Selected Papers of William L. White

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Predicting Violent Behavior in Adolescent Cannabis Users: The GAIN-CVI

Chestnut Health Systems

Abstract

Substance use and interpersonal violence have exerted a profound impact on American society and the criminal justice system in recent decades.   From 1989 to 1998, the number of adolescent drug law violations rose 148%, and the adolescent violent crime index rose 33% during this same period (Stahl, 2001; Loeber & Farrington, 1998). In spite of their frequent co-occurrence, considerable controversy exists on the exact relationship between substance use, criminality and interpersonal violence.

Simplistic models of causation (substance use causes crime/violence) and intervention (treat the substance use and the risk of crime/violence will desist or dramatically diminish) have given way to more complex models that posit multiple etiological pathways to criminality and violence, multiple clinical subpopulations of offenders, and integrated models of intervention into substance use, crime and violence (White, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, and Farrington, 1999).

The latter models have the advantage of being able to concentrate criminal justice resources on those substance-involved offenders who are at highest risk for reoffending and at highest risk for involvement in future violent acts. This article tests Moffitt's (1993) taxonomy of antisocial behavior by examining the factors that are correlated with criminal activity and violence among adolescents entering substance abuse treatment. Using data from the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's (CSAT) Cannabis Youth Treatment Study, we predict how changes in social environment affect criminality and violence over time in a population of 600 adolescents treated for cannabis abuse or cannabis dependency.