Drug Trafficking Recidivism: The Need for Treatment and Prevention Programs

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Many drug traffickers -- once they are released from federal prison or jail -- become incarcerated again due to recidivism. Federal sentencing laws designed with serious traffickers in mind have resulted in lengthy imprisonment of offenders who have played relatively minor roles, but these laws have failed to reduce recidivism (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2015). This poster analyzes characteristics of drug trafficking and recidivism, factors that play a role in this problem, and interventions that can help reduce recidivism. There is limited empirical literature on realistic drug trafficking prevention/treatment that can help reduce recidivism. This indicates further research on the issue that needs to be conducted.

The Business of Drug Trafficking

- Production
- Manufacturing
- Smuggling

Wholesale & regional distribution

Need for Treatment Programs

- A consistent need for equality, education, and employment opportunity within vulnerable communities exists across the U.S.
- Prevention programs can reduce recidivism and the influence of illicit drug use, manufacturing, and selling.
- In 2011, Seattle created the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. This pre-arrest diversion program is a rehabilitative alternative to low-level drug and prostitution offenses. LEAD has reduced recidivism rates by 60%.
- These statistics suggest that treatment programs are beneficial and effective. Providing the same kind of treatment programs for drug traffickers could lead to the same results.
- The substantial amount of money invested into federal prisons that do not provide rehabilitation -- but rather just a means to an end for prisoners -- is a waste of tax payers' money. Also, with no rehabilitation or skill training programs within the federal prison, the rate of recidivism is high for drug traffickers, suggesting that tax payer money is not being well spent.

Goals of Prevention and Treatment

Prevention: Provide other ways to make a living, make education a feasible opportunity and a beneficial one, provide positive programs in communities that focus on building stability and activities that keep individuals away from illicit drugs.

Treatment: Implementing behavioral therapy to traffickers/ex traffickers can be beneficial. Drug trafficking is a lifestyle to most who engage, and effort towards changing the behavior can result in a more positive lifestyle with less consequence.

Discussion

- Reducing drug trafficking recidivism with prevention/treatment programs can help society as a whole by providing traffickers a second chance and potentially reducing drug abuse.
- As a society we need to have a positive productive environment for future generations to have a safe place to live.
- Lack of education, employment opportunities, and pressure to change a situation can make an individual more than others try this risky lifestyle.
- Federal prison does not provide a relief for this problem, it actually makes the issue worse.
- The federal prison system is a profitable business in the United States. It generates billions of dollars and employs over 40,000 people each year.
- The creation of an environment that generates the same cash flow but actually helps individuals can be the solution to our problem.
- Using the LEAD program model as a guide to treating drug traffickers can reduce recidivism and improve community health, safety, and production.

Background

- Drug trafficking is a global illicit trade that regularly results in tons of illegal drugs moved across international borders from producing to destination countries (Natarajan, Yu & Zanella, 2015).
- Most drug traffickers are lacking in academic and employment opportunities, or succumb to pressure to change their personal situation.
- Drug trafficking organizations adopt a complex business structure (Natarajan et al., 2015). This provides evidence of intelligence within the trafficking community that, if given the opportunity, could be used for positive purposes.
- There are more than 95,000 federal prisoners serving time for drug-related offenses, which is up from fewer than 5,000 in 1980 (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2015). The federal prison system consumes more than $6.7 billion a year from tax payers, or roughly 1 in 4 dollars spent by the U.S. Justice Department (2015).
- Research conducted by Saris (2012) examined the U.S. Supreme Court opinion in United States v. Booker (2005). The author found that crack cocaine sentencing was disproportionate to the seriousness of the offense. This led to overcrowding in prisons, which leaves no room for offenders who are an actual threat to the public.

References

Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting data tool. Available at: http://www.ucrdatatool.gov

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