



# Research Bulletin

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## The use of probationer alcohol and substance abuse treatment services in Illinois

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**T**he purpose of this study was to estimate the proportion of juvenile and adult probationers who received publicly funded drug treatment services in Illinois at some time during a period of five fiscal years (from July 1, 1996 to June 30, 2000). The study was sponsored by the Illinois Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (OASA) and was funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), under the State Needs Assessment Program. Other OASA-sponsored studies examined the prevalence of alcohol

**This study was the first step toward learning about the use of drug-related services among juvenile and adult probationers.**

and substance use, including nicotine, within samples of juvenile detainees and adult probationers. They identified the need for alcohol and drug treatment within these samples. This study was designed to collect data on offenders' actual use of OASA-funded alcohol and drug treatment services in Illinois.

### *Methods*

The study's plan was formulated during several discussions involving staff from OASA, which commissioned and funded the project, and TASC, the lead research agency on the project. The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority provided data, resources, and technical assistance to the project, and the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) helped develop the study's instrumentation and allowed the project to piggyback on a statewide assessment of probation outcomes.

### *Data sources*

The first data source consisted of information gathered during the 2000 Illinois Adult and Juvenile Probation Outcome Study, conducted by the Authority with the support of AOIC. The study involved statewide samples of all adult and juvenile probationers discharged between Oct. 30, 2000 and Nov. 30, 2000.



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The data collection tools captured information on probationers' backgrounds, offense histories, conviction crimes, conditions of supervision, use of social services, performance on probation (including rearrests while on probation), and revocation and discharge status.

The second data source consisted of information gathered from OASA records on the recipients of state-subsidized drug treatment, which are captured in the database of the Illinois Drug and Alcohol Records Tracking System (DARTS). Most of the data analyzed for this study were extracted from the DARTS system. The DARTS variables were selected for analysis primarily on the basis of whether they were available and coded in the same manner in all the study's fiscal years. These variables included demographic characteristics, such as age, race, gender, marital status, income, and employment, as well as substance use and treatment histories, such as age at first use of substances, primary substance of abuse, frequency and severity of substance use, number of previous drug treatment episodes, and number of services received.

#### *Procedures*

Identifying information on adult and juvenile offenders included in the 2000 probation outcome study was sent to OASA in electronic files for record-linking purposes. Variables for linking those who were in the probation outcome study and the DARTS database included name, date of birth, race, gender, and social security number. The matching process was completed by OASA staff on the basis of these factors. Matches were required on at least three variables for two cases to be considered a linked pair.

The linked dataset, which contained only individuals who could be matched with the study's identifying variables, was then forwarded to TASC researchers. The clients' treatment records were completely anonymous to researchers.

#### *Sample*

A total of 3,364 adult and 821 juvenile probationers were included in the study. The matched samples contained 921 adults (27 percent of the total adult discharge sample) and 112 juveniles (14 percent of the total juvenile discharge sample). The two matched samples were compared with the total samples on

gender, race, age, marital status, educational level, and income. The only statistically significant differences between the matched and total discharge samples were found in the adult matched sample, which included a significantly smaller proportion of employed persons than did the total adult discharge sample (36 percent in the matched adult sample and 67 percent in the total discharge adult sample). In addition, individuals in the matched adult sample reported significantly lower incomes than did those in the total adult discharge sample (76 percent with incomes less than \$12,000 in the matched sample and 48 percent with incomes less than \$12,000 in the total discharge adult sample).

#### *Analyses*

Descriptive, bivariate, and logistic regression analyses were performed on the data. Because of the problem of empty data cells in the juvenile data set, no bivariate findings were presented in tables, and the bivariate results in the juvenile sample were meant to be largely suggestive. Also, no logistic regressions were performed on the juvenile data.

#### *Findings*

##### *Adult Probationers*

##### *Overall sample*

Adult probationers who received OASA-funded services during the years studied were mostly white, unmarried men younger than 40 years. During the final two fiscal years of the study, the percentage of African Americans began to increase, while the percentage of whites in the matched sample began to decrease. Many probationers lived with family members and were unemployed or earning meager wages. Most had attended or graduated from high school, but few had attended college or had any further training.

Most adult probationers started using alcohol and illicit substances when they were 18 years or younger. Their primary substances of abuse were alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine/amphetamines. One-third were heavy substance users before they entered publicly funded drug treatment programs. Most had moderate or severe substance dependence problems. The number of treatment services received by adult probationers varied greatly across the fiscal years of the study. Most received between one and three. Few

clients in the study were on methadone maintenance therapy.

Most of those in the matched adult sample reported that their current treatment episode was their first time in treatment. The majority of individuals were between the ages of 18 and 40 when their treatment files were first opened. The most common crimes for which subjects were sentenced to probation during the years of the study were drug law violations and DUIs. In the last three fiscal years of the study, the percentage of persons sentenced for DUIs increased significantly in the matched sample.

#### Racial differences

The substance use reported by Hispanics generally began a little later in life than it did for participants in other racial categories. The proportion of Hispanics abusing alcohol was higher than it was for whites or African Americans. African Americans, however, were more likely than individuals in other racial groups to report abusing opiates. Hispanic probationers were less likely than white and African-American probationers to be assessed as severely dependent on substances. Consistent with their assessed levels of substance use severity, Hispanic probationers were significantly less likely to report daily use of substances than were African-American and white probationers. Furthermore, probationers in the latter two groups were more likely to receive larger numbers of services than were Hispanic probationers.

#### Gender differences

Large percentages of men and women probationers abused alcohol. But women were significantly more likely than men to abuse opiates and cocaine/amphetamines. Women received larger numbers of publicly funded drug treatment services than did men. In general, women reported using substances less often than did men. However, women were more likely to be diagnosed with severe dependence problems than were men.

#### Offense differences

Probationers convicted of DUI offenses began using substances when they were older than participants convicted of violent, property, or weapons crimes. Adults sentenced for drug law violations abused all substances at comparable levels and were significantly

more likely to abuse cocaine/amphetamines than were adults convicted of other crimes. Offenders convicted of DUI offenses were the least likely to be diagnosed with severe dependence problems. Consistent with their assessed levels of substance use severity, DUI offenders were less likely than other types of offenders to report daily use of substances. Alcohol abuse was highest among adult probationers convicted of DUI and violent offenses.

#### Employment, marital status, and age differences

Marijuana abuse was particularly high among probationers who were never married. Alcohol abuse increased with levels of education, whereas marijuana abuse decreased. Alcohol abuse also increased with employment levels, but opioid and cocaine/amphetamine abuse decreased. Unemployed participants had more severe drug use problems than those who had full-time jobs. Furthermore, probationers older than 40 years were more likely to be diagnosed with severe dependence problems than were younger probationers.

Employed probationers used substances less often than did unemployed probationers. Older probationers were more likely to receive larger numbers of services than were younger probationers.

#### Probation outcome differences

Nearly 40 percent of the adult probationers were arrested while on probation. In addition, nearly 40 percent were discharged from probation unsuccessfully, because they were newly arrested, did not report to their probation officers, or failed to fulfill special conditions of probation, such as payment of victim restitution. About 20 percent of the offenders had their probation sentences revoked.

A number of variables predicted adult probation outcomes. In general, offenders who were younger, unemployed, and had lower levels of education and income were less likely to succeed on probation supervision. Probationers who started using substances in their adolescent years were more likely to be arrested while on probation. Probationers who had more serious substance abuse problems were also less likely to complete probation successfully. Finally, offenders convicted of DUI offenses were more likely

to finish probation with positive outcomes than were those convicted of other types of crimes.

#### *Juvenile probationers*

Similar to adult probationers, juvenile probationers in the matched sample were mostly white and overwhelmingly male. Most attended school and lived with their families. Most reported that wages were their primary source of income. Although juvenile probationers' incomes were generally low, nearly one-third claimed annual earnings of at least \$19,000.

Half of the juvenile probationers began using alcohol or illicit substances before age 15. Marijuana was by far the primary drug of choice among adolescents on probation. Use of the drug was common across age, gender, and racial subgroups in the matched sample. The largest percentages of adolescents in the sample reported using drugs an average of several times a week or daily. Most juveniles were diagnosed with abuse or mild dependence problems, which were generally less serious than the drug use problems diagnosed in the adult probation sample.

Juvenile probationers, like adult probationers, were fairly new treatment recipients. A large percentage had no or one previous OASA-funded treatment episode, most had files opened at age 13 or older, and most received three or fewer services. Comparable with the adult probationers in the study, about half the juvenile probationers reported that they had previous petitions or adjudications when their OASA files were first opened.

Unlike adult probationers, however, juvenile probationers were more likely to be adjudicated for violent offenses and less likely to be adjudicated for drug, weapons, and DUI offenses. Juveniles were more likely than adults to recidivate while on probation but less likely to have their probations revoked. Juveniles with severe substance use problems were more likely to have their probations revoked than were those with mild or moderate substance use problems.

Juveniles who were older when drug treatment began used substances more often than younger juveniles. Similar to adult probationers, females on juvenile probation were more likely to receive more services than were male juvenile probationers. In contrast with adult probationers, African-American juvenile proba-

tioners received fewer services than did Hispanic and white juvenile probationers.

#### *Conclusion*

This study is the first to explore the characteristics of probationers in publicly funded drug treatment programs in Illinois. Overall, adult probationers receiving OASA services were unemployed, earning meager wages, and unlikely to attend college. Although they began using substances at an early age and had moderate to severe drug use problems, their most recent treatment episodes were often their first experiences in drug treatment. Hispanic probationers were more likely to be treated for alcohol abuse, whereas African Americans were more likely to be treated for opiate abuse. Women were more likely than men to be treated for cocaine and opiate abuse, to have more severe drug use problems, and to receive more treatment services from OASA. Among adult probationers who had participated in OASA-funded programs, the presence of a drug-related problem predicted probation failure.

The drug use problems of juveniles were less serious than those of adults, and juveniles were more likely than adults to be placed on probation for violent crimes. Females on juvenile probation were more likely than males to receive a greater number of drug-related services.

In conclusion, this study is the first step toward learning about the use of drug-related services among probationers who, by far, constitute the largest correctional population in Illinois. The study suggests that both juvenile and adult probationers with substance use problems are being underserved. More than half the state's probationers are sentenced for drug crimes, and previous studies suggest that the percentage of probationers with drug use problems is much higher than the percentage enrolled in treatment programs. Future research should more precisely compare probationers' needs for drug treatment with the numbers of them who are ordered to receive treatment and who actually complete drug treatment programs. That research would help to identify the resources that must be garnered to meet the demand for treatment services, which is clearly necessary in light of the consistent findings that link drug use with probation failure.