

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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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

Announcements: Program Area Updates

There are two updates to the Program Areas on The Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement web site. The updates include a new program area on Offender-based Policing and extensive revisions to the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program area. These updates can be found here:

Offender-Based Policing

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/program-law-enforcement/offender-index.htm

Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT)

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/program-substance-abuse/rsat-index.htm

Law Enforcement

Storey, Gibas, Reeves, and Hart examined a program intended to train criminal justice professionals on the use of violence risk (threat) assessment instruments. Utilizing pre and post-training surveys they evaluated a violence risk assessment training program's impact on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the participants. The program covered principles of violence risk assessment, the nature of mental disorder and its association with violence risk, and the use of various structured professional judgment (SPJ) risk assessment instruments. A total of 73 participants completed pre and post-training surveys. The results of this study were consistent with previous studies that demonstrate that aspects of the SPJ model of violence risk assessment can be taught to and accurately used by various professional groups. Participants demonstrated improved knowledge between the pre and post-training surveys, showed significant improvement in their ability to accurately use the risk assessment skills learned in training in an applied manner, and reported improved confidence, competence, and knowledge following training. *Evaluation of a Violence Risk (Threat) Assessment Training Program for Police and Other Criminal Justice Professionals*, was published in the April 2011 issue of *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. The study is available at:

<http://cjb.sagepub.com/content/38/6/554>

Recidivism

White, Mellow, Englander, and Ruffinengo examined a therapeutic technical violator program in New Jersey called Halfway Back. This program is highly structured and is intended to be an alternative to incarceration for parolees who have not quite succeeded on ordinary parole release, but have demonstrated some potential for success in an environment 'halfway' between prison and parole. To evaluate the program the authors employed a quasi-experimental, retrospective matched groups design. The study explores the impact of the program through a comparison of recidivism and incarceration costs among samples of program participants (n = 227) and nonparticipants (n = 392). The results suggest that program participants experienced modest, though statistically significant, reductions in new arrests over the 18-month follow-up period. The cost analysis results were not as clear. While the cost analyses demonstrate that placement of technical parole

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

violators in the Halfway Back program represents a less expensive alternative to state prison, the degree to which these savings are realized remains unclear because not all of the costs associated with changes in prison populations were assessed in this study. The full report, *Halfway Back: An Alternative to Revocation for Technical Parole Violators*, was published in the May 2011 issue of Criminal Justice Policy Review. The study is available at: <http://cjp.sagepub.com/content/22/2/140>

Drug Courts

Downey and Roman discuss an empirical model developed by the District of Columbia Crime Policy Institute (DCPI) that combines meta-analysis and cost-benefit analysis. The DCPI model utilizes Bayesian statistical methods to test whether the expected outcomes of implementing a policy or set of policies is worth the investment. To demonstrate the utility of the DCPI model the authors use data from 86 drug court evaluations previously coded for meta-analysis. The results of their analysis revealed several important findings: the average drug court does reduce recidivism, there is a great degree of variability in drug court effectiveness, in aggregate the number of arrests averted is not large, drug courts mostly prevent minor arrests, and, that there is a great degree of variability associated with assessment of the costs of drug courts and therefore, the authors do not conclude that drug courts are not cost-effective. The authors noted that while this research has demonstrated that there is capacity for effectiveness, further research on what types of courts are most effective could help reform drug courts to be more effective. The full report, *A Bayesian Meta-Analysis of Drug Court Cost-Effectiveness*, is available at:

http://www.dccrimepolicy.org/costbenefitanalysis/images/12-10-Bayesian-Cost-Benefit-Drug-Court_2.pdf

Other Reports

Cost Savings in Criminal Justice

The American Bar Association's State Policy Implementation Project has recently developed policy recommendations that are intended to save states money and improve the criminal justice system. Specifically, they have identified five key issues where they believe reform will improve community safety as well as reduce state spending. These areas are: pre-trial release reform, decriminalization of minor offenses, effective reentry programs, increased use of parole and probation, and community corrections programs. For each of these five policy areas they have created a packet that includes an introduction and overview, policy standards or guidelines, and sample or draft legislation. For states where relevant statutes have already been passed they identify studies that demonstrate fiscal savings and success rates. More information on the State Policy Implementation Project is available at: <http://www2.americanbar.org/sections/criminaljustice/CR203800/Pages/statepolicyproject.aspx>

Tip of the Month

In today's economic environment there is increasing concern with the benefits and costs associated with programs. It is important to be able to demonstrate any benefits generated by programs are worth the costs of achieving the benefits. Two analytical tools that are focused on this issue: benefit-cost analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis. Benefit-cost analysis is designed to assess service programs by determining whether total societal welfare has increased because of a given project or program. This type of analysis includes a three step process: 1) determine the benefits of a proposed or existing program and place a dollar value on those benefits; (2) calculate the total costs of the program; (3) compare the benefits and the costs. Cost-effectiveness analysis relates the cost of a given alternative to specific measures of program objectives. Unlike benefit-cost analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis does not produce an overall or "net benefit" number, with benefits exceeding costs or costs exceeding benefits. For more information about benefit-cost analysis and cost-effectiveness, see:

BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement, Guide to Program Evaluation

<http://www.bja.gov/evaluation/guide/g6.htm>

VERA Institute of Justice Cost-Benefit Knowledge Bank for Criminal Justice

<http://cbkb.org/>

Harvard Family Research Project's Evaluation Exchange

<http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/methodology-15/at-what-price-benefit-cost-analysis-and-cost-effectiveness-analysis-in-program-evaluation>

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