The Drugs-Crime Relationship
Research, Policy & Practice

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Presentation based on


The Nature of the Drugs-Crime Relationship

1. Strong statistical overlap:

a. High proportion of arrestees are current illegal drug users

b. High proportion of those in treatment have extensive history of criminal behavior and involvement in Criminal Justice System

c. Criminal Justice System is primary referral source for treatment; majority source for juveniles

d. The issue of statistical artifact – we create part of the relationship by our laws/policy.
2. Drug users are a significant part of the ever increasing numbers of Americans in the Criminal Justice System:

   a. Close to equal number of young men in college as under criminal justice supervision

   b. Higher proportion of young men in prison than any other modern democracy.
3. Chronic drug use appears to be related to:

a. Increased criminal behavior

b. Sustained criminal behavior

c. Type of criminal behavior
   i. property crime for funds to acquire drugs
   ii. Violence as a part of subculture and market conflict.
4. National, state, and local policy as well as enforcement matters:

a. Strong deterrence, medicalization, decriminalization, diversion to treatment/drug court

b. Enormous variance by type of drug and by state and locale (Chriqui et al, 2002; Terry-McElrath & McBride, 2004)

c. Evidence that treatment works, breaks the cycle, and is cost effective.
5. Evidence suggests that the following program elements may be the most successful:

a. Comprehensive assessment of wide variety of needs (issue of multi-morbidities)

b. Designing programs to meet assessed needs (VanderWaal et al., 2001):

i. multi-system theory
ii. cognitive behavior motivation approaches
iii. comprehensive cross-system case management
iv. graduated sanctions
v. wrap around services – integration with community – systems handoff – restorative justice
v. increasing social capital (VanderWaal et. al., 2004)
6. **Need for testing some of the promising interventions** (e.g., Multi-system theory, motivational interviewing, cognitive behavior therapy):

   a. **Issue of random trials**

   b. **Difficulties of maintaining scientific designs in field situations**

   c. **Focusing on what works (program and elements) for what populations (socio-demographic characteristics).**
7. Using states as “natural laboratories” examining the effect of differences in such policies as: (see Chriqui et. al., 2002)

a. Deterrence

b. Legalization

c. Medicalization

d. Diversion

e. Treatment quality laws/regulations (Chriqui et al., 2004)
8. Analysis of Secondary Data

a. ADAM data to focus on:
   i. rates of current use
   ii. previous treatment
   iii. dependency indicator
   iv. drug markets

b. Other secondary data such as National Household survey and Monitoring the Futures to examine drugs-crime relationship.
Selected References


