
Factors Associated With Recidivism Among Offenders With Mental Illness

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Abstract

This study examined factors that explained or predicted recidivism of offenders who were mentally impaired and were under various correctional interventions. Offenders in a residential treatment program and specialized probation group, specialized probation alone, and mentally ill offenders who had served time in jail were examined. In comparison to the other two groups, the residential treatment offenders had a more extensive criminal history and were thus more likely to fail on supervision as well as to recidivate after supervision ended. Offenders with an alcohol problem were more likely to recidivate earlier and be rearrested for a violent offense than offenders without an alcohol problem.

Keywords

mental illness, recidivism, mentally impaired offenders, special-needs offenders, probation

Introduction

Between 20% and 40% of persons with severe mental illnesses come to the attention of the criminal justice system at least once in their lives (Swanson et al., 2001). Although the stress and custodial environment of jail and prison settings are a poor fit to address the needs of mentally ill offenders (Roskes, Feldman, Arrington, & Leisher, 1999), there is general agreement that probation or community-based facilities are more appropriate for the supervision and treatment of mentally ill individuals who break the law but present no danger to themselves or others.

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