

7 WAYS TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM

1. What works? Use risk assessment tools to identify risk to reoffend and criminogenic needs.

Research finding: Structured assessment tools predict pretrial misconduct and risk of reoffense more effectively than professional judgment alone.¹⁴ Brief screening tools provide a quick assessment of risk; comprehensive tools provide information on risk to reoffend and effective targets of intervention to reduce future crime.

Examples of policy implications: Law enforcement uses assessments to inform cite versus arrest decisions; prosecutors and judges use assessments to inform plea and sentencing decisions; jails use assessments to determine housing assignments and work release placements; and community corrections uses assessments to determine intensity of supervision.

Examples of practice implications: Law enforcement officers administer brief assessments prior to making cite/release decisions; pretrial services and community corrections conduct assessments prior to key decisions.

2. What works? Direct programming and interventions to medium and higher risk offenders.

Research finding: Recidivism rates are reduced an average of 30% when medium and high risk offenders receive appropriate behavior changing programming.¹⁵ Conversely, offenders assessed as low risk to reoffend do not benefit from behavior changing programming¹⁶ and are slightly more likely to recidivate when they are overly supervised or programmed.¹⁷

Examples of policy implications: For low risk offenders, prosecutors use diversionary programs, prosecutors and judges avoid excessive conditions, defense counsel advocates for low intensity interventions, community corrections uses minimal supervision. Judges, prosecutors, and defense counsel target medium and high risk offenders for programming designed to positively influence behavior.

Examples of practice implications: Agencies performing assessments color code case files of high, medium, and low risk offenders for easy identification by decision makers; community supervision agencies use call-in or kiosk reporting for low risk offenders; treatment programs modify admission criteria to admit only medium and high risk offenders.

¹⁴ Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006; Andrews et al., 1990; Bonta, 2007; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996; Grove & Meehl, 1996; Grove et al., 2000; Harris, 2006; Smith, Gendreau, & Swartz, 2009.

¹⁵ Andrews, 2007; Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006; Andrews & Dowden, 2007; Andrews, Dowden, & Gendreau, 1999; Bonta, 2007; Dowden, 1998; Gendreau, Goggin, & Little, 1996; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007; Smith, Gendreau, & Swartz, 2009.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Bonta, Wallace-Capretta, & Rooney, 2000; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Gendreau, Goggin, Cullen, & Andrews, 2001; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2006.

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3. What works? Focus interventions for medium and higher risk offenders on their individual criminogenic needs.

Research finding: Cognitive behavioral programs are generally the most effective programming interventions for higher risk offenders.¹⁸ Furthermore, employing program interventions that influence the traits that lead to future crime (i.e., criminogenic needs) yield stronger reductions in recidivism (up to an average of 30% reduction).¹⁹ The net value (the cost of the program less the savings derived from preventing crime) of the average targeted, evidence-based cognitive behavioral program, using a cost/benefit formula, is \$10,299 per adult offender.²⁰

Examples of policy implications: Judges ensure that sentencing conditions align with specific criminogenic needs; community corrections and treatment providers use assessment instruments to identify offenders' criminogenic traits; treatment providers avoid "one size fits all" programs; cognitive behavioral services are systematically utilized.

Examples of practice implications: Treatment providers provide program listings that identify the criminogenic needs their services address; community corrections refers offenders to programs based upon the match between offenders' needs and programs' services; county executives/managers ensure that service contracts with treatment providers include accountability measures to make certain that the services provided include cognitive behavioral interventions.

4. What works? Respond to misconduct with swiftness, certainty, and proportionality.

Research finding: Graduated sanctions (i.e., sanctions that increase in severity based on the number and nature of acts of misconduct) increase compliance with supervision and treatment.²¹ Swift,²² certain,²³ and proportional²⁴ actions that reflect disapproval of behavioral misconduct are more effective in reducing recidivism than actions that are disproportionate, delayed, or inconsistent.

Example of policy implications: Court administrators develop policies to move cases swiftly through the court system; judges, prosecutors, and community corrections agencies establish violation decision making guidelines that take into account the risk of the offender and the severity of the violation behavior; all violation behavior is responded to in some fashion; judges and community corrections streamline procedures that allow for swift action following offender misbehavior.

Example of practice implications: Court administrators manage dockets that streamline case processing; community corrections uses a decision making tool to aid supervision officers in structuring their responses to violation behavior; community corrections provides administrative sanctioning processes to address misbehavior quickly.

¹⁸ Andrews, 2007; Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006a; Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005; Lipsey & Landenberger, 2006; Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007; Smith, Gendreau, & Swartz, 2009.

¹⁹ Andrews, 2007; Andrews et al., 1990; Smith, Gendreau, & Swartz, 2009.

²⁰ Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006b.

²¹ Andrews & Janes, 2006; Burke, 2004; Harrell et al., 2003; Hay, 2001; Taxman, Soule, & Gelb, 1999; Taylor & Martin, 2006.

²² Rhine, 1993.

²³ Grasmack & Bryjak, 1980; Nichols & Ross, 1990; Paternoster, 1989.

²⁴ Tonry, 1996; Von Hirsh, 1993.

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5. What works? Use more carrots than sticks.

Research finding: The use of incentives and positive reinforcement are effective in promoting behavioral change.²⁵ Positive reinforcement should be provided at a rate of four reinforcers for every expression of disapproval (or sanction).²⁶ Research demonstrates that this formula enhances offenders' motivation to continue exhibiting prosocial behaviors and attitudes.

Examples of policy implications: Judges and community corrections develop policies around the structured and specific use of rewards to reinforce positive behavior.

Examples of practice implications: Defense counsel requests review hearings when clients reach significant milestones; community corrections acknowledges progress through the posting of awards, writing letters of affirmation, providing complimentary bus passes, praising offenders' behavior to their families, or reducing reporting requirements; law enforcement acknowledges law abiding behavior of known offenders.

6. What works? Deliver services in natural environments where possible.

Research finding: Although treatment services provided in structured (e.g., residential, institutional) settings are demonstrated to be effective, services delivered in natural environments (i.e., settings in offenders' immediate surroundings that most closely resemble prosocial, supportive environments) improve offenders' bonding to the prosocial community and aid in reducing recidivism.²⁷

Examples of policy implications: Law enforcement refers to community-based crisis services for offenders with mental health conditions; judges and prosecutors use community-based rather than residential or institutionally based programs when the safety of the community is not in jeopardy; county executives/managers provide support for funding and zoning community-based programming options.

Examples of practice implications: Judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, community corrections, and others take inventory of available services to ensure a continuum of service options; community corrections utilizes prosocial family members, employers, and mentors to support the offender; resource directories are developed and shared among stakeholders.

7. What works? Pair sanctions with interventions that address criminogenic needs.

Research finding: Research demonstrates that sanctions without programming (e.g., boot camps without a treatment component,²⁸ electronic monitoring,²⁹ intensive supervision,³⁰ incarceration³¹) do not contribute to reductions in reoffense rates. Modest increases in time served may even increase recidivism.³²

Examples of policy implications: Prosecutors and judges employ a combination of sanctions and behavior changing programming for purposes of risk reduction; county executives/managers fund a balance of behavior changing programming and accountability measures; community corrections agencies address offender misbehavior with behavior changing, rather than solely punitive, responses.

²⁵ Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Drake & Barnoski, 2008; Latessa, Cullen, & Gendreau, 2002; National Research Council, 2007; Petersilia, 2007; Petersilia, 2004; Taxman, Soule, & Gelb, 1999.

²⁶ Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Gendreau & Goggin, 1996; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996.

²⁷ Andrews, 2007; Bonta et al., 2002; Clear & Sumter, 2002; Elgelko et al., 1998; Emrick et al., 1993; Galanter, 1993; Higgins & Silverman, 1999; Meyers et al., 2002; Meyers & Smith, 1997; O'Connor & Perryclear, 2003; Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001.

²⁸ MacKenzie et al., 1995; MacKenzie, Wilson, & Kider, 2001.

²⁹ MacKenzie, 1997.

³⁰ Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006a; Aos, Phipps, Barnoski, & Lieb, 2001; Petersilia, 1999; Petersilia & Turner, 1993; Tonry, 1997.

³¹ Andrews, 2007; Gendreau, Goggin, & Cullen, 1999; Gendreau, Goggin, Cullen, & Andrews, 2001.

³² Hughes, Wilson, & Beck, 2001; Langan & Levin, 2002; Smith, Goggin, & Gendreau, 2002.