

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

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This project is supported by Grant No. 2009-DB-BX-K031 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Justice. Privacy Statement and Disclaimer: www.usdoj.gov/privacy-file.htm.

Evaluation News provides information on the BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement, 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A new presentation, *2009 JAG Performance Measurement Tool Training: Performance Measures and Program Management for JAG*, has been added to the Evaluation and Performance Measurement Resources section of the BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/reference>). This presentation was developed by JRSA and presented as part of the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Justice Assistance Grant Performance Measurement Tool Regional Trainings.

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a report that examined the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy's "Top Tier Evidence Initiative." This initiative was designed to help Congressional and Executive Branch policymakers identify interventions for which randomized experiments show sizeable and sustained benefits to participants or society as a whole. GAO examined (1) the Coalition's process for identifying these interventions, (2) how this process compared to other federally supported efforts to identify effective interventions, (3) the types of interventions that are best suited for assessment with randomized experiments, and (4) alternative rigorous methods used to assess effectiveness. One of the findings of this report was that requiring evidence from randomized studies as the only proof of effectiveness will likely exclude many potentially effective and worthwhile practices. While GAO agreed that randomized experiments were the best method for assessing effectiveness, they felt that other rigorous methods are appropriate when randomized assignment is not possible. The full report, *Program Evaluation: A Variety of Rigorous Methods Can Help Identify Effective Interventions*, can be found at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d1030.pdf>.

RECIDIVISM

Rettinger and Andrews examined recidivism among 411 female offenders that were either incarcerated or under community supervision in the province of Ontario. With this study they aimed to expand the knowledge of female offending by exploring how well various factors predict criminal behavior. These factors included traditional gender-neutral variables as well as several gender-specific variables suggested as relevant by feminist perspectives. These perspectives assert that traditional risk assessment tools fail to adequately address factors that influence female offenders. The analyses revealed that the gender-neutral, Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI), performed very well in the prediction of general and violent recidivism of female offenders. Additionally, it revealed that concerns regarding the use of a gender-

Useful resources for criminal justice program evaluation and performance measurement are available at the BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement web site: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation>.

neutral approach to assess women were not supported. The study, *General Risk and Need, Gender Specificity, and the Recidivism of Female Offenders*, is available in the January 2010 issue of *Criminal Justice and Behavior* at: <http://cjb.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/1/29>

SEX OFFENDERS

The authors of this study examined the effects of South Carolina's sex offender registration and notification policy on adult recidivism. The current policy in South Carolina is considered broad, in that it subjects all registered sex offenders to internet notification, regardless of the risk posed by the offender. Internet notification refers to posting sex offenders' information in a publicly accessible online database. In 1994, sex offenders were required to register with law enforcement. In 1999, this registration expanded to include internet notification. In this study the authors analyzed data for a sample of 6,064 male offenders convicted of at least one sex offense between 1990 and 2004. They used models to estimate the influence of registration status on the risk of sexual recidivism while controlling for the length of time that offenders were in the community. Their analyses revealed that registration status at the time of recidivism was not associated with reduced risk of sex crime recidivism or reduced time to detection of sex crime recidivism. These findings were consistent whether recidivism was defined as new charges or new convictions. They found no evidence that South Carolina's policy decreased sex offender recidivism, which was consistent with the majority of outcome studies examining sex offender registration and notification systems. However, this study did not control for changes in the notification and other policies that occurred during the study. The study, *Effects of South Carolina's Sex Offender Registration and Notification Policy on Adult Recidivism*, is available in *Criminal Justice Policy Review* at: <http://cjp.sagepub.com/cgi/rapidpdf/0887403409353148v1>

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The Center for Court Innovation recently completed an evaluation of DWI drug courts in Erie and Niagara counties in New York. These courts were launched in June 2007 to address persistent Driving While Intoxicated (DWI). Both courts were based on the drug court model and targeted non-violent felony DWI offenders who have at least one prior DWI conviction and who have been identified as having an alcohol abuse problem. This evaluation was designed to assess the impact of these courts on re-arrest and case processing. In addition, this report also examined DWI court compliance and alcohol use outcomes of those in the DWI court study. The evaluation revealed that overall re-arrest rates were low among participants and the comparison group, which was consistent with previous research. While the DWI court participants were slightly less likely to be re-arrested at six months and one year than the comparison group, these findings were not statistically significant. Further analyses showed that the DWI court did not significantly impact the amount of time that participants remained crime-free. At the time of this evaluation the vast majority of participants were actively enrolled in the program. Of the 23 participants that were no longer in the program, 20 participants had successfully completed the program. Additionally, the DWI court was not found to have an impact on case processing. The study, *The Drug Court Model and Persistent DWI: An Evaluation of the Erie and Niagara DWI/Drug Courts*, is available at: http://courttechnology.org/uploads/documents/dwi_court_evaluation.pdf

TIP OF THE MONTH

The GAO report highlighted in this month's Evaluation News addressed an issue that impacts many evaluation efforts. The GAO report argues that randomized experiments provide the most credible evidence of effectiveness, but random assignment is not always possible or appropriate. They offer the following alternatives to randomized experiments: quasi-experimental comparison group studies, statistical analyses of observational data, and in-depth case studies. For more information about these alternatives check out these web sites:

- BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement, Guide to Program Evaluation:
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/guide/index.htm>
- Colorado State University Writing Guides, Case Study:
<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/casestudy/>
- Research Methods Knowledge Base:
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/>