BJA JRSA

Evaluation News

Expanding Knowledge Through Information Exchange

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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.

Victim Services

The Rand Corporation recently completed a process evaluation of the National Center for Victims of Crime of the National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI) Victims' Rights Clinics. The NCVLI clinics are intended to promote awareness, education, and enforcement of victims' rights in the criminal justice system. The process evaluation addressed a variety of issues including: clinic activities, acceptance by judges and prosecutors, staff training, client selection, and suggested improvements to clinic operations. The researchers conducted interviews with clinic staff, criminal justice officials and clients. In addition to the interviews researchers conducted site visits which included focus groups with clinic clients. Some of the implementation challenges identified in the evaluation were: resistance of prosecutors and judges to the idea of victims being represented by attorneys in court, high staff turnover and inexperience, demand for services, and sustainability. Initial findings indicate that the clinics are beginning to meet their goals and that the clinics that build on the networks and reputations of experienced clinic directors have an easier time gaining clients and the cooperation of judges and prosecutors. The full report, *Finally Getting Victims Their Due: a Process Evaluation of the NCVLI Victims' Rights Clinics* is available at: http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/228389.pdf.

Reentry

Braga, Piehl, and Hureau evaluated the Boston Reentry Initiative (BRI). The BRI is an interagency initiative designed to prevent former violent offenders from engaging in criminal behavior by helping them transition from jail back to their Boston neighborhoods. The initiative involves the development of individual reintegration plans during and after offenders' incarceration. Case workers and mentors draw on a variety of programs to support the transition into the community, including substance abuse and mental health treatment and vocational development. The authors utilized a quasiexperimental design to evaluate the crime prevention efforts of the BRI, comparing the recidivism patterns of BRI participants and an equivalent comparison group. The recidivism measures used in this study were any new arrests and arrests for violent crimes after release from jail. Despite having high rearrest, the results indicate that the BRI participants had lower rearrest rates than those in the comparison group. While these differences narrowed over time, the BRI participants had lower rearrest rates at one, two and three years post-release than the comparison group. The full study, *Controlling Violent Offenders Released to the Community: Evaluation of the Boston Reentry Initiative* is available in the November 2009 issue of Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency at: http://jrc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/46/4/411.

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.

RECIDIVISM

Sandler and Freeman examined recidivism among female sex offenders. The study was based on a sample of 1,466 females convicted of a sexual offenders in New York state and explored the following: 1) offending prior to the commission of the offenders' first sexual offense, 2) rates of recidivism following their first sexual offense conviction, and 3) factors associated with the likelihood of sexual recidivism. Rearrest was used as the measure of recidivism. Due to the fact that a large number of the offenders received sentences other than custodial sentences, recidivism was measured at 1, 3, and 5 years post-conviction rather than release from custody. The analysis revealed that three factors significantly increased the likelihood of sexual recidivism following first conviction for a sexual offense. These were: a greater number of prior child victim convictions, a greater number of prior misdemeanor convictions, and increased offender age. The age finding was of particular interest since previous research on male sexual offenders has shown that increased age has been found to reduce the likelihood of recidivism among male sex offenders. Further, the results of this study indicate that female sex offenders are most likely to begin their sexual offending later in life when compared to males, typically following a history of low-level, non-sexual offending. The study, *Female Sex Offender Recidivism: A Large-Scale Empirical Analysis*, is available in the December 2009 issue of Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment at: http://sax.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/21/4/455.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Corsaro, Brunson, and McGarrell evaluated the impact of the Rockford, Illinois Police Department's use of problem-oriented policing strategies to address open-air drug markets. Specifically, the authors examined the "Pulling Levers" approach, which has most commonly been used to address violence and gang-related crime. This approach was first implemented in Boston and it is a multistage approach that consists of diagnosing a specific crime problem, convening an interagency working group, conducting research to identify patterns of chronic offenders and criminal networks, developing a specific response to law violators that uses a variety of sanctions, providing social services and community resources to targeted offenders, and directly and repeatedly communicating with offenders so that they understand why they are receiving special attention. The analysis is based on National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) crime data collected for all crimes between June 2006 and June 2008 and interviews with adult residents of the targeted neighborhood. The results of this study indicate that there were reductions in property, drug and nuisance offenses after the approach was implemented. While there were also reductions in violent crime, these reductions were not significant. The authors believe that a likely explanation for this is that violent offenses were relatively infrequent in the targeted area. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which indicate that strategies relying on both proactive and reactive policing tactics appear to be extremely promising for reducing drug and related crime. The study, *Problem-Oriented Policing and Open-Air Drug Markets: Examining the Rockford Pulling Levers Deterrence Strategy*, is available in the October 2009 issue of Crime & Delinquency at: http://cad.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/0011128709345955v1.

TIP OF THE MONTH

Surveys can be a very useful data collection tool. However, you must have a reasonable response rate to have confidence in the results. There are steps that you can take to improve the response rate, such as: keep the surveys short, send advance letters or make advance phone calls asking for participation and explaining the importance of participation, and send follow-up postcards or make follow-up calls to remind people to participate. For more information on surveys and improving response rates, please see: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/resources/pdf/Tipsheet1.pdf.