

Supervising Officers in an Evidence-Based Environment: The Role of the Supervisor as a Coach and Officers as Change Agents¹

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IN FEDERAL PROBATION and pretrial services, evidence-based practices (EBPs) are being implemented at a rapid rate. Most EBPs are based on the widely researched and empirically grounded Risk-Need-Responsivity model (see Bonta & Andrews, 2017). From risk-needs assessments to training probation and pretrial services officers in core correctional practices, these RNR evidence-based practices continue to be invested in by community corrections agencies throughout the world (Bonta, 2023). These implementation

efforts have largely focused on frontline probation and pretrial services officers who deal directly with the clients under their supervision; less is known of the role and impact of the supervisors of these front-line officers.

In the past decade, much effort has been invested in training probation officers (and, in the federal system, pretrial services officers) in core correctional practices through programs such as STICS (Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision), STARR (Staff Training Aimed at Reducing Rearrest, used as part of federal probation's commitment to core correctional practices), and EPICS (Effective Practices in Community Supervision) (Toronjo, 2020). The research evidence around these efforts shows that these training programs can be effective in improving officer skills surrounding adherence to core correctional practices and risk-need-responsivity principles and suggests that they can, if implemented correctly and used with fidelity, reduce recidivism rates (see Bonta, 2023, for a review). These training programs provide intensive initial training and ongoing coaching to officers. They employ a peer-based

coaching model for officers, as supervisors generally don't engage in change work directly with clients and often do not provide coaching and feedback to their officers on the use of EBPs. In the federal system, much of the implementation efforts for STARR have involved training frontline officers, providing them with empirical information on the purpose and reasoning behind EBPs and opportunities to practice and develop their skills in using EBPs. Officers are responsible for capturing EBPs in information management systems by documenting risk assessment results, developing case plans, detailing interventions, and describing supervision strategies targeting criminogenic needs.

Supervisors have acquired some knowledge of EBPs through other training; however, when the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) rolled out the STARR program to officers, supervisors were not factored in as participants. Typically, supervisors were expected to support and encourage officers to use and develop their skills and incorporate these EBPs into their everyday work, facilitating the implementation of the EBPs

¹ We wish to express our gratitude to all participants, faculty members, and others who have been involved with the FJC's SOEBE program over the years. Their input and feedback have helped shape the program into what it is today. We want to acknowledge, especially, the work of FJC Senior Education Specialist Susana Merchant, who led the design, development, and implementation of SOEBE until her retirement in 2020. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and are not the views of the Federal Judicial Center or its Board. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Gabriela Grajeda, Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building, One Columbus Circle NE, Washington, DC 20002-8003. Email: ggrajeda@fjc.gov.

into the organization. Often the supervisors were assigned to track officers' use of STARR skills, but their lack of training in the "what," "why," and "how" of these skills put them at a disadvantage to support officer learning and development and potentially hindered effective implementation of and integration of these EBPs in their daily work. This created a disconnect between what frontline officers were learning in terms of evidence-based client supervision practices and supervisors' knowledge base.

Others in the field have started to recognize the important role supervisory officers play in the implementation of EBPs. Taxman and colleagues have developed an evidence-based model of community supervision practices that focuses on supervisors. The pilot program they developed is Skills for Offender Assessment and Responsivity in New Goals (SOARING2) (Toronjo & Taxman, 2017). Since the pilot, SOARING2 has been revised and is now conducted as Staff Undertaking Skills to Advance Innovation (SUSTAIN) (Toronjo, 2020). In this program, supervisors learn about evidence-based practices and the program material through e-learning modules. Supervisors then attend an in-person training that covers core coaching competencies, interrater reliability in scoring, feedback skills, officer EBP skills, and advanced e-learning module quizzes. Supervisors are trained to become in-house coaches and are responsible for the program's rollout via a "kick-off" meeting where the program process is explained to officers. Following supervisor training, frontline probation officers are expected to complete accompanying e-learning modules focused on evidence-based practices and pass advanced quizzes to progress through the e-learning program. After officers complete the e-learning course, supervisors conduct live observations of officer-client meetings, score the officer on the use of program skills, and provide instant feedback to the officer about the score and the officer-client interaction. The supervisor (coach) and officer then discuss creating goals for ongoing client contacts (Toronjo & Taxman, 2017). Results from offices that piloted SUSTAIN indicate a small but statistically significant improvement in overall officer skill use during their time in the program. However, this statistically significant improvement was not detected for all skill categories, nor was improvement detected for all officers.

The importance of supervisors in EBP implementation has been noted by a number

of implementation scientists (Birken et al., 2018; Bunger et al., 2019; Fixsen et al., 2005). All too often, supervisors' focus is on administrative aspects (paperwork, compliance with policies and procedures) rather than on officers' competency with EBPs, hindering implementation (Fixsen et al., 2007). Indeed, supervisors play different roles during EBP implementation, and it is critical for them to assist officers in integrating EBPs into daily work practices, supporting EBP and their officers, in addition to holding officers accountable and coaching them (Birken, Lee, & Weiner, 2012).

The importance of the role supervisors can play in the development and daily practices of probation officers is highlighted in a qualitative study conducted by Kras et al. (2017). Employing focus group interviews of probation supervisors and probation officers to obtain a better understanding of power dynamics and relationships in a probation setting, Kras et al. (2017) found that probation supervisors are not able to exert their authority on a macro level (e.g., policy changes, agency processes, organizational changes, etc.); rather, they exert their influence at the micro level. One critical influence noted was that the supervisors of probation officers exerted influence through informal methods of case staffing; that is, supervisors have significant influence on officer supervision practices by coaching officers on what they believed to be effective in client supervision and interactions.

Because supervisory officers can play a key role in the development of frontline officers and make or break implementation efforts (Fixsen et al., 2005; Bunger et al., 2019; Birken et al., 2018), the Probation and Pretrial Services Education (PPSE) team within the Federal Judicial Center's (FJC)² Education Division saw an opportunity to support the system's integration and implementation of EBPs through its training programs for supervisors.

The PPSE team's then-existing competency-based leadership training programs for supervisors were infused with discussions

² The FJC is the research and education agency of the federal courts established by Congress in 1967 as an independent agency within the judicial branch. The FJC's statutory purpose is to further the development and adoption of improved judicial administration in the courts of the United States. The FJC has no policy making or enforcement authority; its role is simply to provide accurate, objective research and education to judicial officers and staff.

about how to lead in an EBP environment in order to better understand how to support supervisors in this endeavor. From December 2012 to January 2014, 650 supervisors participating in the competency-based leadership programs were surveyed on the following questions: (1) What is the role of the supervisor in implementing EBP? (2) What knowledge, skills, and abilities does a supervisor need to be effective? (3) What data do you use to drive decisions? (4) Do supervisors need to have the same level of expertise of STARR techniques as the line staff who engage in these activities, and if not, what do they need to know?

The survey results indicated that supervisors believed their role was to educate themselves about EBP, promote its implementation, and support this new environment by educating staff and obtaining buy-in. To do this, they believed they needed knowledge of EBP and good communication skills to create a more supportive environment for their officers in learning and adopting EBP in their everyday work. The supervisors indicated that the data used to make decisions comes from Probation and Pretrial Services Automated Case Tracking System (PACTS) and Decision Support System (DSS). Supervisors were split on whether they needed the same level of expertise as officers regarding the use of specific evidence-based interventions, such as the ones used in STARR. Overall, it was clear that a gap in supervisor training existed, and the FJC recognized a need for additional supervisor training focusing on supervisors gaining a better understanding of their role and that of the officer in an organization focused on EBP. To address this gap in supervisor training, the FJC's PPSE team and colleagues in the field developed the Supervising Officers in an Evidence-Based Environment (SOEBE) program for supervisory officers in U.S. probation and pretrial services.³

³ The development of the SOEBE program was originally led by FJC Education Specialist Susana Merchant, with the assistance of FJC Education Attorney Jim Chance, FJC program coordinator Olivia Pennock, Dr. Guy Bourgon, and executives, supervisors, and officers in the system: Melissa Alexander, Sean Quintal, Lisa Lenart, Blayne Olson, Michael McGrath, Matthew Kakabeeke, Andrea Neumann, Gina Enriquez, Edward Cameron, Bradley Whitley, Sarah Kirk, Fred Crawford, Anna Pakiela, Christopher Bersch, Scott Kiefer, Kalia Batts, Edwin Rodriguez, Jr., Timothy Genyk, Jessica Hoene, Amy Belland, Jeannette Gonzalez, Alma Lopez, Sharon Reinheimer, and Brett Wingard.

SOEBE Framework

SOEBE is a 16-month program designed to train supervisors in evidence-based case staffing skills that reinforce officers' use of evidence-based practices in the management of individuals under supervision. SOEBE uses the case staffing process as a space for reinforcement of officers' practices, broadening their knowledge base, and enhancing expertise in applying evidence-based practices and principles into their everyday work with clients. SOEBE teaches supervisors how to engage in discussions with officers on client risk drivers and supervision interventions and strategies to reduce risks. In federal probation and pretrial services, case staffing is a process where a supervisor and an officer meet to discuss the particulars of a case—typically related to administrative management or issues the officer is facing with the case. The SOEBE program is designed to improve this process in a way that facilitates EBP knowledge, integration, and application in everyday work.

The program uses a combination of interactive presentations, discussions, role-plays and in-vivo practice (similar to elements of STARR training) to teach supervisors the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate EBP implementation in the organization and enhance officer development of their own EBP knowledge and application. In addition, SOEBE employs ongoing clinical supervision, feedback, and reinforcement of skills. Such ongoing clinical supervision and development is considered essential for enhanced skill development, fidelity, and effective implementation (Bogue, 2012; Bonta et al., 2011, 2021; Burrell & Rhine, 2013; Labrecque & Smith, 2017; Miller et al., 2004). In essence, SOEBE is designed to work in tandem with STARR in a way that equips the supervisor to develop and reinforce the officer's application of EBP skills (see Figure 1). The SOEBE program facilitators, learning objectives, competencies, and program structure are described below.

SOEBE Team

The SOEBE program team is responsible for

its administration, and delivery comprises several members. Leading the SOEBE program is the FJC's PPSE Education Specialist Carla Soybel, Program Coordinator Gabriela Grajeda, and Dr. Guy Bourgon, SOEBE's senior consultant. SOEBE also has a faculty, a small group of 15-25 volunteers comprising probation and pretrial services officers, supervisory probation and pretrial services officers, assistant deputy chiefs, and deputy chiefs from various federal districts across the country. Some of the faculty members have been on the SOEBE team since its initial development, while other faculty members have been recruited over the years. All SOEBE team members are provided with continuous training, mentorship, and support.

Learning Objectives

SOEBE is designed to achieve specific learning objectives. At the conclusion of the program, supervisors should be able to a) listen actively, provide effective feedback, and reinforce officers' efforts; b) apply evidence-based (risk-need-responsivity) principles and help officers connect risk/needs assessment results, case plans, and supervision strategies; c) demonstrate focused discussions on risk drivers and strategies to reduce risk during case staffing and interactions with officers; and d) review case plans to ensure that they reflect evidence-based supervision strategies and that officers are actively seeking to address criminogenic needs and risk drivers.

Competencies

The FJC's educational programming is competency-based. Competencies are the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be successful in a particular position or role. The competency model assumes a developmental approach, recognizing that individuals' learning needs change over the course of their careers. As supervisors are the primary audience for SOEBE, the competencies targeted for them are Continuous Learning, Decision Quality, Employee Development, and Managerial Courage. Continuous Learning

refers to the supervisor pursuing activities to enhance knowledge, build new skills, and hone existing skills. Decision Quality refers to the supervisor using analysis, experience, and judgment to solve problems and make effective decisions. Employee Development refers to the supervisor providing informal and formal opportunities for direct reports to develop their capacity to perform their jobs. Managerial Courage refers to the supervisor speaking honestly and directly and taking action even when the situation is challenging.

Frontline probation and pretrial services officers are the secondary audience benefiting from SOEBE-trained supervisors, and the FJC competencies targeted for them are Supervision for Success, Confidence in Decision Making, Critical Analysis, and Everyday Leadership. Supervision for Success refers to the practice of guiding supervisees toward successful pretrial and post-conviction outcomes. Confidence in Decision Making refers to the ability to make and execute well-reasoned case-related decisions, even when those decisions are difficult or unpopular. Critical Analysis refers to the process of examining information to determine its accuracy, veracity, quality, and value to the court. It requires assessment of motivations, assumptions, and beliefs and the ability to organize and combine information to draw conclusions and form new ideas. Everyday Leadership refers to the ability to motivate and influence others to contribute to achieving the goals of the system and the district.

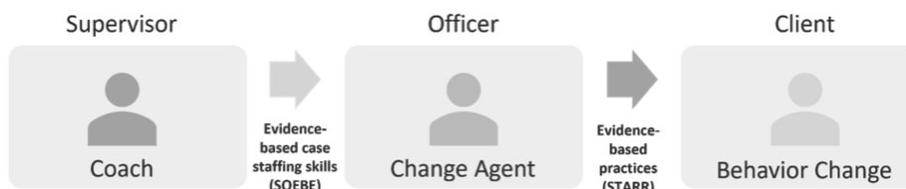
SOEBE Program Structure

The SOEBE program structure consists of the following components: an application process, a pre-program assessment and report, pre-work, seminar, SOEBE clinical training year, and capstone (see Figure 2 next page).

Application

Interested U.S. probation and pretrial services offices apply to be selected for the program through a competitive application process. Applicants are required to complete a formal application and include required documentation. In reviewing applications, the SOEBE lead (PPSE education specialist) considers various factors believed to be an ideal environment for supervisors to participate in the SOEBE training. This includes an office's current base knowledge of EBPs, adherence to the risk principle reflected in caseloads, progress in STARR training, the executive team's motivation to establish an evidence-based culture,

FIGURE 1.
The Supervisor-Officer-Client Connection



and a track record of using data to drive decisions. The SOEBE lead and supporting FJC staff make the final selection of the district(s) that will participate in SOEBE. SOEBE is fully funded by the FJC and comes at no cost to the participating office.

Assessment and Report (“Pre-visit”)

Once selected, an on-site pre-visit takes place over two days. A SOEBE team consisting of the lead PPSE education specialist, program coordinator, consultant, and peer faculty conduct an in-district assessment of the office and supervisors’ needs. This includes observation of the office’s use of evidence-based practices, one-on-one discussions with office leaders and staff, separate focus groups for officers and supervisors, as well as direct observations of present case staffing practices. This assessment provides the SOEBE team with additional information needed to prepare and customize the SOEBE seminar to best meet the needs of the district.

Pre-work

Office leadership and supervisors are assigned customized pre-work to complete before the FJC returns to deliver the SOEBE seminar and are designed to prime leadership and supervisors for what they will be learning during the seminar. The pre-work typically consists of short written assignments related to EBP literature, implementation, program objectives, competencies, and assessment results. For the leadership group, completed assignments are discussed prior to the seminar; for the supervisors, completed assignments are discussed during a session at the seminar.

SOEBE Seminar (“Full Visit”)

The SOEBE Seminar marks the beginning of the one-year training period. The SOEBE team, consisting of the lead PPSE education specialist, program coordinator, consultant, and

program faculty, conduct a three-and-a-half day in-district training for all staff (executive leadership, supervisors, and officers). The seminar is designed to engage all levels of the organization as well as ensure that all staff understand the part each plays in implementing and supporting the SOEBE program.

General training themes consist of the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model, connecting risk and needs assessment to case planning and officer supervision strategies. In addition, all staff are introduced to and trained in a SOEBE case staffing structure and its elements. This structure and elements were first developed by Susana Merchant (retired FJC Education Specialist), Edward Cameron (Supervisory U.S. Probation Officer), and Bradley Whitley (Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer) and have undergone revisions over the years under the guidance of Dr. Guy Bourgon and the SOEBE team.⁴ Supervisors are trained in a specific set of coaching skills (i.e., active listening, feedback, reinforcement, and use of different types of questions). At this point, supervisors are introduced to their individual SOEBE coaching team, each composed of a line officer and supervisor from the program’s peer faculty. The final day of the seminar consists of clinical practice of the SOEBE case staffing structure with officers under the guidance of their SOEBE coaches who provide immediate feedback.

⁴ The Elements of an Evidence-Based Case Staffing and The Elements of a Professional Development Conversation are the principal guiding documents used in the SOEBE program. These documents describe the structure of the supervisor-officer interaction and the evidence-based elements used in the case staffing and professional development conversation (PDC). The structure is made up of three stages, and within each stage, there are evidence-based elements to ensure the goals of continuous professional development, empirically supported decisions, and supervision work driven by evidence to reduce risk and reoffending are met.

SOEBE Year

Supervisors and peer faculty engage in a 12-month clinical coaching period. Supervisors submit a minimum of one audio-recorded case staffing each month. Peer faculty listen to the recordings, code them using a specifically designed rating form based on the elements, and provide coaching and feedback to the supervisor. During this period, virtual quarterly booster sessions take place with supervisors and leadership, and virtual bi-annual boosters take place with all staff. It is during this 12-month period that the SOEBE team works to continuously improve supervisors’ evidence-based case staffing skills that reinforce officers’ community supervision practices and assist the district in its implementation and integration of SOEBE into daily work.

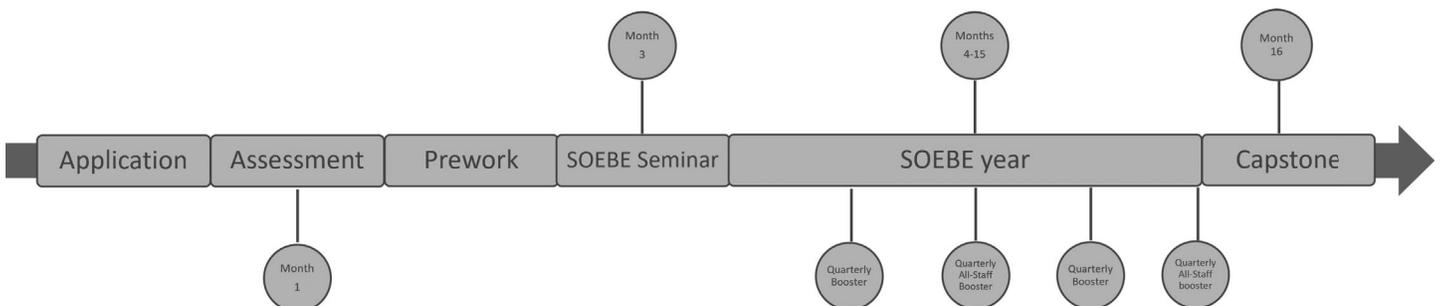
Capstone

At the end of the training year, the SOEBE team conducts a three-day out-of-district capstone seminar for the participating district’s leadership and supervisors. The primary purpose of the capstone is to discuss progress over the year and to finalize plans for sustaining SOEBE and the supervisors’ new skills going forward. While the FJC’s SOEBE team members are available to districts after they complete the program, this capstone formally marks the end of the SOEBE team’s work with the district and the beginning of the district’s journey in sustaining supervisor skills.

SOEBE Implementation Results to Date

Since the program was introduced in 2014, SOEBE has been implemented in 10 of 113 U.S. probation and pretrial services offices, training a total of 67 supervisors. The COVID-19 pandemic halted the FJC’s in-person programming and interrupted SOEBE’s regular schedule in fiscal year (FY) 2021. The 11th district began its participation

FIGURE 2.
SOEBE Components and Timeline



in FY 2022, and the 12th district in FY 2023.

SOEBE collects various data (e.g., surveys, ratings of quality of case staffing, and participant feedback) throughout the course of a district’s involvement; however, due to SOEBE’s continual adjustments, data collection has been somewhat inconsistent. One key data source has been the Coding Form for Case Staffing Recordings specifically tailored to post-conviction supervision and pretrial supervision (see Appendix 1). This data collection rating form consists of 10 items that require raters, usually the two coaches assigned to coach that supervisor, to code the quality of discussions during the case staffing. Four items cover the context of the case staffing, with items evaluating adherence to the (1) risk principle, (2) need principle, (3) responsivity principle, and (4) sentence administration considerations. Three items evaluate the quality of discussions regarding change work/client responsiveness, including (5) external activities such as treatment programs and controlling strategies (e.g., urine testing), (6) the officer’s change-agent work during face-to-face interactions with the client (e.g., STARR techniques such as the Cog Model, reinforcement, disapproval, skill building, homework), and (7) client progress to reduce risk and address needs. Two items evaluate the professional development environment, including (8) collaboration, respectfulness, and professionalism of the interpersonal environment and (9) the professional development learning. The final item (10) evaluates the overall quality of the case staffing that values an EBP change-agent approach to supervision.

SOEBE was initially piloted with two districts in 2014 and implemented with three more districts from 2015 to 2017. Substantial revisions to the program and coding documents were completed in 2017 to improve accuracy and reliability. Three quarterly faculty training sessions on coding the form were conducted in 2017. These training sessions required faculty members to independently listen to and code the same case staffing recording followed by group discussion of their ratings. By the final faculty training, ratings on this form had become consistent in that all faculty members were rating every item within a half-point of each other. To maintain consistency, each year during annual faculty boosters, three or four recordings are coded independently and discussed with the group to ensure reliability.⁵

⁵ During the faculty training sessions on inter-rater reliability, faculty blindly rated the case

Data from the five districts that participated in SOEBE from 2018 to 2020 that were rated on the revised 2017 version of the Coding Form for Case Staffing Recordings were selected to evaluate the changes in quality of case staffing following training. This included a total of 556 coded recordings from 37 supervisors. Each supervisor had multiple recordings across varying time periods, but not every supervisor had submitted the same number of recordings at set time periods. The following method was used to provide a stable measure for each supervisor across three separate time periods. Pre-SOEBE scores were based on average ratings for each of the items on case staffing recordings done at the Assessment and Report period (the “Pre-Visit”) prior to the SOEBE seminar. Post-SOEBE scores were based on the average ratings for each item on the first three case staffing recordings completed within five months of the seminar. Final SOEBE scores were based on the average ratings for each item on the last three case staffing recordings completed at least eight months after the seminar.

To be included in the analysis, the supervisor needed to have at least one pre-SOEBE staffing recordings. During the coaching year, faculty receive and code tapes in the order they are submitted. The authors acknowledge it’s possible that there is an unconscious bias in ratings in the predicted direction; however, this training was done to counteract that bias and ensure that faculty are rating consistently across all recordings.

Table 1.
Means and Standard Deviations of Case Staffing Recordings at Pre-SOEBE, Post-SOEBE1, and Final SOEBE2 for 26 Supervisors

Rated item description of the quality of SOEBE Case Staffing	Pre-SOEBE M (SD)	Post-SOEBE M (SD)	Final SOEBE M (SD)
1. Risk principle considered?	2.31 (1.04)	3.39 (0.68)	3.87 (0.60)
2. Need Principle considered?	2.44 (0.84)	3.45 (0.73)	4.06 (0.67)
3. Responsivity considered?	1.81 (0.91)	2.89 (0.87)	3.54 (0.77)
4. Sentence administration issues?	2.71 (1.02)	3.45 (0.66)	4.08 (0.50)
5. External supervision strategies?	2.71 (0.98)	3.35 (0.68)	4.02 (0.59)
6. Officer’s change work?	2.31 (1.11)	3.11 (0.98)	3.79 (0.65)
7. Client engagement and progress?	2.02 (0.89)	3.04 (0.70)	3.80 (0.59)
8. Case staffing environment?	2.77 (0.91)	3.69 (0.76)	4.26 (0.55)
9. Professional development work?	2.42 (0.82)	3.28 (0.72)	4.04 (0.56)
10. Quality of SOEBE case staffing?	2.29 (0.71)	3.21 (0.73)	3.97 (0.56)

NOTE: Post-SOEBE recordings were the first three recordings following SOEBE seminar. Final SOEBE recordings were the last 3 recordings at least eight months or longer following the SOEBE seminar. MANOVA revealed significant differences across all three time periods with follow up analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicating significant differences for all 10 items (p < .001). Post-hoc comparisons with Bonferroni correction (p < .05) found the three time periods were significantly different on all 10 items (i.e., Pre-SOEBE < Post-SOEBE < Final SOEBE).

recording, three post-SOEBE recordings all within five months of the seminar, and three final SOEBE recordings all at least eight months post-seminar. As a result, 26 supervisors from four districts with a total of 182 recordings were collapsed for analysis. All 182 recordings were averaged as described above to create Pre-SOEBE, Post-SOEBE and Final SOEBE scores for each of the 26 supervisors. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviations (N = 26) of the average scores of all 10 items for the three periods. A repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed significant (p < .001) differences between the three time periods and on all 10 items. Post-hoc comparisons with Bonferroni correction found significant differences (p < .05) between all time periods on all 10 items. These results show that supervisors significantly increased the quality of case staffing across all items from Pre-SOEBE to Post-SOEBE and from Post-SOEBE to Final SOEBE, illustrating the efficacy of SOEBE to improve case staffing quality and supervisor coaching skills.

SOEBE Updates

Since its inception, SOEBE has continuously evolved, incorporating feedback received from faculty and participants and lessons learned from the work conducted with each district. Perhaps the most glaring omission in the original program was a lack of a holistic organizational approach that facilitated

sustainability following the SOEBE involvement. Those districts that participated in SOEBE during the early years noted that sustaining the program and its approach was difficult and challenging with staff turnover; they experienced difficulty mentoring and training new supervisors in the SOEBE methods. Supervisors noted that policy and mandated practices as well as the demands of program audit requirements often conflict with SOEBE methods. In addition, chiefs were requesting that presentence investigation supervisors also be included in SOEBE. Considering this feedback, SOEBE continues to evolve and explore how the SOEBE program can accommodate and address these concerns. The following components have been piloted recently.

Presentence Investigation

Originally SOEBE was only offered to post-conviction and pretrial services supervisors. In 2021, FJC staff and program faculty discussed how to best incorporate presentence investigation supervisory probation officers into the program. By mid-2022, a plan was in place to integrate presentence investigation supervisors into the program, and this approach is being piloted with the 11th and 12th SOEBE districts. Feedback from those working in presentence units indicated that, unlike pretrial and post-conviction supervision, it is uncommon to conduct a traditional face-to-face case staffing; rather, supervisor feedback is provided in written communication and focuses almost exclusively on the content, sentencing recommendations, and writing style within the completed presentence report. To develop a SOEBE-type supervisor-officer face-to-face interaction with a focus on professional development of the officer's knowledge, skills, and application of EBPs, the SOEBE team developed a "professional development conversation" or PDC structure and corresponding Coding Form for PDC Recordings (available from the authors). Initially, PDCs were recommended to occur after a presentence investigation report had been submitted to court, due to the time constraints typical of a presentence report request. This allows the supervisor and officer to engage in discussions about a client-focused approach on the application of RNR principles, EBP, and the development of a holistic correctional plan without the distraction of deadlines and other issues requiring immediate attention in the report. The reasoning was that enhanced knowledge and appreciation of the application

of RNR principles, EBP, and the integration of this into a holistic correctional plan would influence presentence reports in the future.

The Involvement of Leadership with a Focus on Post-Program Sustainability

In 2022, during the faculty development program that finalized plans to integrate presentence supervisors into the SOEBE program, the SOEBE team dedicated time and attention to SOEBE's approach to sustainability and its efforts with the district's leadership (i.e., chief, deputy chief, and assistant deputy chief). Up until then, discussions with leadership had been generally informal regarding the progress of the supervisors and organizational culture. More focused discussions about ongoing implementation and sustainability were reserved for the SOEBE capstone. Based on feedback received from districts that participated in SOEBE in the years prior, it was evident that sustainability planning was addressed far too late in the process. Drawing from literature on organizational change (Tapia & Walker, 2020), SOEBE developed a more structured and tailored set of activities for leadership. During the year of SOEBE training within a district, leaders participate in virtual coaching sessions on their role and responsibilities in successful implementation and sustainability, learning about implementation principles, and practically applying these principles to their own organization. These learning activities are currently being piloted in two districts.

SOEBE Learning Cohort

One of the challenges districts have faced in sustaining SOEBE principles is turnover among supervisors. Supervisors have retired or left a district during the SOEBE year or after its completion. In working with the 11th district beginning in 2022, the FJC team and leadership of the district decided to design a specific track for training senior officers in SOEBE as a means of succession planning, referred to as a SOEBE learning cohort. This group-based learning provides officers with an opportunity to be exposed to and receive coaching in SOEBE's supervisory evidence-based case staffing skills as a professional development opportunity. The participants work in pairs, one acting as a supervisor and the other as an officer, and they record the case staffing on an actual present case. They then reverse roles and complete a recording on a different case. Each month, one pair of participants completes these recordings, and

the rest of the learning cohort participants listen to the recordings. During the virtual class, facilitated by two SOEBE team members, everyone provides feedback and coaching to the pair. This learning cohort continues monthly for the SOEBE year. The intention is for SOEBE to provide the district with some "bench strength," that is, SOEBE-trained officers who are not supervisors now, and further infuse SOEBE into the culture of the organization.

Summary

SOEBE initially started out as a training program for supervisors. To facilitate the use of evidence-based principles and practices, SOEBE was designed to provide the knowledge and coaching skills needed for supervisors to improve the implementation of EBPs within the organization as well as enhance EBP fidelity in practice for the federal probation and pretrial services system. Over the last eight years, SOEBE has evolved as a response to feedback from participants who have highlighted the common challenges associated with implementing EBP in community corrections (Bonta, 2023; Bourgon, 2013, Bourgon et al., 2010, Leal & Walker, 2022). As a result, SOEBE's involvement with a district now incorporates structured learning activities to assist leadership with its roles and responsibilities in implementation and sustainability of evidence-based practices and invest resources in developing non-supervisory individuals in the organization to facilitate succession planning; in addition, it has expanded its training to supervisors whose primary focus is conducting and preparing presentence reports. The results of quality ratings of recordings of case staffing showed that supervisors, in their discussions with officers about the clients under their supervision, significantly enhanced discussions about the application of evidence-based principles and practices. Notwithstanding these promising results, SOEBE is a resource-rich program requiring considerable human and financial resources to conduct lengthy involvement with a district. Although supervisors, officers, and leadership have provided positive feedback regarding SOEBE, further research will be required to determine whether the changes noted during supervisor-officer case discussions translate into other key outcomes, such as enhanced evidence-based supervision practices of the officer, improved office culture and climate, and reduced reoffending.

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Appendix

FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER

SUPERVISING OFFICERS IN AN EVIDENCE-BASED ENVIRONMENT



CODING FORM FOR CASE STAFFING RECORDINGS Post-Conviction/Pretrial

SUSPO NAME	
DISTRICT	
DATE OF RECORDING	
FACULTY COMPLETING CODING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.

INSTRUCTIONS:

This form is to be completed only after you have listened to the case staffing, prepared the notes/ feedback for your SUSPO. Once that is done, rate the case staffing by circling a coding from 1 (low quality) to 5 (high quality) and adding comments on the following items. Based on prepared feedback, please submit the coding form to Teams.

Note: If two faculty members have listened to and provided feedback on the case staffing, complete these codings as a team (use a consensus coding of the two) if possible and submit the completed form to Teams.

CONTEXT OF CASE STAFFING

1. Do the supervisor and the officer demonstrate they are adequately and appropriately considering the risk to reoffend as a primary guiding principle throughout the case staffing?

1	2	3	4	5
Apparent that risk is not considered and/or only given lip service as a guiding principle in the supervision of the client.		Some consideration of risk in EITHER controlling OR change strategies, improvement needed in depth and/or integration.		Clearly apparent that risk level is considered and understood (dosage appropriate) for BOTH controlling strategies AND change strategies.
<u>Comments:</u>				

2. Do the supervisor and the officer demonstrate they are adequately and appropriately considering the criminogenic needs (aka dynamic risk factors) as a primary guiding principle throughout the case staffing?

1	2	3	4	5
Apparent that dynamic risk factors are not considered and/or only given 'lip service' as a guiding principle in the supervision of the client (evident that priority is enforcement/control).		Consideration of dynamic risk factors in EITHER controlling OR change strategies. Inadequate consideration of drivers – how all dynamic factors are inter-related to cause behavior.		Clearly apparent that dynamic risk factors are considered AND drivers are used as guide to both controlling and change strategies.
<u>Comments:</u>				

3. Quality of the discussions regarding the officer's assessment and efforts to increase engagement with the client and help them learn. (Responsivity).

1	2	3	4	5
Apparent that case staffing fails to assess or consider the client's engagement or learning needs.		Some discussion regarding the client's engagement and/or learning needs but no clear strategies in place to address them <u>OR</u> there are strategies in place but they do not match the client's engagement or learning needs.		Clearly apparent that case staffing considers and discusses the client's engagement and/or learning needs and has clear rationale for appropriate strategies in place to address them.
<u>Comments:</u>				

4. Are the consideration and discussion regarding sentence administration issues (e.g., conditions, compliance, UAs, etc.) appropriate and adequate?

1	2	3	4	5
Focuses almost exclusively on sentence administration issues.		Adequate balance of sentence administration and change issues but could have more in-depth discussion and/or exploration of how the two are inter-related, working for and/or against each other.		Clearly apparent that sentence administration issues are emphasized appropriately in staffing based on complexity/severity and balanced with change emphasis (just right).
<u>Comments:</u>				

CHANGE WORK/CLIENT RESPONSIVENESS

5. The quality of the discussions and considerations of external activities (e.g., controlling strategies and treatment resources).

1	2	3	4	5
Little understanding demonstrated how external activities are facilitating client's change in criminogenic needs.		Some consideration how external activities contribute to stepwise change in client behavior and/or thinking.		Clear understanding how external activities support and facilitate stepwise change in client behavior and thinking.
<u>Comments:</u>				

6. The quality of discussions and understanding of and rationale for the officer's change efforts (e.g., basic process of facilitating change from relationships, building foundations, and personal application of what has been learned) during supervision events (i.e., office/home/virtual visits).

1	2	3	4	5
Few, if any or superficial discussion of rationale for officer's face-to-face behaviors with client (e.g., STARR) that promote change.		Some discussions of rationale for officer's face-to-face behaviors with client (e.g., STARR) that promote change.		In depth discussions of rationale for officer's face-to-face behaviors with client (e.g., STARR) that promote change.
<u>Comments:</u>				

- 7. Quality of discussions regarding person under supervision’s progress in reducing risk and/or addressing dynamic risk factors. (May include client’s perspective of assessment, collaborative relationship building, client goals, client learning, and/or client application of what is being learned from small baby steps accomplished and/or officer-client work plans in the short term.)

1	2	3	4	5
Few, if any or superficial discussion of client’s response to change efforts (e.g., engagement, learning, and personal application).		Some discussions of client’s response to change efforts (e.g., engagement, learning, and personal application).		In depth discussions of client’s response to change efforts with clear links to engagement, learning, and personal application.
<u>Comments:</u>				

CREATING OPTIMAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

- 8. Quality of the collaborative, respectful, and professional environment established by the supervisor throughout the case staffing via verbal and nonverbal communication, asking open-ended questions, demonstrating curiosity, etc.

1	2	3	4	5
Not very collaborative, with it being primarily a one-sided conversation with little exploration, reinforcement, or feedback.		About average for collaboration, contributions for officer and supervisor but could have done more.		Very collaborative, respectful, and professional discussion with supervisor and officer significantly contributing.
<u>Comments:</u>				

9. The quality of the professional development demonstrated throughout the course of the case staffing in terms of effective reinforcement, utilizing teachable/ coachable moments, collaborative problem solving, providing time and space for officer reflection and awareness.

1	2	3	4	5
Primarily a review of existing case, more a case audit than professional development of "change agent" work.		Some degree of professional development of "change agent" but could have done more. Reinforcement apparent, but did not observe a "teachable/ coachable moment.		High degree of professional development demonstrated, collaborative, reinforcement, and at least one identifiable "teachable/ coachable moment."
<u>Comments:</u>				

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

10. The overall quality of the Case Staffing to assist, support, teach, reinforce, and/or facilitate the officer taking on an active "Change Agent Role" with this client.

1	2	3	4	5
A poor example of EBP case staffing. More emphasis on completing forms, timelines, and other administrative tasks. "Old" way of doing case staffing.		A moderate or average EBP case staffing with room for improvement. Some elements are good and others are missing.		An excellent example of EBP case staffing. Emphasis on EBP principles and their application to supervision of client, and the officer and SUSPO growing in EBP knowledge.
<u>Comments:</u>				
<u>Feedback provided to SUSPO:</u>				