

ALLIANCE NEWS



Alliance for Better Communities

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ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON FOR DRUG OFFENDERS

By Martin J. Rothschild, J.D.

Prisons and jails in the United States are overcrowded, and a large percentage of the population consists of people convicted



of drug offenses. These largely non-violent offenders cost states and counties enormous amounts of money; and upon completion of their sentences, they frequently relapse and start down the path of a revolving door in and out of prison. Research shows that incarceration does not reduce recidivism among drug offenders and does nothing to address the underlying problems leading to their substance abuse.¹



Once saddled with a criminal offense, or multiple offenses, a substance abuser faces a host of societal and financial problems. Finding decent employment becomes extremely difficult. The resulting financial problems lead to difficulty in maintaining stable housing, the incurring of unmanageable debt, and often a turning to criminal activity as a means of survival. Furthermore, the stigma of a criminal record can lead to rejection by family, friends, and society in general, greatly increasing the likelihood of relapse.²

Vision: To have a community that is fully committed to the health and safety of its residents.

Mission: To reduce underage drinking and substance abuse and expeditiously address any emerging threats.



DRUG COURTS

New York's drug courts enable defendants to avoid the consequences of a criminal conviction if they comply with court-mandated treatment. While these courts, located in different parts of the State, have some variation in their procedures, they all attempt to combine traditional criminal punishments with alternative ones, and they offer treatment and training programs designed to address the root problems leading to substance abuse.³ The Urban Institute performed a statewide study of drug courts in 2013 and found that defendants who were considered high risk and charged with felonies benefited the most. They were referred for residential treatment more often than lower-risk offenders and benefited from a greater level of evidence-based practices related to rehab and reduced recidivism.⁴



PROBATION-SUPERVISED DIVERSION PROGRAMS



Community supervision, or probation, is an alternative to incarceration for drug offenders that can save lives and reduce state expenditures. Probation departments can direct individuals to programs and services that reduce the risk of re-

offending and improve overall quality of life for a substance abuser. The New York State Dept. of Criminal Justice Services funds a variety of programs designed as alternatives to pre-trial detention and incarceration and including drug-and-alcohol-abuse treatment. Non-violent defendants sixteen and older, facing jail or prison sentence, who are non-violent and have indicators of problems with alcohol or other drugs, can qualify for New York State's TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safer Communities) programs. A court-assigned case manager does an in-depth assessment to determine an appropriate treatment recommendation and seeks judicial approval for a qualified defendant. The case manager receives written updates on a defendant's progress in a court-approved program, and these are given to the presiding judge, defense council, district attorney and probation officer or department. The goal is for the individual to successfully complete all treatment programs and avoid a sentence of incarceration.⁵

CHAIRMAN JENNINGS DISPUTES CONCLUSIONS ABOUT HEALTH IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

LOCAL COUNTIES RANKED AMONG UNHEALTHIEST IN STATE, LIST'S ACCURACY QUESTIONED. March 21, 2019

Watertown Daily Times

Serving the communities of Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Lewis counties, New York

Stephen A. Jennings, public health planner for Jefferson County Public Health Service, said double the number of births occur annually than in other comparable-sized counties. Additionally, a significant number of married 18- to 19-year-old soldiers or dependents are having babies, but married or not, the parents fall into teen birth statistics. Even without Fort Drum included, Mr. Jennings said the STI data would be skewed.

"Jefferson is a county that significantly promotes STI testing, and because of that, our rates are higher," Mr. Jennings said. "Another county may do very little to promote testing, have lower rates, but STIs in that community could be actually similar to Jefferson's."

Mr. Jennings also noted most high-ranking counties have stronger economies than the north country.

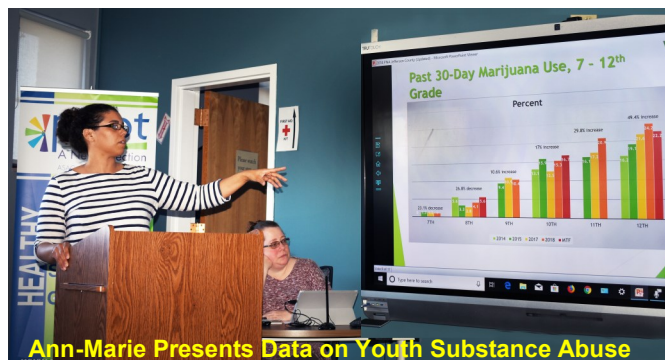
"The social determinants of health position populations to live more successfully and thus in better states of health," Mr. Jennings said.



APRIL ALLIANCE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



Jim Scordo Presides in Arlita's Absence



Ann-Marie Presents Data on Youth Substance Abuse



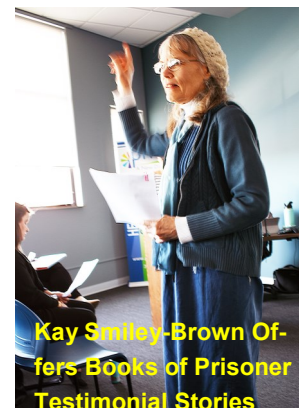
Genie Weaver Gives Update on Anchor Recovery Center



Bob Gorman Discusses Suicide Prevention Program



Connie Elliott Explains Anti-Prom Party-Drinking Program Undertaken with Pizza Shops



Kay Smiley-Brown Offers Books of Prisoner Testimonial Stories

References:

1. Schuppe, J., *NBC NEWS*, Imprisoning Drug Offenders Doesn't Affect Use, Study Says, 2019, retrieved from: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/imprisoning-d>
2. Simmons Staff, *Social Work @ Simmons, Simmons University*, The Challenges of Prisoner Re-entry Into Society, July, 2016, retrieved from: <https://socialwork.simmons.edu/blog/Prisoner-Reentry/>
3. *N.Y. Courts.Gov., Problem-Solving Courts*, Jan. 2017, retrieved from: http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/problem_solving/cc/home.shtml
4. Roman, J., *Urban Institute*, A Statewide Evaluation of New York's Drug Courts, July 2013, retrieved from: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/statewide-evaluation-new-yorks-adult-drug-courts>
5. *New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives*, TASC StandardsdraftAPRIL2008.doc,2008, retrieved from: <https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/opca/pdfs/2008-5tascstandardsmay2008.pdf>

AT THE ALLIANCE MEETING, KILEY HILLYER PRESENTS ANIMATED FILM AIMED AT INFORMING CHILDREN ABOUT THE TACTICS OF SEX TRAFFICKERS



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Give us a call for more information

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Goat Therapy Program Introduced at Addiction Treatment Facility



A new goat therapy program will introduce farm animals to a rehab facility as part of a treatment plan for **recovering addicts**, *People magazine* reported.

South Carolina's Split Creek Farms will donate five goats to Maryland's Ashley Addiction treatment facility in support of its new therapy program that will include daily interaction and care of the goats, according to the report.