



Department of Justice (DOJ)

Office of Justice Programs

Office of Communications

Washington, D.C. 20531

GRANT NOTIFICATION

Grant Number: 15PBJA-21-GG-02794-SMTP

Name & Address of Recipient: HIDALGO, COUNTY OF
2818 SOUTH BUSINESS HIGHWAY 281
City, State & ZIP: EDINBURG, TX 78539

Recipient Project Director/Contact: VALDE GUERRA

Phone: (956) 292-7025

Title of Program: BJA FY 21 Smart Probation: Innovations in Supervision Initiative

Title of Project: Hidalgo County Virtual Supervision Caseload

Amount of Award: \$ 714,908 Date of Award: 12/03/2021

Awarding Agency: Bureau of Justice Assistance Tracey Willis

Supplement: No

Statutory Authority for Program: Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Public Law 116-260, 134 Stat 1182, 1259

Impact/Focus: Competitive Discretionary CFDA Number: 16.812

Project Description: Hidalgo County Virtual Supervision Caseload (VSC) Project Abstract The objective of this project is to integrate innovative technology into supervision protocols to support probationer success through reduced burdens of supervision, facilitate reallocation of resources to allow officers to focus on higher risk clients and decrease the negative impacts of reduced staffing. To achieve this goal, Hidalgo County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (HCCSCD) will implement a Virtual Supervision Caseload (VSC), which will move all individuals assessed as low risk to a fully virtual caseload via the Reconnect Community mobile application. These individuals will have access to a range of features designed to assist them during supervision, including the ability to message with their officer, video chat, calendars, mobile check-ins, reminders for important events, and a progress tracker to support completion of key supervision and case management goals. Use of the mobile application is designed to increase communication between officers and probationers and the ability of the officer to provide support, while decreasing the burdens associated with traditional supervision (e.g., transportation). As part of this demonstration project, the Reconnect Community mobile application will be tailored to fit the needs of the HCCSCD and officers assigned to the VSC will be trained on application use. To examine whether the VSC will promote positive outcomes (e.g., treatment attendance) and reduce negative outcomes (e.g., failure to appear, technical violation, rearrest, and revocations), a randomized controlled experiment will be conducted with approximately 900 probationers. Throughout this process, surveys and interviews will capture officer and probationer attitudes, perceptions, and experiences regarding use of the mobile application and the virtual supervision process. These data will inform ongoing quality improvement processes to reduce barriers to successful implementation and positive outcomes. If positive outcomes are identified, HCCSCD will expand use of the Reconnect Community mobile application allowing for full virtual supervision of all individuals assessed at the lowest risk for recidivism. HCCSCD will also use project results to inform expansion of mobile



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application use to other risk groups, further streamlining the work of officers, improving communications between officers and probationers, and reducing the burdens of in-person meetings. HCCSCD hopes to increase its capacity to effectively supervise clients with fewer staff, without sacrificing the ability to adhere to evidence-based practices and provide appropriate treatment and services. Results from this study will be used to inform other jurisdictions regarding the potential of a mobile application to improve resource allocation while removing barriers to effective supervision for both clients and officers.

For more information about this award, please contact the OJP Office of Communications at 202-307-0703 or OJP.OCOM@ojp.usdoj.gov.