



**CUNY INSTITUTE  
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***Arnold Ventures and the CUNY Institute for State & Local Governance Announce  
Second Phase of Probation Reform Initiative Driven by New Research***

**New York, New York** – Today, Arnold Ventures and the CUNY Institute for State & Local Governance (ISLG) announced the start of the second phase of the Reducing Revocations Challenge, a national initiative to transform probation supervision and reduce its impact on mass incarceration. The work of this second phase is informed by innovative research conducted in 10 jurisdictions across the country to better understand the causes of supervision revocations, which is summarized in the [\*Pathways to Success on Probation: Lessons Learned from the First Phase of the Reducing Revocations Challenge\*](#) research brief, also released today. During the second phase, five of these 10 jurisdictions will be funded to implement strategies informed by their research that aim to reduce revocations, increase equity in probation outcomes, and advance community safety and well-being.

Before the Challenge, little was known about supervision revocations and violations other than that they are major drivers of mass incarceration. For the past two years, action research teams (ARTs) from participating sites composed of a probation agency and local research partner used multiple methods to dive into the policies and practices of these 10 jurisdictions to determine and study the local drivers of violations and revocations, research that both uncovered new insights and reaffirmed existing knowledge. These first-phase findings and their policy and practice implications are discussed in the research brief.

The new insights highlighted in [\*Pathways to Success on Probation\*](#) include:

- **Technical violations are a significant issue in many sites despite the lesser implications for community safety compared to new crime violations.** While some of these filings are punitive in nature, research across sites revealed that officers also issue technical violations for reasons that have nothing to do with wanting to end a client's probation term.
- **While technical violations are prevalent, new crimes are more likely to end in revocation.** This is often tied to the desire of probation officers, judges, and other system stakeholders to avoid risk and ensure community safety, even though new crime violations encompass a range of new criminal activities ranging from low-level misdemeanors to more serious felony offenses.

- **People on probation who are assessed as high risk are more likely to have a violation filed**, even for less serious acts of noncompliance that may not compromise community safety and would have had less serious consequences for people assessed as low or medium risk.

Existing knowledge affirmed in the [\*Pathways to Success on Probation\*](#) includes:

- Probation officers play a key role in the success of people on probation, but the nature of their working relationships varies greatly.
- Many people on probation have complicated needs, and probation does not always have the services and supports to address them.
- Racial and ethnic disparities are prominent among both violations and revocations.
- There is a complicated relationship between time on probation and the likelihood of success.

The five sites that will be funded to implement strategies grounded in these findings in the second phase of the Challenge are: Harris County, TX; Monroe County, IN; Pima County, AZ; Ramsey County, MN; and Santa Cruz County, CA. Over the next two years, the sites' ARTs will operationalize their reform plans, put them into action, and monitor progress and impacts through performance metrics and other data feedback loops. Throughout these efforts, sites will engage in ongoing assessment of the strategies through a racial equity lens, with a particular emphasis on unintended consequences for Black, Indigenous, and people of color and impacts on racial and ethnic disparities.

"While the probation-to-incarceration pipeline is a national problem, it's become clear that solutions work best when they are tailored to the local context," **said Michael Jacobson, Executive Director of the CUNY Institute for State & Local Governance.** "By pairing sites with local research organizations, we've been able to pinpoint jurisdiction-specific policies and practices that have contributed to unnecessary violations and revocations, and use that information to identify reform strategies that work for communities and foster safety and opportunity. We look forward to sharing lessons and models with the field as sites implement and monitor strategies in the next phase of the work."

The challenge of reimagining community supervision requires a fundamental re-examination of the rationale for sending someone to prison for violating the conditions of their supervision," **said Jeremy Travis, Executive Vice President of Criminal Justice at Arnold Ventures.** "The costs—human and fiscal—are enormous, while the benefits are uncertain. We should commend the sites selected for this action research project for undertaking a close examination of this practice, with a goal of promoting success rather than adding to our prison population. "

"Probation has the potential to lead people toward success and well-being rather than incarceration, but for too long technical violations of probation have served as a barrier to that success," **said Veronica Cunningham, Executive Director at the American Probation and Parole Association.** "The work the Challenge sites have done in finding strengths and gaps in their services, policies, and practices to respond to and support those on probation is a huge step not only in perpetuating success in their local jurisdictions, but in creating a blueprint for probation as well as parole agencies nationwide to identify and implement strategies that support both officers and people on supervision."

To read more information about the Challenge and dive deeper into site-specific reports as well as read *Pathways to Success on Probation*, please visit <https://islg.cuny.edu/case-study-reducing-revocations-challenge>.

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### **About the CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance**

[The CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance](#) (ISLG) is a good governance think-and-do tank. ISLG is driven by the idea that data-informed approaches can measurably improve the way government and public institutions operate, equitably serve all constituents, and ultimately solve social policy problems. It also provides the knowledge and action needed to fuel those approaches. With the necessary research, policies, partnerships, and infrastructures, ISLG helps government and public institutions work more effectively, efficiently, and in the interest of all communities.

### **About Arnold Ventures**

[Arnold Ventures](#) is a philanthropy dedicated to tackling some of the most pressing problems in the United States. Driven by a mission to maximize opportunity and minimize injustice, it invests in sustainable change, building it from the ground up based on research, deep thinking, and a strong foundation of evidence. Arnold Ventures is headquartered in Houston, with offices in Washington, D.C., and New York City.