

Con-Quest Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program Outcome Evaluation

February 2004



Introduction

The link between drugs and crime in the United States is widely accepted. Drug users frequently commit crime in order to secure for themselves the drugs that they crave. The chemical effects of certain drugs, especially drugs used in combination, have also been connected to violent behavior. Additionally, the drug abuser's lifestyle includes the daily use of drugs, seriously disrupting his or her ability to fully participate in society. Furthermore, even recreational drug use is extremely risky because of the danger of contracting diseases such as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and Hepatitis. Along with committing costly crimes, drug users are an enormous burden to society as a result of health care costs.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, rising concern over the spread of drug use brought about harsher punishments for drug offenses. Over the years, there has been a large influx into the criminal justice system of offenders who are addicted to drugs. In hopes of breaking the drug-crime cycle, prison officials, researchers, and treatment professionals alike have searched for ways to effectively treat drug-addicted prisoners.

The Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners (RSAT) Formula Grant Program was created by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 in order to assist state and local governments with the development, implementation, and improvement of residential substance abuse treatment programs in correctional facilities. The goal of RSAT programs is to reduce recidivism by providing individual and group based substance abuse treatment in a Therapeutic Community (TC) setting. The TC is separated from the rest of the correctional population, allowing residents to create an atmosphere that encourages them to help themselves and each other as they progress through treatment. It is recommended that states also include relapse prevention and aftercare services in their treatment approach, as well as coordinate with other social service and rehabilitation programs. According to the National Institute of Justice, in order to qualify for RSAT funds programs must:

- Be 6 to 12 months long. Participation in the RSAT program should be limited to inmates who have 6 to 12 months remaining to be served so they can be released from prison after completing treatment.
- Be provided in separate or dedicated residential treatment facilities set apart from the general correctional population.

- Be directed at inmates' substance abuse problems while developing the cognitive, behavioral, social, and vocational skills to ease their return to the general population upon release.
- Require urinalysis and/or other proven reliable forms of drug and alcohol testing for program participants during program participation and after release.

This study and report are the result of a request by the Utah Substance Abuse and Anti-Violence Coordinating Council (USAACV). A growing body of government and independent researchers at the national level has found empirical evidence that Residential Substance Abuse Treatment programs aimed at jail and prison inmates are effective at crime reduction, and are relatively cost-effective. To ensure that these programs are working well and economically at the state level, there is a need for accurate outcome evaluations to be performed.

Overview

Key Findings

This report reveals several key findings, among them are the following:

- ❖ The report includes 80 individuals that graduated from the Con-Quest Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program and had 18 months post-release for follow-up. This was the experimental group. The comparison group, or control group, included 90 individuals who met the criteria for inclusion into the program, but did not ever participate in the Con-Quest program. The control group also had 18 months post-release for follow-up.
- ❖ There were some demographic differences found between the groups, such as age, race, and criminal history.
- ❖ Within 18 months of release, 28.8% of Con-Quest graduates had a new arrest for any type or level of offense, as compared with 65.6% of the control group. The outcome difference between groups for new arrests is statistically significant ($p < .01$).
- ❖ Con-Quest graduates had an average of 0.54 new arrests, while the control group had an average of 1.06 new arrests. The difference in rate of new arrests is significantly different ($p < .01$).
- ❖ Within 18 months of release, only 12.5% of Con-Quest graduates had a new arrest for a drug related offense, whereas 25.6% of the control group had a

new arrest for a drug related offense. The outcome difference between groups is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

- ❖ Within 18 months of release, only five percent of the Con-Quest graduates returned to prison for any reason, compared to almost thirty percent of the control group (5.0% versus 27.8%). The outcome difference between groups for returns to prison is statistically significant ($p < .01$).
- ❖ Within 18 months of release, 32.5% of the Con-Quest graduates were returned to prison and had new arrests for any type of crime, versus 81.1% of the control group participants. Again, the outcome difference between groups is statistically significant ($p < .01$).

What Was Examined

Con-Quest is a Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program for male inmates at the Utah State Prison, in which the offenders are housed separately from the rest of the prison population for the duration of their time in the program. The criteria for entry into the program are a DSM IV diagnosis of Substance Dependence, as well as a parole date within five years of program entry. The program lasts for 12 to 18 months, with a minimum of 9 months required for successful completion. Some aftercare is available for offenders at the Lone Peak work camp facility, just prior to release from prison. However, there are no halfway houses or groups available to offenders in the community following prison release.

When the Con-Quest program began, it was federally funded through the State Prisoners Formula Grant Program, created by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. Currently, the program is being funded by the state. The cost per inmate is \$8.12 per day, or \$243.73 per month.

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an outcome analysis of the Con-Quest program using a matched control group. Outcome was measured based upon new arrests and returns to prison. Looking at it from a cost/benefit model, new arrests appear to be the best point of measurement, as this is the point at which costs begin to be incurred by the criminal justice system. The experimental group was identified from a list of inmates that graduated from the Con-Quest program beginning in July 1999. All of the program graduates had been released from prison for at least 18 months at the time the analysis was done. A control group was identified from a similar group of offenders who met the criteria for inclusion into the program, but never participated in Con-Quest. The control group consists of males who had been released from prison for 18 months or longer at the time the analysis was completed. This is a typical

window of time used in recidivism research, as it gives the offender an opportunity to prove himself in the community.

Data Sources

A majority of the data used in this analysis came from the Utah Criminal History File. Data was extracted from the file during December 2003. Names and State Identification Numbers (SIDs) were provided by the Utah Department of Corrections. The SIDs provided by the Department of Corrections were matched to individuals on the Criminal History File. Once individuals were identified, it was possible to use the Criminal History File to search for arrest events subsequent to graduation from the Con-Quest program.

Data was also extracted from O-Track, a database for offenders used by the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC). The Con-Quest sample and the control group were both drawn from O-Track by UDC staff, as well as information about returns to prison for both groups.

Background

Methodology

The goal of this evaluation was to determine if the Con-Quest Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program was effective in reducing new arrests, drug arrests, and returns to prison among its graduates.

In order to accomplish this goal, the Department of Corrections (DOC) provided a list of Con-Quest participants who had successfully completed the program and had been released from prison for at least 18 months, prior to December 2003. A total of 80 graduates were found in the Criminal History File and were used as the experimental group for this analysis.

Next, a control group was drawn by the DOC based upon offenders who had been out of prison for at least 18 months prior to the December 2003 draw of data from the Criminal History File, and had a DSM IV diagnosis of Substance Dependence, but who had never been in the Con-Quest program. Initially, a list of 296 offenders was sent as a possible control group. A random sample was taken from this list, and 90 offenders were selected as the final control group participants.

The control and experimental groups were found to have significant differences with regards to age, race, and arrest history. Both the control and experimental groups consisted entirely of males.

Finally, the Criminal History File was used to look prospectively for new arrest events for members of each group. Dates were recorded for new arrest events to assist in determining the amount of time that expired between program completion and any new arrest events. New arrests for drug offenses were also identified to determine the success of the Con-Quest program in decreasing drug related offending.

Analysis

An analysis was done comparing the two groups based upon the characteristics of age, race, and criminal history. Based upon the characteristics examined, there were statistically significant differences found between the groups. Sex was the only characteristic for which no difference existed between groups. Both groups consisted entirely of males.

	Con-Quest Graduates (Experimental Group)	Control Group
Average Age	36.0	29.6
Race		
<i>Non-minority</i>	88.8%	76.7%
<i>Minority</i>	11.3%	23.3%
Prior Arrests	11.5	8.3

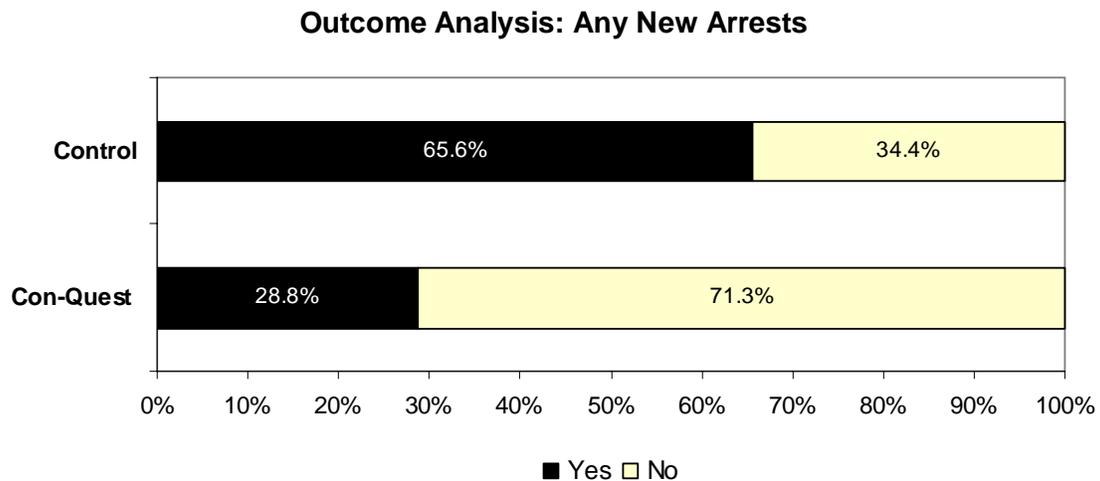
The average age at prison release for the experimental group was 36 years. The average age of the control group at the time of prison release was 30 years. Looking at race, 11% of the experimental group was minority, with the remaining 89% being non-minority. Twenty-three percent (23%) of the control group was minority, versus 77% non-minority.

Finally, the experimental group had an average of 12 arrests prior to participation in the program. Whereas, the control group had an average of 8 arrests prior to entering prison during the period we studied. When using a matched control group quasi-experimental design, it is desirable to have a better

match between the groups on the above named characteristics. The differences noted between the groups examined in this evaluation could have important implications for our outcomes, which will be discussed at the end of this report.

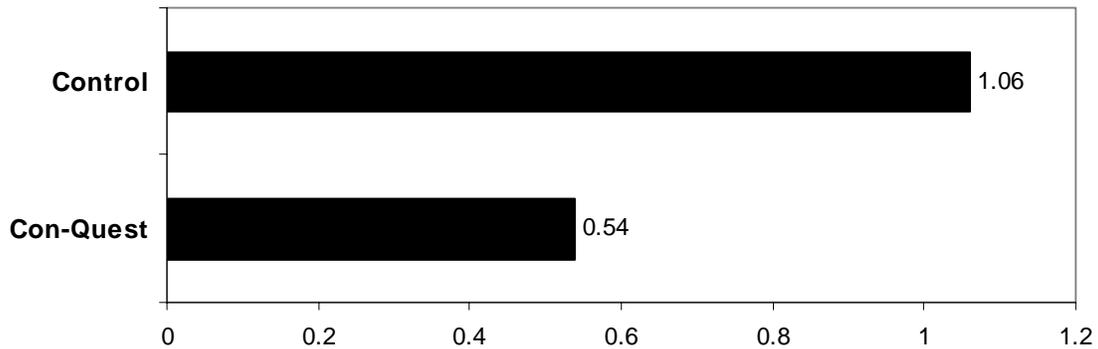
Outcomes

Looking at re-arrest for any offense, 28.8% of the Con-Quest graduates had a re-arrest within 18 months of release from prison. Of the control group, 65.6% had a re-arrest within 18 months of release from prison. The overall difference in outcome between the groups was found to be statistically significant ($p < .01$).

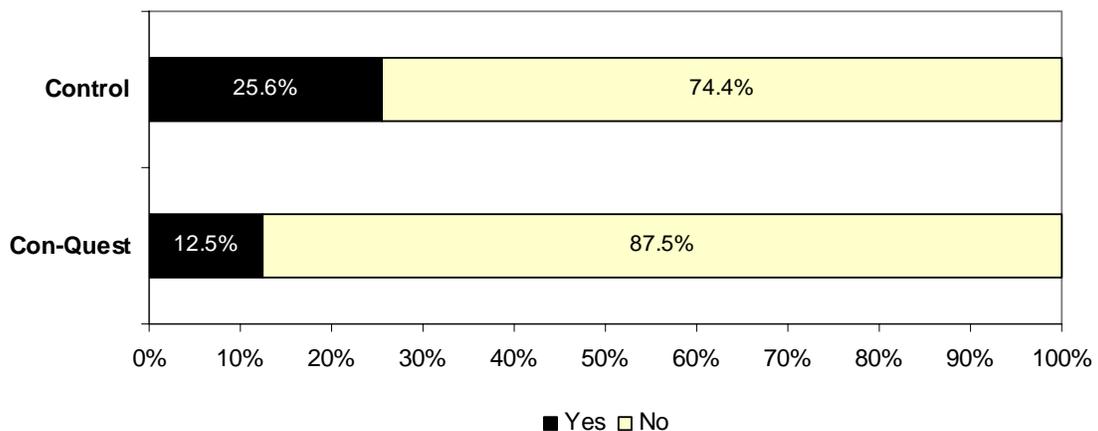


The following chart shows the average number of new arrests for each group, within 18 months of release. On average, Con-Quest graduates had fewer new arrest events, with an average of 0.54 new arrests. Those in the control group had an average of 1.06 new arrests. The difference between groups in average number of new arrests was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

Outcome Analysis: Average Number of New Arrests



Outcome Analysis: New Drug-Related Arrests

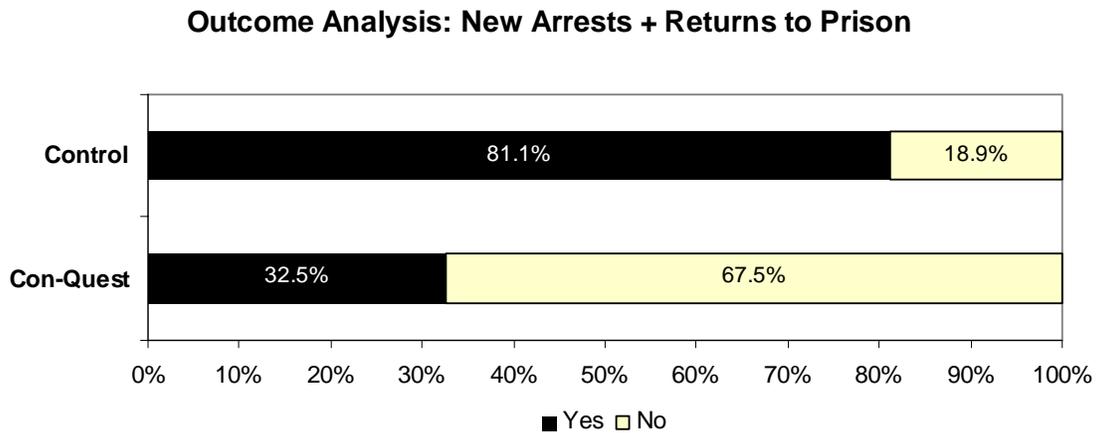
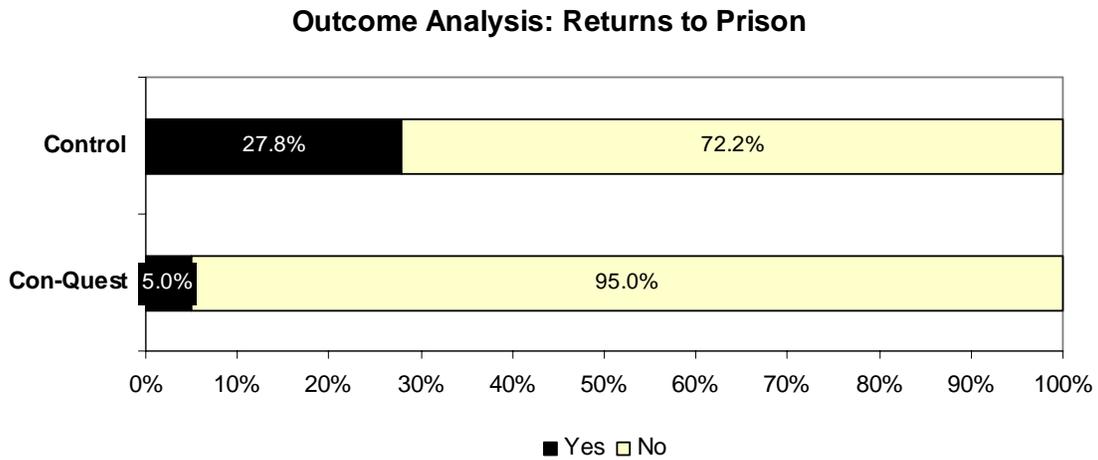


The chart above shows outcomes based upon re-arrest for drug related offenses. This is of particular interest because Residential Substance Abuse Treatment programs, such as Con-Quest, were designed to address the substance abuse problems of program participants. Looking at the groups, it is clear that Con-Quest graduates fared better than those in the control group. Of Con-Quest graduates, only 12.5% had a new arrest for a drug related crime within 18 months of release from prison. Twice as many (25.6%) of those in the control group had a new arrest for a drug related offense within 18 months of being released from prison. The difference between groups was statistically significant ($p < .05$).

No significant difference was found between groups in average number of new drug related arrests. The Con-Quest graduates had an average of 0.18 new drug related arrests, while the control group had an average of 0.33. Reaching

the threshold of significance was more difficult here because it was a smaller population of offenders being examined: only those offenders that had a new drug related arrest.

The figure below shows the percentage of offenders in each group that was returned to prison for parole violations with and without new convictions, probation violations, or new convictions, within 18 months of release from prison. Only 5.0% of those offenders that participated in Con-Quest returned to prison, while 27.8% of the control group returned. Again, the difference between groups was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

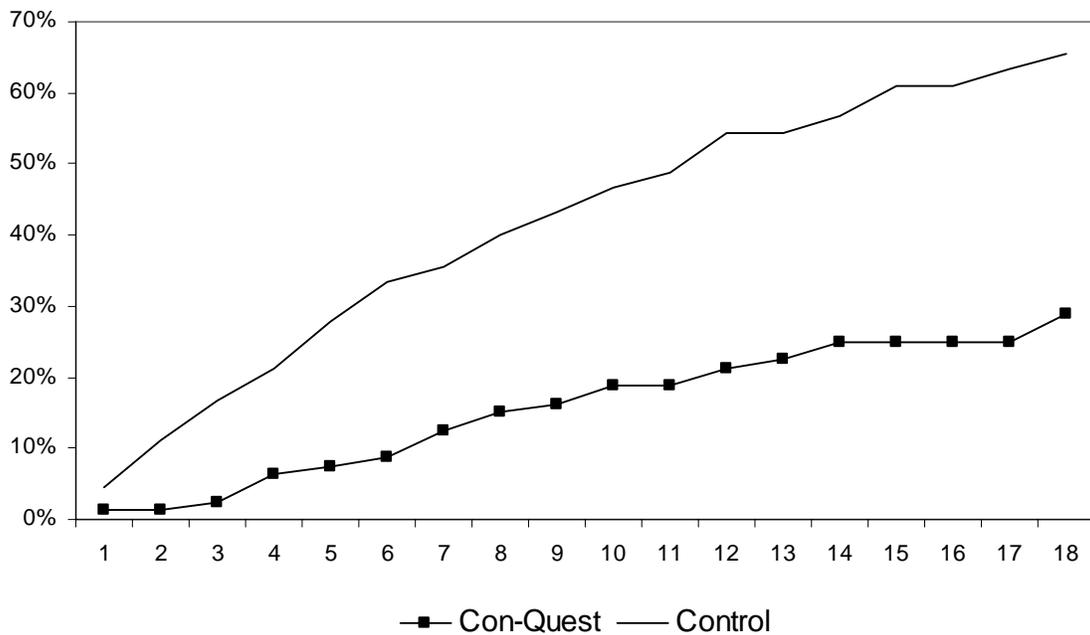


The chart above shows the percentage of offenders in each group who had new arrests and were returned to prison for any reason, within 18 months post release. The returns to prison included parole violations with and without new

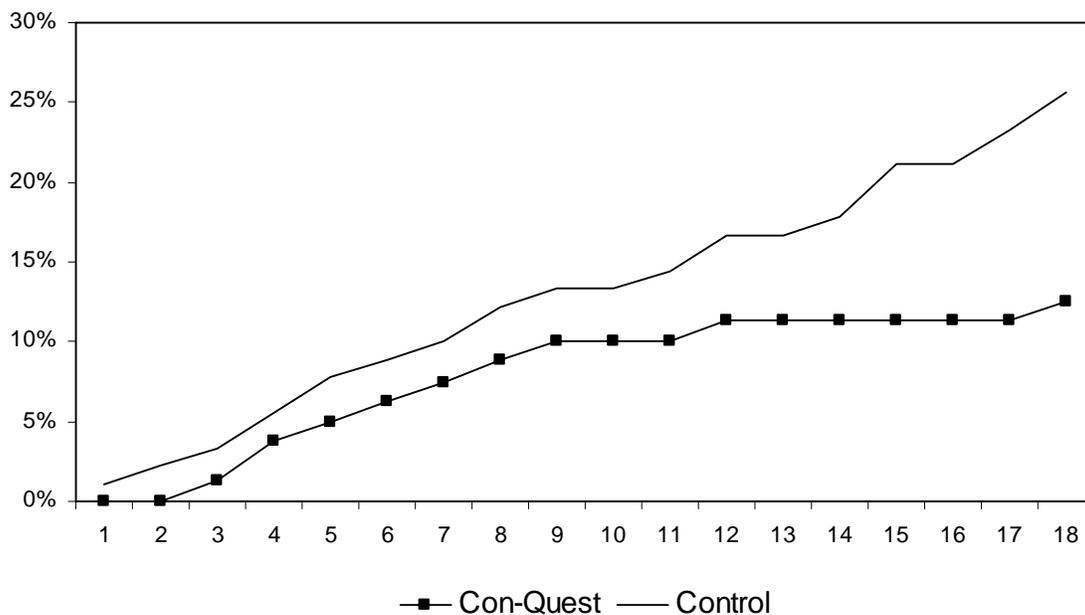
convictions, probation violations, and new convictions. Of the Con-Quest graduates, 32.5% had a new arrest and were returned to prison, compared to 81.1% of the control group. The difference between groups was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

Analysis was initiated to determine if there were any differences in program outcome based upon age of the participant. Examining Con-Quest graduates, there were no statistically significant differences in re-arrests, or more specifically drug related re-arrests, when accounting for age differences.

Time to Re-Arrest: Any Crime



Time to Re-Arrest: Drug-Related Crime



The figures above examine the re-arrest patterns of the Con-Quest graduates and the control group. Clearly, the Con-Quest graduates were much less likely to be arrested for any type of crime. At six months post release, only 8.8% of the Con-Quest graduates had a re-arrest event, versus 33.3% of the control group. After 18 months, still more than twice as many of the participants in the control group were re-arrested when compared to the Con-Quest participants (65.6% vs. 28.8%).

When looking at re-arrest for drug related crimes only, the difference between groups begins to accelerate at 12 months, and is most compelling at 18 months. Six months after release, 8.9% of the control group had a re-arrest for a drug related crime, while 6.3% of the Con-Quest graduates had a drug related re-arrest. One year later, 25.6% of the control group had a drug related re-arrest compared to only 12.5% of the Con-Quest group.

Conclusion

The results of this brief study indicate there is evidence the Con-Quest Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program is effective in reducing recidivism among its participants. Although effort was taken to draw a control group that was comparable to the Con-Quest graduates, there were some

statistically significant differences found between the groups. The age of the offenders was one of the most significant differences between groups, although no significant differences were found in re-arrests of Con-Quest graduates when accounting for age differences. There were also significant differences found between groups based upon race and criminal history of the offenders. There were twice as many minority group members in the control group when compared to the Con-Quest graduates. Con-Quest graduates also had an average of one and a half times as many arrests prior to entering prison than did the control group participants, perhaps due to age. Still, the most compelling difference between the groups appears to be whether or not they completed the Con-Quest program.

Although no effort was made to determine what, if any, drug treatment the control group had received, we did ensure they had not participated in the Con-Quest program at any time. Whatever treatment they may have received, the results of this study indicates the Con-Quest program was more effective in reducing recidivism with this type of offender.

Offenders who participated in the Con-Quest program were much less likely to be re-arrested for all offense types. More than twice as many of the control group participants were re-arrested for any type of offense within 18 months of release from prison. In addition, not only did a larger percentage of the control group get re-arrested, they also had more arrest events. The control group participants had an average of one re-arrest event compared to one-half of an arrest event among Con-Quest graduates. Also, nearly six times as many control group participants had a return to prison when compared to Con-Quest graduates. Lastly, twice as many control group participants had a drug related re-arrest when compared to the Con-Quest graduates. No difference was found in the actual number of drug related re-arrests between the groups. It is evident that Con-Quest had an impact on future drug related offending. This is of special interest since that is the specific problem targeted by this program.

Future Study

Several additional steps could be taken to strengthen the results of this study. First, an additional 12 to 18 months of data could reveal whether or not re-arrests of both the control group and Con-Quest graduates will level off. The re-arrest curves for all offense types and drug related offenses for the control group were still showing an increasing trend 18 months subsequent to prison release. Further time and data would reveal at what point recidivism plateaus.

Second, it would be beneficial to carry out a similar study, using a control group that is strictly controlled for differences in demographic characteristics. Having a closely matched control and experimental group would help to rule out some of the threats to the validity of the results seen in this study. The significant difference between the ages of the two groups in this study could have impacted the results in several ways. The offenders in the experimental group were older than those in the control group, which could explain why they had more prior arrests on average. They may have been committing criminal offenses for a longer period of time. Also, the older age of the offenders in the experimental group could be influencing their recidivism rates. These offenders could be "aging out" of their life of crime. This may also have played a role in their acceptance into the Con-Quest program, as these older offenders may have appeared more amenable to treatment. The older offenders may even be more successful in completing the program, due to their age. It is difficult to rule out some of these factors, or to know exactly how much impact they had on the outcome of the evaluation.

Third, it would be interesting to repeat this study at another residential substance abuse treatment program in Utah in order to find out if the results can be replicated. Finally, a cost/benefit analysis of these results can be conducted in coming months. CCJJ, in conjunction with the Criminal & Juvenile Justice Research Consortium, has nearly completed a cost/benefit analysis framework to determine whether justice programs realize a cost savings to taxpayers and victims of crime. Once finished, the outcomes from this study can be processed through the framework to determine whether the Therapeutic Community costs outweigh the downstream victim and taxpayer costs attributed to those who recidivate.