Mandated treatment, 12-step support groups, and criminal recidivism policy implications and perspective

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Abstract: An estimated 23 million people in the USA are currently struggling with chemical dependence or abuse. There are 7 million people active in the judicial system, 5 million of which committed a crime related to their use of drugs and alcohol. Mandates to 12-step programs are a key tool in the judicial system but there is a 40-80% drop out rate leading to increased criminal activity and incarceration. Research clearly demonstrates that mandated treatment and 12-step fellowships reduce recidivism and addiction rates. This research conducted 42 case study interviews in Buncombe County NC. 38 of the subjects were incarcerated in the county jail with a history of court mandate to attend Narcotics Anonymous (NA). 4 of the subjects were active in the local NA fellowship. Subjects were males between the ages of 18-66 with varied backgrounds as discussed in the results section. A total engagement score was assigned to each subject based on their involvement in the five core components of NA including sponsorship, literature reading, service work in NA, obtaining a homegroup and step-work. Engagement scores were compared to categorical and quantitative data to evaluate the strength of specific relationships between variables. The use of SAS validated the narrative outcomes indicting that treatment engagement, hope that recovery is possible, desire to quit using and positive expectations for NA. Outcomes indicate the need for a program specifically designed to increase hope, desire and expectations in a treatment environment. A program model has been recommended as a test pilot in the County of the research. Success at a local level will set the stage for a larger implementation of the program. Addiction is estimated to have a financial impact of $270 billion on America's economy.

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