The Timing and Sequencing of Correctional Programming

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Overview

- 2016 BJS Visiting Fellowship
- Connects data from two sources:
  1. National criminal history data on 1,879 MN prisoners from 2005 BJS recidivism study
  2. Minnesota DOC institutional data on 1,879 offenders
- Address two main questions:
  - Does Timing Matter?
    - Does point at which participation in programming begins or ends affect recidivism outcomes?
  - Does Sequencing Matter?
    - Do certain combinations of interventions yield better (or worse) recidivism outcomes?
Background

- Research on aggregate-level effects of programming
  - Studies w/ Valerie Clark: Recidivism and Post-Release Employment

- Main Findings
  - Warehousing increases recidivism and unemployment
    - Warehousing = idle/no participation in programming
      - More likely: Males, probation/parole violators, < confinement periods
  - Effective interventions improve employment/recidivism
    - At least one successful recidivism-reduction intervention (SRRI)
      - 12% decrease in recidivism
      - But less than half = at least one SRRI
    - At least two SRRI’s
      - 26% decrease in recidivism
      - Only 18 percent = 2 or more SRRI’s
Research Questions

- Warehousing = worse outcomes
- Effective interventions = better outcomes
- Can we improve the outcomes for effective interventions?
  - Earlier involvement = more programming?
  - Does more programming/greater dosage reduce recidivism?
  - Does delivering programming closer to release improve recidivism outcomes?
- What combinations of interventions are most (least) effective?
  - Does the order in which they participate in these interventions matter?
- Current study attempts to address these questions
Description of Study Sample

- N = 1,879 prisoners released in 2005
- 11 correctional interventions included
  - Education (secondary and post-secondary degree)
  - Employment (work release and home-building program)
  - Treatment (chemical dependency and sex offender)
  - CBT, a correctional boot camp, and visitation
  - Faith-based, prisoner reentry, and MH programming
- 18% were warehoused
- 52% participated in 2 or more interventions
  - 26% = 3 or more
  - 8% = 4 or more
Demographics, Criminal History and Recidivism

- **Gender**
  - 85% male and 15% female
- **Age at Release** = 34
- **# of prior arrests** = 9.25
- **# of prior convictions** = 4.93
- **5-Year Recidivism Rates**
  - Rearrest = 76%
  - Reconviction = 63%
  - Resentenced = 42%
  - Reimprisonment = 52%
Does Timing Affect Program Participation?

- **Two timing measures**
  1. **Days from admission to first intervention**
     - Average for sample = 170 days
  2. **Start Timing Percentage**
     - Days from admission $\rightarrow$ intervention/Total Prison Days
     - Average for sample = 47%

- **Estimate ordinal logistic regression models**
  - **DV = Total # of interventions**
  - **Results**
    - Earlier involvement in programming = more interventions
    - True for both timing measures
Initiation Timing and Recidivism

- When individuals begin programming—does it affect recidivism?
- Estimated Cox regression models
  - Same 2 timing measures (days and percentage)
  - 4 measures of recidivism
- Results
  - Initiation timing did not have a significant effect on any of the recidivism measures
End of Programming and Recidivism

• When individuals end programming—does it affect recidivism?

• Two timing measures
  1. Days from end of last intervention to release
     • Average for sample = 68 days
  2. End Timing Percentage
     • Average for sample = 28%

• Results
  • Days significant for only one recidivism measure
  • Percentage significant for 3 of 4 recidivism measures
Does Dosage Affect Recidivism?

- Dosage = number of confinement days involved in programming
  - 2 measures
    - Total intervention days
      - Average = 198 days
    - Dosage percent (Total intervention days/Total prison days)
      - Average = 36%

- Results
  - Both dosage measures had a significant effect on all 4 recidivism measures
    - More confinement time involved in programming ➔ less recidivism
Combinations/Sequencing of Programming

- Sample size too small for sequencing
- Combinations of interventions
- Results
  - Combos $\rightarrow$ significantly better recidivism outcomes
    - Two interventions
      - Education and visitation
      - Visitation and work release
      - Chemical dependency and sex offender treatment
    - Three interventions
      - Sex offender treatment, education, and visitation
Summarizing Timing and Dosage

• When programming ends $\Rightarrow$ greater effect on recidivism
  • Closer to release date = less recidivism
  • Could also reflect benefits of “continuum of care”
• Earlier involvement in programming $\Rightarrow$ greater participation in interventions
  • More interventions/higher dosage = less recidivism
• Initiation Timing
  • May have more direct impact on prison misconduct
Summarizing Sequencing/Combos

• Can’t conclude much about sequencing (yet)
  • Sample size too small
  • Much larger sample needed to address questions related to combinations/sequencing
    • Relatively few participate in multiple interventions
• More important for higher-risk offenders?
  • Higher-risk offenders may need more than one intervention to desist
    • If multiple interventions are needed, what combinations or sequences will yield best outcomes?
    • Incorporate risk and needs assessment
Closing Thoughts

- Results are preliminary
- Individual program evaluations and meta-analyses of specific interventions are important
  - Help address the question: What works?
- But research on aggregate-level effects of correctional programming is also needed
  - Can help address the questions:
    - What works best for whom?
    - And under what circumstances?