

Text-Message Reminders for Probation Appointments

Reducing failure-to-report with text-message appointment reminders

Agency: Clackamas County Community Corrections (Oregon)
Trial Completion Date: 01/15/16
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Context

One-third of probationers fail to complete the terms of their supervision (BJS, 2014).

Failure to report deprives probationers of program benefits, wastes public time and money, and increases incarceration risk.

Key Finding

Clackamas County Community Corrections sent text-message reminders to probationers and reduced their failure-to-report rate by one-third.

*BetaGov trains agency personnel to become research-savvy "pracademics" who lead trials.

Background

Clackamas County Community Corrections wants to ensure that probationers consistently attend their probation appointments. Missed appointments waste public time and money, in addition to increasing the likelihood that probationers will be incarcerated. The agency decided to test whether a simple technology like text messaging could improve the situation.

Text messaging is an inexpensive, fast, and convenient way to communicate. Text-message reminders have been formally evaluated in areas besides criminal justice, mostly within healthcare, and have shown large increases in appointment attendance and medication adherence.

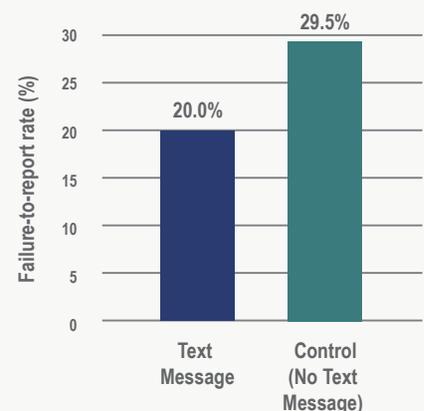
Trial Design

Clackamas County probationers (n=190) were randomized to one of two conditions. In the test group (n=95), each subject received a text-message reminder for each office appointment, and the control group (n=95) received no text messages. The follow-up period was two months.

Results and Implications

The failure-to-report rate for probationers who received a text-message reminder was 20.0%, compared with 29.5% for the control group, a one-third reduction in failure to report. Clackamas County Community Corrections found text-message reminders to be an effective method to reduce failure to report.

Text Message Trial Results



Note: Intent-to-treat design. All individuals randomized to study conditions were included in outcome analysis.

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