

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/remote-access-video-technology-probation-parole-substance-users-south-dakota>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

The challenges of accessing services for alcohol and other drug use in South Dakota may have contributed to the states high percentage of people convicted of low-level nonviolent offenses, particularly for drug or alcohol related offenses. To minimize these challenges, especially for parolees and probationers residing in the states vast rural areas, the state worked with local providers to pilot a teleconferencing program aimed at connecting people to community-based services without the cost and barrier of transportation or other access issues. This brief describes the issues people on parole or probation encounter and the solutions the state developed to address them. It is the second brief in a series of three that focuses on the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI)an initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Justices Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), in partnership with the Pew Charitable Trusts. JRI is a data-driven approach to improve public safety, examine corrections and related criminal justice spending, manage and allocate criminal justice populations in a more cost-effective manner, and reinvest savings in strategies that can hold system-involved people accountable, decrease crime, and strengthen neighborhoods. At least 30 states have engaged in this process.

How South Dakota overcame the challenge of delivering treatment services across vast distances may serve as a guide for interested jurisdictions facing similar issues and hoping to start a similar program.

Substance use is a known risk factor for re-offending and people with substance use disorders are more likely to be arrested or to violate the terms of their supervision in the community if they have limited or no access to treatment services.

The South Dakota Department of Social Services (DSS) is attempting to address the numerous barriers that both rural and urban residents face in accessing treatment, including the cost of and access to transportation, and personal inhibitions (such as anxiety or perceived stigma) toward attending in-person counseling.

PUBLICATION

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