



National Institute on Drug Abuse
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NIDA Survey Shows Lack of Substance Abuse Treatment Options for Offenders

Fewer than 10% of Drug-Abusing Offenders Get the Treatment They Need

Substance abuse treatment services for offenders are not widely available in all phases of the correctional system, according to the first set of findings from a national survey funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The National Criminal Justice Treatment Practices Survey (NCJTPS) provides a picture of existing treatment programs across all correctional settings, including prison, jails, probation and parole offices, and local community correction agencies for juvenile and adult offenders. The survey findings, published in a special issue of the *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, question the capability of the adult and/or juvenile correctional system to effectively address drug abuse and associated criminal behavior among offenders.

The offender population is at greater risk than the general population to have a substance abuse disorder, and it is widely shown that such disorders influence criminal behaviors. As a result, substance abuse treatment for offenders has been part of the national strategy to not only reduce the demand for drugs, but also reduce drug-related crime for over 10 years. However, the survey found that of the nearly eight million adults and 700,000 juveniles involved in the justice system, access to treatment services is minimal with less than 10 percent of offenders receiving the treatment that they need.

“The survey shows that far too few programs and services exist, and the ones that do exist are only offered to a handful of offenders,” said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. “Since offenders are four times as likely as the general population to have a substance abuse disorder, treating the offender population could measurably lower the demand for drugs in our society, and reduce the crime rate.”

Studies show that treatment cuts drug abuse in half, drastically decreases criminal activity, and significantly reduces arrests. It is estimated that for every dollar spent on addiction treatment programs, there is a \$4 to \$7 reduction in the cost of drug-related crimes.

The NCJTP survey illustrates multiple systemic, organizational, and infrastructural barriers to the successful evidence-based addiction treatment approaches described in NIDA's *Principles of Drug Abuse Treatment for Criminal Justice Populations: A Research Based Guide* (NIDA, 2006). "This survey can be used to assist policy makers and program officials in plotting a course to implement more effective services and delivery systems for the offender population," said study director Dr. Faye Taxman of Virginia Commonwealth University. She noted that the papers in the series will help integrate research into practice for the goal of reducing recidivism among substance abusing offenders. Such strategies include:

- Integrate NIDA's recommended strategies to convert existing education-based substance abuse programs into more clinically driven programs.
- Use screening and assessment tools to link offenders to appropriate programs and services.
- Hire staff or provide training in motivational techniques for offenders.
- Emphasize training of existing staff to increase capacity for working with offenders who have substance abuse issues in all criminal justice settings.
- Build more community-based programs with approaches that build on the same treatment philosophy found in correctional settings, to enable a seamless transition from prison to the community.

"The results from the National Survey can provide needed data for agencies to begin to plot the course for using existing services and converting them to programs and services that are designed to address risk of recidivism among offenders," added Taxman. "It is clear that correctional agencies see that they need to increase their efforts to change offender behavior, attention to the NIDA-funded research should help in this endeavor."

This is the first set of papers from the NCJTP. Other papers will address topics such as organizational issues impacting the implementation of substance abuse programs, and should provide further insight into advancing a national strategy.

The Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment (JSAT) features original reviews, training and educational articles, special commentary, and especially research articles that are meaningful to the treatment of alcohol, heroin, marijuana, and other drugs of dependence. JSAT is directed toward treatment practitioners from all disciplines (medicine, nursing, social work, psychology, and counseling) in both private and public sectors, including those involved in schools, health centers, community agencies, correctional facilities, and individual practices.

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to ensure the rapid dissemination of research information and its implementation in policy and practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at www.drugabuse.gov.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH)—The Nation's Medical Research Agency—includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational

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