

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Public School Rehabilitation Programs Following an Adolescent's Criminal Offense

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the success rate of rehabilitation programs implemented by public school districts in reducing reoffending. Programs were sorted into five categories: education, counseling, drug prevention, social work, and specialty cases. A random sample of 141 adolescents (ages 10 to 14) enrolled in Harris County school districts in Houston, TX, from 2010 to 2014 who had committed an offense classified as a felony, misdemeanor, or violation of probation were examined. We hypothesized county programs would be effective in reducing recidivism rates and that programs that emphasize education should be more successful than other types of programs. Preliminary results indicate that 79% ($n = 112$) of adolescents reoffended after their first offense; only 53% ($n = 59$) of these adolescents were referred to a county program. After committing a second offense, 69% ($n = 77$) recidivated again for a third or more time; of these, 61% ($n = 47$) were enrolled in programs. Results indicated a significant relationship between recidivism and program enrollment following the first offense, $R^2 = .036$, $F(1,140) = 5.179$, $p = .024$, but not after the second offense, $R^2 = .005$, $F(1,111) = .581$, $p = .448$. This suggests that county implemented programs may be effective at reducing reoffending, but only if implemented early in a youth's trajectory, emphasizing the importance of interventions sooner rather than later. Future statistical testing will allow us to quantify the effectiveness of individual programs and has the potential to lead to program reform to maximize the utility of county programs.

Introduction

- The preliminary study examines the relationship between recidivism and program enrollment in juvenile offenders.
- Rehabilitation programs with the greatest effect were those that: delivered to high risk offenders, targeted to client needs, provided training for treatment providers, and focused on research and demonstration purposes (Landenberger & Lipsey 2005; Pearson 2002).

Methods

Participants

- A random sample of 141 adolescents, ages 10 to 14, were examined.
- Adolescents were enrolled in Harris County school districts in Houston, TX, from 2010 to 2014.
- Adolescents examined committed any offense classified as a felony, misdemeanor, or violation of probation.

Procedure

- Using a random number generator, 145 adolescents were chosen from a data set received from Harris County; of this sample, four were deemed unusable due to input error.
- Each adolescent in our sample was recorded as a one, two, or three-or-more time offender. Enrollment in any type of program after each offense was also recorded.
- Binomial tests were run to determine the percentages of reoffenders after their first and second offense.
- Binomial tests also determined the percentages of reoffenders that were enrolled in any type of programs after their first and second offense.
- Linear Regression was then used to determine significance between recidivism and program enrollment.

Results

- After their first offense, 79% ($n = 112$) of adolescents committed a second offense.
- Of these 112, only 53% ($n = 59$) were enrolled in some form of county program after their first offense.
- After their second offense, 69% ($n = 77$) recidivated again for at least one more offense – totaling in three or more offenses.
- Of these 77, 61% ($n = 47$) were enrolled in some form of school program.
- Results indicated a significant relationship between recidivism and program enrollment after the first offense, $R^2 = .036$, $F(1,140) = 5.179$, $p = .024$.
- There was not a significant relationship between recidivism and program enrollment following the second offense, $R^2 = .005$, $F(1,111) = .581$, $p = .448$.

Discussion

- Our evidence suggests that county implemented programs may be effective in reducing recidivism rates, but only if the programs are implemented early on. This time sensitivity shows just how critical rehabilitation promptly after an offense is.
- Despite positive indications of program effectiveness, percentages drawn from our own data show that only 57% ($n = 81$) of all first-time offenders and 63% ($n = 71$) of all second-time offenders were placed in any type of program.
- Based on our own conclusions, rehabilitation rates may decrease when intervening early on. It seems more emphases should be placed on program involvement after the first offense.
- Limitations include funding, parental consent, and student engagement, but any effort to increase program percentage early on may result in decreased recidivism rates.
- Future analysis may be explored to determine the effective of specific program types.

References

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