

A FIELD GUIDE TO Proactive Supervision

Practical strategies to help highly-effective agencies move from reactive to proactive, and strengthen accountability under pressure.



WHY PROACTIVE SUPERVISION MATTERS

Studies show that alcohol- and behavior-related violations can rise by as much as 25–30% during major holidays and community events.¹ These same patterns often repeat around long weekends, sporting events, and graduation season—times when clients are more vulnerable to stress, substance use, and impulsive decisions.

For community corrections professionals, these moments test every part of supervision: communication, coverage, and consistency. This guide helps agencies anticipate those high-risk periods, strengthen accountability plans, and keep officers and clients on track when pressure peaks.

¹ Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), "Holiday Season Drunk Driving Campaign Data," 2023

STRESS IS REAL



- ⇒ High-risk behavior often spikes during major holidays and other periods of increased social activity.
- ⇒ Treatment access can drop as programs reduce hours or close.
- ⇒ Communication lapses—even a single missed check-in—can snowball into crises.
- ⇒ Morale across both clients and staff take a hit.

It's no wonder that these high-risk periods can undo months of progress if we're not proactive. But the goal isn't to clamp down; it's to plan smarter.

Accountability during the holidays isn't about supervision—it's about stability. Agencies that fare best are those that anticipate pressure points, communicate early, and align resources.

This guide was built around that reality.

This guide provides practical frameworks, field insights, and adaptable tools to help supervision teams plan ahead, reduce reactivity, and maintain consistency through high-risk seasons—all with the goal of achieving steadier operations and stronger outcomes.

PRACTICAL PLANNING

Every jurisdiction handles peak periods a little differently—but the pressure is universal. High-risk times test staffing, communication, and consistency across every part of supervision.

The goal of this planner isn't to add work; it's to protect the progress your clients and teams have built all year long.

Use it to spot blind spots and strengthen coordination when accountability matters most.

What to Review	Key Questions to Ask
Scheduling & Caseloads	Have we reviewed caseloads to identify high-risk or newly enrolled clients who may need closer contact? Have we set expectations for check-ins during office closures or limited hours? Who is on-call during high-risk periods, and does everyone have access to coverage details?
Communication & Messaging	Have we sent clear reminders to clients about testing schedules, curfews, and reporting expectations? Does each client know what to do and who to contact in case of emergency or travel? Have we shared updated contact details with courts, law enforcement, and treatment partners?
Technology & Monitoring Coverage	Are all devices functioning correctly with current contact information? Do we have backup equipment ready for quick swaps if a unit fails after hours? Is data being reviewed consistently, even when staff are on leave?
Community & Treatment Resources	Have we updated our resource list for shelters, food programs, treatment schedules, or 12-step meetings that stay open during high-risk times? Do we have relationships with providers who can accept urgent referrals when offices are closed?
Recognition & Morale	How will we recognize clients maintaining compliance through challenging periods? How can we support staff managing workload and personal stress? Can we highlight success stories or milestones from this quarter to boost morale?

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

Stay grounded when it gets busy.

Every jurisdiction faces high-risk periods a little differently, but the pressures are universal—more calls, fewer resources, and clients under added stress. These insights come from professionals who’ve managed those challenges year after year and discovered small, consistent practices that make a lasting difference.

GET AHEAD OF CHAOS

Most supervision challenges start because something small slips through the cracks.

- ⇒ Review caseloads early—don’t assume “low risk” means low need.
- ⇒ Create one shared calendar with closures, on-call coverage, and equipment swap plans.
- ⇒ Hold a 20-minute “readiness” huddle with your team before high-risk periods.



Tip: Identify your top five clients most likely to struggle and call them before things ramp up. **Ask one question: “What’s your plan for staying on track over the next few weeks?”** That single proactive call often prevents a violation later.

COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY AND COMPASSION

Stress and confusion spike when clients don’t know what’s expected or feel disconnected.



Send a brief reminder or text outlining schedules, curfews, and key contacts.



Remind clients that accountability keeps them connected to their families and their progress.



Reinforce success publicly—share small wins in meetings or keep a recognition board.



Tip: Have each officer record a short voicemail greeting or text template with after hours instructions—clients remember tone more than policy.

STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS BEFORE YOU NEED THEM

The best programs stay consistent because they don't work in isolation.



Check in with courts, law enforcement, or treatment partners about changes during high-risk periods.



Confirm backup testing or monitoring coverage before offices rotate.



Coordinate data sharing or alerts across departments so everyone sees the same picture.



Tip: Consider hosting a 15-minute “readiness coordination call” with your local court liaison and/or treatment providers. Everyone hates extra meetings—but one quick sync can prevent a crises.

Protect Your Team's Bandwidth

Even the most committed officers burn out when the pace never lets up.



Encourage micro-breaks, brief decompressions, and team acknowledgment.



Assign a point person to handle small logistics so others can focus on clients.



Rotate coverage so everyone gets real rest time—officers who recharge perform better.



Tip: Try pairing newer team members with experienced ones for coverage weeks. New staff learns from observation, and veterans get a morale boost from mentoring.

No program can prevent every setback—but clear plans, simple communication, and genuine care go further than extra rules ever will. When accountability feels fair and supportive, everyone stands a better chance of finishing the year strong.

| WHEN SCHEDULES SHIFT

High-risk periods can throw off everyone's rhythm. Court calendars shift, staff rotate, clients travel, and data reviews pile up. Consistency—not intensity—is what keeps programs steady. The goal isn't more oversight; it's fewer surprises. These tools and methods help agencies maintain accountability, even when offices, families, and communities are running on different schedules.

READINESS ASSESSMENT

Every program has strengths—and blind spots. This short self-assessment helps you identify how well your team is prepared to manage accountability during high-risk or high-activity seasons.

Instructions:

For each statement below, rate your program from **1–3**:

3 = Consistent

2 = Sometimes

1 = Not Yet

Total your points at the bottom to see how ready your program is to stay consistent during high-pressure periods.

1. PLANNING & COVERAGE

- We review caseloads early and identify high-risk clients before high-risk times. _____
- Our office has a clear coverage plan for staff rotations and on-call duties. _____
- Everyone knows who to contact for after-hours alerts or emergencies. _____

Subtotal:

2. COMMUNICATION & EXPECTATIONS

- Clients receive clear expectation writing or by text before high-risk events. _____
- We reinforce accountability as support, not punishment. _____
- Our staff proactively check in with clients before schedule shifts or events. _____

Subtotal: _____

3. TECHNOLOGY & DATA MANAGEMENT

- All monitoring devices and equipment are tested before coverage changes. _____
- Alerts or data reviews continue during staff absences. _____
- We maintain backup devices or partner access for emergency swaps. _____

Subtotal: _____

4. PARTNER COORDINATION

- We confirm adjusted hours with courts, law enforcement, and treatment providers. _____
- Referral and contact lists are updated and shared with staff. _____
- Consistent communication with partner agencies when risk increases. _____

Subtotal: _____

5. TEAM WELLNESS & RECOGNITION

- Staff rotations allow everyone reasonable time off. _____
- Supervisors check in regularly on workload and morale. _____
- We recognize clients and staff who maintain accountability. _____

Subtotal: _____

YOUR TOTAL SCORE: _____

MAXIMUM = 45 POINTS

SCORING GUIDE

Score Range	Readiness Level	Next Step
38–45	Proactive & Prepared	Strong systems and communication—keep doing what works and share your plan with peers.
30–37	Solid but Stretched	You're well-prepared. Focus on consistency—especially coverage and communication.
20–29	Needs Attention	Revisit your plan now. Identify 1–2 areas that could cause breakdowns under stress.
Below 20	At Risk	Assign clear ownership for coverage, partner contact, and communication before the season starts.



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STAY STEADY ALL YEAR LONG

High-risk seasons test everything we build throughout the year—our processes, our patience, and our purpose. Across the country, supervision professionals show up with the same goal: to keep people safe, families connected, and clients moving forward. The truth is, no checklist can prevent every setback. However, your commitment, from planning through communication and care, creates the stability that programs and communities rely on. Every proactive call, calm conversation, and moment of patience matters more than it ever shows on paper.

Before the next busy stretch, take stock of what worked.

- ⇒ Which small habits made the biggest difference for your team or clients?
- ⇒ What would you do earlier or differently next time?
- ⇒ Who on your staff deserves a thank-you for the invisible work that kept things steady?

Carry those insights forward. Share them with your peers. Build from them. Because accountability, when done right, isn't about control—it's about connection, trust, and opportunity.



WANT MORE INSIGHTS?

If your team is planning ahead or looking for guidance, our team at SCRAM Systems is here to help explore tools, training, and resources that strengthen accountability all year long.

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