

Reducing Re-Incarceration Rates in Non-Violent Drug Offenders

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Addiction: Stopping the Cycle

The following project is meant to show how drug abuse treatment can help reduce the risk of reincarceration in non-violent drug offenders in New York State. In 2008 the Human Rights Watch found that NYS violated international human rights due to how it handles drug-related crimes (HRW,2015). This pushed for drug law reform in NYS, which was meant to lower requirements for NYS sponsored treatment. Although NYS has made some reforms in its drug policy, it still is not treating most non-violent drug offenders. Instead these offenders are forced to struggle though their disease, which puts them at a great risk of re-offending and continuing the cycle.

Drug Use Climbs

Drug use globally has seen a rise over the past decade. In the United States as of 2018 19.4% of the population had reported using illicit drugs at least once during the year (NSDUH,2018). Along side the increase of drug use is the increase of drug overdoses. This trend is pragmatic given how the United States handles drug abuses or rather how each State handles drug abuses. As more of the population decides to engage in illicit drugs, States need to act in order to protect and serve its communities. This means States will have to investigate better treatment options for both the free and incarcerated members of society.

Figure 1. Age-adjusted drug overdose death rates: United States, 1999–2016

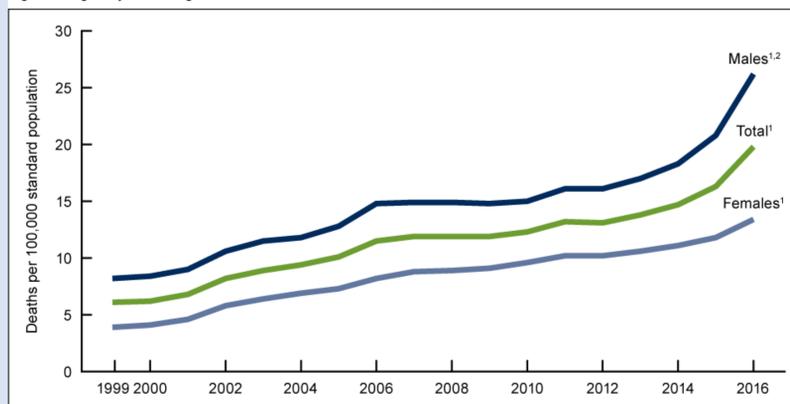
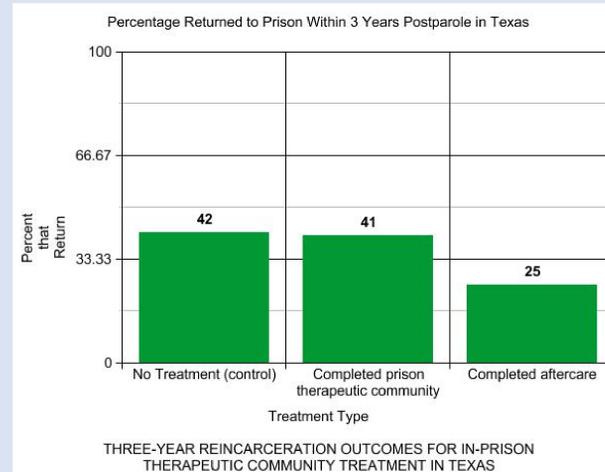
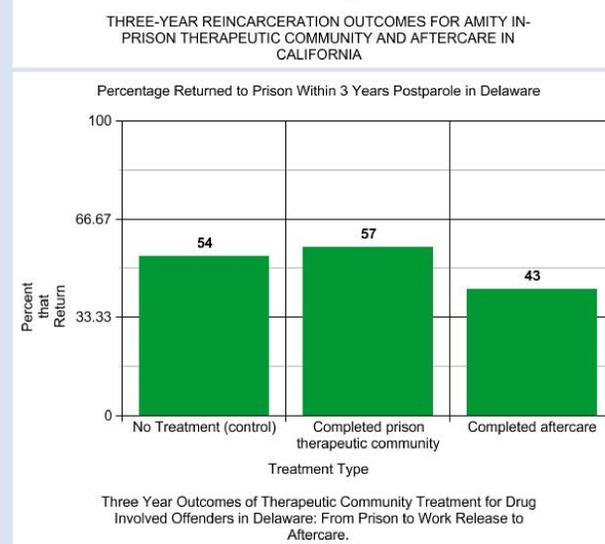
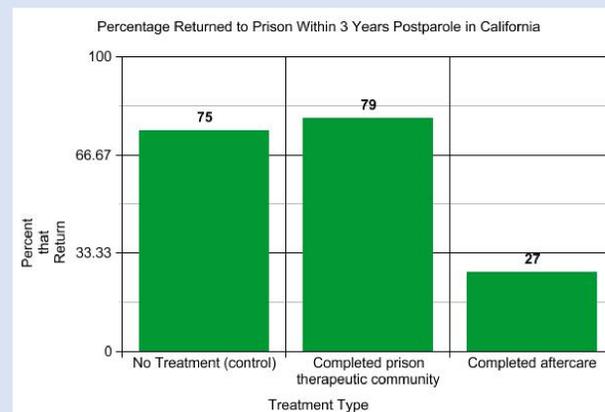


Figure 1. *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db294.htm>

Reducing Re-incarceration

Studies regarding drug abuse treatment in non-violent offenders regardless of state show the same general trend. This is that drug therapy within prisons either had no or negative impacts on patients regarding re-offending. However, in all studies it was found that after prison treatment had an impact on lessening reincarceration rates in this community. (references 3-5)



New York State Now

As of right now NYS has no post incarceration after care treatment and only one program for inmates during incarceration. SHOCK is NYS's program that is designed to help inmates overcome drugs, but it has its own facilities meaning there's a limit to how many people they can treat, which is about 1,600. SHOCK also has many requirements that stop many who need help from receiving it, such as an age limit at 35.

SHOCK

This program works in two phases, the incarceration phase and the parole phase. The incarceration phase entails six months of rigorous military style training along side therapy. The parole phase is very similar to normal parole except these paroles are encouraged (not mandated) to continue therapy treatments.

Policy Proposals

- Stop implementation of SHOCK as studies show it doesn't reduce the risk of re-incarceration.
- Stop treating people with addiction as sub-human, recognize addiction as a disease.
- Write policy mandating all prisons educate inmates about addiction and their available options for recovery. Along side this they must set out proper guidelines of treatment especially regarding inmate's health in matters of discipline within prison system.
- Write policy regarding after care treatment for non-violent drug offenders. This policy should be available for all non-violent drug offenders regardless of age or ability level, an entirely inclusive program.

Future of NYS

Implementing new policy regarding non-violent drug offenders will help bring NYS into the future of addiction services. By focusing on what works instead of how it's always been, NYS can save money on failing programs. This money saved can go into funding programs that are known to aid in addiction recovery, such as after care programs. Treating addiction as a disease instead of punishing addiction as a crime is one-way NYS can put its people's health in the forefront of what's important.

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