

Colorado Probation Research in Brief

Efficacy of Frequent Monitoring with Swift, Certain, and Modest Sanctions for Violations: Insights from South Dakota's 24/7 Sobriety Project

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Key Words: Alcohol; Incentives; Sanctions; Sobriety; Substance Abuse; Recidivism

Summary/Conclusions

The current study evaluated the effectiveness of swift and certain sanctions within South Dakota's 24/7 Sobriety Project. Using data from DUI arrests, vehicle accidents, and arrests for domestic violence from 2001 to 2010, researchers compared counties that implemented the 24/7 programs against those that have not. The researchers suggested the 24/7 program reduced DUI rearrests by 12% and domestic violence arrests by 9%. Data from traffic accidents showed a significant reduction on accidents for males age 18-40.

Limitations of Information

The 24/7 program utilized correlational data, such as arrest data and traffic accident data, does not reflect a true cause/effect relationship. Prior research suggests that incentives change behavior long term while sanctions change short term behavior. The fidelity of the program was a concern, as the researchers found some failed or missed breath tests did not result in sanctions. Accuracy of tribal land data was a concern. Tribal lands report arrests differently than other agencies in South Dakota.

Caveat: The information presented here is intended to summarize and inform readers of research and information relevant to probation work. It can provide a framework for carrying out the business of probation as well as suggestions for practical application of the material. While it may, in some instances, lead to further exploration and result in *future* decisions, it is not intended to prescribe policy and is not necessarily conclusive in its findings. Some of its limitations are described above.

Delivering Incentives and Sanctions

In 2005 South Dakota piloted a new program, the 24/7 Sobriety Project, that made twice daily breathalyzer tests a condition of bail for individuals that had been arrested for Driving Under the Influence (DUI). The program was later expanded to domestic violence and offenses involving alcohol. If an individual tested positive or failed to appear to a test, he or she would be subject to a short immediate jail sentence of one or two days. From 2005 to 2010, the program participants completed approximately 3.7 million breath tests. 99.3% of the tests were negative, 0.36% were positive, and 0.34% were failure to appear.

The researchers analyzed data from repeat DUI arrests, domestic violence arrests, and traffic accidents to measure the success of the 24/7 program. To isolate the effect of the 24/7 program, the study controlled for other factors (such as snowfall, Sturgis Motorcycle Festival, college student populations, and etc.) that may have contributed to the results.

The 24/7 program contributed to a 12% reduction of DUI rearrests and a 9% reduction in arrests for domestic violence at the county level. For all populations, traffic accident reduction outcomes were not statistically significant. The 24/7 program data showed a significant result in a reduction of traffic accidents for males between the ages of 18 and 40. Researchers state these results are conservative due to only a fraction

of the total possible number of participants. The study only evaluated programs in counties where participants numbered at least 25% or more of the total DUI arrests in that county. For reference, prior research has discovered that suspending a license after a DUI reduces DUI arrests by 4%, an interlock program reduced DUI reconstructions by 9%, and a 16% rise in the price of alcohol reduces DUIs among men by 12%.

Practical Applications

For longer-term behavior change:

- ✓ Respond to positive and negative behaviors swiftly. You may need to contact probationers by phone in order to give them an incentive or sanction.
- ✓ Identify and reward positive behaviors. Try to adhere to the 4:1 principle, four positives for each negative.
- ✓ Review monitoring results frequently to ensure clients are maintaining sobriety.
- ✓ Account for the probationer's risk and needs when responding to positive and negative behaviors.
- ✓ Try to respond consistently when dealing with similar behaviors with like probationers.
- ✓ Have a discussion with new clients starting probation that positive and negative behaviors will be incentivized or sanctioned throughout supervision.
- ✓ Discuss with probationers the logic behind how incentives and sanctions were determined for the probationer.

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