Research-Based Guide Presents Principles of Drug Abuse Treatment for Criminal Justice Populations

“Treatment offers the best alternative for interrupting the drug abuse/criminal justice cycle for offenders with drug abuse problems,” according to a research-based guide to treating drug abuse among criminal justice populations (p. 13). The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) guide describes 13 research-based treatment principles that are of particular relevance to the criminal justice community and to treatment professionals working with drug abusing offenders (see below). A copy of the full report, which includes a detailed discussion of all 13 treatment principles, as well as answers to frequently asked questions about drug abuse treatment for those involved with the criminal justice system, is available online (http://www.drugabuse.gov/podat_cj).

Principles of Drug Abuse Treatment for Criminal Justice Populations

- Drug addiction is a brain disease that affects behavior.
- Recovery from drug addiction requires effective treatment, followed by management of the problem over time.
- Treatment must last long enough to produce stable behavioral changes.
- Assessment is the first step in treatment.
- Tailoring services to fit the needs of the individual is an important part of effective drug abuse treatment for criminal justice populations.
- Drug use during treatment should be carefully monitored.
- Treatment should target factors that are associated with criminal behavior.
- Criminal justice supervision should incorporate treatment planning for drug abusing offenders, and treatment providers should be aware of correctional supervision requirements.
- Continuity of care is essential for drug abusers re-entering the community.
- A balance of rewards and sanctions encourages prosocial behavior and treatment participation.
- Offenders with co-occurring drug abuse and mental health problems often require an integrated treatment approach.
- Medications are an important part of treatment for many drug abusing offenders.
- Treatment planning for drug abusing offenders who are living in or re-entering the community should include strategies to prevent and treat serious, chronic medical conditions, such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, and tuberculosis.