

Jail Reentry in Rural America: A Quasi-Experimental Examination of a Rural Behavioral Health Reentry Program

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Abstract : Offenders face many challenges as they transition from being incarcerated to the community, ranging from housing and employment needs to long standing problems with addictions and mental health issues. A lack of appropriate behavioral health services in the more remote parts of the United States has led to a significant illegal substance abuse problem, housing instability, and unaddressed mental health and trauma issues. High rates of poverty and unemployment exacerbate the growing behavioral health issues, drug overdoses, co-occurring disorders, and crime that are so prevalent across rural communities. This study examines the challenges of rural jail reentry faced by offenders in a treatment capacity. The client-centered evidence-based program is uniquely designed to provide continuity of care that focuses on issues which affect rural communities. Prior to release from jail, individuals go through comprehensive assessment screenings to measure mental health and substance use disorder as well as trauma and prior crime victimization histories; the assessments help to target client-specific services. The quasi-experimental research design tracks clients throughout their recovery and reintegration into the community. Individuals in a rural program often do not have the benefit of easy access or peer mentoring that is so often found in urban recovery programs. Therefore, much of the support is provided through telehealth and e-services. The goal of this study is to explore the nature of rural reentry programs and measures of recidivism, drug overdoses, and other behavioral health needs and successful reentry to include stable housing and employment.

Keywords : jail reentry, rehabilitation, behavioral health, drug abuse, recidivism

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