



Why Addictions Should Be Treated, Not Penalized

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The way that addiction is treated in the US is incredibly damaging and goes against what we now understand about the problem. Addiction is recognized as a treatable medical condition, but instead of being treated as a health issue, it is still managed as a criminal issue. Those with drug addiction problems are heavily penalized and treated as criminals, instead of being given the help that they need. Understanding why addictions should be treated, not penalized, is the key to tackling this ongoing health crisis.

Studies show that there is a big racial disparity in addiction and black communities have been disproportionately damaged by the punitive approach taken by this country when dealing with addiction issues. Unfortunately, governments and law enforcement agencies don't recognize why addictions should be treated, not penalized, and they ignore the now widely accepted scientific view that addictions are a health problem, not a criminal one.

By continuing to view people with addiction issues as criminals and social deviants, we only make it harder for them to access [treatment programs](#), creating a vicious cycle of addiction that cannot be broken. The US must take a new approach to addiction and treat it as a health issue if we are able to manage these distinct problems caused by the current system.

The Racial Disparity In Enforcement

When comparing the statistics on drug use between white and black communities, the differences are very minor. However, the enforcement of drug offenses and the punishments that are delivered are very different. For example, black people are four times more likely to be arrested for cannabis use than white people, even though they use the drug at similar rates.

This is a historic problem that stems back to the crack epidemic. Arrest rates among people using crack were significantly higher than those using cocaine. Although they are two different forms of the same drug, crack was more heavily used in black communities and so it was penalized to a much greater degree.

By treating addiction as a criminal offense, we create opportunities for racial disparities to be exacerbated and many people in disadvantaged communities are being put in jail when what they really need is medical assistance.

Punishments That Don't Work

The idea behind the current punitive system is that if you put people in jail or fine them for using drugs, it acts as a deterrent and they are less likely to do it in the future. However, the evidence shows that this is not the case at all and, in fact, imprisonment makes the problem worse in many cases. People that have been in prison are more likely to have an overdose after being released, for example. Drug use tends to increase after a period in prison too. The reason for this is that addiction is a medical problem that requires [specialist treatment programs](#) to deal with. If the underlying health issue is not addressed, that person will continue using drugs, regardless of whether they have been punished for doing so or not.

Imprisonment often leads to isolation, which increases the risk of relapse in drug addicts. When this is coupled with the difficulties that people face when coming out of prison in terms of finding work and reentering society, it is only natural that people are more likely to use drugs after coming out of prison. So, the current system for managing addiction only makes the issue worse instead of solving it.

Disproportionate Access To Treatment

In response to the opioid crisis, there have been some moves towards a treatment-based approach. However, access to government-sponsored treatment programs is disproportionately weighted towards white communities. The figures show that people from black communities experience much longer delays while waiting for treatment and, in some cases, this can be up to four or five years. A wait this long drastically increases the risk of overdose or further criminal punishment.

Although there have been some trials of initiatives like drug courts, which aim to avoid handing out prison sentences, there is still a lot of work to be done. In the future, more research is needed to demonstrate why addiction should be treated, not penalized.

At Findlay Recovery Center, we recognize the challenges posed by drug addiction and we understand the importance of compassion when dealing with it. So, if you think that you or somebody close to you needs help with addiction problems, [get in touch today](#) to learn more about our specialist treatment programs. You will get the medical help you need without being penalized or treated as a social deviant.

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About Our Company

Findlay Recovery Center is a drug & alcohol treatment center in Findlay, Ohio that offers evidence-based, detoxification and residential inpatient treatment at an affordable rate.

