Issue Brief

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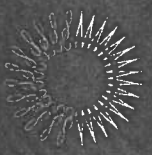


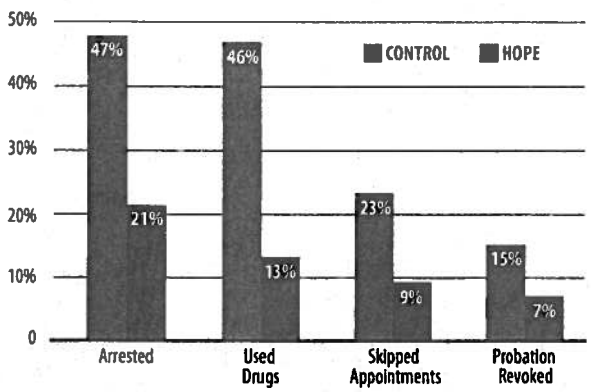
THE PEW CENTER ON THE STATES

The Impact of Hawaii's HOPE Program on Drug Use, Crime and Recidivism

The HOPE Program

Launched in 2004, Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (HOPE) program aims to reduce crime and drug use among criminal offenders. HOPE identifies probationers who are likely to violate their conditions of community supervision; notifies them that detected violations will have consequences; conducts frequent and random drug tests; responds to detected violations (including failed drug tests and skipped probation meetings) with swift, certain and short terms of incarceration; responds to absconding probationers with warrant service and sanctions; and mandates drug treatment upon request or for those probationers who do not abstain from drug use while on the testing and sanctions regimen.

Exhibit 1. **HOPE Program Outcomes**



By 2009, more than 1,500 probationers (one in every six felony probationers in Oahu) were enrolled in HOPE. The Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States and the National Institute of Justice of the U.S. Department of Justice collaborated to produce this summary of an evaluation conducted to assess HOPE's effectiveness.

Results

In a one-year, randomized controlled trial, HOPE probationers were 55 percent less likely to be arrested for a new crime, 72 percent less likely to use drugs, 61 percent less likely to skip appointments with their supervisory officer and 53 percent less likely to have their probation revoked. As a result, they also served or were sentenced to, on average, 48 percent fewer days of incarceration than the control group (Exhibit 1).[1]

Evaluation Structure

Adult probation officers in Honolulu identified 507 men and women on probation who showed an elevated risk of violating probation conditions based on a widely used risk assessment instrument and prior behavior while under supervision. Office supervisors deemed 493 of these probationers eligible.[2] In October 2007, random assignment by computer placed 330 probationers (two-thirds of

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the eligible group) into HOPE (the "treatment group") while 163 remained on probation-as-usual (the "control group"). This randomized controlled trial followed an intent-to-treat design: all probationers assigned to the treatment group were included in the evaluation *regardless of what occurred after assignment*. Due to randomization, the treatment and control groups were not statistically different in terms of age, sex, race or ethnicity, assessed risk level and criminal history (Exhibit 2).[3]

The evaluation was conducted by Dr. Angela Hawken of Pepperdine University, with funding from the National Institute of Justice. The full evaluation report is available online at ***http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/229023.pdf.***

Additional research could focus on which program components are most important, what types of offenders respond best, and whether the outcomes are sustained after probation supervision ends.

Launched in 2006, the Public Safety Performance Project seeks to help states advance fiscally sound, data-driven policies and practices in sentencing and corrections that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable and control corrections costs.

NIJ is the research, development and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice and is dedicated to researching crime control and justice issues.

Exhibit 2. **HOPE Program Demographics**[3]

	HOPE	Control
Average age (median)	36.1 (35.2)	35.4 (34.4)
Male	75%	71%
Asian/Polynesian	65%	64%
Caucasian	16%	14%
Black	5%	3%
Portuguese	1%	2%
Puerto Rican	1%	1%
Other or Unknown	11%	14%
Percent assessed high risk	46.7%	44.1%
Average prior arrests (median)	17 (13)	16.4 (12)
Most serious prior charge: drug	35%	33%
Most serious prior charge: property	30%	34%
Most serious prior charge: violent	22%	22%
Most serious prior charge: other	14%	11%

1 All reported differences across groups are significant at the .01 level. To determine the rate of skipped appointments, the evaluator calculated the percent of skipped appointments for each probationer and then averaged those percentages. The same method—giving equal weight to each probationer—was used for rate of detected drug use. Using another method, she also calculated the rates for total skipped appointments divided by total appointments (control group = 18 percent, HOPE = 5 percent) and total positive drug screens divided by total drug screens (control group = 41 percent, HOPE = 9 percent). Because of the one-year observation period, figures for days incarcerated include both served and sentenced days in both jail and prison. If not all sentenced days are served, then the percentages may change for both HOPE and control probationers.

2 The 14 excluded probationers included 10 who had been transferred or were preparing to transfer to another unit; two who were pending deportation; one who was deceased; and one who was pending transfer to drug court.

3 Baseline HOPE and control group statistics are not significantly different at the .05 level.

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