



## Office of Justice Systems Analysis Evaluation Brief

©COPYRIGHT 2002—NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES  
FEBRUARY 2002

### ***The Juvenile Electronic Monitoring Project: The Use of Electronic Monitoring Technology on Adjudicated Juvenile Delinquents***

Thomas J. Harig, Ph.D.  
Bureau of Research and Evaluation

This brief summarizes an evaluation of juvenile electronic monitoring demonstration projects conducted in Monroe, Niagara, and Onondaga counties. These projects sought to determine the extent to which electronic monitoring (EM) is a viable community supervision strategy for adjudicated juvenile delinquents recommended for an institutional placement. The evaluation included surveying the attitudes of local juvenile justice practitioners toward the use of EM technology with juvenile delinquents. It also surveyed the attitudes of participating juvenile delinquents toward the EM sanction, and examined their program performance.

Interviews with local juvenile justice professionals, including police, probation officers, presentment attorneys, law guardians, and family court judges, found considerable support for the juvenile EM programs. Overall, 96.1% of subjects in an initial interview thought EM would be a useful tool with juvenile delinquents, compared with 96.6% of subjects responding in a similar followup interview.

Juvenile EM clients were also quite positive about the program. In an intake survey, 98.8% of youngsters felt EM would be better than a term in a juvenile institution. The majority (88.2%) of those completing an exit survey likewise thought EM had been better than institutionalization would have been.

Client performance was examined after twenty-three months of program operation. One hundred-fifteen (115) clients were enrolled in the programs and ninety-nine (99) had completed or terminated participation. Among clients completing or terminating the program, 58% of clients successfully completed their term of EM. Successful clients averaged three to four months in the EM programs (mean = 122 days; median = 94 days). Approximately two-thirds (64%) of program failures chose to cut off their ankle bracelet, generally thought by program staff to be due to coping difficulties of the youngsters. If a client cut off the monitoring bracelet, this occurred on average after approximately two

months in the EM program (mean = 56 days; median = 56 days). There is no evidence that clients cut their bracelet in concert with further criminal behavior, however one client did commit a burglary while AWOL from the EM program. The majority (69%) of program failures were subsequently institutionalized.

Among the most likely to have been successful were those with a school classification of *Emotionally Disturbed* or *Special Education* student. Clients with a father or stepfather in the home, and those who had committed a violent offense or an offense against a person were also disproportionately more successful than others. Youngsters with a history of runaway and those with a prior PINS referral were disproportionately more likely to cut their bracelet.

In order to make juvenile EM programs more effective, probation departments should give serious attention to revisiting policies and procedures relating to supervision of high-risk clients. Common sense suggests that a youngster diverted from an institutional placement should likely present a higher public safety risk to the community than a typical youngster who would be assigned to a general supervision caseload. Yet in dealing with high-risk youngsters, program staff are often bound by the practices applied to the traditional low-risk juvenile probation caseload. It is important for departments to consider the different challenges of the juvenile high-risk caseload when defining policies related to night and weekend coverage, warrant execution, arrest authority, and weapons search and seizure, as the strength of these policies and procedures directly influence the ability of the probation officer to manage the high-risk youngster effectively. In particular, prospective juvenile EM programs should consider the following design features:

- Juvenile EM programs should plan on daily face-to-face contact with clients, as made possible by a small caseload.

- Jurisdictions should not undertake the conduct of a juvenile EM program without a clear plan for off-hour case coverage.

- Prospective programs should establish a clear and effective agreement with the Family Court regarding the expedited issuance of warrants for program absconders. Programs should also establish cooperative agreements with local police agencies for timely assistance in the execution of warrants for juvenile EM absconders. Probation departments should train and authorize EM officers in arrest procedures for those occasions when the officer might happen upon a juvenile absconder prior to the issuance of a warrant.

- Prospective juvenile EM programs should craft an alcohol and drug testing policy that provides for true off-site random testing, with clearly stated consequences for client non-compliance.

- Prospective programs should clearly specify programmatic expectations for the client including, for example, school attendance, timely curfews, alcohol and drug abstinence, and contraband prohibitions, and the client should be provided with a clear statement of procedures used to monitor these conditions, and consequences for non-compliance.

The use of electronic monitoring technology with juvenile delinquents is clearly a viable local alternative to an out-of-home placement. There is support for it among local professionals, and youngsters are generally cooperative with the sanction. The project

demonstrated that there was virtually no increased damage to public safety while youngsters were on EM. As an added benefit, it saves placement costs for local governments for clients who can be effectively managed in the community. After paying for the project, it is projected that local jurisdictions saved between \$97,000 - \$110,000 in placement costs. All three demonstration sites are continuing with their local EM programs and are considering possible expansion of this juvenile community supervision strategy.

For a copy of the full research report, contact:  
Office of Justice Systems Analysis  
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services  
4 Tower Place  
Albany, New York 12203  
(518) 457-3724  
<http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/>