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Facilitating Access to Supportive Services for Adults on Probation

A Review of the DOORS Program

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In the United States there are approximately 3.7 million people under community supervision — also known as probation or parole.¹ People under community supervision often need supportive services, such as behavioral health (to deal with mental health and substance use disorders), education, employment, housing, and transportation services.² Such services are usually provided by local governments or community-based organizations, which play a pivotal role in helping people under supervision to avoid contact with the criminal legal system.³ Probation officers typically provide referrals for services, though research suggests that a low percentage of people under community supervision end up receiving services.⁴

Studies have also shown that those affected by the criminal legal system, including those under community supervision, live in marginalized and under-funded communities, and lack adequate access to services.⁵ As a result, researchers, practitioners, and advocates have worked to develop programs that increase the supply of available services and lead to greater cooperation with social services providers in the community to connect people to services.⁶ Recent innovations within probation departments (about 80 percent of people under community supervision are on probation and they are the focus of this brief) have incorporated a “community hub” model where multiple service providers are located in the same places as probation offices to facilitate access to services for clients and to raise officers’ awareness of those services.⁷

This brief describes an MDRC study of a community hub model in Los Angeles (LA) County, the Developing Opportunities and Offering Reentry Solutions Community Reentry Center (better known as “DOORS”).⁸ DOORS was established inside a building where probation officers also work.⁹ The DOORS model is intended to provide probation officers with the opportunity to connect adults on probation to service providers located within the same building with the goal of reducing future involvement in the criminal legal system.¹⁰ However, within eight months of opening, the COVID-19 pandemic forced DOORS to shift to a hybrid model where services were provided both in person and virtually. Since study data collection ended, DOORS has expanded in LA County as a hybrid model that is not always co-located in a probation building.¹¹

The DOORS model affected how probation officers identified, referred, and connected their clients to services, although probation officers referred a relatively small portion of their clients to DOORS. Those clients that were referred to DOORS were usually referred to multiple services and were more likely than a similar group of people that were not referred to DOORS services to avoid criminal legal involvement.

This brief starts with an explanation of the main components of the model, followed by a description of the analysis methods used in the study. It then details the findings of the implementation study and of a quasi-experimental analysis that examined the effect on desistance from criminal legal system involvement for adults on probation.¹²

Program Background and Key Features

DOORS was launched in July 2019. It seeks to better address the service needs of justice-involved individuals — particularly those on adult probation, their families, and the community — by improving the process of connecting individuals to supportive services.¹³ It was created by the Reentry Division of the LA County Justice, Care, and Opportunities Department (JCOD), in collaboration with the LA County Probation Department, with the goal of using the community hub model primarily for adults on probation.¹⁴ There are two distinguishing features of DOORS: (1) co-location in the same building as a probation field office known as the Probation Reentry Opportunity Center (“the ROC”); and (2) the use of a community hub model where multiple support service providers share a communal office space.¹⁵ DOORS represents a shift from the traditional approach used by probation officers in LA County, and nationally, to provide service referrals for their clients. In the traditional approach, probation officers can refer clients to various resources but do not have the ability to connect a client to a specific individual working for a specific service provider. (This is described more below.) Importantly, however, 8 months after its launch, DOORS had to adjust its delivery model in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These unexpected adaptations are described throughout this brief.

Co-location is a key ingredient of a community hub model.¹⁶ Being in the same location increases probation officers’ awareness of available services, gives them a direct line of communication to the service providers, and can help officers connect clients to services when a need arises. Referrals to service providers can be streamlined by providing a “warm hand-off,” where the referring probation officer walks the client directly to the provider. A warm hand-off can improve the number of successful referrals by reducing obstacles to getting connected to a provider.¹⁷

Additionally, the community hub model provides a “one-stop shop” by grouping service providers who offer different services and resources. Table 1 shows the services offered at DOORS, which include case management, education, employment, housing, legal, mental health, personal growth, social, and substance use disorder services. DOORS also directly supports clients by providing access to its clothing closet, food pantry, and computer lab, and offering hygiene kits, blankets, and transportation subsidies to clients who need them. Using lessons learned from other programs, JCOD curated the community hub based on the needs of people under community supervision in LA County and invited various well-established community-based service providers

Table 1. Types of Services Offered at DOORS

Service Category	Description of Services Offered
Housing	Placement into interim and permanent housing
Legal assistance	Legal assistance related to consumer law; family law; family preservation/reunification services, including Department of Children and Family Services system navigation; housing; immigration; post-conviction/criminal record expungement; and visitation monitoring
Education	Test preparation and financial assistance with testing fees for students in pursuit of their GED or high school diploma
Personal growth	Parenting classes, anger management classes
Employment	Employment opportunities and vocational training
Mental health	Screening, support groups, and referrals to mental health services
Social services	Benefit eligibility screening and establishment support
Substance use disorder	Screening for substance use disorders and program referral
Case management	General support, such as goal setting, and regular communication (either in person, over the phone, or via text messages)
Direct support	Access to clothes, transportation support, food pantry, hygiene kits, blankets, and computer lab

SOURCE: Information about services provided by leaders, staff members, and clients of the Developing Opportunities and Offering Reentry Solutions Community Reentry Center (DOORS).

NOTE: Service categories were formulated by MDRC to represent all services offered by DOORS providers according to the program data.

in LA County to take part in the DOORS program. By centralizing these services in one location, JCOD aims to increase service access, with the goals of increasing service receipt and reducing future criminal legal involvement.

Overview of Methods

Scope of the Study

This study describes an analysis of the first three years following the launch of the DOORS model, from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2022. The analysis compares the ROC probation office, where DOORS is co-located, with two other probation offices, known as Centinela and South Central.¹⁸ The goal is to understand how DOORS was implemented as a community hub model inside a probation building and its impact on the subgroup of persons that were referred to DOORS by a probation officer at the ROC. The study takes into account the disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic had on implementation and its potential effect on the outcomes.

Data

To describe the implementation of the DOORS model, this brief uses in-person and virtual semi-structured interviews with DOORS staff members, clients, and probation officers from the ROC and Centinela offices. (MDRC was not able to interview officers at South Central.) Interviews were conducted from September 2022 to February 2023. This brief also draws upon program administrative data managed by JCOD that include all referrals made to DOORS providers, although a notable limitation is that the data lack information about the actual receipt of services. Program data is complemented by quantitative data from the administrative records of adults with an active probation case from 2017 to 2022 across the three probation offices in this study.¹⁹

Analysis Sample

DOORS leadership and staff members reported that DOORS services are initiated when a staff member receives and logs a referral into the JCOD program database. In the case of referrals from a probation officer, the officer would refer an individual to a specific service, and that person would then be directed by a DOORS administrative staff member to specific service providers within DOORS. In this brief, a “DOORS client” is defined as any individual that was referred to JCOD for at least one DOORS service. Researchers examined a specific subset of DOORS clients, namely those who were referred to a provider by a probation officer at the ROC.²⁰ To form a basis of comparison, this study includes individuals who were not referred to DOORS services that were supervised by a probation officer at either of the two comparison sites.

The Doors Model in Practice

This brief follows the general process by which a person on adult probation would end up receiving services aimed at decreasing recidivism, a common measure of desistance, which is the act of abstaining from new contact with the criminal legal system.²¹ The following sections describe the implementation of DOORS as a co-located community hub. As part of the co-location component, probation officers are expected to (1) assess and identify clients’ needs, (2) identify services for those needs, (3) refer clients to service providers, and (4) connect clients to those providers. The last step analyzed in this brief is (5) the community hub component, where the services are provided. This is followed by a quantitative analysis of the effects of DOORS on recidivism outcomes.

Co-Location

A central component of DOORS involves integrating its services within the ROC probation office. While DOORS also welcomes all community members, this co-location model specifically aims to enhance the connection between adults on probation and available services. To understand the significance of the model, the study team interviewed probation officers at the ROC and Centinela. These interviews revealed that officers at both sites assess clients’ needs in similar ways but differ in how they identify potential service providers and connect clients to services and resources.

1. Assess and Identify Clients' Needs

Probation officers at the ROC and at Centinela use the same methods and strategies to assess their clients' needs. Once clients are assigned to a probation officer, which can happen after court sentencing or after they are released from jail, they are expected to report to the probation office within 48 hours. Officers in both probation offices use formal assessment tools, such as the Drug Risk Assessment Database, the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory, and the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment.²² They also review clients' legal histories, engage in in-depth conversations with them, and consult their minute orders (court-issued documents that list the conditions of probation) to determine the services their clients may need.

2. Identify Services

Probation officers at the ROC are aware of the services and resources that DOORS has to offer because of consistent interactions with DOORS staff members. For example, DOORS staff members regularly hold presentations for probation officers and have standing meetings with officers' supervisors to help them retain information about their services.

Centinela probation officers appear to rely on indirect resources like email blasts from supervisors, "word of mouth" recommendations from colleagues, and flyers posted around the office to identify service providers. Officers occasionally identify resources in conversation with their clients or they encourage their clients to "Google" and "look on [their] own." Although probation officers have identified an array of services using their networks, they shared that it could be beneficial to have resource fairs so that officers and clients alike can see what resources are available to them.

3. Refer Clients to Services

Officers at the ROC are aware of DOORS services, although they do not consistently refer their clients to these services. For example, one officer emphasized the comprehensiveness of DOORS, stating that "DOORS has everything" for client support, suggesting he referred clients to a wide range of services. Other officers prioritize referrals based on the urgency of connecting a client to a service, which sometimes involves issuing two concurrent referrals: one referral to an external service provider for a quicker response and a second referral to a DOORS provider for a back-up response. For instance, one probation officer refers clients to the Department of Mental Health if they are experiencing an active mental health episode, followed by a second referral to a DOORS provider for continuing support. Some probation officers selectively refer their clients to some DOORS services, but also refer them to other services elsewhere. For example, one officer indicated that she referred clients to DOORS for anger management, legal support, and assistance in obtaining identification documents. If clients expressed interest in employment, the officer would refer them to outside services, such as a temporary employment agency or offer them flyers for vocational training and jobs focusing on career-track employment opportunities. Finally, service providers and DOORS leadership shared that only a small group of officers regularly referred clients to DOORS, indicating that other officers may not have been making any referrals.

Table 2 shows the types of services officers at the ROC referred DOORS clients to. The two most common referrals were related to employment and housing services. Fifty-eight percent of clients received at least one employment service referral to either Chrysalis, a community-based partner (51 percent of clients, not shown), or to Innovative Employment Solutions (INVEST), an LA County program (35 percent of clients, not shown). Both are designed to help individuals navigate the workforce and mitigate employment barriers.²³ Additionally, 48 percent of DOORS clients were referred to housing services provided by a DOORS community partner, the Homeless Outreach Program Integrated Care System.

Table 2. Service Referrals Made to DOORS, by Type of Service

Type of Service	Number of Participants	Percentage
Employment	391	58
Housing	325	48
Legal assistance	162	24
Personal growth	113	17
Case management	112	17
Substance use-related	93	14
Mental health	89	13
Education	76	11
Social services	30	4
Direct support	16	2
Usage categories		
Only 1 service	295	44
2 to 3 services	292	43
4 to 5 services	73	11
More than 5 services	16	2

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Developing Opportunities and Offering Reentry Solutions Community Reentry Center (DOORS) programming information system and InfoHub.

NOTES: Sample includes 676 DOORS clients who were identified as being referred by a probation officer at the Reentry Opportunity Center. A service is defined as an individual being referred to a particular service in the administrative data maintained by DOORS.

Probation officers at the Centinela office, in the absence of a co-located community hub, rely more on indirect referral methods such as offering clients pamphlets for various service providers, sharing contact information for community-based organizations, and recommending the 211 helpline.²⁴ The only on-site resource at Centinela is INVEST, which one officer said was “extremely popular,” but only provides employment services.

Program data also shed some light on the extent to which probation officers leverage co-location within the ROC. During the analysis period, there were 2,493 DOORS clients, and of these, 676 clients (27 percent) were identified as being referred through the co-location component (that is, they were being supervised by a probation officer at the ROC at the time they were referred to DOORS service providers).²⁵ The 676 individuals made up 8 percent of the ROC's active caseload during the study period, even though individuals who started their probationary supervision after the DOORS program began (June 2019) became clients at a marginally higher rate (11 percent). As a basis of comparison, the Centinela probation office referred fewer than 1 percent of their clients to DOORS during this period (not shown). These results indicate that probation officers from the ROC were not the primary conduit to DOORS, despite being the primary conduit to DOORS among those on adult probation.

The disruption from the pandemic may have made it less likely that probation officers at the ROC would refer their clients to DOORS services, although it is notable that referrals from these probation officers never stopped. An analysis of the referral patterns of ROC probation officers before and after the start of the pandemic reveals that there was a 25 percent decline in referrals per month after the start of the pandemic compared with pre-pandemic levels. This new rate of referrals remained consistent throughout the study period (not shown).²⁶ Box 1 describes some other possible reasons why co-location did not lead to more adults on probation being referred to DOORS providers.

4. Connect Clients to Service Providers

ROC probation officers are able to make referrals any day of the week to DOORS service providers by completing an online referral via the agency's tracking system for making referrals. JCOD administrative staff members receive these referrals and direct them to the relevant DOORS service provider. Providers are then required to contact clients within 24 hours of receiving the referral.²⁷ If a probation officer makes a referral while working with a client in person, the officer is responsible for accompanying their client up to the DOORS office for a warm hand-off.²⁸ The onset of the pandemic disrupted model implementation, however. While DOORS pivoted to a virtual and then a hybrid model in response to public health regulations, ROC probation officers were not required to be in the office more than once or twice a week, making it difficult for an officer to connect a client with DOORS service providers in person.²⁹ Nevertheless, service providers are still expected to contact clients within the same timeframe of referral receipt.

To leverage their site partnership, Centinela probation officers refer their clients to INVEST via the agency's tracking system for making referrals or by accompanying clients over to the INVEST officer. The INVEST program provides a semblance of the warm hand-off practice observed at the ROC, albeit for a single provider.

Box 1. Possible Reasons Why Co-Location Did Not Lead to More DOORS Referrals

The analysis of program data shows that approximately 8 percent of the active caseload at the Probation Reentry Opportunity Center (known as “the ROC”) during the study period were referred to DOORS service providers. This box describes some additional possible reasons why co-location did not lead to more adults on probation being referred to DOORS providers.

- **Opening of the program to the wider community**

The decision to open the program to the wider community, beyond those adults on probation at the ROC, was made very early in the implementation period because of an understanding that individuals who are indirectly affected by the justice system — such as the friends or family members of someone who is, or has been, incarcerated — are also in need of services. It may be the case that DOORS simply experienced strong community involvement, potentially crowding out those clients who are on probation and assigned to the ROC. DOORS leadership and service providers attribute its community referral network to its active presence in the local community and its strategic partnership with the Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership.

- **Department-wide staffing challenges**

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the LA County Department of Probation began issuing mandatory, temporary deployments of probation officers from their field offices at the ROC (and elsewhere) to the county’s juvenile halls and camps due to significant staffing shortages within those facilities. As a result, the officers responsible for overseeing individuals assigned to the ROC changed frequently, which may explain the varied understanding among officers about the DOORS program and the referral process. One service provider suggested that probation officers seemed confused about some of their programming and indicated that staff member turnover might have contributed to their misunderstanding.*

- **Priority setting within the probation department**

It is possible that a lack of communication about the importance of DOORS from probation leadership to probation officers led to fewer referrals. One service provider questioned the communication within the probation department, suggesting that information about DOORS “is not getting through.” Additionally, service providers noted that there were only a limited number of officers who engaged with providers, implying it was not a priority for others.

NOTE: *Over the past three years, probation officer deployment increased, and some of the deployments have become permanent instead of temporary. While ROC officers are deployed, their caseloads at the ROC receive a cursory review by other field officers, supervisors, or the officer-on-duty — a rotating probation officer who sees the clients of officers who are absent on any given day.

Community Hub

5. Provide and Receive Services at DOORS

Upon receiving a client referral to one or more service providers, DOORS aims to ensure that the client obtains these services through the holistic support that the community hub provides. To

understand how the model was implemented and experienced, the study drew from interviews with DOORS leadership, service providers, and clients.

A Welcoming Space

Service providers and clients alike noted that the DOORS space is cordial and welcoming. While the first two floors of the building house conventional probation offices, the DOORS office on the third floor is designed to reflect the understanding that the ambience of a space influences the feelings and attitudes of those entering the room. The space is painted in warm colors, such as oranges and yellows, and has large seating areas, a kitchen, a children's play area, a computer lab, and office cubicles along the periphery of the space. The program's leaders intended to establish a supportive environment where clients could receive encouragement and assistance with the goal of reducing features and language typically associated with jails, prisons, and probation offices. The integration of features such as a childcare corner and open space for community events, and the use of unarmed security guards with trauma-informed training, intentionally deviates from a traditional institutional environment.

Genuine Care for Clients

The supportive approach of service providers encourages clients to open up about their experiences, concerns, and aspirations. DOORS clients consistently shared that they felt supported by service providers, indicating that they had positive experiences when they received services. For example, one client shared how the social worker made significant efforts to ensure that the client was treated for depression by personally transporting the client to mental health services. As the client noted, "We didn't have any appointments. We just drove and showed up..." The client mentioned that the social worker "was willing to do whatever she had to do" for the client. Another client noted that the service providers at DOORS treated her with respect and dignity, unlike other service providers in the community that did not make her feel as valued. She then mentioned that "[DOORS] understands where you're coming [from]. They're not just sitting in the chair getting paid... They treat you like people. They've been really good to me."

A Collaborative Effort

Service providers underscored the presence of robust partnerships and a collaborative spirit. This interagency collaboration enables them to have a deeper understanding of clients' needs and ensures prompt service delivery. Being in a hub environment also gives providers the opportunity to refer clients to colleagues who can address their needs quickly. Illustrating this approach, one provider recounted a situation where, prior to joining DOORS, a client in need of housing "ended up getting referred to five different agencies and ultimately got referred back to the original referral agency."³⁰

Staff members further stated that the collaborative nature of their service hub has led to an increase in some program completions. One service provider noted that the graduation rate for clients enrolled in the education program at DOORS is "probably eight times [higher] than at other sites just because of the reduction in barriers," crediting this reduction to the holistic support of multiple services from the hub that addressed clients' barriers and helped them complete the program.

Engaging with Multiple Services

Service providers strive to offer clients holistic and supportive resources. Clients mentioned the opportunities given to them including education, skills training, and personal development, and drew attention to the wraparound services that helped them mitigate socioeconomic, legal, and financial barriers. One participant initially sought family reunification services, such as parenting classes to meet court mandates, but also decided to concurrently enroll in behavioral health services for anger management with A New Way of Life, a program supporting formerly incarcerated women by providing family reunification, healing, housing, and legal services. As shown in Table 2, over half of DOORS clients were referred to more than one service and almost 15 percent were referred to four or more services.

Communication Challenges

There were some communication challenges between ROC probation officers and service providers that led to a lack of collaboration in sharing information about clients' needs. Service providers noted that they engaged with only a limited number of probation officers. One reason may have been that probation officers misinterpreted information-sharing practices. For example, some ROC probation officers thought that clients' personal information could not be shared with DOORS providers due to data-sharing laws and did not realize that consent forms were already in place.

Another communication barrier that limited collaboration arose from how ROC probation officers interact with the court system. Judges presiding over a case can add mandates (or minute orders) for the provision of services. These orders are then distributed to probation departments, which is one way that a client's needs are identified. However, the information and instructions included in these orders can vary and officers may not know how much discretion they have in referring their clients to services. For example, one order might have detailed that the officer is allowed to decide on the type of counseling a client can receive while another order might not have been as specific about the officer's discretion. One officer stated,

[T]here is some disconnect between verbiage that [the courts use] versus DOORS sometimes... [I]n this office, we see the stricter types of minute orders. I've had other experiences where I had more discretion as to how to direct the person to get counseling.

This lack of clarity would extend from the courts to probation officers to service providers, as probation officers could not provide clear information to providers if they were not clear themselves on the types of services the client required.

Limitations of Hybrid Work and Technology

In March 2020, DOORS closed in-person operations in response to the statewide stay-at-home order issued because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the program was able to pivot to virtual services within a matter of weeks — for example adapting education, anger management, and parenting classes to an online format — and operated on a hybrid schedule throughout the study period.

While these transitions succeeded to sustain operations under difficult circumstances, the adaptations to hybrid work and technology brought their own set of challenges. As one DOORS staff member noted, "One of our main challenges is not really having something to model. So, there's

a lot of trial and error, as you can imagine.” Despite these challenges, the DOORS staff member emphasized the adaptability of quickly moving services online, “[We] did a really good job at pivoting our services. So, we moved everything to a virtual platform where clients are still able to be engaged in services via telephone, email, Zoom.” However, some service providers shared concerns about the hybrid structure, as it hinders engagement for some clients. Providers noted that clients who are transient and difficult to reach via telephone may miss an opportunity to meet with a provider if they are referred on a day when the office is not open for in-person referrals. Other providers noted that some clients are unable to navigate technology to attend virtual classes or groups conducted on Zoom. Similarly, administrative procedures, such as making a PDF of documents required for housing or employment or executing a digital signature, are challenging for clients who are not accustomed to using or do not have access to the technology required for such tasks. Although service providers encouraged clients to contact them over the telephone or attend in person to mitigate technological issues, clients were only able to attend on days that certain services were implemented, such as group sessions.

In addition, probation officers at the ROC indicated that providers not being on site every day presents a barrier to their ability to successfully refer clients, as many of their clients want to see someone in person, and immediately because of a pressing need.

Did DOORS Clients Have Better Outcomes?

DOORS is intended to reduce criminal legal system involvement among adults on probation by improving access to services. The analysis described in this section investigates whether DOORS affected recidivism outcomes for clients compared with a similar group that were not referred to DOORS services. In addition, the section explores whether DOORS clients were more likely than this group to receive behavioral health services to address mental health issues and substance use disorders. Because one DOORS provider offers screenings and connections to behavioral health programs, an increase in the receipt of these services suggests DOORS could also improve access to services.

Method and Outcomes

The analysis (described in greater detail in Supplement A) estimated the effects for DOORS clients by comparing outcomes for individuals who were referred to DOORS service providers by a probation officer at the ROC (“participant group”) with individuals who were not referred to DOORS that were being supervised by probation officers at the Centinela and South Central offices and had characteristics that were similar to the participant group (“comparison group”). Demographics, previous criminal legal involvement, and previous use of behavioral health services were used to determine the comparison group.³¹ To address the changes that occurred due to the pandemic, the analysis only compared individuals who were on probationary supervision at the same time.

The recidivism outcome measures included in the analysis are desisting from a new arrest, days spent in jail, and desisting from a probation revocation. These outcomes were measured for the 12 months after the client in the participant group received their first DOORS referral to a provider.³²

These measures are most appropriate to identify whether individuals were involved in the legal system in the relatively short time frame that is available for the “post period” of the analysis. The outcomes used to measure the utilization of behavioral health services are inpatient and outpatient admissions into substance use disorder and mental health treatment services.

Findings and Interpretation

Table 3 shows the estimated effects of DOORS on the outcomes measuring desistance from the criminal legal system. DOORS clients consistently fare better (in the estimated differences that control for group differences in characteristics) than the comparison group at avoiding new arrests, days in jail, and probation revocations. The effects are not statistically significant, though, for any of the outcomes measured. Table 4 shows the estimated effects of DOORS on behavioral health treatment outcomes. DOORS clients were more likely by a statistically significant 6.6 percentage points to have an outpatient mental health treatment. They had 1.6 more of these admissions, on average, although this value is not statistically significant. The estimates on utilization of substance use disorder treatment are inconsistent, pointing to DOORS having no effect on this outcome. Although the quantitative analysis of DOORS shows some promising findings, it applies only to the 8 percent of individuals supervised by a probation officer at the ROC that were referred to DOORS service providers. Co-locating DOORS at the ROC presumably had no effect on recidivism for most individuals supervised by a probation officer at the ROC since they were not referred to DOORS.

Table 3. One-Year Criminal Legal System Contact Outcomes for DOORS Clients

Outcomes	Program Group	Comparison Group	Estimated Difference	P-Value
Never arrested (%)	75.9	73.5	3.6	0.192
Number of arrests	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.786
Number of days incarcerated	18.4	18.4	-1.7	0.620
Never arrested for a felony (%)	78.5	76.3	3.5	0.184
Number of felony arrests	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.564
Never had probation revoked (%)	81.2	80.3	1.6	0.515
Number of probation revocations	0.4	0.4	-0.1	0.383
Sample size	460	460		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from InfoHub.

NOTES: Means are presented without regression adjustment for ease of comparison. Estimated differences in outcomes are presented regression-adjusted, controlling for characteristics before referral to Developing Opportunities and Offering Reentry Solutions Community Reentry Center (DOORS). (See Supplement A for more information on regression adjustment and on controlling for characteristics.) Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The p-value indicates the likelihood that the estimated difference would have been generated by a program with no true effect.

Table 4. One-Year Behavioral Health Outcomes for DOORS Clients

Outcomes	Program Group (%)	Comparison Group (%)	Estimated Difference	P-Value
Ever had inpatient or outpatient mental health treatment	23.9	17.2	6.6 ***	0.001
Ever had inpatient mental health treatment	3.5	2.8	0.6	0.624
Ever had outpatient mental health treatment	23.9	17.2	6.6 ***	0.001
Number of outpatient mental health treatments ^a	6.5	5.2	1.6	0.205
Ever had inpatient or outpatient SUD treatment	5.9	6.3	0.6	0.672
Ever had inpatient SUD treatment	1.5	3.3	-1.4	0.162
Ever had outpatient SUD treatment	4.8	3.9	1.6	0.234
Ever had successful inpatient or outpatient SUD treatment	2.0	2.8	-0.7	0.471
Sample size	460	460		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from InfoHub.

NOTES: Means are presented without regression adjustment for ease of comparison. Estimated differences in outcomes are presented regression-adjusted, controlling for characteristics before referral to Developing Opportunities and Offering Reentry Solutions Community Reentry Center (DOORS). (See Supplement A for more information on regression adjustment and on controlling for characteristics.) Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. The p-value indicates the likelihood that the estimated difference (or larger) would have been generated by a program with no true effect. SUD signifies substance use disorder.

^aEvery individual that received inpatient mental health treatment also received an outpatient mental health service, which is why the value in this line is the same as in the outpatient mental health treatment measure.

Finally, it is important to recognize that individuals were not randomized to DOORS. As a result, differences in outcomes between the participant and comparison groups might be due to factors that are not related to DOORS. It is possible the factors that led a probation officer to refer someone to DOORS could be related to an individual's likelihood to desist from a future arrest, regardless of whether they are DOORS clients.³³ The analysis does use a common quasi-experimental method to deal with these issues, but the method is limited by the available data.

Another complication is that the analysis is not able to identify whether individuals in the comparison group have an identified need that could have been served by DOORS. While the participant group includes only individuals that have been referred to DOORS, and thus have had their needs identified, the analysis cannot directly filter the comparison group in the same way. The analysis does attempt to account for this by including measures related to an individual's likelihood for demonstrating service needs, but the study lacks the data to directly identify those needs.

Considerations

The DOORS model exhibited features during implementation that previous studies have argued promote engagement with services and, correspondingly, desistance from the criminal legal system.³⁴ As a result of co-location, probation officers at the ROC were aware of services and had relationships with the providers of those services at DOORS. Additionally, during the days of the week in which DOORS was open for in-person services, probation officers walked their clients up to the service providers to provide warm hand-offs. As a result of the community hub component, people received multiple services in a supportive environment.

However, the pandemic disrupted the implementation of DOORS, forcing staff members to quickly adapt the model to be virtual and then hybrid without any previous experiences to use as examples. These adaptations may have made the co-location component less relevant, though the full effect of the virtual and hybrid model on referrals and service delivery is not clear. Co-location becoming less relevant may be the reason the study found that a relatively small portion of the population under supervision at the ROC received referrals to DOORS service providers. On the other hand, DOORS served a substantial number of individuals from the community, who made up most of its clients.

For the group that was referred to services, results from a quasi-experimental analysis suggest that DOORS may have helped to somewhat increase desistance from arrest when compared with people in probation offices receiving business-as-usual referrals to services. This finding indicates that community hub models can be successful, although the results should be interpreted with caution since the analysis did not find significant effects. There were also limitations in forming a comparison group (see Supplement A) and a lack of data to measure service engagement. The analysis that examined service engagement outcomes related to behavioral health showed significant effects on one type of service, providing limited evidence that DOORS led to an increase in service engagement.

Further research is needed to investigate how models like DOORS foster engagement with supportive services. This is the main mechanism by which such a model intends to promote desistance. Moreover, strengthening the evidence base for the theory of change in community hub models with outcomes that incorporate a client-centered perspective, which are currently neglected in the literature, is necessary to capture the essence of centralized services in support of people on probation. For example, outcomes that measure whether the individual has been able to maintain stable housing and employment or has developed fruitful relationships with their family or community that were previously splintered by justice involvement are more directly related to the programming available at DOORS than a reduction in recidivism. At the same time, client-centered programming should ensure that service outcomes interconnect with the well-being of the individual while still addressing the goals of community supervision.

Finally, while this brief has focused on the probation office where DOORS is co-located, future studies may want to explore how models like DOORS more broadly affect the population impacted by the criminal legal system. During the study period, DOORS mostly served individuals that were not being supervised by the co-located probation office and even served many community members that were not serving a probationary sentence. DOORS continues to operate as a hybrid model. Additionally, JCOD has opened a new DOORS initiative in a different part of LA County that originally launched as a virtual model and only recently opened a physical location.³⁵ Given that areas more affected by the criminal legal system are also more likely to be places that are under-funded, community hub models such as DOORS may play a preventive role for those who have been affected by the legal system but are not under active supervision.³⁶ DOORS is a good fit for the goals of LA County's Care First Community Investment initiative, which aims to invest in service infrastructure as an alternative to incarceration.³⁷

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8. The DOORS model is based on a New York program called the Neighborhood Opportunity Network. See New York City: NYC Neighborhood Opportunity Network, “Programs Page,” (website: www.nyc.gov/site/neon/programs/programs.page, 2023).
9. DOORS is being evaluated by MDRC as part of the Los Angeles Coordinated Reentry Integrated Services Project (LA CRISP) — a multiyear, multistudy evaluation of several JCOD programs (website: <https://www.mdrc.org/work/projects/los-angeles-county-reentry-integrated-services-project>, 2024).
10. Throughout this brief, the target population for DOORS will be referred to as individuals on “adult probation.” While the motivation and lessons learned from DOORS can be attributed to the broader group of individuals on community supervision, which also includes those on parole, DOORS itself only served adults on probation.

11. Jake Phillips, Kathy Albertson, Beth Collinson, and Andrew Fowler, “Delivering Desistance-Focused Probation in Community Hubs: Five Key Ingredients,” *Probation Journal* 67, 3 (2020): 193–318.
12. Quasi-experimental methods aim to estimate a program effect using methods other than random assignment to construct a control group that is as similar as possible to the participant group. The method used in this study is described in detail in Supplement A.
13. The program funds come from the California Community Corrections Performance Initiative Act (Senate Bill 678), which passed in California in 2009 with the goal of providing counties with financial incentives to develop policies, programs, and services to reduce the number of adult probationers committed to state prison. Information about DOORS can be found at: Los Angeles Reentry Partnership, “DOORS Fact Sheet,” (website: www.lareentry.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/DOORS-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf, 2023).
14. In an effort to divert people from incarceration as well as support individuals after their interaction with the criminal legal system, LA County’s Board of Supervisors established the Office of Diversion and Reentry in September 2015. In 2022, the LA County Board of Supervisors consolidated various efforts and programs across County departments – including Reentry Division programs from the Office of Diversion and Reentry – to support communities that are system-impacted within the new Justice, Care, and Opportunities Department (JCOD). For more information, see: Los Angeles County Justice Care and Opportunities Department, “About Us,” (website: jcod.lacounty.gov/about-us/, 2023).
15. The program itself is located on the uppermost floor of the three-story building that houses the ROC, in South Los Angeles.
16. Phillips, Albertson, Collinson, and Fowler (2020).
17. R. Morgan Taylor and Cynthia S. Minkovitz, “Warm Handoffs for Improving Client Receipt of Services: A Systematic Review,” *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 25 (2021): 528–541.
18. The probation offices included in this study were selected in consultation with the other stakeholders in the study, namely JCOD and the Department of Probation. It was determined that the two comparison offices were most similar to the ROC office in terms of client characteristics, caseload volume, office staffing, and surrounding neighborhood characteristics.
19. Los Angeles County Chief Information Office InfoHub data. For more information on the data, see Supplement A.
20. The subset of clients referred by the ROC are identified by whether those individuals had an active probation case assigned to the ROC office at the time of the DOORS service referral. In the case that the client had referrals from multiple dates, only the first date is used in the analysis.
21. This process is provided from the perspective of someone that would be guided to services by a probation officer. People may also find services independently and that process is not displayed.
22. These assessment tools evaluate the risk and need factors of people on probation. The purpose is to help in the case management and rehabilitation of people on probation by identifying risks, needs, and challenges upon reentry.
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24. Federal Communications Commission, “Dial 211 for Essential Community Services,” (website: www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/dial-211-essential-community-services).
25. The other possible sources of referrals to DOORS, which were not a focus of this brief, were either probation officers from other offices in LA County or other “community” resources that are available to justice-involved individuals, such as the Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership.

Based on MDRC calculations from the available data from probation caseloads (table not shown), 26 percent of DOORS clients were under probation supervision with a different probation office in LA County and the remaining group, 47 percent of DOORS clients, were not under probation supervision at the time they were referred to DOORS.

26. Referrals to DOORS from other probation offices followed a similar pattern to referrals from the ROC after the start of the pandemic. Referrals from the community totally stopped between spring 2020 and early 2021. In early 2021 they increased rapidly to the point that community referrals became the dominant referral source through the end of the analysis period.
27. The 24-hour response is triggered if the referral is received during business hours and is processed no later than the end of the following business day. If the referral is received outside of business hours, the 24-hour response is triggered at the start of the following business day and processed similarly.
28. The ROC had a designated officer that would walk clients up to the DOORS providers.
29. In response to the pandemic, DOORS shifted to a hybrid work schedule that was based on the busiest days at the ROC that determined its in-person operations.
30. Data on internal referrals was not available because these referrals were not consistently entered into the program management system.
31. The comparison group is constructed using a propensity score matching analysis where the participant group is matched to a pool of non-DOORS clients that are supervised by the comparison sites (Centinela and South Central offices) based on their similar characteristics. The comparison pool is limited to individuals supervised by the comparison sites because the implementation research shows that probation officers were not making referrals to DOORS, which increases the likelihood of finding similar individuals that would have been referred had those sites implemented a DOORS model.
32. In order to create matching baseline dates for the comparison group, the analysis created cohorts, which would determine the baseline date. More information is available in Supplement A.
33. For example, probation officers may decide to only refer clients who they think are ready to benefit from services. This type of information would not be captured in the data.
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