

Justice Systems Research and Evaluation

Practical, Data-Driven Solutions to Improve the Justice System



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 in becoming healthier and safer.

Key Features of Our Work

We offer research expertise and technical assistance in variety of topics related to criminology and criminal justice, which includes corrections, crime, interpersonal violence, drug use and drug markets, recidivism and reentry, criminal justice data management, and human trafficking. Our teams:

- Analyze trends and emerging issues, with particular focus on the above topics;
- 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; and
- Provide evidence-based, data-driven training and technical assistance to programs, communities, and agencies within the criminal justice field.

Expertise

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



Services/Capabilities

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

Featured Projects

Operation of the Federal Justice Statistics Program

Abt is operating the Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP) for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), which is the Federal government's source of information on persons arrested and processed through the Federal criminal justice system. Abt is responsible for collecting offender-level data annually from agencies involved in this process, including the Executive Office of the US Attorney, United States Sentencing Commission, Administrative Office of the US Courts (AOUSC), the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the US Marshals Service (USMS), and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), creating analysis files, analyzing these data to inform policy discussions on federal criminal case processing, and developing a website to provide FJS summary data to the public.

Supporting the National Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Resource Center

The PRC is dedicated to assisting correctional agencies in implementing national standards designed to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse in confinement. Since 2010, Abt has worked with Impact Justice and the Bureau of Justice

Assistance to develop measures of compliance with the national standards (for adult prisons and jails, juvenile facilities, community confinement facilities, and lock-ups), develop audit instrumentation and procedures including development and management of an online audit system, and develop and deliver an auditor training and certification program.

Estimating the Quantity of Painkiller Prescription Diversions to Illicit Use by “Doctor Shoppers”

Abt researchers designed and conducted a novel study to determine the extent of opioid medication diversion by “doctor shoppers.” Funded by NIDA, our study revealed that 4.3 million prescriptions for painkillers were obtained by individuals seeking prescriptions for the same drugs from different physicians. The results of the study were published in the journal PLOS ONE.

Determining Disparities in ADHD Treatment in the U.S.

The use of amphetamine medications to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the U.S. varies widely from state to state and even more dramatically from one county to another. This was the finding of a recent study by Abt. The results of this NIDA-funded study were published in Psychiatric Services. It is the first study to estimate treatment rates for ADHD using prescription records of individuals.

Sharing Information on Local Initiatives Aimed at Combating Prostitution

Abt launched a website, DemandForum.net, to provide comprehensive information about the nearly 1,000 local U.S. initiatives aimed at preventing prostitution by stopping men from buying sex. The site offers a forum for sharing best practices, lessons learned and how to start or improve similar initiatives. Prior to the website’s development, Abt conducted a nationwide assessment of sex trafficking demand-reduction efforts for the National Institute of Justice.

Evaluating Linkages to HIV Primary Care in Jails

This Special Program of National Significance was a collaboration between Abt Associates and the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. The Emory-Abt Evaluation and Support Center coordinated the multi-site evaluation and showcased the effectiveness of innovative methods for linking persons living with HIV/AIDS who are incarcerated in jails or have been recently released from prison to primary medical care and ancillary services in their communities.

Assessing Linkage to Care for Recently Released Prison Ex-Offenders

Abt and Rhode Island’s Miriam Hospital are assessing the level and adequacy of linkage to HIV care for HIV-positive prison releasees. The study is examining the effects of the variation

in local resources and relationships among criminal justice and public health systems, and comparing different strategies for improving a systems-wide, multi-agency approach to delivering HIV care to criminal justice populations.

Improving Information on America’s Prisons and Jails

The National Correctional Reporting Program (NCRP) is a longstanding program operated by the BJS that gathers information on all offenders in America’s thousands of prisons and jails. Beginning in 2010, BJS has funded a cooperative agreement with Abt to revitalize and redesign the program to meet a number of policy-relevant purposes. In the years since, the program has increased the number of participating state systems and increased utilization of the data by BJS and other researchers, making NCRP a vital source of information on states’ justice systems.

Developing a Model to Improve Federal Community Corrections

Abt has an ongoing project for the AOUSC to assist in their implementation of a results-based management framework for evaluating the effectiveness of operations in U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office. The ultimate goal is to continually examine and improve the management and performance of probation and pretrial services. This project includes supporting the technical and analytic phases of the AOUSC’s implementation of their performance management system, including the annual assembly of analyses files for offenders on post-conviction supervision and defendants on pretrial supervision; continued statistical modeling and analyses, including studying the outcomes for federal defendants and offenders during supervision and post-supervision; and special studies to inform improvements to PPSO programs.

Contact

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Abt Associates is a mission-driven, global leader in research and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development. Known for its rigorous approach to solving complex challenges, Abt Associates is regularly ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and one of the top 40 international development innovators. The company has multiple offices in the U.S. and program offices in more than 60 countries.

