



*“The SP program makes us feel that we are making the right decision when it comes to reentry programs and public safety.”*

- ADA Lili Nguyen

A UC Berkeley evaluation found recidivism reduced by **8** percentage points in cases relying on the SP recommendation

# Sentencing Planning Program

## **Prosecutors Role in Recidivism Reduction**

Our prosecutors increasingly recognize that they can – and should – play a key role in recidivism reduction, but they need practical tools to take the leap from ideal to real.

In 2012, the SFDA launched our Sentencing Planning (SP) program, becoming the first office in the State of California to hire a Sentencing Planner. Since then, the program has doubled its capacity with two Sentencing Planners, and transforms the way that prosecutors approach cases by developing individualized sentences that address the needs and risks of justice-involved individuals. This model fundamentally shifts our prosecutorial mandate and approach, moving from the traditional metrics of conviction rates and prison terms to recidivism reduction and community safety.

## **Disrupting the Cycle of Crime**

In 2011, following the passage of AB 109 (California Public Safety Realignment), individuals convicted of non-serious, non-violent, and non-sex crimes were either transferred from state prison to local jails or released on non-custodial mandatory supervision. Many of these individuals returned to the community with minimal or no services to address their criminogenic needs, increasing their risk of recidivating.

In an effort to break this cycle of crime, the SP model focuses on offenders and their readiness for rehabilitation through the application of evidence-based practices designed to reduce reoffending and increase individual accountability.

## **Evidence-based Practices**

The SP model is comprised of two Sentencing Planners with expertise in evidence-based programs to address criminogenic needs, and detailed knowledge of programs and services available in San Francisco.

The SPs are assigned certain types of cases—primarily gang cases, and those involving young adults—, and also receive referrals from prosecutors during the early stages of prosecution. An SP conducts an in-depth case review, often including interviews with the defendant and his/her attorney, to determine if alternatives to incarceration are appropriate for the defendant. The SP subsequently provides a written report with detailed recommended dispositions including education requirements, vocational training requirements, rehabilitation and behavior adjustment programs, and, when requested, the length and type of supervision. The prosecutor decides whether to incorporate the SP's recommendations into her final disposition.

## **Cost and Recidivism Reduction**

The simplicity of the SP program belies the significance of its reform to the system. It redefines a “win” for prosecutors. It reduces costs across all stages of the criminal justice system – from the courthouse, where cases resolve faster, to jails and prisons, to the street, where police no longer expend resources on individuals who would otherwise remain enmeshed in the cycle of crime.

Independent evaluation of the SPP program, conducted by UC Berkeley in May 2014, found compelling evidence that it reduces recidivism and prosecutor reliance on incarceration. We recently expanded the SP program to include a second Sentencing Planner focused on young adults, and are seeking resources to extend the model to our Juvenile Unit.