

Dear committee members,

An evidence-based option that has yet to be explored in an Australian context for methamphetamine users is the HOPE (Hawaii Opportunity Probation with Enforcement) program. This community supervision strategy for substance-abusing probationers began as a pilot program in October 2004 and has expanded to more than 1500 participants, about one out of six felony probationers on Oahu. It is a sentencing option for substance using offenders, which incorporates mandatory sobriety from drugs. If abstinence is not maintained, there are swift and certain sanctions. Whilst it was initially developed for offenders on probation, it has the ability to be adapted to fit within an Australian criminal justice context so that it could be applied to divert offenders away from the prison system, for those on bail, or for those on parole.

This intervention has achieved:

- **Seventy-two percent less likely to use drugs.**
- **Fifty-five percent less likely to be arrested for a new crime.**
- **Sixty-one percent less likely to skip appointments with their supervisory officer.**
- **Fifty-three percent less likely to have their probation revoked.**

Source: <http://www.nij.gov/topics/corrections/community/drug-offenders/pages/hawaii-hope.aspx>

The 10 year results will be released soon.

Being involved in the HOPE program requires some effort from participants, and an initial outlay of government resources. Participants are allocated a colour when they join the program. They must call the HOPE hotline each morning, and if their particular colour is stated they must attend their probation office before 2pm that day for a drug test. During the first two months of the program they are randomly tested once a week, though good behaviour through compliance and negative drug tests means they are able to receive a new colour which is associated with less regular testing. If the participant returns a positive drug test or fails to appear for testing, a warrant to appear in court is immediately issued. They are brought before the judge within 72 hours. If the person has violated the HOPE conditions they are immediately sentenced to a short jail stay (usually several days, with credit given for time served).

The first evaluation of the HOPE program found that probationers who were assigned to HOPE demonstrated large reductions in positive drug tests and missed appointments, and were significantly less likely to be arrested in the 3, 6, and 12 month periods after the program than those

who were on probation as per usual (Hawken & Kleiman, 2009). Further, those probationers who completed the HOPE program spend a third fewer days in prison on revocations or new convictions than those who were on probation as per usual (Hawken & Kleiman, 2009). One of the more important findings is that most offenders are able to desist from drug use in the face of a credible sanction – which has important implications for treatment resource allocation, as fewer need to be treated, but they need to be treated better.

With a growing prison population in Australia, as well as an increase in those people seeking treatment for methamphetamine use in prisons, it is important that this issue is addressed. HOPE provides the opportunity for those who use crystal methamphetamine to take responsibility for their drug use, and demonstrate they are capable of managing their substance use problem in the community. Not only will this result in a reduction of resources being spent on placing crystal methamphetamine using offenders in prison, but it also allows people to maintain employment, housing, and their support network, which may in turn result in a drug-free and crime-free lifestyle.

References

Hawken, A., & Kleiman, M. (2009). *Managing drug-involved probationers with swift and certain sanctions: Evaluating Hawaii's HOPE. Evaluation Report*. NCJ 229023. National Institute of Justice: Washington.