

Constructing a Corrections Continuum Control and Services Matrix: Instructions and Examples

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Purpose of the Matrix

A Corrections Continuum Control and Services Matrix presents a comprehensive picture of adults under correctional supervision at any given point in time. The matrix provides a “snapshot” of the adults being supervised on a given day along with their sanctioning location, type of supervision, and the range and type of services being provided within the local criminal justice system. It is a planning and coordination tool that provides an easily understood, comprehensive, and common frame of reference for examining, evaluating, and improving a local correctional system.¹

Constructing the Matrix

The Corrections Continuum Control and Services Matrix is like a spreadsheet (and is easily created using spreadsheet software). It is organized along two dimensions, or axes: (1) the range of correctional placement options; and (2) the range of treatment and services, including additional external controls.²

The Vertical Axis: The Corrections Placement Options

The first column of the matrix (Column A) lists the range of correctional sanctioning options. These are scaled from the least amount of control and intervention (e.g., administrative caseload) to the maximum amount of control and intervention (e.g., high security in a state correctional institution). Thus, as an offender moves down the listed continuum of correctional options, the offender is subjected to increasing amounts of external control by the justice system.

¹ This discussion concerns adults. A similar matrix can be constructed for juveniles.

² In 2004, the Criminal Justice Planning Unit in Jefferson County, Colorado used these instructions to create a matrix for the county. The matrix was printed on paper (3 feet by 4 feet) using a color plotter (an oversized printer). The graphic provided a common visual conceptual framework for examining their sanctions and services. See the end of this appendix for Jefferson County’s matrix. The matrix can be viewed more easily by increasing the zoom when viewing the page electronically. In addition, some printers may not have sufficient memory for printing the matrix.

The list of correctional placement options are grouped into two basic categories: (1) Field Supervision and (2) Custodial Placement.³ Each of these categories is further divided into sub categories that include the typical generic correctional options.

A first step that a local jurisdiction might take is to re-name these generic correctional placement options to reflect actual local circumstances. For example, the title “Residential Treatment Facility A” might be changed to reflect the actual name of a residential treatment facility in the community. This change will make the matrix more useful and more understandable for a local jurisdiction.

The Horizontal Axis: Additional External Controls, Sanctions, and Treatment/Services Provided to Persons in Corrections Sanctioning Options

Three categories extend across the top of the matrix: 1) Additional External Controls; 2) Additional Sanctions; and 3) Treatment and Services.⁴ These are preliminarily subdivided into generic categories. Other subdivisions may be added within these broad categories. For example, the matrix may list “Other Probation Conditions” under “Additional Sanctions.” This will provide the opportunity to list additional conditions of probation supervision that have a specific supervision objective (e.g., electronic monitoring).

Filling-in the Matrix

The first two columns and the first two rows of each matrix are most important. These contain totals and are used to summarize the information in the rest of the matrix.

Column A presents the correctional options. Column B should contain the total number of people being supervised in each correctional option. Column C contains the number of people receiving the first type of additional external control in each of the correctional options. Column D contains the number of people receiving the second type of additional external control in each of the correctional options etc.....

Each cell should contain a number, even if that number is zero. Where the number in the cell needs an explanation or annotation, a narrative can be prepared as a footnote and attached to the matrix for reference. The narrative should identify the cell that is being described. This can be accomplished by using the column and row designation. For example, the “Total Number Under Supervision” is cell B-1.

Column B: The Number of Offenders

The number of persons in each correctional option should be entered in column B. The objective here is to obtain an unduplicated count of persons under supervision. (This is the only column

³ See the tables at the end of this appendix.

⁴ Example categories for additional external controls, sanctions, and treatment/services appear in the Horizontal Axis table at the end of this appendix.

for which this will be true). When all the rows of column B are totaled, the total should represent the total number of adults being supervised at one time (cell B-1).

This approach requires a decision rule to resolve those instances where a person is truly receiving two or more types of supervision. For example, a person may be on active probation and also be in jail. In this case, the person should only be counted in the category and placement option which provides the greatest degree of external control (and is thus farther down the list). However, the annotation to both the probation and the jail cells should indicate that one person who is on probation is also in the jail category. This method will allow analysis of unduplicated and duplicated counts of these individuals.

Columns C through Z

The cells in these columns reflect counts of the number of offenders in each correctional sanctioning option who are receiving any given additional external control, additional sanction, or treatment or service. It is likely that an individual offender may be receiving a variety of services and treatments. Thus, the row totals will almost always be greater than the total number of offenders in Column B. Here, too, the matrix approach will accommodate additional, more specific columns under the general headings that have been suggested here. These will represent additional external controls, additional sanctions, or treatment services.

Annotations can be prepared and attached to the matrix to further describe the populations that are represented by numbers in any of the cells of the table. The available time and resources will serve as realistic limits to the amount of detailed annotations that can be prepared to support and further explain the numbers in the cells of the matrix. Annotations need not be completed for each cell, but there may be some cells which contain correctional populations that can be further described in terms of age, race, type of presenting correctional issue or problem, average length of stay, and so forth.

Advanced Uses of the Matrix

Comparing “What is” with “What Ought to Be”

The matrix represents a “snapshot” of the correctional population at any given point in time. Once completed, members of a task force or planning group may review the matrix and come to the conclusion that there are “gaps” in the local justice system. That is, they would like to reallocate the number of people in some of the cells in the matrix. For example, additional external controls, additional sanctions, or additional treatment or services may need to be directed toward certain groups. In this sense, the matrix represents “what is.” A group exercise can be fashioned to have each person in the task force or planning group list “what ought to be.” Then, through negotiation, persons can come to a general consensus about major changes that would transform the “what is” version of the snapshot into a version that is improved and more desirable.

Determining Capacity and the Cost Demands of Each Cell of the Matrix

Any attempt to modify the existing matrix to reflect “what ought to be” will immediately result in the need for information about what it might cost to change the allocation of offenders within the matrix. These costs will serve to naturally limit the changes that can realistically occur. If the costs prove to be too high, the exercise in which offenders are reallocated into to different cells of the matrix must be repeated. In order to make these estimates, the task force or planning group will need to move on to another use of the matrix: To first determine the capacities and the cost of the workload in each cell of the “what is” and, later, do the same for the “what ought to be” matrix.

Therefore, it will be useful to develop estimates of current program capacities and costs before engaging a task force or planning group in any exercise that might lead from “what is” to “what ought to be.” Defining current program capacities will let the participants know which sanctions and services are operating at capacity, and which are not being fully utilized. Developing estimates of the daily costs for each cell in the matrix will help participants understand the relative costs of each sanction and service.

This information is most easily displayed by creating a second matrix and entering the program capacity and expenditure information into each cell of the new matrix. Here again, the most useful information will be the totals in Column B. This will summarize the expenditures and capacities of all the cells in the matrix.

Methods for Determining Costs

As noted above, the matrix can be used to display estimates of the daily cost of offender placement in each cell of the matrix. This exercise can be guided by: a) actual cost accounting, or b) by individual or group estimates. Actual cost counting is achieved by reviewing agency budgets and calculating the agencies’ daily budgets. A group exercise can be created to capture different opinions and estimates of many people. These can be averaged or negotiated to reach some consensus of the relative cost that should be associated with the specific sanctioning option and/or services being received by offenders in each cell of the matrix.

Another approach is to avoid actual costs altogether and scale these options in terms of their *relative* costs. These costs could be based on a “correctional cost unit,” where 1 unit equals the least expensive one day correctional placement in the matrix. All other cells would be assigned appropriate multiples of the correctional cost unit. An advantage to this approach is that it can be conducted as a planning exercise without having to go out and actually collect cost data or gather it through “expert opinion.”

Determining Annual Workload Size

An easy rule-of-thumb method for coming up with the total annual correctional workload is to merely multiply the numbers in each cell of the matrix by 365. This would approximate the annual load because the matrix represents a snapshot of a typical day. When multiplied by 365

days, the result should approximate the total annual correctional workload.⁵ The actual daily capacities of the various sanctions and services can be determined by surveying the people who are responsible for administering these programs.

Repeat the Process

The three step cycle moves from: 1) determining “what is” and “what ought to be;” 2) preparing estimates of how this transition would change the distribution of the workload, or more particularly, changes rates of admission or length of stay; and 3) converting changes in workload into changes in costs. A planning group may have to cycle through these steps several times to “fine tune” a scenario that optimizes the allocation of offenders to cells of the matrix and use of resources to maximize public safety. Data from computerized information systems can provide the basic data needed for this process, and spreadsheet software can facilitate computation, but these data and software are not necessary for constructing the matrix.

These advanced uses of the matrix will be particularly helpful when (1) correctional resources are limited and priorities and choices need to be made to make the most efficient and effective use of available correctional resources to maximize public protection, and (2) a jurisdiction wishes to analyze and develop an overall correctional strategy.

Helpful Tips for Constructing the Matrix

The staff person(s) creating the matrix may find that the following tips expedite matrix creation and make it more meaningful to the audience of stakeholders.

(1) Ask justice system stakeholders to come to a consensus about the ranking of the correctional placement options from least restrictive to most restrictive.

(2) Ask them to list the additional external controls, sanctions, and treatment/services that are used in each of the placement options. Staff may need to add to this list as the matrix is being constructed.

(3) To get a head count of person under supervision in each of the placement options, be flexible with the date of the snapshot. Some agencies will have the head count for the last day of the previous month, whereas some may have the current day’s number. Either way, ask the data provider if the number being provided is typical for the agency at this time.

⁵ A more sophisticated, advance method is to use the matrix to characterize the two things that actually determine the size of the correctional population: rate of admission and length of stay. Through management the two factors that determine the size of the population in each cell, it may be possible to create additional sanctioning or program capacity. An additional matrix/spreadsheet would need to be created. Each cell of the matrix would be constructed to contain the formula: (annual admissions x average length of stay = average daily population). This will permit analysis of the total annual number of days of supervision/treatment being provided to persons in each cell of the matrix. This use of the matrix will allow the user to begin modeling the changes in the correctional loads in each cell that can be expected to occur if the rates of admission or lengths of stay are changed. It will allow the user to prepare alternative scenarios, or to ask “what if” questions.

(4) Ask data providers what their monthly or yearly budget/costs are for supervising this many offenders. Initially, do not worry about separating out direct from indirect (overhead) costs. Then calculate the daily cost per offender. Results will normally show a pattern that the less restrictive placement options are less expensive and the more restrictive options are more expensive.

Sample Corrections Continuum Control and Services Matrix

The matrix consists of cells created by the intersection of the first column and first row of the spreadsheet.

Vertical Axis (Column A)

1	Total Under Supervision
2	FIELD SUPERVISION
3	PROBATION
4	Administrative
5	Banked caseload
6	Minimum Risk
7	Medium Risk
8	Maximum Risk
9	Intensive Supervision
10	Specialized Caseload #1
11	STATE PAROLE
12	Minimum Risk
13	Medium Risk
14	Maximum Risk
15	Intensive Supervision
16	Specialized Caseload #1
17	RESIDENTIAL FACILITY
18	Residential Placement #1
19	CUSTODIAL
20	LOCAL JAIL
21	Pre-sentenced
22	Minimum Risk
23	Medium Risk
24	Maximum Risk
25	Sentenced
26	Work Release
27	Minimum Risk
28	Medium Risk
29	Maximum Risk
30	STATE PRISON
31	Security Level 1 (Low)
32	Security Level 2
33	Security Level 3
34	Security Level 4 (High)
35	Etc...

Horizontal Axis (forms the column headings)

A	TYPE OF CONTROL (Vertical Axis goes under here)
B	Number of Offenders
	ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL CONTROLS
C	Electronic Monitoring
D	Day Reporting
E	Curfew
F	Restraining Order
G	Drug Testing
H	Alcohol Testing
	ADDITIONAL SANCTIONS
I	Community Service
J	Restitution
K	Fines
	TREATMENT AND SERVICES
L	Inpatient/Residential Subs Abuse Treatment
M	Outpatient Subs Abuse Treatment
N	Any Day Treatment
O	Mental Health or Offender-Specific Treatment
P	Support Group (AA, NA)
R	GED/Educational Classes
S	Job Skills Training
T	Job Search Assistance
U	Health/Medical Service
V	Etc...

