



Evaluating the Second Chance Act Reentry Courts Program

Second Chance Act Grantee Conference

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*Informing policy,
improving programs*



Background: Cross-Site Evaluation

The National Institute of Justice has awarded a grant to

- NPC Research (NPC),
- Research Triangle Institute (RTI),
- Center for Court Innovation (CCI)

to perform a cross-site evaluation of the Second Chance Act Reentry Court Program

Who is NPC Research (NPC)?

- NPC Research is a private research and evaluation firm, based in Portland, Oregon
- NPC has conducted quality social services evaluation, policy analysis, and research nationwide for 20 years
- NPC has conducted evaluations of over 126 problem-solving courts, including reentry programs

Who is the Center for Court Innovation (CCI)?

- CCI is a non-profit think tank, based in New York
- CCI promotes new thinking about how the justice system can respond more effectively to difficult problems
- CCI has completed process and impact evaluations of the Harlem Reentry Court and has evaluated every other major problem-solving court, such as adult drug courts and domestic violence courts

Who is Research Triangle Institute (RTI)?

- RTI is an independent, non-profit research institute, based in North Carolina
- RTI has extensive experience with large, multi-site evaluations of prisoner reentry initiatives, problem-solving courts, and other approaches for crime prevention
- RTI conducted the multi-site process evaluation of the Office of Justice Program's Reentry Court Initiative

Other Players

Collaboration Among:

- NIJ
- Cross-site evaluators
- BJA
- CSG (TA providers)
- Local evaluators

Overview

- Why is evaluation important
- What is evaluation and what kind of evaluation we will be doing
- How we plan to do the evaluation
- What you can expect from the evaluation
- What you will get out of the evaluation
- Previous research

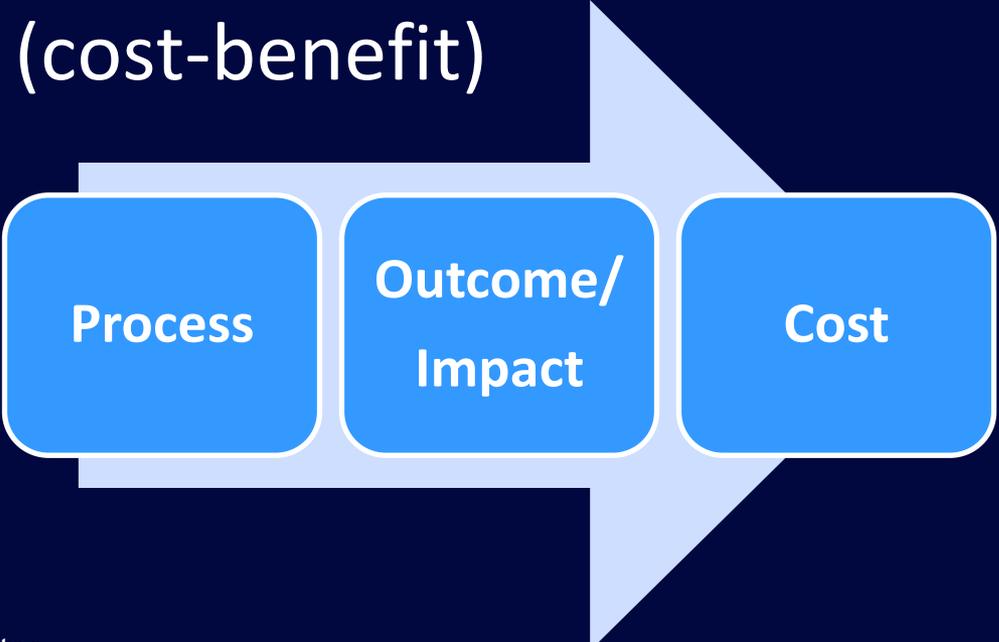
Why Evaluate?

- The reentry court program model is not as well studied as other problem-solving court models
- The Second Chance Act (SCA) Reentry Courts and the creation/expansion of 9 reentry courts offers an opportunity to learn more about
 - The challenges associated with implementing a reentry court program
 - The effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of reentry courts

What is Evaluation?

Three main areas of evaluation:

- Process (program improvement)
- Outcome/Impact
- Cost (cost-benefit)



Process

Outcome/
Impact

Cost

IMPACT EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Baseline Status

Practices

Cognitions/Perceptions

Responses

Outcomes

Reentry Court Participation Status

(Reentry Court vs. Comparison Group)

Legal Status

- Original charges
- Original sentence (jail, prison, probation, etc.)
- Length of incarceration
- Probation/parole violator
- Current release status (parole, probation, other)

Clinical Status

- Drug abuse/dependence
- Co-occurring diagnoses

Risk Level

(High, moderate, low)

Individual Characteristics

- Demographics
- Criminal history
- Criminal thinking
- Peer relationships
- Employment history
- Education/training
- Prior drug use/treatment
- Housing status/needs
- Mental/physical health
- Family relationships

Pre-Release Planning

- Assessment: name of tool; risk-needs classifications;
- Treatment Plan: length & content of services/planning

Treatment/Services

- Service Type & Modality: drug treatment, education, employment, therapy, etc.
- Dosage: days/sessions

Supervision

- Judicial Supervision: length, frequency & content
- Probation/Parole: length, frequency, location, content
- Drug Testing: frequency & location (court or provider)

Case Management

- Assessment: name of tools; frequency, timing & length
- Service Linkages: e.g., court-initiated placements & midcourse corrections

Information & Expectations

- Frequency: # times told of rules & responsibilities
- Source: roles of those who imparted information
- Format: oral, phone, or written communication

Rehabilitation

- Motivation to change
- Less criminal thinking
- Pro-social orientations (e.g., interests/aspirations regarding work & family)
- Internal locus of control (beliefs that pro-social actions can achieve goals)

Procedural Justice

- Elements: Perceptions of *voice, respect, neutrality, helpfulness, & understanding*
- Agents: Perceptions of the judge, supervision officer, & service providers

Social Control

- Interest in Conformity: e.g., desire to please judge, supervision officer, family members, or others
- Desirability of Incentives: internal rewards gained from positive incentives
- Threat of Revocation: expected likelihood & undesirability of revocation for noncompliance
- Threat of Sanctions: expected likelihood & undesirability of swift & certain interim sanctions

Individual Response

- Compliance: court & service attendance, negative drug tests, avoidance of criminal behavior, compliance with all parole rules, positive attitude, etc.
- Completion Status: fulfillment of all rules & requirements (reentry court only)

System Response

- Incentives (for compliance/progress)
- Interim sanctions (for noncompliance)
- Probation revocation (for noncompliance)

Recidivism

- Criminal behavior
- Arrests & convictions (any, drug, or violent) (Measured as any event, number of events, and time to first event)

Reincarceration

- Technical violations
- Revocations & reincarceration

Drug Use

(Alcohol and drug use by type of drug)

Psychosocial Outcomes

- Socioeconomic (employment status, education & income)
- Housing situation
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Family engagement
- Peer relationships (e.g., avoidance of anti-social peers)

Cost Outcomes

(Savings to taxpayer-funded agencies)

What is Process Evaluation?

- Implementation: Was the program implemented and providing services as intended?
- Program History: How was the program implemented? What decisions were made in developing the program? Who were the key players?
- Program Operation: How does the program operate? What services does it deliver? What kind of practices does it follow?

Process Evaluation—Goals

- Document the policies, practices, community context, and implementation barriers across all Second Chance Act Reentry Grantees
- Draw explicit comparisons between the reentry court model, as implemented in the sites, with the antecedent drug court model, specifying similarities, differences, and adaptations in each policy domain
- Examine reentry courts in the context of reentry programs (in addition to drug court context) and reentry best practices

Process Evaluation—Questions

- What are the policies and practices at each site?
- What are the common policies and practices that span all or most sites, and which are highly variable?
- Are the drug court “Ten Key Components” relevant, or can a new set of common components be developed?
- Do the courts’ policies and procedures draw upon evidence-based practices?

Process Evaluation—Questions cont.

- What has been the quality and quantity of program implementation and what, if any, common barriers have arisen?
 - How have the barriers and challenges been addressed?
 - What resources might be provided, or strategies established, to overcome challenges?
- How feasible would it be to conduct an impact evaluation, given available data sources?

Process Evaluation—What to Expect

- In partnership with you, we will
 - Conduct annual site visits for 3 years
 - Interview program staff
 - Observe court sessions
 - Conduct focus groups with participants
 - Review program participant information from databases
 - Review performance measures
 - Analyze results (summarize information)
 - Interpret results

The Benefits of Process Evaluation



- Provides useful information about program functioning
- Allows an assessment of the reasons for successful or unsuccessful performance
- Provides information for replicating the program in another site
- Improves practice, increasing effectiveness for participants (better outcomes)
- **Better Outcomes, Better Cost-Benefits**

What is Impact Evaluation?

- Impact Evaluation: Outside/After Program
 - Recidivism
 - Other Individual outcomes
 - Comparison group needed

Why Does an Impact Evaluation Need a Comparison Group?

- An impact evaluation asks the question, “Did the program make a difference?” (e.g., recidivism)
- To see a difference, or an impact, there has to be a baseline that tells you, “different from what?”
- A comparison group is the baseline: it tells us what would have happened if there had been no program.

Outcome/Impact Evaluation— Questions

- Do reentry courts reduce arrests, convictions, and reincarceration?
- Do reentry courts reduce problems related to criminal behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, employment, housing, mental health, and family relationships?
- What policies and practices explain the impact of reentry courts on recidivism and other outcomes?
- For which categories of probationers/parolees are reentry courts most effective?

Outcome/Impact Evaluation— What to Expect

- In as many sites as possible (but not all sites), we will examine baseline criminal behavior, demographics, and recidivism using administrative data
- At a subset of sites, we will also conduct
 - An in-depth probationer/parolee survey at baseline on criminal behavior, drug use, prior treatment, employment, education, housing, and mental health
 - A one-year follow-up survey on experiences of court practices, perceptions, compliance, responses to non-compliance, and outcomes
- We will identify a **comparison group** for both components



Outcome Benefits



- Provides feedback to determine if any adjustments are needed
- Critical information about the implementation and effectiveness of a reentry court model
- Provides information that can be used to:
 - Obtain funding
 - Obtain community support
 - Gaining potential participant interest
 - Give your staff a pat on the back

What is Cost-Benefit Evaluation?

- A *cost-effectiveness* analysis calculates the cost of a program and then examines whether the program led to its intended positive outcomes without actually putting a cost to those outcomes.
- A *cost-benefit* evaluation calculates the cost of the program and also the cost of the impacts (the benefit), resulting in a cost-benefit ratio.

Cost-Benefit Evaluation— Questions

- Does placing an individual through a reentry program cost taxpayers more than standard parole/probation?
- What costs are avoided as the result of any positive outcomes for participants in reentry programs as compared to any positive outcomes from standard parole/probation?
- What is the cost/benefit ratio per site for taxpayer money spent on the reentry court?

Cost-Benefit Evaluation— What to Expect

Step 1: Determine the flow/process

Step 2: Identify the transactions

Step 3: Identify the agencies involved

Step 4: Determine the resources used

Step 5: Identify costs associated

Step 6: Calculate cost results

Methods: Interviews, budget review (local and online), observations of transactions (program activities)



Cost Benefits

- Demonstrate program effectiveness in dollars
 - Savings that are generated by effective programs
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- Use to gain additional funding and community support
 - Show your importance to legislators that are not familiar with social service concepts but understand money

Evaluation Benefits/Products

- Interim reports describing early implementation experiences of grantees
- A final implementation report that describes an common reentry court model (if possible)
- Site-specific reports for each program with process, impact and cost results (with available data)
- A cross-site impact report describing the impacts (recidivism, employment, drug use, etc.) and cost-benefit

Local Evaluators

What to Expect

- Local evaluators will not be required to perform work for the cross-site evaluation
- Cross-site evaluators would like to talk with the local evaluators to learn about
 - Local evaluation plans
 - Knowledge of local data sources
 - Possible areas for collaboration

Previous Research

- What do we already know about the reentry court model?

Research on Reentry Programs

- Several approaches have demonstrated reductions in recidivism
 - Vocational training
 - Cognitive behavioral therapies
 - Substance abuse treatment

The 2005 Prisoner Reentry Initiative

- Provided funding for 30 agencies to provide mentoring, job preparation, soft skills, and other transitional services
- The evaluation demonstrated
 - Reductions in recidivism
 - Challenges in forming collaborative relationships with justice agencies
 - Challenges in maintaining participant compliance

Multi-Site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Program (SVORI)

- Programs included common elements such as risk-needs assessment, transitional planning, drug treatment, job training, educational programs, work release, and vocational programs
- A 16 site impact evaluation found that SVORI programs demonstrated improvements in intermediate outcomes (e.g., drug use)
- No significant impact on re-arrest rates; female participants had higher reincarceration rates

Project Greenlight

- A highly publicized reentry program that produced unintended adverse effects
- Designed to provide pre-release cognitive behavioral therapy
- Implementation was suboptimal (e.g., large class size, poor facilitator training)
- Participants in the program had higher recidivism rates than the comparison group

OJP Reentry Court Initiative

- A process evaluation of the 9 pilot programs (conducted by RTI), identified 6 core program elements
 1. Assessment and planning
 2. Active oversight
 3. Social services
 4. Community accountability
 5. Graduated sanctions
 6. Incentives for success

Evidence for other core elements

- A dedicated judge
 - Enhance procedural justice may lead to internalization of parole requirements and thus to greater compliance
- A public forum
 - May contribute to a greater perception of fairness
- Interim ceremonies and public graduation
 - To incentivize and mark compliance
- An array of services
 - To serve participants with a variety of risks/needs

Harlem Reentry Court

- CCI conducted a rigorous evaluation and found mixed results
 - Participants had lower rates of arrests and reconvictions but higher rates of reincarceration
 - Attributable to revocations for technical violations, perhaps due to “supervision effects”

“Supervision Effects”

- A concern across Project Greenlight, the Harlem Reentry evaluation and other studies
- The notion that increased observations lead to greater opportunities to “catch” non-compliance—resulting in increased incarceration on technical violations

Building Upon What We Know About Other Specialized Courts

- A broad national movement towards specialized “problem-solving courts” such as drug, mental health, domestic violence, and community courts
- These courts address a wide array of problems but share several elements
 - Treatment mandates
 - Ongoing judicial supervision
 - Collaboration
 - Direct interaction between defendants and judge
 - Community outreach

Research Findings on Specialized Courts

- Across more than 50 studies, adult drug courts have been found to achieve significant recidivism reductions
- Although there is limited research, mental health courts appear similarly promising
- Other models, such as domestic violence and community courts, have had mixed results in recidivism, but have pointed to other positive outcomes such as offender accountability, victim services, and interagency collaboration

What Does All This Mean?

- Reentry courts are an intriguing innovation
- Research is limited and has generated mixed results
- Potential threats to program success, such as “supervision effects” have been suggested
- The evaluation of the Second Chance Reentry Program will address these gaps and concerns by comprehensively documenting the implementation of a diverse set of reentry courts and rigorously studying their impact and cost-effectiveness

Questions?

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