

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

Send questions and comments to
bjaeval@jrsa.org

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement at the Justice Research and Statistics Association
777 N. Capitol St., NE, Suite 801
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 842-9330

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bjaeval@jrsa.org

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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.

POLICING

The Home Office in the United Kingdom has released a review of the evidence related to public confidence in the police. It summarizes research and provides an assessment of local practices. Interventions were classified into categories: what works, what looks promising, and potential pitfalls. The strategies found most likely to be effective in improving confidence in the police were those aimed at increasing community engagement. Some of these included embedding neighborhood policing, high quality community interactions, and utilizing local-level communications. In terms of neighborhood policing, analysis revealed that the full implementation was critical to achieve desired results. Programs that target confidence-building activities to localized areas where they are most needed were identified as a promising approach. The best intervention for any community was reported to be one that fits its needs and conditions and is compatible with available resources. The report, *Improving Public Confidence in the Police: A Review of the Evidence*, is available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/horr28c.pdf>.

RECIDIVISM

Hawkin and Kleiman have completed an evaluation of Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (HOPE) program. The program is designed to reduce crime and drug use among criminal offenders who are likely to violate their conditions of community supervision. This is accomplished by: notifying offenders that violations will have consequences; conducting frequent and random drug testing; responding to detected violations (e.g., failed drug tests) with swift, certain and short terms of incarceration; issuing warrants for and imposing sanctions on absconding probationers; and mandating drug treatment upon request for probationers that do not abstain from drug use. The study was based on 493 eligible probationers identified as being at a higher risk of violating probation based on a risk assessment and past behavior while under supervision. Probationers were randomly assigned to the HOPE program or standard probation. These groups did not differ statistically in terms of age, sex, race, or ethnicity. Study results show that the HOPE program was largely implemented as designed. Also, HOPE probationers showed large reductions in positive drug tests and missed appointments, and were significantly less likely to be arrested at three months, six months and one year than those on standard probation. The report, *The Impact of Hawaii's HOPE Program on Drug Use, Crime and Recidivism*, is available at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/229023.pdf>.

Rengifo and Stemen assessed the impact of Kansas's Senate Bill SB 123 on recidivism. This bill created mandatory community-based drug treatment for non-violent drug offenders convicted of a first or second drug offense. The treatment group consisted of 1,494 offenders sentenced to mandatory treatment. The comparison group included 4,359 offenders sentenced to prison, court services or community corrections. Recidivism was defined as a reconviction or a return to prison for a technical violation. Overall, the results indicate that SB 123 had no significant impact on recidivism compared to community cor-

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<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation>.

rections and increased the chances of recidivism compared to court services. The authors believe that this was largely due to the increased number of revocations tied to higher levels of supervision. The study, *The Impact of Drug Treatment on Recidivism: Do Mandatory Minimums Make a Difference? Evidence from Kansas's Senate Bill 123*, is available at: <http://cad.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/0011128709348447v1>.

Andrews and Bonta recently published an article titled *Rehabilitating Criminal Justice Policy and Practice*. In this article they argue that for over 30 years justice policy has been dominated by a “get tough” approach to offenders. They argue that research has shown that a better approach would be to place the emphasis on rehabilitating offenders utilizing programs based on the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model. This model has been shown to reduce recidivism by addressing the risks and needs of offenders. Specifically, they argue that effective programs should: direct intensive services to high-risk offenders and minimize services to low-risk offenders; target criminogenic needs in treatment; and provide treatment that is responsive to the offender’s learning style and ability. Programs based on the RNR model have been shown to reduce recidivism, but the authors note that it is vital to maintain the integrity of program delivery and the quality of services. The article can be found at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/10768971>.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy recently completed an evaluation of Washington’s Offender Accountability Act (OAA). Per legislative requirement, the Department of Corrections (DOC) conducted an assessment of each offender’s risk for recidivism and then allocated resources accordingly. The results of the initial examination showed: recidivism rates are higher today than they have been in the past 20 years and recidivism rates have dropped since the OAA became fully effective in 2002. To test whether these reductions could be attributed to the OAA, the authors used criminal history and DOC risk assessment data to simulate the probability of recidivism for each offender during the OAA period. The simulated recidivism rates were then compared to actual recidivism rates to test the OAA’s causal influence. The analysis revealed: the increase in recidivism over the past 20 years could largely be explained by today’s offenders having a greater risk of recidivism and that recidivism rates have dropped since the implementation of the OAA. The analyses could not attribute these results to the OAA. The drop in recidivism may be the result of the OAA, other factors, or a combination of both. The report, *Washington’s Offender Accountability Act: Final Report on Recidivism Outcomes*, is available at: <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/10-01-1201.pdf>.

EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT RESOURCES

The Vera Institute of Justice has recently posted a six-part video interview series focusing on the use of cost-benefit analysis in justice policy. The series features Steve Aos, the Associate Director of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. The interview series is available at: <http://www.vera.org/>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Annual Jerry Lee Crime Prevention Symposium Systematic, *Evidence on What Works in Crime and Justice*, is being held April 19-20, 2010 in College Park, MD. For more information see: <http://gunston.gmu.edu/cebcp/JerryLee.html>.

The Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) at George Mason University seeks to make scientific research a key component in decisions about crime and justice policies by advancing rigorous studies in criminal justice and criminology. CEBCP’s most recent newsletter includes a discussion on defining evidence-based crime policy. The newsletter is available at: <http://gunston.gmu.edu/cebcp/newsletterjan10.pdf>.

TIP OF THE MONTH

Studies often present results as significant or not significant. To better understand this, it is important to define significance. In everyday usage, significant means important. When used in statistics, significance refers to something that is likely true or, in other words, it is not due to chance. Statistical significance is presented as a significance level. Significance levels can be confusing because while this number represents the likelihood that the results were not caused by chance, it is represented by the converse—or the likelihood that the results did occur by chance. For example, a common significance level is .05. This means that there is a 95% chance that the results did not occur by chance. The lower the significance level, the more certain one can be that the results did not occur by chance. For example, .01 means that there is a 99% chance that the results did not occur by chance. For more information see: <http://www.statsoft.com/textbook/elementary-concepts-in-statistics/#What>.

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