

Evaluation News is produced by BJA's Center for Program Evaluation at the Justice Research and Statistics Association.

Send questions and comments to
bjaeval@jrja.org

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
Center for Program Evaluation at the Justice Research and Statistics Association

777 N. Capitol St., NE,
Suite 801
Washington, DC 20002

202 842-9330

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Evaluation News provides information on the BJA Center for Program Evaluation, promotes the exchange of information on evaluation and performance measurement, and publicizes criminal justice research and evaluation reports for use by state and local criminal justice agencies.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES RESUME: REQUEST FOR UPDATES

After a brief hiatus, the BJA Center for Program Evaluation has resumed operations. We will continue to develop resources and information to facilitate evaluation and performance measurement in criminal justice. Check out the web site in the coming months for new information.

Since it has been several months since the last newsletter, we are in the process of updating the list of newsletter recipients. Please send an email to bjaeval@jrja.org if your contact information has changed or you would like to receive a free subscription to *Evaluation News*.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH AND COURTS/ADJUDICATION

MENTAL HEALTH COURTS: NEW REPORTS

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority has released two evaluations on mental health courts; *Outcomes from the Last Frontier: An Evaluation of the Palmer Coordinated Resources Project, Palmer Mental Health Court* and *Outcomes from the Last Frontier: An Evaluation of the Anchorage Mental Health Court, Anchorage Coordinated Resources Project*.

These two studies addressed questions regarding characteristics of the population served, why participants chose to enroll, enrollment processing, program completion and program costs. One year post-program outcomes for participants and a comparison group of similar individuals included the impact of the court on substance abuse, new psychiatric admissions, and criminal recidivism. Interviews were conducted with program participants and system actors to learn their perspectives on the mental health court.

Authors reported that in Anchorage there were substantial reductions in criminal recidivism as well as some improvements in new psychiatric admissions and cost savings. In Palmer, the most significant improvements were in the area of criminal recidivism and court costs.

The reports provide a variety of recommendations to aid in the improved operations of the mental health courts.

Anchorage report: http://www.mhtrust.org/documents/ACRP_Report_FINAL1.pdf

Palmer report: http://www.mhtrust.org/documents/Palmer_Mental_Health_Court_Evaluation_.pdf

CORRECTIONS

PEW REPORT ON MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

In May, the Pew Center on the States published a report to help Departments of Corrections improve prison operations, reduce crime, and address increasing prison costs. This report, *Ten Steps Corrections Directors Can Take to Strengthen Performance*, is based on an assessment conducted by Pew to identify effective management practices.

http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/sentencing_and_corrections/8098PCTS_TenActions_finalLOW.pdf

COST- BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The Campbell Collaboration recently released a systematic review entitled, *Benefit-Cost Analyses of Sentencing*. This review examines the following sentencing options: pre-trial diversions, community orders, fines, probation, participation in drug treatment programs, victim awareness and anger-management programs, boot camps, jail and imprisonment. Though difficult to compare sentencing options directly due to a lack of standardized approaches for calculating costs and benefits, the review indicates that, overall, rehabilitative programs combined with structure (such as a custodial sentence) may be cost-beneficial.

http://db.czadmin.org/doc-pdf/McDougall_C-B_Analysis_review.pdf

SEX OFFENDER RESIDENCY RESTRICTIONS

A new study by Chajewski and Mercado in the July 2008 issue of *Criminal Justice Policy Review* used geographic mapping software to examine the likely impact of residency restrictions for sex offenders on housing availability and distances of sex offenders and community member residences from schools. Sex offenders living in urban areas would be the group most likely to have difficulty finding housing, but residency shortages would also likely occur in rural and suburban areas. Sex offenders who are not acquainted with child victims, were no more likely to live near schools than community members or offenders who were acquainted with adult victims. Finally, nearly all sex offenders and community members lived within 2,500 feet of schools. This suggests that residential proximity to schools is related to urban planning rather than being a choice by sex offenders to live near schools. *An Evaluation of Sex Offender Residency Restriction Functioning in Town, County, and City-Wide Jurisdictions* is available from Sage Publications at <http://cjp.sagepub.com/archive/>.

TIP OF THE MONTH

Write better, clearer objectives: Forget *and*, *through*, and *by*.

For example, ‘reduce fear of crime *through* improving police-community relations’ should be two objectives. You can explain in the narrative that you expect fear of crime to be reduced when relations between the police and community are improved. By developing two objectives from this one phrase it will be easier to explain the activities and corresponding performance measures associated with each objective.