Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

2. Analyze the juvenile court and juvenile justice systems.
   2.1 Compare and contrast the differences between the adult and juvenile justice systems.
   2.2 Assess the rationale for treating juveniles differently in the criminal justice system.

6. Analyze the impact of rehabilitation in probation and parole.
   6.1 Examine the various ways in which probation and parole officers contribute to offender rehabilitation.
   6.2 Examine the use of evidence-based practices in working with special populations and why they are effective in rehabilitating offenders.

8. Examine the importance of supervision in probation and parole.
   8.1 Explain why different populations of offenders need to be supervised in different ways.
   8.2 Analyze the different ways that probation and parole officers provide varying levels of supervision to special offender groups.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 6: Community Supervision for Offenders with Special Needs

Chapter 13: Juvenile Justice, Probation, and Parole

Unit Lesson

In this unit, the focus is on special-offender populations, which include those offenders with mental health and substance abuse issues, sex offenders, gang members, veterans, females, and juvenile offenders. Evidence-based practices go even more in-depth with these groups of offenders because the criminal justice system has found tested, effective ways to work with specific populations in order to reduce recidivism. Essentially, we are looking at what works with specific groups of people. However, these offenders are not being held to any different level of culpability for their offense than other offenders. If an offender in a mental-health court does not successfully complete probation, or if an offender on parole who has a substance abuse issue does not successfully complete treatment, those offenders will still face the same consequences as offenders who do not have mental-health or substance-abuse issues. What the criminal justice system recognizes is that individuals in these groups have issues that have contributed to their criminal behavior and thinking, and addressing these specific risk factors in a specific way gives the offenders the opportunity to take advantage of services to improve themselves and avoid criminal behavior in the future. These offenders are placed on specialized probation or parole caseloads because those officers need special training in order to effectively work with these populations, and officers also work closely with designated treatment facilities and community groups in monitoring their caseload’s progress.

One special-offender population that is only touched upon briefly in the textbook is female offenders, which encompasses both adult and juvenile females. They are considered a special population of offenders because, while the interventions used with females may be the same as with males (for example, domestic violence or anger management counseling), some of the approaches in these programs need to be changed to meet the needs of women and girls. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, “the female jail population has been the fastest growing correctional population, increasing by an average of 3.4% annually” since 2010 (Glaze & Kaebel, 2014, p. 1), and the number of women on probation and parole has increased...
over 30% since 1995 (Van Voorhis, 2013). Since the number of females involved in the criminal justice system is growing, it is important to develop effective interventions that will target their criminogenic needs and reduce their recidivism rates.

The first aspect of working with female offenders that needed to be addressed was assessing them for risk. While there are many empirically validated risk-assessment tools available for judging on what level of supervision an offender needs to be placed while on probation or parole, the traditional risk-assessment measures have only been validated with male offenders because they make up the majority of the criminal justice population. In response to this, various risk-assessment tools have been developed and tested with female offenders in order for probation and parole officers to really hone in on the specific risk factors and criminogenic needs of their female probationers and parolees.

Even some of the risk factors for criminal behavior are different for men than for women. For example, while criminal history, substance abuse, and antisocial friends present increased risk for both men and women, women vary in that mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) play a greater role in their offending (Van Voorhis, 2013). Women who have histories of trauma and abuse are also more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system (Van Voorhis, 2013). What this means is that while men may also have histories of abuse or depression, those particular aspects of their lives are not going to contribute to their criminal behavior as much (or at all) as those factors will for women. When probation and parole officers work with women and girls who have experienced trauma and abuse, for example, they have to evaluate how that trauma and abuse has contributed to their substance use, affected their mental health, or caused them to be in unhealthy relationships that may be abusive themselves. Then the probation or parole officer has to make sure that the offender is referred to appropriate services to deal with these issues.

Approaching traditional treatments for women and girls is also different because, while both men and women may need substance abuse treatment, the part that a girl or woman’s self-esteem plays in using substances is greater than it is for men (Van Voorhis, 2013). This is also why most treatment providers run separate groups for men and women or for juvenile males and juvenile females. Putting males and females together in the same group will not be beneficial because the focus and goals for males will be completely different from those of females.

Take some time to read over these articles that discuss the special issues of women and girls in the criminal justice system and how the gender-responsivity principle comes into play when developing rehabilitative programming for women and girls, and evaluate how the specific risk factors for females and girls can contribute to their criminal behavior:


(More materials from Penal Reform International can be found at their website: www.penalreform.org.)

http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/RS_No90/No90_09VE_Van%20Voorhis.pdf

This case example will help illustrate further how, if not addressed, underlying risk factors can contribute to recidivism. Even though the overt issue, like substance use or anger, is being addressed in the same type of treatment modality that is used with male offenders, failure to refer the offender for services for the underlying risk factor will make the primary treatment ineffective.

Example: Sherry

Sherry is 24 years old and is currently on probation for retail theft. The father of her two children, Damon, is currently incarcerated in the department of corrections for two years for a residential burglary. Sherry is very stressed out trying to care for her two children on her own. While her mother does help her out occasionally by watching the children so that she can go to work, she still has to pay for childcare most of the time—along with her apartment, utilities, food, clothes, and transportation. She does receive some help from several government programs, but this never seems to be enough. Sherry has also recently started to smoke marijuana with one of her friends who lives in her apartment complex. She states that sometimes she is so worried about money that she cannot sleep at night, so she smokes marijuana to calm down, forget about her troubles, and get some rest. Sherry was arrested for felony retail theft six months ago. She accepted a plea deal and is on probation with you for two years and needs to complete an education class online about shoplifting and provide the completion certificate to you. She also owes $1,800.00 in fines, court costs, and...
probation fees, which she states very early on is going to be very hard for her to pay on her fixed budget. She is very stressed out about money and her ability to care for her two children adequately, and she reports to you that she was stealing clothes for her oldest child from a retail store because he had grown out of his old clothes and she could not afford to purchase him ones that fit. She tells you that she feels like a horrible mother because she cannot buy her children clothes and states that if she were a better person or a smarter person, then she would be able to take care of her children.

While Sherry is on probation for retail theft, do you think that the online class about retail theft will really reduce her likelihood of recidivism? What underlying issues do you see present in Sherry’s case that, if unaddressed, will contribute to her either stealing or developing a substance abuse problem in the future? (Right now we can just classify her marijuana use as casual use because she has not reported problems with ceasing use of marijuana since she was arrested.) What types of programs or interventions would you, as her probation officer, refer her to that would be the most effective?

References


Suggested Reading

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention website is a great tool for reviewing recent statistics on juveniles in the criminal justice system:

http://www.ojjdp.gov/

The National Institute of Corrections has a great library database that has a special section dedicated to special offenders. Just scroll to the bottom of the page, click on Browse the Library, and then click on Topic Index:

http://nicic.gov/

Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Listen to this DC Public Safety radio show podcast highlighting veteran’s treatment courts:


1. Identify what needs of this special population were identified that necessitated the development of these courts.
2. Evaluate how evidence-based practices are being utilized in the criminal justice system with veterans.
3. Decide whether or not you believe that Veteran’s Treatment Courts are meeting their goals of rehabilitating offenders, providing needed services, and reducing recidivism in the veteran population.
4. Consider where you think this type of program can improve. What do you think is the best aspect about this type of program?

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.