

Factors Associated with Criminal Severity Among Adolescents Entering Substance Abuse Treatment

Adolescent substance abuse treatment has been increasingly emphasized as an intervention that could interrupt progression to adult criminal careers. However, information about the pretreatment criminal behavior of adolescent treatment clients has rarely been reported. This study examined the factors associated with the severity of self-reported pretreatment offending of 178 adolescents entering outpatient substance abuse treatment in Baltimore County, Maryland. Results indicated that increased severity of crime was related to male gender, use of drugs other than alcohol and marijuana, bullying and being physically cruel to people, higher levels of deviant behavior among peers School problems, and having sex without a barrier. Given the rather low level of criminal involvement even among the more serious offenders, the degree to which study findings replicate those on other samples of adolescent is especially noteworthy.