What Works, For Whom, and Where?
Evidence Mapping to Advance Justice Practice
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Purpose
The goal of this project is to synthesize the existing research on issues related to the criminal justice system by collecting meta-analyses and systematic reviews and making the findings widely available. This project encompasses includes a variety of topics, from access and programming to organizational functioning. While some research deals directly with the criminal justice system, research in other areas is relevant to the same issues. Research synthesis is well-established as a means to understand findings across individual studies. This study aims to provide an easy-to-use tool for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers alike to access and, more importantly, understand the existing research as it is reported in reviews of primary studies.

Web Tool
ACE! has developed a web tool that houses a database of coded reviews. This continually evolving tool allows users to:
• Enter articles directly into the database. A save function allows researchers to code at their own pace.
• Browse through the various topics that have already been researched and view summarized findings.
• Review findings, using user-defined criteria to target studies of interest.

Methods
Phase 1: Systematic Search
Each EMTAP researcher begins with a set of comprehensive search terms and searches for these terms in the title/abstract/keywords of seven databases and two specialized search engines. Researchers read the abstract of each article located through this search and determine whether it:
• reviews the topic they are researching; and
• is a systematic review or meta-analysis (only reviews that reported a systematic search are accepted).
The search process and figures are documented in a flowchart (pictured left) based on the CONSORT flow diagram (http://www.consort-statement.org).

Phase 2: Coding
After the search is complete, EMTAP researchers read through the reviews they have deemed suitable based on our limited criteria. They then review and enter data on various elements of research synthesis, including:
• the number of studies and participants included in the review
• the criteria by which studies were examined for inclusion into the review
• whether and how methodological quality of included studies was assessed
• the outcomes studied
• effect sizes calculated and any moderating factors

Phase 3: Review
When coding is complete, two other researchers code a sample of the reviews to ensure quality and reliability across all topics researched as part of the EMTAP project.

Next Steps
• Complete work on the web tool to get our researchers’ findings in an easily accessible format.
• Disseminate information on the EMTAP project and web tool to target users.
• Expand the research into new target areas to maximize our knowledge of criminal justice system related issues.

Join the Team
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Reviews are needed in the areas of:
• Screening
• Cessation
• Abusers
• Physical Care
• Prevention
• Domestic Violence
• Pay-For-Performance (P4P)
• Tobacco
• Engagement

More information on this and other projects can be found at www.gmuace.org.

“A hundred dissertations are mute. Someone must read them and discover what they say.”
- Glass, 1976

Collaborators
As part of this project, ACE! has partnered with students and faculty at:
• Yale University
• Brown University
• Marymount University
• St. John’s University
• Emory University
• University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Practitioners can use the tool as a quick source of information on which interventions work for their clients and how they can be incorporated into day-to-day practices.

Researchers and Funding Agencies can use the tool to guide where the gaps in research occur to decide what still needs examination and review.

Policymakers can use the tool as a guide to what works and doesn’t work for certain settings, populations, and practice areas to inform policy decisions.