

Anger management programming for federal male inmates: An effective intervention (R-82, 1999)

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This investigation compared a matched sample of 110 male federal offenders who completed the institutional Anger Management program to an untreated comparison group. The majority (86%) of whom was matched to the treatment group on age, Statistical Information on Recidivism (SIR) risk group and major admitting offence. Where it was not possible to match on all three criteria (14%), offenders were matched on age and SIR risk group. In comparing groups on post-release outcome criteria (non-violent and violent recidivism), survival analysis was used to equate groups for time-at-risk in the community.

The first set of comparisons compared “treated” to “comparison” subjects on non-violent recidivism (defined as any new conviction for a non-violent offence). Both groups of inmates were divided into higher-risk versus lower-risk groups based on SIR risk group ratings. Results revealed that for the lower-risk cases (n = 54), completion of the Anger Management program was not significantly associated with reduced levels of non-violent re-offending. However, when analyses focused on higher-risk cases (n = 56), significant reductions in non-violent recidivism were found. This translated into a 69% reduction in non-violent recidivism (i.e. 39.3% recidivism rate for the comparison group versus 12.5% of the Anger Management group).

These groups were also compared on violent recidivism. For the higher-risk group, completion of the Anger Management program was associated with significant reductions in violent reoffending. There was an 86% reduction in violent recidivism (25% for the control group versus 3.6% for the Anger Management group).

Another interesting finding was that some of the pre-post change scores on assessment measures were significantly correlated with reductions in both non-violent and violent recidivism.

Results of this investigation provide preliminary support for the effectiveness of Anger Management programming, especially for high-risk cases. Operational implications include ensuring comprehensive pre-treatment screening assessments where high-risk cases are assigned to Anger Management treatment and low-risk cases are diverted into lower intensity programs.

The high proportion of Aboriginal offenders in the treatment group highlights the necessity of evaluating the effectiveness of this program for this particular offender population.

This study has raised some important points for practitioners and researchers alike. First and foremost, the present investigation has illustrated that Anger Management programming is indeed an effective intervention strategy, especially for high-risk offenders. ■