



Key Policy Research Questions in Intervening with Drug Involved Offenders

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Prepared for:

**Strong Science for strong Practice: Identifying Science-
Based principles and Research for Integrating Drug
Treatment in Corrections**

**Sponsored by the Urban Institute for the National
Institute on Drug Abuse**

Washington D.C., November 29 – 30, 2001



Introduction & Purpose:

- Brief overview of U.S. policy development that has resulted in virtual saturation of the criminal justice system by drug users
- Recent trends in legal policy that may effect the prevalence of drug users in treatment:
 - Medical marijuana movement
 - Depenalization of marijuana
 - Increasing penalties for “club drugs”
- Overview of key successful elements in treatment services for drug using offenders
- Key policy research questions



Historical Variance in U.S. Drug Policy

- There has been considerable variance in U.S. drug policy – varying between fairly open regulated markets to high deterrence prohibition
- Such variance has been (and likely will continue to be) a key part of the drug-crime relationship
- Interventions in the relationship must at least be aware of the policy needs of their programs and the policy implications



The Importance of Theory

- Ecosystems theory may provide an organizing framework for examining and intervening in the relationship by including:
 - A focus on micro (cognitive processes/motivations & medical), mezzo (family, peers & work) and macro (law, education, prevention and social capital) variables
 - the impact of variables change throughout an individual's life course
 - Research hypotheses that suggest specific evaluation designs





Criminal Justice Philosophies

- Retributive Justice
- Deterrence Theory
- Therapeutic Jurisprudence
- Restorative Justice
- Each of these will effect the type of programs that can be implemented and their impact

Essential Program Components

- Immediate and comprehensive assessment
 - Delivery of services based on assessment
 - Supervision and monitoring utilizing graduated sanctions, drug testing and cross-systems case management
 - Provision of a continuum of drug treatment services from jail/prison to community to aftercare
 - Aftercare with continuing clinical monitoring, service needs assessment and delivery of needed services
 - Obtain judicial/criminal justice system support for comprehensive elements
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Suggestions for the Future

- Use existing data to provide new empirical baseline and suggestions for future research
- Use latest multi-disciplinary assessment and treatment delivery models
- Evaluate those models and provide feedback to criminal justice system
- Evaluate impact of state level drug laws and policies (high penalties, de-penalization medical marijuana & diversion to treatment) on crime and other behavioral outcomes

Suggestions for the Future (cont.)

- Consider the need to use a program project/center mechanism to ensure coordinated research program
- Examine impact of enforcement strategies on prices, use and crime
- Undertake comprehensive long term evaluations of best of current intervention programs including
 - what levels of intensity of services are most appropriate for offender and drug use types
 - what types of program elements and settings relate to best outcomes for various groups of users

