

Blazing the Trails ... A Pioneering Program Evaluation Technique



**Arizona Supreme Court
Administrative Office of the Courts
Juvenile Justice Services Division
December 3, 2010**

What Motivated Arizona



- **The Situation in 2004:**
 - Responsible for administering funds for all juvenile intervention programs (\$28 million; nearly 200 programs)
 - Statutory purpose to “reduce the number of repetitive juvenile offenders”
- **The “Feared” Question:**
 - Are these programs working? If so at what cost?
- **The “Honest” Answer:**
 - We really didn’t know ...

Why Arizona Embraced the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol



- **The Dilemma:**

- What to do with almost 200 popular, mostly home-grown, statewide treatment programs?

- **The Options:**

- Maintain status quo (unacceptable)
- Rigidly evaluate each program (impractical)
- Phase out current programs and replace with model/brand name programs (cost, number, scope, replication fidelity, and resistance)

An Alternative Practical Approach: SPEP



- **Dr. Lipsey's Presentation at 2005 NIJ Research Conference/North Carolina's Experience**
 - Measure current programs against research-derived key characteristics of effective programs
 - Establish a baseline – assess how effective we now
 - Set a roadmap for continuous program improvement building on current infrastructure
- **Potential for Recidivism Reduction Approaching or Equaling Model Programs; At Lower Cost**

Key Implementation Elements



- **Data/Information Systems**
 - Arizona's statewide information systems perfectly fitted for SPEP
 - ✦ Type of Program
 - ✦ Dosage (duration and intensity)
 - ✦ Risk Level
- **Support of Key Leaders**
 - Juvenile judges, chief probation officers, service provider leadership, Supreme Court
- **Talented Staff**
 - Energized and dedicated

Implementation Challenges

Identify and Classify Programs



- **Identify Programs**
 - A program must have one or more active treatment ingredients
 - A “structure” is a context that fulfills other needs in the juvenile justice continuum, but does not necessarily intend to impact recidivism reduction
 - Programs must be classified into research-based categories for comparison purposes
- **Classify Programs into SPEP Treatment Categories**
 - Determine what services are actually being provided
 - ✦ Sometimes different from what provider indicated
 - ✦ Reach understanding with provider on proper classification
- **Identify Supplemental Services**

Implementation Challenges

Conduct Statewide Education/Training



- **Conduct Training Sessions Across State**
 - Training for providers; judges; court staff; probation staff
 - Create a non-threatening atmosphere to gain acceptance
- **Address Provider Concerns**
 - Will the court send referrals to other agencies if my score is not as high as it could be?
 - Will court/probation embrace SPEP recommendations?
 - Will my score impact my contract?
 - Will I be placed in a position to turn away referrals because of risk level?

Implementation Challenges

Develop and Distribute SPEP Scores



- **Develop initial SPEP Scores for Each Program**
 - Length of treatment; applicable service units translated from statewide billing system
 - Risk level drawn from statewide info system (JOLTS)
- **Provide Initial Scores**
 - Statewide meetings to distribute scores to providers
 - Initial scores given only to individual providers
 - High level description of score ranges publicly released
- **Require Program Improvement Plans (PIP)**
- **Re-Score after PIP implementation**
 - New scores to become public

Program Improvement Plans



- Few Changes Were Made to Primary Services
- Many Programs Offer Supplemental Services – No Research but Addresses Need
- Frequency and Duration Modifications for Many Programs
- Intake Criteria Adjusted to Consider the Risk Level of Youth
- Many Providers Identified a Need for Collaboration with the Court

Current Status



- **SPEP in Arizona Continues to Move Forward**
 - In process of re-scoring original programs after implementation of program improvement plans
- **Priorities**
 - Rebuild AZ SPEP team
 - Provide increased technical assistance surrounding program improvement both for providers as well as the courts
 - Inclusion of quality component to allow for more comprehensive scores

What Arizona Learned



- **The Initial SPEP Scores of Most Programs were Mediocre**
 - Types of programs utilized were generally in high/medium effect categories (Lipsey)/lots of room for improvement
 - Juveniles generally medium and high risk
 - Program dosage generally insufficient; inadequate duration and intensity
- **What to do with Fixed and/or Shrinking Budget?**
 - Change provider behavior, and
 - Change judicial/probation behavior

What Arizona Needed to Do



- Focus on Risk Level by Prioritizing High/Moderate Risk Level Youth for Treatment Services
- Match Juveniles to Most Appropriate Treatment Programs
 - Revamp statewide needs assessment instrument
- Continue Program Improvement/Examine Cost

Long Range Vision



- Continue Risk Assessment for All Juveniles
- Require Needs Assessment Prioritizing Criminogenic Factors
- Crosswalk Prioritized Criminogenic Factors with Appropriate Types of Treatment Programs (matching)
- Provide Automated Information for Judge/ Probation Staff

Example: Information for Judges and Probation Staff*



Risk Level	Priority Needs	Program Type	Community Programs	SPEP Score	Average Cost Per Juvenile
Medium	Anti-Social Attitudes and Values	Cognitive Behavior Therapy	ABC Services	90	\$4,500
			New Day	85	\$2,000
			Kids First	65	\$2,500

Market forces drive more cost effective programming

*Hypothetical programs, scores, and costs

Contact Information



<http://www.azcourts.gov/jjsd/ArizonaSPEP.aspx>

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