Assess, Inform, and Measure (AIM) Court:
An Evaluation of an Alternative to Incarceration

By: Megan A. Buyse in collaboration with Dr. Donald D. Mowry, Center For Service-Learning
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Abstract

Each year an incredible amount of money is spent in Eau Claire county for correction activities alone. This cost of spending is only increasing exceedingly and surpasses all increases with other state-run activities. With the initiation of programs such as Truth in Sentencing and Mandatory Minimum Sentencing for offenders, the cost of incarceration will only continue to increase. Eau Claire county along with Marathon County, Portage County, Lacrosse County, Milwaukee County and one county in Iowa, have teamed together to produce a pilot program entitled Assess, Inform, and Measure (AIM) Court. The goal of this program is to help decrease the cost of incarceration as well as help assist those persons who come into the Criminal Justice system in reducing their likelihood of reentering the system. Each county has targeted a different demographic population. Eau Claire County has focused on women with dependent children who also have AODA and mental health problems. The program began in February 2007 with its first referral.

AIM Court: Levels

Requirements for PHASE ONE:
- 60 Consecutive days of total abstinence from the use of drugs and alcohol.
- Attendance required at one documented case management meeting per week.
- Letters of support may be attached.

Requirements for PHASE TWO:
- 120 days of total abstinence from the use of drugs and alcohol.
- Attendance required at one documented case management meeting per week.
- Letters of support may be attached.

Requirements for PHASE THREE:
- 180 days of total abstinence from the use of drugs and alcohol.
- Attendance required at one documented case management meeting per week.
- Letters of support may be attached.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Judge Benjamin Proctor and the entire AIM Court Team for volunteering their time and efforts to this program.

Conclusion

The goal of AIM Court is to help offenders in the Criminal Justice System with an alternative to Incarceration. After one year, AIM Court has graduated its first participant from the program. We can already see the positive effects of the program through the fact that many now report a decrease in the use of drugs and alcohol and a decrease in the likelihood of reentering the system. We have been able to avoid the cost of incarceration as well as show that the program can only be justified based on the cost of incarceration. Goals for the next year include the graduation of several more participants, as well as collect data on the recidivism of participants that have graduated and those that do not.

AIM Court: An Overview

Criteria:
- Single Mother of one or more children.
- Must meet the DSM-IV criteria for alcohol/drug dependence and/or mental illness.
- Must be a resident of Eau Claire County.
- Offender must be receptive and willing to voluntarily participate.

Procedure:
- The offender meets the criteria for the AIM program.
- The offender is referred to the AIM Team.
- The offender is assessed and completed an application.
- The offender is assigned a case manager.
- The offender attends the required amount of times, per level, to check in with the team and to assess the progress being made.

Objectives

1. Provide courts and specifically judges with better information to deliver the most effective sentences.
2. Identify and support problem-solving approaches and/or programs that can cost-effective, evidence-based, enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, and address criminal behaviors.
3. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated state-level strategy to promote and implement evidence-based criminal justice strategies.

AIM Court: Steps

1. Referral of an offender to AIM Team
2. Basic participant criteria is met by offender
3. Assessment of offender is completed by Uintified Evaluator
4. Assessment is presented to AIM Team
5. Referral is made if offender meets criteria into AIM Court
6. Assuming an acceptance, offender is sentenced at AIM Court
7. Offender begins program with level One
8. Offender continues through program to Level Two; if all criteria have been met
9. Offender continues through program to Level Three; if all criteria have been met
10. Offender graduates from program

Criteria:
- Single Mother of one or more children.
- Must meet the DSM-IV criteria for alcohol/drug dependence and/or mental illness.
- Must be a resident of Eau Claire County.
- Offender must be receptive and willing to voluntarily participate.

Procedure:
- The offender meets the criteria for the AIM program.
- The offender is referred to the AIM Team.
- The offender is assessed and completed an application.
- The offender is assigned a case manager.
- The offender attends the required amount of times, per level, to check in with the team and to assess the progress being made.

Objectives

1. Provide courts and specifically judges with better information to deliver the most effective sentences.
2. Identify and support problem-solving approaches and/or programs that can cost-effective, evidence-based, enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, and address criminal behaviors.
3. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated state-level strategy to promote and implement evidence-based criminal justice strategies.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Judge Benjamin Proctor and the entire AIM Court Team for volunteering their time and efforts to this program.