

Text-Message Appointment Reminders for Young Adult Probationers

Reducing failure-to-report rates in young adults on probation

Agency: Riverside County Probation Department (California)

Trial Completion Date: 12/31/16

Pracademic*: Rudy Lovato, Division Director

Context

Young adults who miss probation appointments fail to benefit from the supervision provided, and are at risk of receiving technical violations and revocation of probation.

Key Finding

This small pilot study demonstrated the feasibility of text message reminders provided to young adult probationers, and also documents a reduction over time in failure to report (FTR) rates.

*BetaGov trains agency personnel to become research-savvy "pracademics" who lead trials.

Background

Research shows that young people often mistrust legal authorities and associated policies and procedures, and those under community supervision may manifest their mistrust by failing to obey probation mandates. One area of concern is the relatively high rates of missed probation appointments by young adults on probation. This failure-to-report (FTR) rate was addressed in a recent trial that used text message technology to optimally communicate with young adult probationers about upcoming probation appointments.

Trial Design

Young adults in a single caseload were randomly assigned to the texting intervention (n=4) or to business-as-usual (n=5). Three clients who did not have consistent use of a cell phone, and one client whose probation was revoked were removed from the trial. The trial ran from October - December, 2016. Youth were sent text message reminders about each visit.

Results

The number of participants in this trial is too small to statistically analyze, so we report percentages. The FTR rate for the intervention group showed a reduction across trial months (20%, 16%, 0). The control group rate was lower compared to the intervention group in months 1 and 2, and the same in month 3 (7%, 8%, 0). No baseline group comparison was done, so there may be differences between groups that contribute to FTR rates. The intervention group performance is compelling, suggesting a larger trial is needed to explore the effectiveness of this technology for reducing FTR rates.

Text Message Trial Results



Why BetaGov?

We are *fast*. We are *free*. And we focus on research that matters to *you*. BetaGov promotes practitioner-led research that tests locally generated advances in education, criminal justice, health, and human services. We support more than 200 randomized controlled trials across a dozen states. One trial at a time, we are changing the way knowledge is created in the public sector.