

*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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*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.*

### CORRECTIONS

#### **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) recently completed an outcome evaluation of the effectiveness of chemical dependency (CD) treatment provided within the DOC. The evaluation uses official system data to compare recidivism outcomes between treated and untreated offenders released from prison in 2005. Recidivism was defined as rearrests, felony convictions, and reincarceration for a new offense within 36 to 48 months of prison discharge. Researchers did not have access to post-prison substance use data. The sample consisted of matched groups of 926 treated offenders and 926 untreated offenders. The results are consistent with previous findings showing that prison-based CD treatment significantly reduces offender recidivism. Those substance abusers who received substance abuse treatment recidivated less often and more slowly than substance abusers who did not receive treatment. Those completing treatment and those in short-term programs (90 days) and medium-term programs (180 days) were least likely to recidivate. The report, *Prison-Based Chemical Dependency Treatment in Minnesota: An Outcome Evaluation* is available at: [http://www.corr.state.mn.us/publications/documents/03-10CDTXEvaluationReport\\_Revised.pdf](http://www.corr.state.mn.us/publications/documents/03-10CDTXEvaluationReport_Revised.pdf)

#### **REENTRY**

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) recently released its third annual report on the San Diego Prisoner Reentry Program. The key program components are based on best practices and include conducting screenings and assessments and providing case management and services to meet identified needs. The report describes the program implementation, outlines the research methodology, and presents preliminary findings from the process and impact evaluation. Thus far the process evaluation has revealed the following: good communication and strong collaboration has been the key to successful program implementation, participants' needs were assessed within the expected timeframe, over three-quarters (78%) of the treatment group participated in programming while in prison and over two-thirds (69%) received services in the community during the six months following prison release. Key findings from the impact evaluation included: treatment group participants were significantly less likely than the comparison group to be returned to prison within the first six months of community reentry, treatment group participants were five times more likely to be employed six months post-release compared to the comparison group, employed individuals were less likely to have a new arrest within 6 months of release, and preliminary data suggest that program participation reduced substance use and improves social supports, housing, and employment. The report, *Improving Reentry for Ex-Offenders In San Diego County: SB618 Third An-*

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>.

nual Evaluation Report, is available at:

[http://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid\\_1488\\_11261.pdf](http://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_1488_11261.pdf)

## **ADJUDICATION**

### **MENTAL HEALTH COURTS**

The Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense recently released a report detailing their efforts to evaluate mental health public defenders (MHPDs) and mental health courts (MH courts). Both of these criminal justice interventions create means through which a contact with the justice system can be used to address therapeutic needs of people with mental illness. It was hypothesized that mental health courts would have a positive impact on four major outcomes including pre-disposition jail days, mental health treatment engagement, case disposition and recidivism. Results are based on all individuals who enrolled in the program. While it was hypothesized that mental health court participants would be detained fewer days prior to being released on bond, the examination of pre-trial jail days found no statistically significant differences. That is, participants in each of the mental health courts evaluated were released from detention at approximately the same time as otherwise identical non-participants. Since mental health courts are designed to link offenders to care and other services, it was therefore expected that participants would show long-term benefits of increased treatment engagement after leaving the program. The results showed significant increases in long-term treatment engagements for all diagnoses. When case disposition was examined, large, statistically significant reductions in the chance of a guilty verdict were observed for participants in both Dallas and Tarrant County mental health courts. Finally, the results show that, as desired, six months after case disposition, people represented by the mental health public defender experienced significantly lower rates of recidivism than otherwise identical people who were not in the program. Additionally, recidivism continued to be suppressed up to 18 months after case disposition for defendants with schizophrenia. The report, *Representing the Mentally Ill Offender: An Evaluation of Advocacy Alternatives*, is available at:

<http://www.courts.state.tx.us/tfid/pdf/MHStudyFinal.pdf>

## **OTHER REPORTS**

The Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) at Community Resources for Justice was contracted by the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), in conjunction with the Virginia Community Criminal Justice Association (VCCJA), to develop a Roadmap for the implementation of evidence-based practices in local probation and pretrial agencies across the state. The Roadmap offers insights into lessons learned during the implementation of evidence-based practices (EBP) and provides proven strategies for addressing challenges to sustainable change for community corrections agencies. While Virginia-specific, the document contains content and tools that are applicable to agencies and systems everywhere. The Roadmap provides practical guidance and useful information to agencies that would like to implement or continue to employ evidence-based practices. It includes comprehensive chapters on lessons learned in the implementation of EBP, organizational assessment, strategic planning and workplan development, assuring fidelity and quality, managing change, and stakeholder collaboration. The report, *Commonwealth of Virginia: Roadmap for Evidence-Based Practices in Community Corrections* is available at: [http://cjinstitute.org/files/Roadmap\\_Final.pdf](http://cjinstitute.org/files/Roadmap_Final.pdf).

## **TIP OF THE MONTH**

To ensure that evaluation results are relevant and useful for learning, decision-making, or for taking some other type of action it is important to engage stakeholders in shaping the evaluation. Stakeholders are the relevant individuals, groups, or communities that have an interest in the policy or program being evaluated. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has developed a guide to engaging stakeholders. To download a copy of *A Practical Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions* see: <http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/49951.stakeholders.final.1.pdf>