Justice Research and Evaluation
Practical, Data-Driven Solutions to Justice Issues

Abt ASSOCIATES

At Abt Associates, we study some of the most difficult public safety and justice issues facing the nation and offer practical solutions to policymakers, practitioners and funders. We execute research that informs real-world practices and provide technical assistance to support skill development and practice improvement. Through data-driven strategies, our work aids service providers, programs and communities.

Key Features of Our Work

We offer research expertise and technical assistance on many criminology and criminal justice topics. We:

- Apply innovative and rigorous methods to evaluate various criminal justice programs
- Use advanced and Abt original data systems designed to maximize clients' monitoring and information capabilities and provide corrections reporting and outcome assessments
- Develop and support web platforms for disseminating technical assistance information, best practices, resources and tools to our clients and their stakeholders
- Assemble, manage and link large complex criminal justice datasets to advance research in the field
- Provide evidence-based, data-driven training and technical assistance to programs, communities and agencies within the criminal justice field
- Analyze trends and emerging issues, with particular focus on topics in our areas of expertise.

Expertise

- Criminal Justice and Criminology
- Institutional and Community Corrections
- Recidivism and Reentry
- Criminal Justice Data Management
- Drug Use and Drug Markets
- Human Trafficking
- Interpersonal Violence

Services/Capabilities

- Research and Evaluation Design
- Process, Outcome and Program Evaluation
- Technical Assistance
- Statistical Modeling and Performance Measurement
- Instrument and Web-based Systems Development
- Project Management
- Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis
- Data Collection and Management

Featured Projects

Improving Information on America's Prisons and Jails

The National Correctional Reporting Program (NCRP) is a longstanding program operated by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) that gathers information on all offenders in America's state prisons. Since 2010, BJS has funded a cooperative agreement with Abt to revitalize and redesign the program to meet a number of policy purposes. In the years since, the program has increased the number of participating states and increased use of the data by BJS and other researchers. NCRP is now a vital source of information on states' justice systems.

Evaluating the Impact of Probation/Parole Field Contacts

Abt receives funding from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to describe the varying field contact practices in probation/parole. We also evaluate their effectiveness in maintaining public safety and promoting compliance with supervision requirements. Abt conducted a nationwide survey of community supervision agencies' field contact policies and practices. We partnered with two agencies to implement a quasi-experimental evaluation of the impact of field contacts

on supervision outcomes (e.g., returns to prison). We also conducted a qualitative examination of how agencies use field contacts during supervision through brief field contact checklists and interviews and focus groups with agency staff.

Researching Drug and Crime Trends in the United States

With NIJ funding, Abt is uses quantitative and qualitative data to explore the effects of changing marijuana laws on public safety and public health outcomes. This project provides a rare opportunity to gather and analyze richly detailed data from sources that are national in scope, produce large and representative samples and support time series designs. Key data sources include the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) and the US Department of Justice's National Incident-Based Reporting System.

Describing Jail Diversion Interventions for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

With funding from the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services, Abt is evaluating contextual factors that influence jail diversion programs' effectiveness. We are performing an environmental scan and case studies of five jail diversion programs. The project focuses on understanding implementation strategies and facilitators, barriers and effectiveness. We evaluate monitoring, and assessments of program impact. We also are researching the implications for promulgation and scalability of pre-booking jail diversion interventions targeting people with serious mental illness, substance/opioid use disorders and co-occurring disorders.

Operation of the Federal Justice Statistics Program

Since 1983, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has sponsored the Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP) as the premier source of data about the federal criminal justice system. Abt collects, processes and analyzes data from investigation and arrest through conviction. We make research data publicly available and support a public data-query tool. These data include data from the Drug Enforcement Administration, US Marshals Service, Executive Office of the US Attorneys, Administrative Office of the US Courts, US Sentencing Commission and Federal Bureau of Prisons. Abt has also developed a system to track an individual's movement through the federal justice system across agencies and over time. The FJSP platform provides a unique source of data to address myriad system-wide research and public-policy questions. In addition, BJS and Abt continually incorporate new data and analysis products into the FJSP, such as information from civil case records and pretrial detention.

Developing a Model to Improve Federal Community Corrections

For the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (AOUSC), we assist in its implementation of a results-based management framework for evaluating the effectiveness of operations in US Probation and Pretrial Services Office (PPSO). The ultimate goal is continuous examination and improvement of the management and performance of probation and pretrial services. This project includes supporting the technical and analytic phases of the AOUSC's implementation of its performance management system. That includes the annual assembly of analyses files for offenders on post-conviction supervision and defendants on pretrial supervision. The project also provides continued statistical modeling and analyses, including studying the outcomes for federal defendants and offenders during supervision and post-supervision.

Researching Trafficking in Persons

Under an NIJ grant, Abt is developing and testing methods of estimating the prevalence of human trafficking. We designed the methodology to produce empirical findings useful to local practitioners and policymakers by providing solid city- and county-level estimates of the scope of human trafficking. Such evidence is often lacking, impeding efforts for proper scaling and targeting of interventions to prevent and respond to the problem. The estimation methods use survey data we will collect during this study, supplemented with existing administrative data from law enforcement and social-service providers. We designed the study to result in prevalence estimation tools and guidance feasible for local replication and adaptation to other locations.

Contact

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Bold Ideas. Real Results.

Abt Associates is an engine for social impact, dedicated to moving people from vulnerability to security. Harnessing the power of data and our experts' grounded insights, we provide research, consulting, and technical services globally in the areas of health, environmental and social policy, technology, and international development.

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