

# Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation For Drug Courts

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# Module 4: Outcome and Impact Evaluation

- Examples of outcomes and impacts:
  - Recidivism
  - Abstinence
  - Academic achievements
  - Employment status
  - Pro-social family/peer association
  - Housing situation improvements
  - Gains in income
  - Gains in health status
  - Financial management skills
  - Parenting skills



# Distinguish “Outcome” from “Impact”

- Outcome: Status of recipients or target social conditions after exposure to the program
- Impact: The value added by the program-benefits that would not have occurred without the program



# Requisite Conditions for Outcome and Impact Evaluation

- Well-defined program with a plausible logic for expected outcomes
- Well-implemented program that delivers a sufficient “dose” of service to reasonably expect effects



# Important Considerations for an Outcome and Impact Evaluation

- Outcome and Impact measures should reflect program goals and objectives
- Impact analysis design
  - How will comparison groups be selected?
  - How will the design control for confounding explanations of results?



# Determining Impact is Much More Difficult than Measuring Outcomes

## Counterfactual Condition

- Assessing impact (value-added) inherently involves comparison of outcomes when:
  - the program is present
  - with when it is absent
    - the latter being contrary to fact



# Requisite Conditions for Impact Evaluation

- Clearly defined and policy-relevant counterfactual condition, e.g.,
  - Practice as usual
  - No treatment
  - Placebo treatment
  - All but the critical ingredient treatment



# Rigor in Impact Evaluation Requires Internal Validity

- Internal validity is the accurate, unbiased estimation of a program effect – the difference in outcome with and without the program
- Experimental and quasi-experimental research designs have been developed for the specific purpose of estimating effects with internal validity



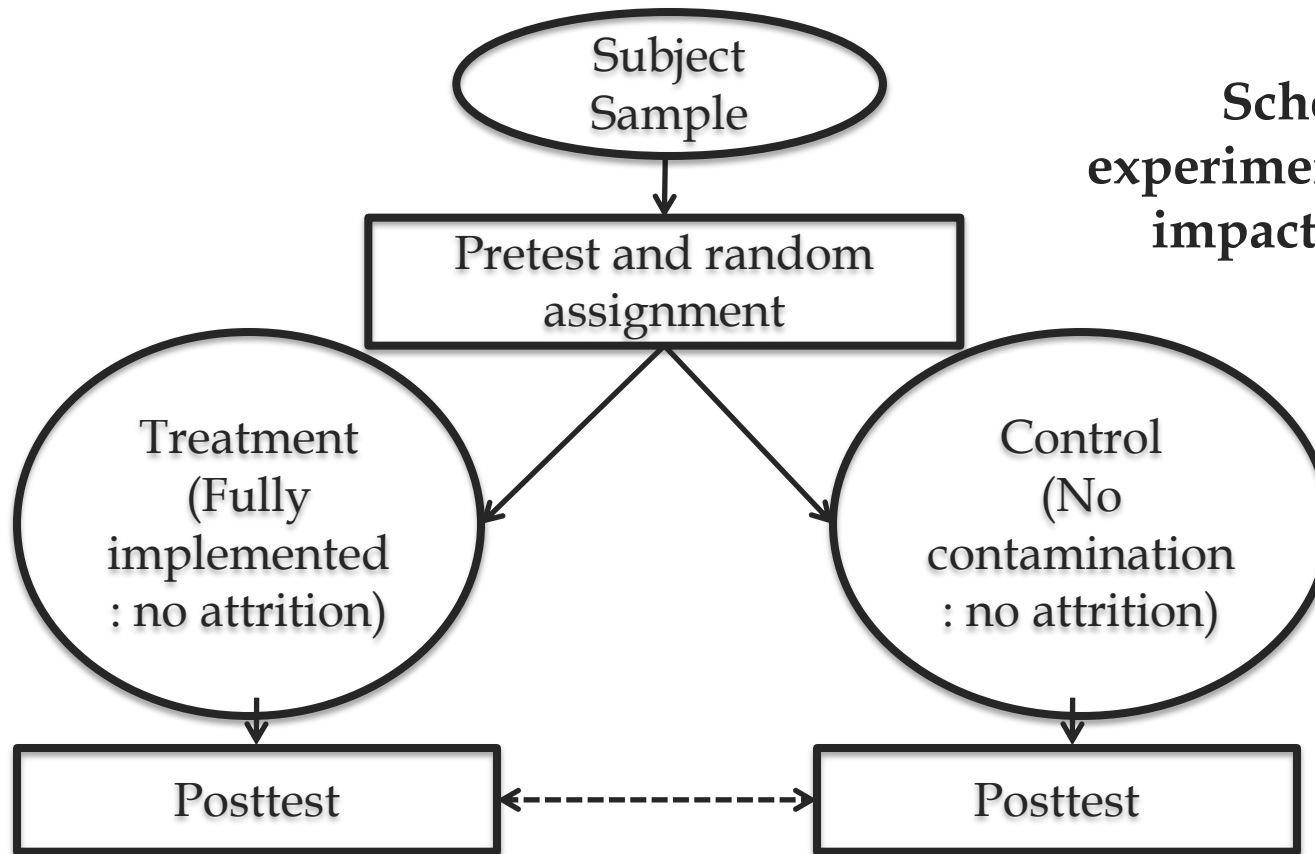


# Different Designs have Different Inherent Vulnerabilities to Their Internal Validity

- All designs can be compromised by poor execution or external influences
- Randomized controlled experiments are widely recognized as the least vulnerable when well conducted
- Next best designs are more vulnerable even when well constructed



# Experimental Design for Impact Assessment



Schematic of  
experimental design for  
impact assessment

*Intervention effect*



# Important Considerations for Impact Evaluation

- Quasi-experimental design
  - Select based on eligibility criteria before program is in operation
  - Select retroactively based on eligibility criteria
  - Select from similar jurisdiction
  - Select from opt-outs
- Amount of time for follow-up

