



Continuous Transdermal Alcohol Monitoring: An Agency Administrator's Guide

Executive Summary

This document is the third in a three-part series. The first report, entitled “Continuous Transdermal Alcohol Monitoring: A Primer for Criminal Justice Professionals,” was released in November 2006. It was designed to provide practitioners with an overview of the research, technology, and program approaches to continuous transdermal alcohol monitoring. The second report, entitled “Continuous Transdermal Alcohol Monitoring: A Practitioner’s Guide,” was released in September 2007. It was designed to assist practitioners with incorporating such technologies into existing supervision practices and protocols. This third and final report in the series has been developed for agency administrators who are implementing continuous transdermal alcohol monitoring into agency practices to supervise offenders. It seeks to address their concerns regarding the implementation of new supervision strategies in general, and continuous alcohol monitoring technology, in particular. It contains guidance on a variety of issues including:

- cultivating leadership;
- fostering agency and stakeholder partnerships;
- organizing community support;
- developing a supervision strategy;
- creating and maintaining training opportunities;
- generating funding; and
- designing an evaluation.

Prior to reviewing this document, readers should refer to the Primer for Criminal Justice Professionals referenced above to gain a better understanding of:

- What does the research on continuous alcohol monitoring conclude?
- How does the technology work?
- Where does technology fit within supervision strategies that are part of court-based probation or treatment programs?

Getting started

- Appointing a coordinator to lead a continuous transdermal alcohol monitoring project and ensuring transparent decision making are crucial ingredients to the successful implementation of this initiative.
- Consultation with stakeholders and partners is an essential element to a successful implementation. It is recommended that a roundtable be organized at the outset of any continuous alcohol monitoring project to discuss concerns and identify opportunities.
- A roundtable will create consensus and buy-in among the different parties and stakeholders involved in the project.



- Once buy-in has been established, the broad strokes of the purpose and goals of using the technology can be determined and agreed upon during the roundtable.
- It is important that line officers be engaged in the development of any application, and provide input into purpose and goals at a more practical level under the leadership of the coordinator.
- One of the chief outcomes of the first roundtable is an action plan. An action plan can be brief and should include:
 - a statement regarding the purpose and goals of using the technology;
 - a list of involved parties and stakeholders, their role and contact information;
 - a detailed description of the responsibilities of the coordinator;
 - a time frame with an indication of deliverables and milestones;
 - a list of actions.
- The coordinator may want to set out a more detailed day-to-day management plan.

Application development

- When an action plan has been developed, a development plan for the application can occur using a field study to identify the most practical and efficient strategies.
- A field study designed to inform the development of the application can be considered a scaled-down version of the full project. This can provide an opportunity for testing out practices and procedures, thereby identifying and rectifying problems.
- Ideally, a field study should consist of at least two different stages:
 - a 'dry run' that allows front-line staff to 'experiment' with the technology; and,
 - a small-scale field study that involves using the technology on real test subjects - i.e., offenders.
- Conducting a dry run that is followed by a study with real test subjects prior to a full-scale implementation provides agencies with an opportunity to gradually and systematically increase the complexity and dynamics of possible scenarios in a controlled setting. Such a gradual increase allows for a trial and error process with errors that are kept within reasonable margins, preventing failure on a larger scale.
- While the media does not have to be involved as a partner or observer in each step toward implementation, it is important to consider how information about this project can be shared with the media, in the event that they become interested in it at some point.

Training, staffing, and funding

Training

- The training of officers in the use of a new technology is critical to the success of its implementation. The goals of any training exercise are threefold:
 - ensure officers are comfortable using the technology

- ensure that officers are familiar with the established procedures to apply the technology and to defend the technology and any violations in court; and
- ensure officers are able to 'trouble-shoot' any problems that may arise.
- Agency supervisors, prosecutors, defense bar, and judges should also participate in a training exercise to ensure they have working knowledge of the device and how it will be applied to offenders.
- A training session can be easily accomplished in three to four hours. Training can often be delivered by the service provider and can take place individually or in group settings. Training should be ongoing to ensure officers are aware of any advances in the technology, or changes in procedures and practices.

Staffing

- Conducting a field study during the development phase of the project will allow administrators to estimate the workload associated with each case, and to anticipate the work associated with monitoring each offender using the technology. As such, administrators will be better able to gauge the appropriate caseload size for officers.
- It will also be possible to gain insights into whether and how the workload decreases over time as officers become more comfortable with and knowledgeable about the technology, and what efficiencies can be achieved using the technology.
- It is essential that the workload be quantified, as this information can inform decision making about caseload and the appropriate staff-to-offender ratio on a larger scale.
- It is particularly important to be sensitive toward workload and caseload issues during the initial few months of implementation as officers become familiar with and comfortable using the technology.

Funding

- The use of continuous alcohol monitoring technology typically relies on an offender-pay arrangement.
- Efforts should be made to organize indigent funding arrangements using a variety of options.

Evaluation

Process and impact evaluation

- Ongoing agency support and funding of a continuous alcohol monitoring project is contingent on the execution of a process and impact evaluation.
 - An impact evaluation determines whether the implementation of the technology led to the desired effects.
 - A process evaluation investigates reasons explaining these effects, or lack thereof.
- Process and impact evaluations serve two particular objectives.
 - At a practical level, the first objective is to create a learning environment that allows agencies to review and improve policy, procedures and practices.

- The second objective pertains to the availability of objective data to increase the scientific understanding of the impact of the technology on attitudes and behaviors of field officers and offenders.

Cost-savings analysis

- In a cost-savings analysis, both direct costs and indirect costs incurred with supervision using continuous alcohol monitoring are weighed against comparable costs incurred with using other supervision strategies.
- An evaluation in terms of savings accrued with the use of a continuous alcohol monitoring technology may provide useful information to allow agencies to demonstrate a return on investment and justify a full-fledged implementation and/or an expansion of the use of the technology.

Cost-benefit analysis

- It may be worthwhile to also carry out a cost-benefit analysis. A cost-benefit analysis involves converting outcome measures coming from the impact and process evaluation into monetary terms, so they can be compared to outcome measures coming from the cost-savings analysis.
- A cost-benefit analysis provides useful economic information to compare alternative policy options.



Full report available at:
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