

Study examines effectiveness of probation program

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Within the criminal justice community, an approach to community supervision known as Honest Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (HOPE) has generated widespread enthusiasm and praise as a way to reduce substance use, violations, new arrests, and revocations to prison, while also leading to significant cost savings for local justice systems. A new study casts doubts on the benefits of HOPE over probation as usual (PAU), however.

In a four-site randomized control trial that tested the effectiveness and replicability of HOPE programs, more than 1500 individuals on probation from communities in Arkansas, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Texas were randomly assigned to either HOPE or PAU.

Conducted from fall 2011 to spring 2015, the study found no significant differences between HOPE and PAU probationers in the likelihood of re-arrest, nor did it see differences between HOPE and PAU participants in the time to re-arrest.

The study suggests that the original strong findings for HOPE that were reported for the Hawaii HOPE program may not be generalizable and that HOPE is not the "silver bullet" that will produce reduced recidivism and lower costs for supervising high-risk probationers.

"The study does suggest that supervision practices that enforce strict compliance with the conditions of supervision can be successfully implemented, holding probationers accountable for their actions," said

Dr. Pamela K. Lattimore, lead author of the *Criminology & Public Policy* study and Director of the Center for Justice, Safety, and Resilience at RTI International. "Additional work is needed to determine if the HOPE model is effective for specific types of probationers or if it can be modified to produce favorable recidivism outcomes and reduce overall probation costs."

More information: *Criminology & Public Policy*, [DOI: 10.1111/1745-9133.12248](https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12248)

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