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An Evolution of Effectiveness of Drug Courts

Sean Pinney

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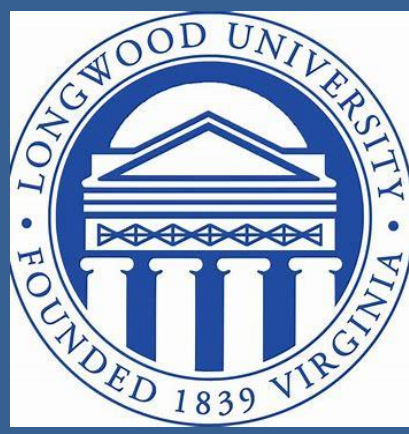
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An Evaluation of Effectiveness of Drug Courts

Sean Pinney, Longwood University



Abstract

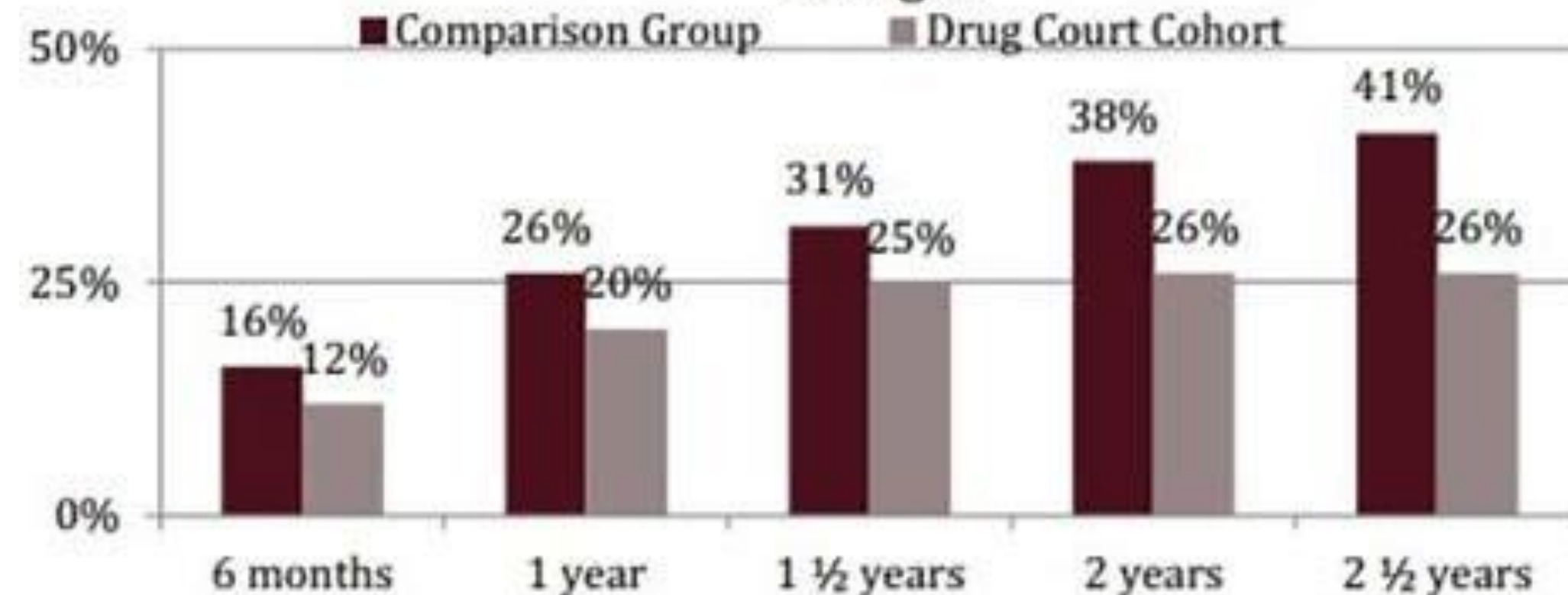
The objective of this research is to examine the effectiveness of Drug Courts and what makes the courts more effective than the traditional probation process. A systematic review of studies conducted to assess the impact of drug courts on stated outcomes indicates that the policy is an effective means of reducing negative outcomes between drug courts and drug offenders. In addition, this policy reduces the incarceration number of inmates due to the rehabilitation style treatment that the offenders receive.

Introduction

Due to increased concern over drug use and abuse in the United States during the 1960's and 1970's, the United States government launched the War on Drugs in the early 1980's. The War on Drugs was a multifaceted drug response program that combined educational elements along with interdiction strategies and punitive approaches for users. In relation to users, the War on Drugs ushered in new and stricter sentencing guidelines for individuals who were arrested for possession and use of illegal substances.

During this epidemic, America's prisons were massively overflowing with offenders who were caught with illegal substances (National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 1997). This led to a burgeoning of the prison population which resulted in the mass incarceration phenomenon.

Recidivism Rate from Drug Court Entry - New Charges



Studies Demonstrating Effectiveness

Gallagher, J. R. (2014). Predicting criminal recidivism following drug court: Implications for drug court practice and policy advocacy. *Journal of Addictions & Offender Counseling*, 35(1), 15-29.

Guydish, J., Wolfe, E., Tajima, B., & Woods, W. J. (2001). Drug court effectiveness: a review of California evaluation reports, 1995–1999. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 33(4), 369-378.

Studies Demonstrating Ineffectiveness

Juveniles have been known to have a more difficult time completing their drug court process. A big reason for this is because the treatment they are given does not work the same on every offender.

Henggeler, S. W., McCart, M. R., Cunningham, P. B., & Chapman, J. E. (2012). Enhancing the effectiveness of juvenile drug courts by integrating evidence-based practices. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 80(2), 264.

Alliance, D. P. (2011). *Drug courts are not the answer: Toward a health-centered approach to drug use*. Drug Policy Alliance

Summative Analysis

Most studies did support the effectiveness of drug courts, there were still other studies that did not feel the same way and found drug courts to be ineffective.

Studies that did support drug courts found data that suggested lower recidivism rates when compared to other offenders who did not go through drug courts. Studies demonstrated the type of power and influence drug courts have. Ever since the creation of drug courts back in 1989, offenders now have a chance to avoid jail time and rehabilitate themselves.

Studies that did not support drug courts found that drug courts only put more pressure on an offender by threatening them with a harsher sentence than previously given before.

Conclusions

Overall, the research regarding the effectiveness of this policy has been supported.

Drug offenders are less likely to reoffend when let back into society due to their drug court rehabilitation process. Drug courts have proven to be a very sound criminal justice policy that offers drug offenders a chance to rehabilitate themselves.

Contact
Sean Pinney
Longwood University
Sean.pinney@live.longwood.edu

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