



## Minority Communities

and the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act  
A California Voter Initiative — November 2000

The ravages of drug addiction and heavy-handed drug enforcement policies have hit minority communities the hardest. Drug use levels are relatively consistent across racial lines. However, minorities are much more likely to be convicted on drug-related charges, and have considerably less access to treatment facilities. According to federal government statistics, in 1996, 5.2 percent of Hispanics, 6.1 percent of whites, and 7.5 percent of blacks admitted to using illicit drugs within the past month. In that same year, 23 percent of the people sentenced to state prisons for drug offenses were Hispanic, 20 percent were white, and 57 percent were black. However, the individuals who were admitted into treatment in 1996 were 10.8 percent Hispanic, 73.3 percent white, and 24.9 percent black.

The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act will create a diversion-to-treatment system for all non-violent, drug possession offenders. Any individual, regardless of race or economic status, will be able to enter treatment if they meet the criteria for diversion. Treatment costs will be covered for those who need assistance, and all treatment regimens will be designed for each individual offender.

The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act defines treatment to include many programs that will help strengthen families and communities. Examples include, but are not limited to, vocational training, family counseling, literacy training, drug education and prevention, as well as out-patient and residential treatment programs. Breaking the cycle of addiction and incarceration will bring many non-violent, addicted offenders back to their families and communities ready to serve as productive parents and role models.

**Fifty-four percent of blacks convicted of drug offenses receive prison sentences versus thirty-four percent of whites convicted of the same crimes.**

— *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, BJS, '96*

**Between 1990 and 1995, three Hispanic males were added to the prison population for every one added to California's four-year public universities.**

— *Class Dismissed: Higher Education vs. Corrections During the Wilson Years, Justice Policy Institute, '98*

All research references are available upon request.

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