Week 5 - Discussion

The Criminal Justice and Implications for Human Services

Choose one of the following questions to discuss. You should not discuss both questions but should respond to peers for both.

Legalizing marijuana is a controversial topic in human services, criminal justice, political arenas, and health arenas. From a human service policy perspective, analyze what you believe would be the positive and/or negative consequences of legalizing marijuana. Discuss the implications for human services providers. If you agree or disagree with the stance of your peers, then explain specifically why and provide substantial evidence in your peer responses.

OR

Sexually violent predators are among the most feared and the most ridiculed individuals in our society. Some states have enacted legislation to allow civil commitment of sexually violent predators once they have been released from prison. Discuss the pros and cons of this legislation. Include in your discussion the implications for human services providers.

Respond to at least two of your classmates’ postings by Day 7. If you agree or disagree with the stance of your peers, then explain specifically why and provide substantial evidence in your peer responses. APA 6th edition format is required for any citations and resources used.

Point Value: 5 Points

Introduction: The Criminal Justice System and Human Service Policies

As discussed in Week 4, many former mental hospital patients have ended up in the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system is a highly regulated system that is often the subject of human service policies. The rights of those accused and convicted are fundamental to the jurisprudence system.

* The legalization of marijuana is one of those “hot” issues that often takes on political implications, but also has implications to the substance abuse and healthcare systems.
* Another “hot button” issue is the civil commitment of sexually violent offenders.

These topics will form the basis of this week’s discussion and written assignments.

Resources

Required Text

Herzberg, J. T. (2015). *Foundations in human services practice: A generalist perspective on individual, agency, and community*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson. ISBN: 9780205858255; eISBN: 9780205982233  
Chapter 2: Case Management: A Human Services Practice

Karger, H. J. & Stoesz , D. (2018). *American social welfare policy: A pluralist approach* (8th ed). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson. ISBN: 9780134628127; eISBN: 9780134543468  
Chapter 14: Criminal Justice

Recommended References

Alleyne, J. E., Joshi, K. G., & Gehle, M. E. (2016). Expert witness testimony in civil commitment hearings for sexually dangerous individuals. *Journal Of The American Academy Of Psychiatry And The Law, 44*(2), 265-267.

Graham, L. (2015). Legalizing marijuana in the shadows of international law: The Uruguay, Colorado, and Washington models. *Wisconsin International Law Journal, 33*(1), 140-166.

Lieb, R. & Matson, S. (1998). Sexual predator commitment laws in the United States: 1998 update. Retrieved from [*http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/sexcomm\_98.pdf (Links to an external site.)*](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/sexcomm_98.pdf)

Rowse, P. (2016). Legalizing marijuana: Promises and pitfalls. *School Library Journal*, 03628930, Vol. 62, Issue 8.

Wrighten, S. A., Al-Barwani, M. B., Moran, R. R., McKee, G. R., & Dwyer, R. G. (2015). Sexually violent predators and civil commitment: is selection evidence based? *Journal Of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology, 26*(5), 652-666

Guidance

As we are rounding the corner to the end of our course, you are hopefully beginning to understand the complexities of the processes of human service delivery. There are many facets to the inception of human services (mental health policy, insurance coverage, prison diversion, and public assistance programs to name a few) and how we as human service workers can serve our clients best. This week we will cover some “hot button” issues related to the criminal justice system and human service policies. The legalization of marijuana is a highly controversial topic with opposing sides expressing strong opinions in favor of or against it. From the criminal justice perspective, the legalization has negative implications on police resources, and as some of you have chosen to write about in your research papers, the impact on prison diversion related to non-violent offenders. We’ve discussed health care policy in week three and for those on the “pro” side of legalization there are a myriad of stories on the medical benefits of marijuana. This will tie in our discussion on health care policy and how it relates to human service delivery. The topic is also controversial among political arenas and we could argue that lobbying and advocacy (think Week 1) has played a major part in the legalization of marijuana in many states.

Another sensitive and hot button issue is related to sexually violent predators and how they are integrated into society once they’re released from prison. Some states have enacted legislation to allow civil commitment of sexually violent predators once they have been released from prison. This means the convicted individual is involuntarily confined, based on the risk they may commit offenses in the future, even after they’ve served their time. Some will argue the individual has served their debt to society, while others may argue there is no rehabilitation for a violent sex offender particularly if they are a repeat offender. Some of you may have taken (Overview of Human Services) and in that course one of the journal assignments is to discuss whether you as a human services professional would rather work with the victim or offender of sexual crimes. Depending on the field you go into, you may not have the luxury of deciding whom you’d rather work with.

Our discussion this week will be to choose one of the above topics and discuss whether you agree or disagree with the legalization of marijuana, or to discuss the civil commitment of sexually violent predators. While this is based on your opinion or belief, I fully expect you to utilize scholarly sources to support your stance. These issues may hit close to home for some and you may have personal experiences related to yourself or someone you know, so I want to respect any feelings it may bring up for you. That being said, I want to remind all of us to be respectful of one another’s stance on the subjects.

Lastly, your written assignment will be to research legislation related to civil commitment of sexually violent predators once they have been released from prison. You will be asked to form your own opinion on the matter and present an argument reflecting your position.