

Role of Batterers' Treatment in Recidivism by Domestic Violence Offenders

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Purpose: To examine the role of batterer's treatment at LEAP Alternatives to Violence in Fairbanks relative to other factors that influence the likelihood that a domestic violence offender will be arrested for further violent offences.

Methods: I sampled 101 program participants from all of the men who did intakes at LEAP between January 1, 2008 and June 30, 2015. Then I used 27 factors shown to be correlated with domestic violence re-offence in the literature (including criminal history, substance abuse, employment status, living with partner, history of child abuse, and others). I built models predicting re-arrest for violent offences after last contact with the program. I also modeled attrition from the program.

Results:

- Of men who completed LEAP, 20% were re-arrested for a violent crime. Of men who did not complete LEAP, 41% re-offended violently.
- The recidivism model was able to correctly predict whether a participant would re-offend 60% of the time. The attrition model predicted who would drop out of the program with 68% of the time.
- Of 27 possible predictive factors, the top predictors of recidivism were:
 - 1) the number of days since last contact with LEAP
 - Participants were more likely to re-offend as time went by since they had last contact with the program, with a peak in re-arrest 5 years after last contact.
 - 2) whether the participant had committed any violent offenses during the program
 - Participants who committed violent offenses while they were in the program were more likely to re-offend once they were out of the program.
 - 3) whether the participant had completed LEAP
 - Men who completed the program were less likely to re-offend than those who dropped out.
- The top predictors of attrition were:
 - 1) The participant's race
 - Alaska Native participants were most likely to drop out.
 - 2) Whether the participant was abused as a child
 - Men who were abused in childhood were less likely to drop out
 - 3) The number of past minor offences in the participant's criminal record
 - Clients with more minor offences on their record were less likely to drop out
 - 4) The total number of past offences in the participant's criminal record
 - Clients with more past offences on their record were less likely to drop out

- 5) Current charge for which the participant was ordered to the program
 - Clients with more serious past charges were less likely to drop out. Clients with no charges (who are typically volunteers) were most likely to drop out.
- 6) The number of past violent offences.
 - Clients with more violent offences were less likely to drop out.

Conclusions

- While it is impossible to attribute reduced recidivism among program completers to the effects of the program with our study design, the fact that program completion and attendance variables out-performed the rest of the 27 predictors found in the literature to relate to recidivism provides evidence in support of the effectiveness of the program. This is further supported by the increase in recidivism with time since last contact with the program, as other confounding variables are not expected to change in a consistent way over time.
- Efforts could be targeted to retain Alaska Native clients in the program. Clients with more numerous and more serious criminal charges were less likely to drop out, probably because there is more enforcement of court orders sending these clients to the program. Similar enforcement efforts could be made for all offenders ordered to complete alternatives to violence to improve the rate of program completion.