Colorado Probation Research in Brief
Assessing Risk Among White-Collar Offenders Under Federal Supervision in the Community

Key Words: Risk assessment, white-collar offenders, community supervision, economic crime

Summary/Conclusions

The current study sought to determine the utility of the Post Conviction Risk Assessment (PCRA) in predicting supervision revocation of white-collar offenders. Researchers used a sample of 31,306 white-collar offenders for the study. The study found that 66.7% white-collar offenders were classified as low risk, 23.4% were low-moderate risk, 7.7% moderate risk, and 2.2% as high risk. While there was a higher percentage of white-collar offenders who were low risk, the PCRA still accurately predicted revocations with low risk offenders being revoked at a rate of 1.7% and high risk offenders at 49.3%.

Limitations of Information

The study used revocation from supervision and not post release recidivism as the predictor of risk. It is unclear if the results would be similar for re-arrest following supervision. The population of the study was limited to individuals under federal supervision, which may not be representative of white-collar offenders under state supervision.

Caveat: The information presented here is intended to summarize and inform readers of research and information relevant to probation work. It can provide a framework for carrying out the business of probation as well as suggestions for practical application of the material. While it may, in some instances, lead to further exploration and result in *future* decisions, it is <u>not</u> intended to prescribe policy and is not necessarily conclusive in its findings. Some of its limitations are described above.

Supervising According to Risk

There's an ongoing discussion about risk assessments being universally applied for a variety of populations and offense types. White-collar/economic crime offenders are a population that has recently received more attention. The current study examines if Federal Probation's current standard risk assessment tool, the Post Conviction Risk Assessment (PCRA), properly assesses individuals who have committed white-collar offenses.

Using risk assessment information and supervision revocation data from 31,306 white-collar offenders, researchers explored whether the PCRA accurately predicted the risk classification and whether the total score accurately predicted supervision revocation. Most of the offenders (71.2%) were on supervised release. The others (28.8%) were on federal probation. The offenders were on supervision for a period ranging from 1 year and 4 months to 2 years and 6 months. Most of the white-collar offenders were classified as low risk (66.7%) or low/moderate (23.4%).

Researchers analyzed the offender risk levels against supervision revocations to determine if the PCRA was accurately predicting risk. Only 1.7% of the low risk offenders had their supervision revoked. High risk offenders were revoked at a rate of 49.3%. As white-collar offenders increased in risk, so did the rate of revocation. When researchers examined supervision revocation and total PCRA score, the mean score for individuals who were revoked from supervision (8.99) was over double the mean score

for probationers who completed their sentence successfully (4.06). The results indicated that the PCRA significantly predicted revocation of white collar offenders.

Practical Applications:

√ The LSI is an actuarial assessment that has been validated on a wide variety of offenders and accurately predicts an individual's risk to reoffend. Trust the assessment and supervise probationers in accordance to their assessed risk and needs.

√ Ask for support by eliciting feedback or staff a case with a probation officer with a different caseload. They might be able to offer different perspectives and suggestions.

√ Explore what factors drive beliefs about risk and try to separate differences between perception of risk and facts regarding risk.

√ Use risk levels to strategically plan the amount of contacts and the time during contacts you spend with probationers (e.g. prioritize higher risk cases).

√ Review assessments regularly to focus on individual criminogenic needs.

√ When addressing criminogenic needs with special populations, consider exploring the big four criminogenic needs related to the probationer's offenses (e.g. anti-social behaviors, thoughts/beliefs, and peers.).

State Court Administrator's Office
Colorado Division of Probation Services, Evaluation Unit
720.625.5760; www.courts.state.co.us   **May 2019**