

The relationship between delay discounting, judicial supervision, and substance use among adult drug court clients

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Intensive judicial supervision improves adult drug court outcomes, but past research has found it to be most effective for high-risk participants (Marlowe, Festinger, Lee, Dugosh, & Benasutti, 2006). The aim of this study was to assess whether there are limits to the effectiveness of intensive judicial supervision. On the basis of previous research, a set of possible risk factors was identified among high-risk participants who took part in a randomized controlled trial of intensive supervision on an Australian drug court. Random effects binomial regression models were fitted to measures of on-program substance use to estimate whether intensive supervision modified the effect of these risk factors on substance use. Intensive supervision was found to be effective for lower risk participants, particularly those with low delay discount rates (i.e., less impulsive decision makers) and less risky social environments. Intensive supervision was found to be more effective for participants presenting with poorer attitudes toward the criminal justice system. Intensive supervision, therefore, appears to offset the risk associated with procriminal attitudes. These results suggest that future drug court interventions may be most effective if they target impulsiveness and participants' social networks. Implementation and evaluation of psychosocial interventions such as contingency management and aftercare ought to be priority areas for investigation.