

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@jrja.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

To subscribe or unsubscribe to *Evaluation News*, send an email with your request to bjaeval@jrja.org

This project is supported by Grant No. 2010-D2-BX-K028 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.

Drug Courts

Urban Institute, the Center for Court Innovation, and RTI International have recently completed a study of drug courts. The study, funded by the National Institute of Justice, compared participants in 23 adult drug courts in seven states to similar defendants who went through conventional case processing. This study addressed the following questions: (1) do drug courts work in reducing substance abuse, crime, and other psychosocial problems?; (2) do drug courts work better for some types of participants than others?; (3) what are the mechanisms through which drug courts achieve positive effects?; and 4) what are the net benefits of drug courts? The results indicate that the drug courts produced significant reductions in drug relapse and criminal behavior over the 18 -month follow-up period. A comparison of different offender types revealed that nearly all categories of offenders benefit comparably from the drug court. The findings also revealed that the judge, offender attitudes, and court procedures played a central role in outcomes. Offenders that felt that they were treated fairly had more positive attitudes towards the judge and better outcomes. Courtroom observations revealed that drug courts with judges that exhibited a more positive judicial demeanor produced better outcomes than other drug courts. Drug court offenders that perceived the consequences of program failure as undesirable had fewer infractions and less substance use than others; offender motivation to succeed as well as perceptions related to certainty, severity, or undesirability of immediate sanctions did not have an effect on outcomes. Higher levels of judicial supervision and drug testing, and attendance at more than a month of substance abuse treatment were related to fewer crimes and reductions in substance abuse. Lastly, this research demonstrated that while the costs of drug courts are higher than traditional case processing, they save money through improved outcomes. Cost savings were mostly attributed to a reduction in serious offending by a few individuals. The report includes several policy and practice implications. The full report, *The Multi-Site Adult Drug Court Evaluation* is available at:

<http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412353-multi-site-adult-drug-court.pdf>

Policing

The Campbell Collaboration recently released a systematic review of the evidence concerning the degree to which geographically focused policing initiatives are related to spatial displacement of crime or the diffusion of crime control benefits. One of the most common criticisms associated with geographically focused policing initiatives (such as hot spots policing and crackdowns) is that the crime will simply move (i.e., be displaced) because the underlying causes of crime were not addressed. The results suggest that in the majority of studies the treatment areas experienced a decrease in crime. Further, the majority of studies also showed the possibility of a diffusion of benefit outside of the treatment area; this suggests that crime is not displaced. The full report, *Spatial Displacement and Diffusion of*

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>.

Benefits Among Geographically Focused Policing Initiatives, is available at:
<http://campbellcollaboration.org/lib/download/1171/>

Other Reports

Mental Health Assessment

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy recently released a report detailing the results of a legislatively-mandated review of validated mental health assessment tools used for court-ordered competency to stand trial assessments of defendants, and recommendations to courts regarding the appropriateness of conditional release from inpatient treatment of criminally insane patients. The report includes a review of various assessment instruments, the results of a survey of state forensic evaluators, and options for assessment strategies and instruments, with advantages and disadvantages of each option. The full report, *Competency to Stand Trial and Conditional Release Evaluations: Current and Potential Role of Forensic Assessment Instruments*, is available at: <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/pub.asp?docid=11-05-3401>

Justice Reinvestment

Justice Reinvestment is a data-driven approach to reduce corrections spending and reinvest savings in strategies that can decrease crime and strengthen neighborhoods. This approach brings together policymakers, experts, and stakeholders to work to accomplish three phases: analyze data and develop policy options, adopt new policies and put reinvestment strategies into place, and measure performance. The Council of State Governments Justice Center is working with a handful of states to implement justice reinvestment strategies. Recent case studies have demonstrated some of the positive outcomes associated with this approach. For example, in Texas this approach has been linked to a stabilization in prison population, fewer probation and parole failures and savings of nearly half a billion dollars. For more information on Justice Reinvestment in Texas and other states see:

- The National Summit on Justice Reinvestment and Public Safety: Addressing Recidivism, Crime, and Corrections Spending
http://justicereinvestment.org/files/JR_Summit_Report_Final.pdf
- Texas Justice Reinvestment: Outcomes, Challenges and Policy Options to Consider
<http://justicereinvestment.org/files/TXJRStateReport32011v2.pdf>

Tip of the Month

What should you look for when choosing an evaluator?

Organizations seeking an evaluation often lack the experience to conduct an evaluation or need an objective perspective. In these cases, the organization will need to hire an outside evaluator. When choosing an evaluator it is important to consider an evaluator's experience and skills as well as the actual evaluation plan submitted for the current project. These will provide clues about their experience and knowledge as well as their evaluation style and help an organization ensure that they select an evaluator appropriate for them. For more information see:

- Hiring and Working with an Evaluator
<http://www.jrsa.org/njiec/publications/evaluator.pdf>
- Choosing and Using an External Evaluator
http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/publications/hiv_handbook/pdfs/hiv_booklet07.pdf