



Public Safety / Crime Reduction

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

The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act of 2000 will divert low-level, non-violent drug possession offenders out of the criminal justice system and into drug treatment and other rehabilitation services, including vocational training, family counseling, and literacy training. A number of studies have shown that drug treatment reduces drug abuse, drug dealing and criminal activity, and, as a result, improves public safety.

The 1994 California Drug and Alcohol Treatment Assessment (CALDATA) found that among previously criminal offenders, 72 percent stopped committing crimes after receiving treatment and 74 percent reduced their use of weapons and physical force after completing treatment services. The National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (NTIES) found that arrests for shoplifting declined by 82 percent, drug dealing declined by 78 percent, and arrests for any crime were reduced by 64 percent among those who completed a designated treatment program.

Employed ex-offenders are less likely to commit crimes to support themselves and their families. However, getting a job requires marketable skills. Vocational training and adult education help build such skills, and they have been found to provide returns many times greater than their initial costs. The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act provides for vocational training to be among the possible requirements for diverted offenders.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that providing job counseling and job search programs for inmates leaving prison resulted in a combined taxpayer and crime-victim benefit of \$4.00 for every dollar spent. Adult basic education programs resulted in \$2.40 in benefits per dollar of cost.

Finally, by diverting non-violent drug offenders out of the criminal justice system, more jail and prison cells will be available for violent offenders. According to the state Legislative Analyst's Office, between 10,000 and 12,000 prison beds, and about 2,800 jail beds will be freed up by the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act. More available space in California's prisons and jails means that more violent criminals will be kept off the streets longer.

Treatment reduces criminal activity by 72 percent.

— *General Report, CALDATA, '94*

Adult basic education programs result in \$2.40 in benefit per dollar spent on the program.

— *"The Comparative Costs and Benefits of Programs to Reduce Crime," Washington State Institute for Public Policy, '99*

Between 10,000 and 12,000 prison beds, currently used by non-violent drug offenders, will be available to house dangerous, violent criminals.

— *Fiscal Effect of "The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act of 2000", California Legislative Analyst's Office, '99*

All research references are available upon request.

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