Phone-Based Monitoring

Compliance-Based Practices · https://www.gmuace.org/appropriateness-statement-package/compliance-based-practices/phone-based-monitoring/

Phone-Based Monitoring – The evidence is promising

Summary of the Evidence

- The evidence on phone-based monitoring on recidivism is promising.
- Phone-based monitoring can include phones, text, emails, videoconference, etc.
- Phone-based monitoring can be used as a replacement for or supplement to face-to-face contacts with an officer.
- Phone-based monitoring can be used to support the positive change of a client and monitor compliance to supervision conditions.

What is Phone-Based Monitoring?

- **Phone-based monitoring** occurs whenever an officer uses cell phone technology to carry out the objectives (rehabilitative or law enforcement) of supervision.
- Phone-based monitoring can take many different forms.
  - Voice recognition telephone monitoring can be a replacement for monthly face-to-face meetings with officers.
  - Various smartphone functions can be (re)purposed for use in supervision, including:
    - text messages
    - GPS technology
    - applications (i.e., apps)

How Is It Used?

- Voice recognition telephone monitoring
  - clients call in once a week (or some frequency) to an automated system
  - clients may complete a series of short interview questions once a month during the randomly selected call
  - typically reserved for low-risk clients
  - allows officer to reallocate their time and energy to higher risk clients per the risk principle
- Smartphone technology
  - text messages
    - can be used for a variety of purposes, including sending reminders for appointments, giving a client access to their officer between visits, providing positive reinforcement, providing brief surveys, allowing check-ins between visits, and providing information (i.e., programs, jobs)
  - GPS technology
    - smartphone GPS can be used as a replacement for more intrusive and potentially stigmatizing versions of GPS technology (i.e., ankle bracelet)
    - can also be used to offer warnings to clients when they are getting close to areas that are triggers (environmental)
  - Applications
    - smartphone applications exist which provide support (i.e., self-help, mental health, substance abuse) for clients

How Can It Be Used to Monitor Compliance?

- Phone calls between office visits can be used to ensure a client is following through with tasks/goals established during visits.
- GPS tracking can monitor the geographic location of a client and alert the officer if the client leaves the prescribed area.
- GPS technology can track a client’s everyday activities and alert officers of aberrations (e.g., not going to work, staying at home multiple days in a row).

- Brief surveys embedded in text messages between face-to-face visits can alert the officer to concerning behavior and allow for early intervention.

How Can It Be Used as a Supervision Tool?

- Text messaging can be positive reinforcement for achieving supervision milestones, promoting effective behavior change, and fostering a positive supervision climate.
- Text messaging can remind clients of their appointments and other supervision responsibilities, cutting down on technical violations for nonattendance.
- Information about job openings, programs that offer services, or self-improvement classes can be sent via phone.
- An officer who contacts clients between office visits via phone shows they care about the success of the client.
- Shifting a medium-risk client to low-risk by placing them on voice recognition telephone monitoring can be a reward for success on supervision.

What Are the Costs of Phone-Based Monitoring?

- The main cost of phone-based monitoring for officers is their time and effort.
- The costs of phone-based monitoring for clients is minimal.
    - Financial costs can include the cell phone and the charge for minutes or text messages. Usually, this is borne by the client, which can be a burden.

What Do Supervision Staff Think?

- Supervision staff report that phone-based monitoring is
    - sometimes appropriate for all low-risk clients and
    - sometimes appropriate for all medium- to high-risk clients except for those with substance use disorders, for whom it is always appropriate.

What Should You Expect When Using Phone-Based Monitoring?

- Phone-based monitoring strategies can be used to promote rehabilitation of the client and monitor their compliance with supervision conditions.
- Phone-based monitoring can be used to build rapport between office visits by providing clients with positive reinforcement and resources that assist their success on supervision.
- Some evidence exists that using phone-based monitoring as a replacement for a face-to-face meeting with low-risk clients can reduce recidivism.
- Some limitations of using phone-based monitoring to replace regular office visits include
  - less opportunity to build rapport, address client needs, or become familiar with the client and
  - more challenge in tracking down noncompliant clients with whom the officer has less familiarity or depth of relationship.

Is Phone-Based Monitoring an Evidence-Based Practice?

- The evidence supporting phone-based monitoring is limited but promising.

What Do People Formerly Involved in the Criminal Legal System Think About Phone Monitoring?

- People with lived experience in the criminal legal system (the “criminal justice” or “legal” system is referred to as the criminal legal system in this document) report that phone-based monitoring is
  - never appropriate for all low-risk clients except those who are gang-involved or in the intimate partner violence special population, for whom it is sometimes appropriate, and
  - sometimes appropriate for all medium- to high-risk clients except those in the general violence special population, for whom it is never appropriate.

Communication That Strengthens the Officer-Client Relationship (Messaging)

- Officers should use rapport-building techniques when communicating by text message with their client.

- Officers should be aware of essential milestones in their client's life (i.e., sobriety date, graduation) and recognize those accomplishments when they come.
- When using a cell phone as a GPS monitoring tool, officers should discuss with the client the extent to which they will be monitored and remind them how this contributes to their long-term success.
- Officers should communicate clearly when texting so that nothing gets lost in translation.

Special Considerations When Using Phone Monitoring with Subpopulations

Gang-Involved

Some departments automatically place gang-involved clients on at least medium-risk to increase supervision. These departments resist replacing face-to-face contacts with phone-based monitoring. There is no evidence supporting this practice.

General Violence

Some departments automatically place violent clients on at least medium-risk to increase supervision. These departments will resist replacing face-to-face contacts with phone-based monitoring. There is no evidence supporting this practice.

Intimate Partner Violence

Some departments automatically place IPV clients on at least medium-risk to increase supervision. These departments will resist replacing face-to-face contacts with phone-based monitoring. There is no evidence supporting this practice.

Serious Mental Illness

Some departments automatically place SMI clients on at least medium-risk in order to increase supervision. These departments will resist replacing face-to-face contacts with phone-based monitoring. There is no evidence supporting this practice.

Substance Use Disorder

None

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