

Are Probation Programs Working?

Evaluating Program Effectiveness

Juvenile Probation in 2011

- In 2011,
 - 79,875 juveniles were referred to juvenile probation departments
 - 28,835 juveniles were supervised per day on deferred adjudication and probation
 - 991 juveniles were committed to state institutions

Juvenile Probation in 2011

- Juvenile probation departments offered 33 types of community-based programs in addition to supervision, services and residential placement

Juvenile Probation in 2011

- Approximately ***\$491 million*** in state and local funding was expended to provide services to youth in the juvenile probation system

But, Can You Tell Me...

**Are Probation Programs
Effective?**

Anecdotally....

- We believe that community-based programs are “working” because:
 - Referrals to juvenile probation departments are down
 - Commitments are down
- But what do we really know?

What We Know and Don't Know

- Know outcomes of juveniles served in community-based programs
- Know recidivism of juveniles participating in programs
- Don't know what programs work best with which kids
 - Program Registry will enable us to know this

What Works in Juvenile Probation

- TJJD will be evaluating community-based programs to determine “what works”
 - Looking at programs as well as program components
- Key to this effort is data provided by departments through the Program Registry and the extract data

Goal for Program Evaluation

- With evaluation results TJJJ will develop “guides” for community-based programs
 - Goal to replicate what is working
 - Provide technical assistance to departments that may need to enhance programs / program outcomes
- Create “best practice” for Texas juvenile probation programs

Today's Session

- Using an example, we will go over basic information on:
 - Developing a program
 - Maximizing program effectiveness

Which Program is Right?

- When developing or selecting a program it is important to know what you are trying to achieve and with whom
- Even the best program might not be effective if it does not match your goals or fit your intended population

Evidence of Effectiveness

- Programs don't have to be “evidence based” to be effective
- **BUT** - Research findings for juvenile programs do exist and should be used in program selection whenever possible

Developing a Program

- **Define the problem** you want to address
- Determine the **Goal** or purpose of the program
- Set **objectives** that are measurable
- Select **activities** that fit the program objectives and can accomplish program goals

Program Example – Female Offender

- The department has identified a need for services for female offenders
 - Young girls are at risk of becoming involved with truancy, running away, drug use and unhealthy relationships - which leads to juvenile justice contact, prostitution and victimization

Program Example – Female Offender

- Goal of program is to prevent young girls from further entering the justice system by teaching them to make appropriate and “healthy” choices
 - Focus on “low-level” female offenders that are exhibiting “gateway” behaviors
 - Provide services to girls and their parents

Program Example – Female Offender

- Objectives should directly relate to the goals for the program
- Objectives must be measurable
 - Juveniles participating in the program will not be truant
 - Parents will learn parenting skills, with focus on communication
 - Juveniles will learn how to make appropriate choices and manage anger

Program Example – Female Offender

- Develop activities that will achieve the program's objectives and goals
 - Parent group counseling to discuss challenges of day to day supervision and communication with daughter
 - Place each juvenile with mentor
 - Create a “healthy choices” curriculum that all must complete

Is the Program Working?

- How do you know if the program is working as planned?
- Even if the program is working as planned, is it achieving it's stated goal?

Choices Program

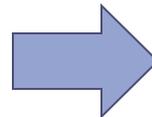
- Six months after creation, the Choices program is up and running
- The program has served 30 girls to date
- The length of stay is longer than expected as girls are not “graduating” from the low level phases
- Of the 12 girls that have left the program, 6 have completed successfully

What to Do?

- Look at the program a few months after implementation to determine if it is operating as planned
 - Are the girls in the program the “target” population?
 - Have all of the activities begun?
 - Do the selected activities still “make sense” for the program objectives and goals?

Make the Program More Effective

- Girls entering the program were not first time offenders
- Girls were not being paired with mentors until phase 3 of the program
- The program required the girls to come to the department three nights a week



- Revise selection criteria to match target population
- Pair girls with a mentor in the first phase of the program
- Reduce the number of times the girls have to travel to the office and/or provide transportation

Determining Program Effectiveness

- Continue to review your program to ensure it is effective
 - Check that goals and objectives are being met
 - Identify measures of program impact
 - Collect information

Determining Program Effectiveness

- Look at the impact of the program in both the short and long-term to determine effectiveness
- For Choices program
 - Look at completion rates as a **short-term** measure
 - Look at subsequent arrests and referrals as a **long-term** measure

Evaluating “Outcomes”

- Don't forget to look at program operation when determining outcomes
 - Check that the program is operating as intended before determining impact
- “Analyze” the data that is gathered from the program
 - Look at information in conjunction with other data that is collected

Use What You Learn to Make Program Better

- Use information generated from the program to make modifications
 - Change activities to better suit objectives
- Don't change too much too soon

Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help

- Resources are available to assist in program selection and design, performance and outcome measures, and data collection