

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.

Research Summaries

Substance Abuse

The Campbell Collaboration recently completed a systematic review of the evidence regarding the effectiveness of incarceration-based drug treatment in reducing drug relapse and recidivism. Specifically, this systematic review addresses three main questions: 1) Are incarceration-based drug treatment programs effective in reducing recidivism and drug use? 2) Approximately how effective are these programs? 3) Are there particular types of drug treatment programs that are especially effective or ineffective? The review is based on 66 independent evaluations, all of which used a comparison group. The findings show that approximately 83% of the drug treatment groups had lower recidivism rates than the comparison groups and that on average participation in these drug treatment programs was associated with a modest reduction in post-treatment offending. The average recidivism rate for comparison groups was 35% compared to approximately 28% for the treatment group. The effectiveness of drug treatment varied by type of treatment: Boot camps aimed at drug-involved offenders were ineffective in reducing re-offending and drug relapse. Group counseling programs exhibited reductions in re-offending but not drug use. Therapeutic communities showed strong and consistent reductions in drug relapse and recidivism. Finally, narcotic maintenance programs did not demonstrate reductions in re-offending or drug use, but the authors caution that evidence on narcotic maintenance programs was weak. The full review, *The Effectiveness of Incarceration-Based Drug Treatment on Criminal Behavior*, is available at: http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/reviews_crime_justice/index.php

Corrections

The Vera Institute's Center on Sentencing and Corrections and Cost-Benefit Analysis Unit recently released a cost-benefit analysis designed to assess the full cost of prisons to taxpayers. Their methodology involved calculating costs not included in states' corrections budgets, including: (1) costs that are centralized for administrative purposes, such as employee benefits and capital costs; (2) inmate services funded through other agencies, such as education and training programs; and (3) the cost of underfunded pension and retiree health care plans. To assess the cost of prisons, researchers developed and administered a survey of state correctional departments and analyzed public documents regarding funding levels for pensions and retiree health care, as well as statewide administrative costs. A total of 40 states participated in the survey. The results of the analyses revealed that the cost of prisons in the 40 states included in the analysis was \$39 billion in fiscal year 2010, \$5.4 billion more than the amount reflected in corrections budgets. States' costs outside their corrections departments ranged from less than 1% of total prison costs in Arizona to as much as 34% in Connecticut. The

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>.

full report provides the taxpayer cost of incarcerating a sentenced adult offender to state prison in 40 states, presents the methodology, and concludes with recommendations about steps policymakers can take to address these costs without compromising public safety. The report, *The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers*, is available at: <http://www.vera.org/download?file=3495/the-price-of-prisons-updated.pdf>

Sentencing

Stemen and Rengifo recently completed an evaluation of Kansas Senate Bill 123. This bill mandated community-based supervision and substance abuse treatment for individuals convicted of a first or second offense of simple drug possession. Under SB123, judges must sentence nonviolent drug possessors who have no prior convictions for drug sale or manufacture to up to 18 months of community corrections supervision and drug treatment. The goals of SB123 are to reduce prison populations by creating a mandatory non-prison sentence to divert prison-bound drug possessors at sentencing and decrease recidivism rates for drug possessors by creating comprehensive community-based drug treatment. This evaluation documents the first five years of implementation of SB123 (2003 - 2008) and it examines its impact on recidivism rates and on prison populations as well as on the work routines of criminal justice system actors. Individual-level impacts were assessed using sentencing and revocation data collected by the Kansas Sentencing Commission on 10,467 SB 123-eligible drug possessors sentenced between November 1, 2001 and October 31, 2007. Measures of recidivism included probation revocation, reconviction, and re-arrest, and were calculated at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months. Researchers generated three matched samples to compare the recidivism rates of offenders sentenced under SB123 with those of similar individuals sentenced to community corrections or court services (minimal supervision). System-level impacts were then estimated by modeling prison populations based on changes in new admissions and revocations. Supervision and program participation data provided by the Kansas Department of Corrections were used to assess the use of drug treatment, education and employment services, and sanctions for 6,794 individuals sentenced to SB123 or standard community corrections. The results indicated that SB123 reduced admissions to prison for drug possession. However, the bill also created significant front-end net-widening, meaning that it drew offenders primarily from court services (probation with minimal conditions) and subjected them to stricter conditions and greater surveillance than they would have received prior to its implementation. The NIJ-funded evaluation, *Alternative Sentencing Policies for Drug Offenders: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Kansas Senate Bill 123, Final Report*, is available <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/238012.pdf>

Other Reports

Evidence-Based Practices

Advancing Practice is a publication of the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!) at George Mason University. It highlights the Center's work to advance the study and practice of evidence-based policies and practices (EBPPs). The March 2012 issue focuses on reentry. The newsletter includes articles on "what works" in reentry (residential treatment, substance abuse treatment, and other psychosocial treatments); the role of corrections officers in reentry; mental health issues in reentry; and the findings of the Center's recent studies on probation and parole. The issue of *Advancing Practice* is available at: <http://www.gmuace.org/newsletters/Advancing%20Practice%20March%202012.pdf>

Announcements

The 12th Annual Jerry Lee Crime Prevention Symposium will be held in Washington, DC on April 23 and at the University of Maryland on April 24. Day 1 will cover low cost experiments and cutting costs in policing, the effects of community policing, and the impact of electronic monitoring on reoffending. Day 1 closes with a discussion on "The Costs of Cutting Criminal Justice and the Promises of Evidence-Based Policy." Day 2 will feature a panel on experimental criminology and a session on propensity score matching as a substitute for randomized experiments. Registration is free, but space is limited, so they ask that you pre-register at: <http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/JerryLee.html>

Tip of the Month*What is an Effect Size? Interpreting the results of meta-analyses*

A meta-analysis is a statistical analysis of a large collection of studies for the purpose of integrating and comparing the findings. It can be useful for establishing whether findings are consistent and generalizable across different populations, settings, and program variations, or whether findings vary significantly by particular subgroups. The results of meta-analyses are expressed as an effect size (ES) and reported as either a Standard Mean Difference (d) or Correlation (r). To understand these methods of reporting effect sizes, you must understand how to interpret the effect sizes. Below is a table that shows the effect size thresholds for each of these methods of reporting effect sizes. For example, an effect size of .15 using a standard mean difference would be interpreted as a program having a small effect on the outcome.

Test	Effect Size Threshold		
	Small	Medium	Large
Standard Mean Difference (d)	.20	.50	.80
Correlation (r)	.10	.30	.50

For more information on effect size and interpreting the results of meta-analyses, see:

- *Meta-Analysis: Formulation and Interpretation*
<http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/neuro/documents%5Cmetalanalysis.pdf>
- Meta-Analysis Notes
<http://www.stat-help.com/meta.pdf>
- *Thresholds for Interpreting Effect Sizes*
[http://www.polyu.edu.hk/mm/effectsizafaqs/thresholds for interpreting effect sizes2.html](http://www.polyu.edu.hk/mm/effectsizafaqs/thresholds%20for%20interpreting%20effect%20sizes2.html)