



COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC DEFENDERS

In addition to motivated, innovative, and dedicated defense counsel, an alternative sentencing program requires the following components to be effective and to perpetuate itself:

1. Sufficient funding to develop effective alternative sentencing programs.
2. Commitment to reduce jail and prison populations.
3. Clearly defined case screening and selection criteria and procedures.
4. Range of services appropriate to the clients and consistent with the program objectives. These may include: Client Specific Planning, community corrections programs, third party advocate (volunteer probation supervision) programs, community service and restitution programs, and social and psychiatric referrals.
5. Coordinated strategy by defense counsel with those providing sentencing services.
6. Coordinated and cooperative effort with probation services.
7. Early and informed involvement with the prosecution, particularly when pleas are negotiated.
8. Internal evaluation of sentencing results. (The public defender should be the first to know how well the program is operating and whether it is achieving its objectives.)
9. Confidential follow-up (not supervision!) of defendants who receive alternatives proposed through the program. (Eventually, program sponsors will have to answer: "What happens to defendants given alternatives to prison?")