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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.

Reentry

Prendergast, et al. conducted a multi-site, randomized study to test whether strengths-based case management provided during an inmate's transition from incarceration to the community increases participation in community substance abuse treatment, enhances access to needed social services, and decreases drug use, crime, and HIV risk behaviors. Strengths-based case management is characterized by the focus on the client's strengths rather than their pathology or deficits, aggressive outreach and the client-case manager relationship. This study examined 812 male and female inmates in four states that were randomly assigned to receive either Transitional Case Management (TCM), based on strengths-based principles, or standard parole services (SR). The findings revealed no significant differences between parolees in the TCM group and the SR group on outcomes related to participation in drug abuse treatment, receipt of social services, or drug use, crime, and HIV risk behaviors. Contrary to positive findings reported in earlier studies of strengths-based case management with mental-health and drug-abuse clients, this study found that strengths-based case management did not improve treatment participation or behavioral outcomes for parolees with drug problems. The study, *A multi-site, randomized study of strengths-based case management with substance-abusing parolees*, was published in the April 2011 issue of the Journal of Experimental Criminology. The study is available at: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/p04124166n594715/>

Drug Courts

The Center for Court Innovation recently conducted a pilot study to explore the value of applying a brief screening tool, the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Short Screener (GAIN-SS), for substance abuse and dependence in a high volume criminal court setting. This screener was developed for the purpose of rapidly identifying those individuals who would be likely to have a disorder identified if they were administered the full GAIN assessment. The GAIN-SS was piloted with 170 eligible defendants referred to the Brooklyn Treatment Court (BCT) over a seven month period. In terms of efficiency, the results indicate that the screener took approximately twice as long to administer as had been predicted. Case managers also reported that many of the terms required additional explanation, which impeded efficiency and administration time. Researchers also assessed the accuracy of GAIN-SS at identifying defendants with a substance abuse problem, but no serious mental health disorder. The results indicate that the GAIN-SS correctly identified all of those defendants eligible for drug courts; however, it also found eligible defendants who clinical staff deemed to be ineligible due to no discernable addiction. The results indicate that the GAIN SS more accurately identified defendants who the case managers found to be ineligible for drug court due to a serious mental health problem compared to its performance in identifying substance abuse. Given the high prevalence of substance abuse and dependence in the population 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>.

defendants referred to BTC, the authors stated that there are more useful screeners than the GAIN-SS. The results indicate that the GAIN-SS was less accurate and efficient than had been expected. The report, *Evidence-Based Screening among Drug Involved Defendants: Piloting the GAIN Short Screener in the Brooklyn Treatment Court*, is available at: http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/GAIN_Short_Screener_1.pdf

Other Reports

The Crime and Justice Institute at Community Resources for Justice and the National Institute of Corrections recently released a manual that focuses on Implementing Evidence-based Practices (EBP) in adult community supervision. Some of the topics covered in this manual include: organizational assessment, strategic planning, developing a work plan, and creating a culture of ongoing quality improvement. This manual also includes other valuable resources such as: a list of EBP practitioners, resources and references, employee tip sheets, and information pertaining to data collection preparation and developing a communication plan. The manual, *Putting the Pieces Together Practical Strategies for Implementing Evidence-Based Practices*, is available at: http://www.cjinstitute.org/files/Putting_Pieces_Together_ImpManual508_033011.pdf

Gill recently conducted a study that was designed to assess quality of reporting of issues that may affect internal and external validity in randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in criminology, and explore the impact of reporting quality (descriptive validity) on the policy relevance of rigorous research. Specifically, the author applied the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT), a 22-item checklist of trial characteristics to be reported, to 38 RCTs covering a range of criminal justice interventions. The results indicate that these studies were particularly strong in reporting on items relevant to external validity or generalizability, which is of paramount importance in translating evidence into practice across different populations and settings. In addition, studies conducted by criminologists and sociologists or focused on more traditional criminal justice strategies and settings performed as well, and sometimes better, than crime-related studies conducted within health science disciplines. The study, *Missing links: how descriptive validity impacts the policy relevance of randomized controlled trials in criminology*, was published in the April 2011 issue of the *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. The study is available at: <https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/3215p435p2820w38/resource-secured/?target=fulltext.pdf&sid=004awt55nxtsw245j3audtv5&sh=www.springerlink.com>

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy recently released a report that details their search for validated mental health assessment instruments to be used for decisions on competency to stand trial and recommendations to courts regarding the appropriateness of conditional release from inpatient treatment of criminally insane patients. In addition to providing overviews of the instruments reviewed, this report also summarizes findings from an October 2010 survey of state evaluators and identifies three options regarding the state's potential adoption of such assessment tools. 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/rptfiles/11-05-3401.pdf>

Tip of the Month

Have you prioritized your evaluation questions?

When evaluating programs, evaluators almost always have more questions than can be answered. Often the time or costs associated with answering questions make it impractical to answer all of them. As a result, evaluators must decide which questions are most important. Prioritizing evaluation questions is a useful approach to collecting the information that is most important to know about the program that is being evaluated. The Minnesota Office of Justice Programs has developed a Tip Sheet that suggests some approaches for prioritizing research questions. Some of these suggestions include reviewing the program logic model to identify the most important research questions related to the program's outcomes, processes, and satisfaction. For more information on prioritizing evaluation questions see:

<http://www.wilder.org/download.0.html?report=1916>