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How AI is Reimagining Case Management in Juvenile Justice – Sasha Barab & Anna Arici, Lifelab Studios

Probation officers carry one of the most difficult responsibilities in our system: protecting public safety while guiding youth toward lasting behavioral change. Officers are asked to enforce sanctions, broker services, manage paperwork, and coordinate across multiple agencies—all while trying to build trust and inspire change in young people.

Too often, the transactional demands of paperwork and compliance overshadow the relational work that is the true engine of change. The result is burnout for officers, fragmented services for youth, and uneven progress for communities. But today, AI-powered case management tools are beginning to change that reality.

By embedding intelligent supports directly into daily workflows, agencies can restore balance—allowing officers to focus on relationships while ensuring every case stays accountable to change. More than increasing efficiency, AI can drive effectiveness and transformation, increasing personalization, guiding behavioral change, and allowing the officer to focus on the relation so that those they serve are making real, measurable progress.

Why This Matters

Behavioral change is one of the hardest needles to move—yet it becomes possible when every interaction counts. AI is already removing the transactional burdens so staff can focus on what truly matters: the youth in their care. Recording field visits, transcribing conversations, and producing structured case notes can be handled automatically by the system. Too often, the

transactional consumes the day. Officers must juggle three roles:

Transactional – Managing compliance and paperwork.

Relational – Building trust and motivation.

Transformational – Ensuring lasting behavioral change.

AI rebalances the equation: it handles the transactional, frees officers for the relational, and guides practice toward the transformational. This ensures that every youth not only complies with requirements but also develops responsive life skills to succeed. Officers are no longer forced to choose between taking notes and making eye contact; they can engage fully, knowing documentation will be accurate, consistent, and aligned to the case plan. When you combine the power of AI with human connection, it can also be transformational.

Efficiency Boost – AI reduces hours of documentation and data entry.

Effectiveness Boost – Ensures fidelity, consistency, and actionable insights across cases.

Outcomes Boost – Every interaction fuels measurable transformation.

This technology changes the game. Every contact, every note, every plan becomes a deliberate step toward positive behavioral change. This is more than efficiency—it's intelligent, accountable care that ensures every touchpoint drives measurable impact for both individuals and organizations.

AI Goes Beyond Efficiency to Deepen Human Connection

Supporting behavioral change is hard, but long-term public safety depends on it. Even for a trained therapist with a manageable caseload, guiding youth through meaningful change is difficult. For probation officers, who must enforce sanctions, manage multiple conditions, and broker services—the task can feel overwhelming.

Many of the young people in the system have grown up with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which complicate trust, communication, and



relationship-building. Yet officers are still expected to address these challenges, build coaching connections, and ensure that real behavioral change occurs over time.

True public safety and life transformation come only when youth gain the core skills—emotional regulation, decision-making, communication, and resilience that make positive behavior sustainable.

This is where AI can shine. Rather than leaving assessments, case plans, field notes, and interventions fragmented, AI integrates them into a cohesive trajectory that informs and supports both officers and staff. It can provide real-time, aligned insights into how to reach and support each person in their care, all while reducing workload.

AI should serve to deepen human connection, making interaction with youth informed and purposeful, transforming documentation into insights, and insights into action. The real transformation happens not in efficiency alone, but in combining agentic AI, behavioral sciences, and strength-based coaching practices to structure case management in ways that deliver personalized, scalable behavioral change. This is the core focus of the work.

The Flow of Change: From Intake to Outtake

Behavioral change is not a single event—it is a journey made up of many moments across three distinct stages. Too often, criminogenic needs are identified, but little real progress is made over the course of a case. Meaningful change requires a clear plan, aligned to those needs, with each interaction coordinated to move the plan forward. In practice, this is much easier said than done. But, with integrated AI, we can make this happen with fidelity at scale.

Intake – Curating Aligned Intention

At intake, the most important task is building rapport and establishing buy-in. AI allows officers to record and transcribe the conversation, automatically generating a personalized growth plan based on youth strengths, challenges, and goals. Officers can put down the pen, make eye contact and listen

deeply, while still leaving with an actionable, strength-based, data-driven, compliant case plan. AI can integrate the assessment, the plan, and the words of the youth to ensure it is strength-based.



Treatment – Supporting Connected Growth

During supervision, AI can prepare officers for each visit with timely insights: key needs, progress updates, and suggested coaching questions. After visits, the system creates structured notes automatically tied back to the plan. Officers also benefit from feedback on their personal coaching style—whether they used motivational interviewing, strength-based language, or active listening.

This turns every contact into an intentional step toward responsive skill-building—time management, emotional regulation, and decision-making, rather than just a compliance check.

Outtake – Reinforcing Transformation

At discharge, AI compiles reports and creates transition plans that highlight growth, affirm milestones achieved, and outline next steps. These plans are written in accessible language for youth and families, reinforcing accountability while celebrating progress.

Supporting Officers, Sustaining the Workforce

AI-powered case management is not about replacing officers. It is about empowering them, turning paperwork into progress, visits into growth

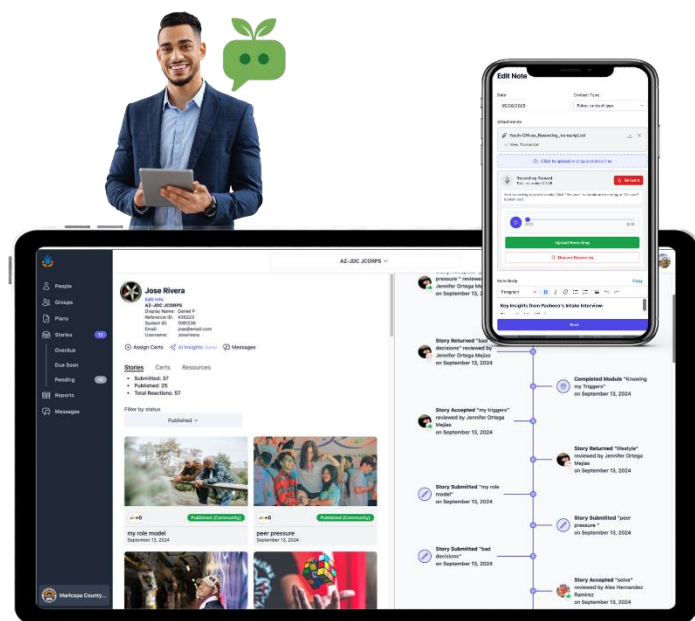


opportunities, and case management into true transformation.

With more than 60,000 probation officers supervising 750,000 youth annually, burnout and turnover are constant risks. AI helps sustain the workforce by reducing paperwork, embedding professional development into daily work, and even offering wellness check-ins for staff.

As one officer put it: “I can finally look up from my laptop and really see the youth in front of me.” More than supporting youth, AI can also power the officers, providing personalized, agentic, non-judgmental staff development.

Because intakes and field visits are recorded, AI can provide embedded feedback, what went well, were they using strength-based techniques, was the motivational interviewing effective, and did the interaction support accountable change.



Agentic AI represents the future of case management. It goes beyond efficiency gains to help ensure that real behavioral change occurs. Rather than simply storing data, it acts as a guide, helping officers think several moves ahead in how best to support an individual's growth. An officer can ask before a visit: “What are the top three behavioral areas I should focus on with this youth, based on their plan and recent notes?” Afterward, the system generates feedback on interactions, creating opportunities for reflection and professional growth. Supervisors gain dashboards that highlight strengths, identify areas for improvement, and ensure fidelity across cases.

In a field where transactional tasks often consume the day, Agentic AI rebalances the equation: automating compliance, enabling deeper relational work, and supporting transformational change. This ensures that youth are not only monitored for compliance but are guided toward developing the skills and strengths necessary for long-term success.

We at Lifelab Studios, believe deeply in the power of innovation to deepen human connection. By embedding these tools in Journey.do from intake to outtake, we partner to help juvenile and adult justice systems can move beyond compliance to transformation—ensuring that behavioral change happens with fidelity at scale. The result is not only safer communities, but brighter futures for the young people entrusted to our care.

Reach out to sasha@lifelabstudios.org by email or visit <https://journeydo.com> to learn more about how we can power your organization.

Lifelab Studios is a behavioral change company, led by a passionate team of learning scientists, platform engineers, and segment experts.

Conclusion and Call to Action

Juvenile justice is at a crossroads. We can continue to ask officers to juggle impossible demands—or we can equip them with tools that restore their capacity to connect, coach, and change lives.

At Lifelab Studios, we've reimaged how personal growth and behavioral change happen. We believe lasting change occurs when people are truly seen, supported, and empowered—and when organizations have the systems to deliver that care well. We build the tools that make this possible.