

*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.

### SEX OFFENDERS

Duwe and Goldman evaluated the effectiveness of prison-based treatment for sex offenders. This study examined the recidivism outcomes for 2,040 treated and untreated sex offenders released from Minnesota prisons between 1990 and 2003, with an average follow-up period of 9.3 years. The treatment program consisted of assessment, therapy, chemical dependency treatment, family/support education, and psychoeducational programming. The recidivism measures used in this study were rearrest, conviction, and reincarceration for a new offense. The authors found that the treatment group had lower reoffense rates than untreated offenders for each of the recidivism measures for sexual offenses, violent offenses, and general offenses. Overall, prison-based treatment in Minnesota did produce modest, but significant reductions in sex offender recidivism. The study, *The Impact of Prison-Based Treatment on Sex Offender Recidivism: Evidence from Minnesota*, is available at:

<http://sax.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/21/3/279>

Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus, and Hodgson conducted a meta-analysis to assess whether the principles associated with effective treatment for general offenders Risk Needs Responsivity (RNR) also applied to sex offender treatment. Their analysis was based on 23 recidivism outcome studies of sex offenders. They found that programs that adhered to the RNR principles showed the largest reductions in both sexual and general recidivism. While the authors believe that their findings indicate that RNR principles should be considered in the design and implementation of treatment programs for sex offenders, they also noted that more studies with strong research designs are needed. The study, *The Principles of Effective Correctional Treatment Also Apply To Sexual Offenders: A Meta-Analysis*, is available at:

<http://cjb.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/36/9/865>

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Hall, Prendergast, Roll, and Warda evaluated a 26-week intervention for substance-abusing offenders referred to outpatient treatment. The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the use of vouchers for goods and services for participants of a court-ordered treatment program for substance abuse. Program participation was voluntary. All 136 study participants received a standard evidence-based model for treating stimulant abuse. Contrary to other studies, the authors found that issuing vouchers for abstaining from substance use and for completing treatment plan tasks showed no significant increase in treatment completion or in the number of weeks

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>.

spent in treatment, or decrease in drug use relative to the standard treatment. One possible explanation is that one or more elements of the drug court model had greater influence on positive outcomes than the vouchers. The study, *Reinforcing Abstinence and Treatment Participation Among Offenders in a Drug Diversion Program: Are Vouchers Effective?* is available at:

<http://cjb.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/36/9/935>

Pérez evaluated the effectiveness of residential substance abuse treatment in reducing recidivism among high-risk offenders. The study matched 82 probationers who participated in a residential drug treatment program to 82 probationers with similar criminal histories and demographics who did not receive treatment. The results were similar to those of other studies of residential substance abuse treatment programs. Treatment participants were found to have reduced amounts of criminal activity during the 18-month follow-up period. While treatment participants had more arrests, the probationers who did not participate in treatment had a higher percentage of convictions. Similar to offenders under other forms of intensive supervision, treatment participants were more likely to be rearrested for violations of supervision requirements, while non-participants were more likely to be arrested for new offenses. The author believes that this may be a result of the increased levels of supervision that are associated with residential substance abuse treatment programs. The study, *Applying Evidence-Based Practices to Community Corrections Supervision: An Evaluation of Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for High-Risk Probationers*, is available at:

<http://cjb.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/25/4/442>

## **RECIDIVISM**

MDRC released interim results from its evaluation of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), a New York City-based employment program for ex-prisoners. The program is designed to provide immediate, paid employment for individuals returning to New York City after being released from prison. This evaluation is based on 977 ex-prisoners randomly assigned to either the program or control groups. Program group participants were eligible for all program services, such as a 4-day life skills class, job coaching, job placement, and post-placement services. The control group received a 1.5-day abbreviated life skills class and use of the resource room. Initial results show: 1) most program participants received core services and worked in a transitional job, 2) the program generated a large but short-lived increase in employment for program participants, and 3) program participants were less likely than the control group to be convicted of a crime, to be admitted to state prison for a new conviction, or to be incarcerated for any reason in prison or jail over the full two-year follow-up period. The study, *Transitional Jobs for Ex-Prisoners*, is available at:

<http://www.mdrc.org/publications/529/overview.html>

## **TIP OF THE MONTH**

Are you measuring what you intend to measure?

When evaluating a program, it is essential to use well-designed measures. This includes ensuring that any and all measures are valid. Validity refers to extent to which a measurement instrument or test accurately measures what it is supposed to measure. If it does not, then it is not possible to demonstrate causality. In other words, the observed outcome(s) can not be attributed to the program or effort. For example, a reading test may be a valid measure of reading skills, but it is not a valid measure of total language competency, which requires a set of skills much broader than a reading test can measure.