Treatment requirements were also common among this group of offenders. Many had substance abuse issues that prompted referrals for drug and/or alcohol treatment. Sexual offenders were required to attend sex offender counseling, which is a very intense and confrontational form of treatment. The offenders' attendance and progress in treatment was closely monitored by their ISP agents.

"Richard" was an offender who fit the profile of the Ugly. Richard came to the WDOC ISP after spending over a decade in prison following his conviction for rape. Aside from his most recent prison sentence, Richard had spent time in prison for various other violent and sex-related crimes. All in all, he had spent most of his adult life in

correctional institutions. Richard's ISP supervision consisted of a combination of intense monitoring and life skills training. Owing to years of incarceration, Richard was institutionalized and thus struggled with even the most basic tasks. I remember picking him up from the bus stop on the day he was released from prison. His bus came in around lunch time, and I took him to a local fast-food restaurant. I offered to buy him lunch and told him to order what he wanted. Richard had not had a choice about what meal he would eat for over a decade and was completely overwhelmed by the prospect of ordering his own lunch. As I glanced over at him, I saw his hands trembling, and he had a look of panic on his face; I ultimately had to order for him. Despite being over 40 years old, Richard had never held a legitimate job and had few job skills to offer a potential employer, making it very difficult for him to find work. He was required to attend sex offender counseling as part of his release, as well as substance abuse treatment due to his history of drug and alcohol abuse. However, his counseling was hampered by his strong distrust of treatment providers and authority figures in general.

❖ ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ISP SUPERVISION

Now that a typology of offenders has been established, I can begin to examine the ways in which my supervision of offenders either contributed to or detracted from goals of ISP. I begin with the goal of punishment. As discussed earlier, ISPs were developed in part to expand the continuum of sanctions by creating a punishment option that was more severe than traditional probation but less onerous than prison. I can confidently say that the WDOC ISP was effective in achieving at least part of this goal. ISP was unquestionably more punitive than traditional supervision. The strict conditions of ISP coupled with intense supervision practices created an environment that offenders found unpleasant to say the least. This was most apparent in the supervision of offenders classified as the Bad. As mentioned above, many of the Bad came to ISP after they were unsuccessful under traditional supervision and thus had a reliable reference point for assessing the punitive nature of the program. These offenders often began the program skeptical of the true nature of the program and would often test the boundaries. However, they quickly realized that conditions of supervision would be monitored and strictly enforced.

I am less confident that the WDOC ISP was successful in creating an environment that was less punitive than incarceration for all offenders. On the surface it seems absurd to assert that ISP even with its strict conditions and aggressive supervision practices could be considered more punitive than incarceration. However, for a considerable number of offenders, this seemed to be the case.[1] The burdens of ISP supervision were substantial. In addition to the strict monitoring, participants were expected to work full-time, maintain sobriety, attend treatment, and provide for their own food, housing, and other living expenses. Incarceration, by contrast, creates no such obligations. The difficulty of ISP was often compounded by a lack of resources in the community to assist offenders in meeting their obligations. Programs to assist individuals with needs such as housing or employment were in limited supply and in some cases excluded ISP participants due to their legal status. Thus, at least for certain offenders such as those who are unemployed and lack economic resources, the advantages of incarceration are understandable.

Understanding why offenders might not view ISP as being less punitive than imprisonment can be better understood by considering the supervision of the Ugly. The Ugly most commonly came to ISP after having spent considerable time in prison. For these individuals, prison was familiar and, while not pleasant, was at least comfortable. Additionally, prison did not require a substantial amount of effort; everything was done for them. ISP, by contrast, was unfamiliar and required them to be more than passive participants. In addition to normal responsibilities of life, such as maintaining a job and paying bills, ISP offenders were often required to attend treatment, perform community service, and attend groups and meetings at the probation office. The difficulty of ISP for these offenders was amplified by the fact that it took place in the community where temptations and distractions were abundant. An offender once told me that it was fairly easy to stay clean in prison where drugs and alcohol were not always readily available, but staying clean in the community was much more difficult because of the constant temptations. Thus, for many offenders, especially the Ugly, ISP was perceived as being more onerous than spending time in prison.

Next, I turn my attention to the goal of enhancing public safety. The strict and intense nature of ISP is meant to enhance public safety by both limiting participants' abilities to commit further crimes (incapacitation) and sending a message that all transgressions would be caught and punished (deterrence). On the surface, my experiences

suggest that there is strong reason to believe that ISP was extremely effective in this regard. During my time as an ISP agent, I can recall only two cases in which offenders under my supervision were arrested for serious crimes. One involved an offender who stole a car and absconded from supervision, while the other involved an attempted sexual assault. In both cases, the individuals were revoked and quickly returned to incarceration, which is not surprising given the emphasis placed on deterrence. Aside from these instances, most other arrests involved relatively minor offenses, most of which were traffic related. This observation is consistent with findings from studies of other ISPs, which show a relatively small proportion of offenders commit new crime violations while under ISP supervision (Petersilia & Turner, 1993).

While the lack of serious criminal offending by offenders under WDOC ISP supervision is encouraging, I have to be cautious before unequivocally asserting that the program enhanced public safety for all types of offenders. It is important to recognize that the public safety goal of ISP is premised on the belief that ISPs are composed of high-risk offenders who present a substantial risk to public safety. In reality, however, many offenders I supervised were not high risk at all. Most notable are the Good offenders, whose destructive behavior tended to be directed inward rather than outward. These individuals, regardless of the type of supervision they received, were unlikely to engage themselves in behavior that represented a substantial threat to the well-being of the community. Thus, for this group of offenders, it is unlikely that ISP contributed to public safety in any meaningful way.

The WDOC ISP, like other ISPs, was intended to promote the rehabilitation of offenders by combining intensive supervision practices with therapeutic interventions aimed at addressing offenders' underlying problems. Because rehabilitation involves long-term behavioral change, it is admittedly difficult to assess the degree to which my efforts as an ISP agent were successful in achieving this result. What I can say with confidence, however, is that the program was successful in promoting the goal of rehabilitation in more than a superficial manner. Legitimate emphasis was placed on ensuring that offenders had access to and were engaging themselves in the appropriate treatment programs, such as substance abuse counseling, sex offender treatment, or job training programs. I was expected to maintain regular contact with counselors and other treatment providers to monitor offenders' progress in therapy. Offenders who failed to meet their treatment obligations were held accountable through sanctions or other methods. In

short, treatment was a priority in the supervision of offenders in the WDOC ISP.

Did this emphasis on treatment and rehabilitation result in long-term behavior changes in offenders? While this is a difficult question to answer, the answer seems to be yes, at least for some. As a group, the Bad seemed to be the least amenable to treatment and thus benefitted the least. While these offenders would attend counseling when mandated, they rarely engaged in any meaningful way. Most of my rehabilitative successes were from the Good. The combination of strict supervision with intensive therapy created an environment that was often beneficial to this group of offenders. One case that stands out involved a woman who had developed an addiction to prescription pain medication. She had been dealing with this addiction for several years, and by the time she began ISP, she was taking between 40 and 60 pills a day. She struggled severely when she first started the program as a result of her addiction, which resulted in a number of sanctions, such as time in jail and placement in a 30-day in-patient substance abuse program. Over time, she began to improve. She continued with her treatment, stayed clean, and was able to complete her ISPs. Several years after she had finished ISP, she came to my office to thank me for all I had done for her. She was still clean, had a good job, and had regained custody of her children. She credited ISP with "saving [her] life."

ISPs were developed largely with the aim of reducing prison crowding and soaring correctional costs through the diversion of prison-bound offenders. Prior research suggests that ISPs in general have not been successful in achieving this goal (Petersilia, 1998; Tonry, 1996). A primary reason for this finding is that ISPs have largely been occupied by probation-bound rather than prison-bound offenders (Petersilia, 1998; Tonry, 1996). In other words, ISPs most commonly are composed of offenders who would have been on traditional probation supervision had the program not existed, which does little to reduce prison growth and correctional costs.

Of all of the ISP goals, this is the most difficult to assess from my experiences. It is simply difficult to know what proportion of offenders I supervised would have gone to or remained in prison had the program not existed. I can say with at least some assurance that a good proportion of the Ugly would have remained in prison had they not been given the opportunity to be supervised on ISP because of the serious nature of their offending. Consequently, for this group of offenders, ISP was successful in reducing the prison population by facilitating the early release of these high-risk offenders. It is more difficult to

assert with any confidence what effect the supervision of the Good and the Bad had on this goal. As discussed previously, many of these offenders were not high-risk individuals, and it is likely that they would have remained in the community under traditional supervision had WDOC ISP not existed.

A further reason for the failure of ISPs to suppress prison growth and correctional spending is due to the high revocation rates experienced by ISP offenders. The strict conditions of supervision combined with the aggressive supervision practices used in ISP have created an environment in which large numbers of technical violations are perpetrated and detected. And these technical violations are the most common basis for revocation of ISP offenders (Petersilia, 1998; Tonry, 1996). This finding is consistent with my experiences with the WDOC ISP. Vast numbers of technical violations were detected, especially for certain offenders. As one might expect, the Bad was the group most likely to violate program rules. These young and impulsive offenders found it very difficult to confine their behavior to the structure of the program. Common transgressions among this group included staying out past curfew, associating with unapproved visitors, and drinking alcohol. While it was rare to revoke offenders following their first violation, it was typically the accumulation of these technical transgressions over time that led to their removal from the program.

❖ CONCLUSION

Nearly 30 years has passed since the ISP movement first began, and these programs remain a dominate feature of the community-corrections landscape. It would be easy to end this essay on a critical note by espousing the ways in which ISP has failed to live up to the promises of its advocates. However, as I reflect on my experiences as an ISP agent, I find that there are reasons to be optimistic. ISP, while not a panacea for the failings of the correctional system, does have the capacity to achieve promising results for at least certain types of offenders. The ISP movement, for example, has shown that incarceration is not the only method available to punish offenders; rather, punishment can be effectively meted out in the community. ISP has also shown that even high-risk offenders can be managed in the community without sacrificing public safety. Finally, and maybe most importantly, ISPs that incorporate intensive supervision strategies with a commitment to rehabilitation can produce long-term behavioral changes.

❖ ENDNOTES

1. It is important to recognize that this finding is not unique to the WDOC ISP. Research focusing on perceptions of punishment severity has revealed that many offenders do not view certain community-based sanctions, such as ISP, to be less punitive than prison confinement; see for example, Petersilia and Deschenes (1994) and Wood and Grasmick (1999).

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is intensive supervision different from other types of community interventions? What is or are the main purpose(s) of ISPs? How are they connected to probation and parole?
2. What does the author mean by "*the Good, the Bad,* and *the Ugly*"? (Be able to describe the categories and identify the types of people to whom the author is referring.) What do persons in each category need as a counter to offending, and to function well in the community?
3. What appear to be the strengths and weaknesses of ISPs? Should there be more ISPs? Why or why not?