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# Predictors of client retention in alternative to prison substance abuse programs

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

PREDICTORS OF CLIENT RETENTION IN ALTERNATIVE TO PRISON  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SOCIAL WELFARE

by

Jolae Brocato

2004

To: Dean Ronald M. Berkman  
College of Health and Urban Affairs

This dissertation, written by Jolae Brocato, and entitled Predictors of Client Retention in Alternative to Prison Substance Abuse Programs, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Andres Gil

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Mark Macgowan

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Linda Sobell

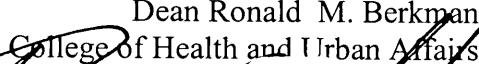
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Eric F. Wagner, Major Professor

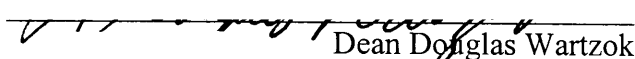
Date of Defense: April 13, 2004

The dissertation of Jolae Brocato is approved.

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 Dean Ronald M. Berkman  
College of Health and Urban Affairs

---

 Dean Douglas Wartzok  
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2004

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother and my daughter who inspired me to realize this effort, and the staff and clients of Spectrum Programs who gave freely of their time and helped me to complete this work.

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I want to thank my committee members Dr. Andres Gil, Dr. Mark Macgowan, and Dr. Linda Sobell who have influenced my thinking on this topic and challenged me to examine these questions in ways that contribute to the fund of social work knowledge. I particularly want to thank Dr. Eric Wagner for his respect, guidance, patience, and mentoring of my academic pursuits. He has exemplified a passion for research and teaching and has generously provided me with opportunities for intellectual and professional growth. He has given freely of his time and knowledge throughout the entire doctoral program.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION  
PREDICTORS OF CLIENT RETENTION IN ALTERNATIVE TO PRISON  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMS

by

Jolae Brocato

Florida International University, 2004

Miami, Florida

Professor Eric F. Wagner, Major Professor

Increased treatment retention among substance abusing individuals has been associated with reduced drug use, fewer arrests, and decreased unemployment, as well as a reduction in health risk behaviors. This longitudinal study examined the predictors of client retention for alternative to prison substance abuse treatment programs through assessing the roles of motivational factors and the client-worker relationship. The sample was comprised of 141 male felony offenders who were legally mandated to community based long-term residential drug treatment programs.

The primary measures used in the study were the consecutive days a participant remained in treatment, Stages of Change Readiness Model and Treatment Eagerness Scale (SOCRATES), the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI), and The Readiness Ruler. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted for four hypotheses (a) participants who are more motivated to change at the time of entry will remain in treatment longer, (b) participants who have a strong therapeutic alliance will remain in treatment a greater number of consecutive days than participants who have weaker therapeutic alliance, (c) motivation to change, as measured at treatment entry, will be

positively related to therapeutic alliance, (d) during the course of treatment variation in motivation to change will be predicted by the therapeutic alliance.

Results support the following conclusions: Among clients in alternative-to-prison programs the number of days in treatment is positively related to their motivation to change. The therapeutic alliance is not a predictor of the number of days in treatment. Motivation to change, particularly recognition of a drug problem, is positively related to the therapeutic alliance. Changes in motivation to change in response to treatment are positively related to the therapeutic alliance among clients in an alternative to prison substance abuse treatment programs. These results carry forward prior research and have implications for social work practice, research, and social welfare policy.

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