

Hawaii HOPE

by Philip Bulman

Two evaluations of Hawaii’s innovative HOPE program found that participating probationers were significantly less likely to fail drug tests or miss probation appointments. They were also sentenced to less time in prison because of probation revocations than were probationers who did not participate in the program.¹

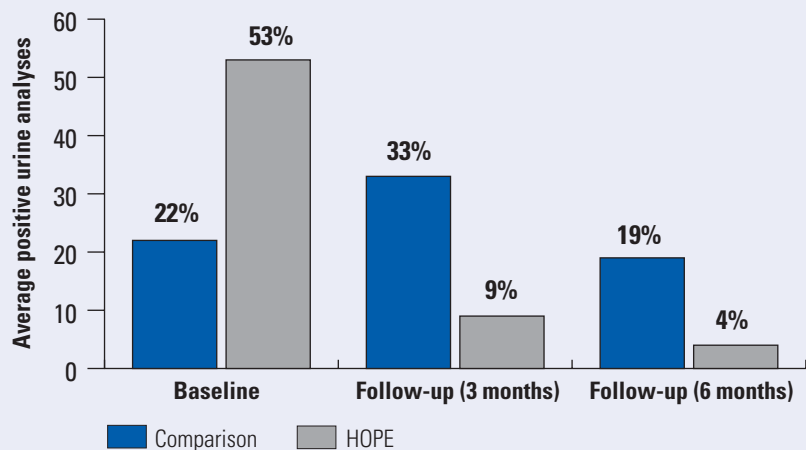
Hawaii’s Opportunity Probation with Enforcement program uses a “swift and sure punishment” approach to discourage probation violations. Judges give probationers “warning hearings” to tell them that probation terms will be strictly enforced. Frequent, unannounced drug testing is part of the program. Participants must call a hotline each weekday morning to learn if they will be drug-tested that day. Participants who fail a morning drug test are arrested immediately. They may be in court within a few hours, where the judge will change the terms of their probation to include a short stay in jail. Employed probationers are often permitted to serve their jail time on weekends, at least initially, to encourage continued employment.

The court also assures those who need drug treatment or mental health counseling that they will get the treatment they need and are expected to attend and complete such programs. In the past, probationers might skip appointments with probation officers, fail numerous drug tests, or even drop out of treatment programs. Before HOPE, the consequences of

these violations, such as probation revocation and a lengthy prison sentence, were typically delayed and uncertain. The HOPE approach is to respond immediately to probation violations, emphasizing swiftness and certainty rather than severity.

Researchers compared probationers who participated in the HOPE

Figure 1: Average Percentage of Positive Urine Analyses*



*Results are from the quasi-experimental portion of the evaluation.

program with those who did not. Results from the NIJ-funded quasi-experimental evaluation show that HOPE probationers had large decreases in positive drug tests and missed appointments. They were much less likely to be arrested. They spent about the same number of

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days in jail for probation violations as the comparison group, serving more frequent but shorter terms. However, they were sentenced to about one-third as many days in prison as the non-HOPE group for probation revocations or new convictions. A one-year randomized controlled trial confirmed these results.

Figure 2: Probationer Outcomes During the One-Year Follow-up Period*

	HOPE	Control
No-shows for probation appointments	9%	23%
Positive urine tests	13%	46%
New arrest rate	21%	47%
Probation revocation rate	7%	15%
Incarceration (days sentenced)	138 days	267 days

*Results are from the one-year randomized controlled trial portion of the evaluation.

During the first three months after HOPE probationers started participating, they showed striking improvement in their drug usage as positive drug tests fell from 53 percent to 9 percent, as figure 1 shows. By contrast, positive drug tests for the non-HOPE group increased initially but showed negligible change over time. Results in figure 2 from the smaller but more rigorous randomized controlled trial show similar declines in problem outcomes among probationers in the HOPE treatment group.

HOPE was pioneered in 2004 by Circuit Judge Steven S. Alm, who believed that the probation system was not working well and could be improved. Initial participants included those whom probation officers thought were particularly high-risk probationers.

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Note

1. Angela Hawken of Pepperdine University and Mark Kleiman of the University of California, Los Angeles conducted two evaluation studies. One was a quasi-experimental design; the other was a one-year randomized control trial.



Visit NIJ's Web topic page on Hawaii HOPE at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/corrections/community/hawaii-hope.htm>.

The NIJ final report from the evaluation, *Managing Drug Involved Probationers With Swift and Certain Sanctions: Evaluating Hawaii's HOPE* by Angela Hawken and Mark Kleiman, is available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/229023.pdf>.



See an interview with Judge Alm at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/journals/media.htm>.