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

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
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