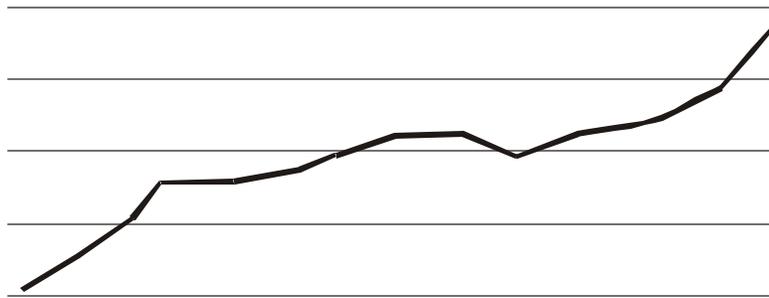


September 2001

Salt Lake County Drug Court Outcome Evaluation



Overview

Purpose of Report

Criminal justice programs run the spectrum from light supervision in the community to locked-down 24-hour supervision in a prison setting. Regardless of programming type, it is frequently unclear whether or not the program is actually realizing beneficial outcomes.

The report is in response to intent language passed by Representative Scott Daniels during the 2001 Legislative Session. As such, this report examines the results of a unique criminal justice intervention labeled “Drug Court.” More directly, the report compares a group of graduates from the Salt Lake County Drug Court with a group of similar offenders who did not participate in the Drug Court program. By looking at subsequent criminal activity, this report sheds some light on the impact the Salt Lake County Drug Court had on its participants when compared to similar offenders who were not involved in the program.

Key Findings

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

- ❖ The report includes 143 individuals that graduated from the Salt Lake County Drug Court and had 18 months post-release for follow-up. The comparison group, or control group, included 150 individuals, who were similar in terms of age, sex, race, and arrest history. The report also includes 56 individuals who were involved in Drug Court, but did not successfully complete the program.
- ❖ Within 18 months of graduation, 39.2% of Drug Court participants had a new arrest for any type or level of offense, while 78.0% of the control group had a new arrest. Of those not successfully completing the program, 55.4% had a new arrest event. The outcome difference between groups is statistically significant.
- ❖ Within 18 months of graduation, only 15.4% of Drug Court participants had a new arrest for a drug related offense, 64.0% of the control group had a new arrest for a drug related offense, and 39.3% of those not completing Drug Court had a new arrest for a drug related offense. Again, the outcome difference between groups is statistically significant.
- ❖ Drug Court participants had an average of 0.8 new arrests, the control group had an average of 3.1 new arrests, and those not completing Drug Court had an average of 1.7 new arrests. The difference in rate of new arrests is statistically significant.
- ❖ The control group was re-arrested soon after their initial arrest. Within 6 months of the initial arrest, 34.7% of the control group had a new arrest, only 9.1% of the Drug Court participants had a new arrest, and 25.0% of those not successfully completing Drug Court had a new arrest.

What Was Examined

The purpose of this analysis was to provide an outcome analysis of the Salt Lake County Drug Court using a matched control group. Outcome was measured based upon new arrests. Although new convictions might be a more compelling measurement than new arrests, data and timing limitations did not allow for this type of analysis at this time. The control group was selected by identifying individuals arrested in Salt Lake County during 1997 for an offense that would qualify for Drug Court. This group was further narrowed based upon eligibility requirements and program restrictions. Finally, a random sample of 150 individuals was selected as a comparison group. All Drug Court participants who had a successful termination 18 months prior to May 2001 were included as the “experimental” group. This provided the necessary 18 month window of opportunity for program graduates to recidivate.

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 May 2001. Names and Offense Tracking Numbers (OTNs) for Drug Court graduates and those not successfully completing Drug Court was provided by the Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse (DSA). The OTNs provided by DSA 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 Drug Court program.

Background

During the 2001 Utah Legislative Session, intent language was issued to examine the effectiveness of drug treatment programs in Utah. From this request, the Utah Substance Abuse and Anti-Violence Coordinating Council's Treatment Subcommittee (Subcommittee) narrowed the initial focus to the effectiveness of Drug Courts in Utah.

In evaluating the effectiveness of criminal justice programming, time is of the essence. Program participants must have an evaluation period after completing the program's requirements. Most generally, a period of 18 months after release from the program are used to examine the participant's behavior. It is during these 18 months that we look for new criminal activity, measured in terms of new arrests or new convictions. Because of this timing issue, we needed to look to a mature Drug Court in Utah that would have a cohort of graduates who had been out of the program for a minimum of 18 months. This requirement narrowed the current analysis to the Drug Court operating in Salt Lake County.

Methodology

The goal of this evaluation was to draw a comparison between Drug Court participants, a control group, and a group of individuals unsuccessful in completing the program, where the groups were as similar as possible with the exception of participation in the program. Our desire was to select the groups from the same geographic location of Utah within a relatively close frame of time to minimize differences in demographic characteristics and drug use patterns.

To accomplish this goal, the control group was drawn based upon arrestees in Salt Lake County from 1997, before the Drug Court in Salt Lake County was fully implemented and operational. Using this group, we were able to identify a cohort with characteristics similar to Drug Court participants, but who were not involved in Drug Court programming.

The figure on the following page shows how the control group was selected, then narrowed. During 1997, there were 50,271 arrests in Utah, and 24,089 arrests in Salt Lake County. Of those arrested in Salt Lake County, 1,371 had arrests for drug offenses that would qualify them for consideration for the Drug Court Program. These 1,371 arrest events accounted for 1,175 individuals. Of these, only 415 individuals had drug offense history that would allow them to remain in the pool of those eligible for the Drug Court Program, in that they had either two prior drug arrests or one prior drug conviction. Finally, because the Drug Court does not allow individuals with a prior history of violent offenses to participate in the program, the cohort was further narrowed to 347 individuals. It was from this cohort that the final control group of 150 was randomly selected.

Initial Arrests for Control Group

Amphetamine - Possession	77	51.3%
Cocaine - Possession	42	28.0%
Heroin Possession	24	16.0%
Opium or Derivative - Possession	6	4.0%
Hallucinogen - Possession	1	0.7%

The adjacent figure shows the initial arrest for the control group that would potentially have qualified them for Drug Court Participation. Over half, 51.3% had an initial arrest for possession of amphetamine. Another 28.0% were arrested for possession of cocaine. Finally, 16.0% were arrested for possession of heroin.

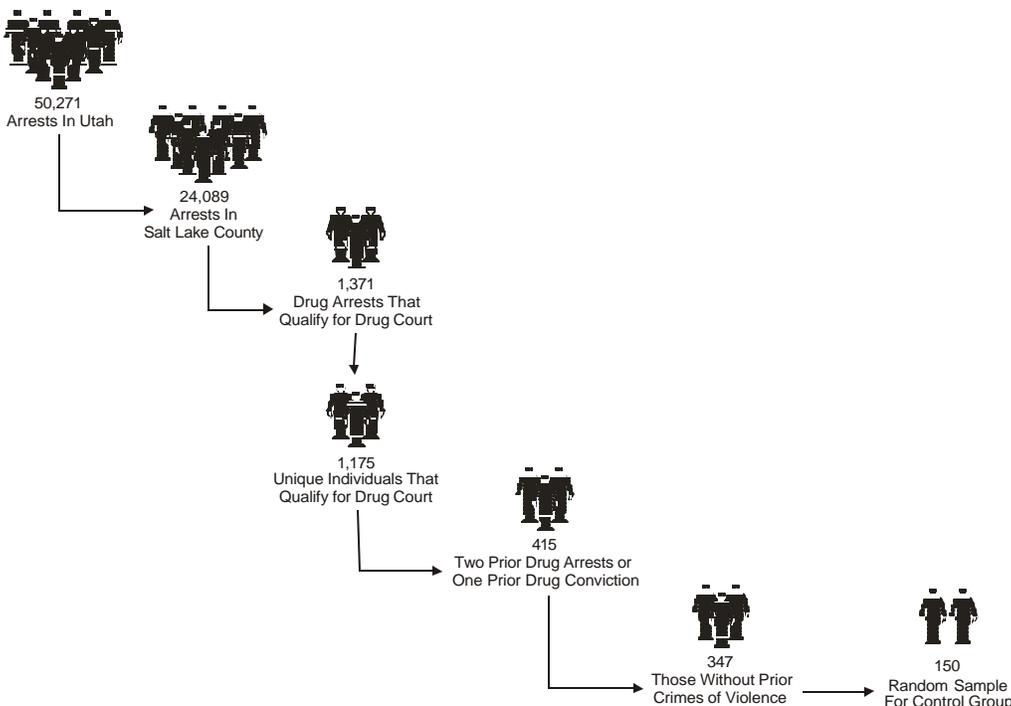
The DSA next provided a list of Drug Court participants who successfully completed the program and participants who were not successful in completing the program at least 18 months prior to the May 2001 draw of data from the Criminal History File. A total of 143 graduates were found in the Criminal History File and were used as the experimental group for this analysis. A total of 56 individuals who did not successfully complete the Drug Court program were also included in the analysis.

The control and experimental groups were comparable with regards to age, sex, race, and arrest history. There were no statistically significant differences when the groups were compared on these characteristics.

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 Drug Court program in decreasing drug related offending.

Although information about new convictions would add insight into this analysis, complete information is not available. Due to the amount of time required to process a case through the court system, many of the individuals in both the control and experimental groups have yet to receive dispositions for the arrests accounted for in the Criminal History File.

Control Group Selection Process



Analysis

Based upon the characteristics examined, all three groups were the same. No statistically significant difference was found between the groups on any of the characteristics identified.

The average age of the groups was about 31 years. Looking at sex and race, 70% were male and 30% female, with 98% being non-minority (white) and the remaining 2% being minority.

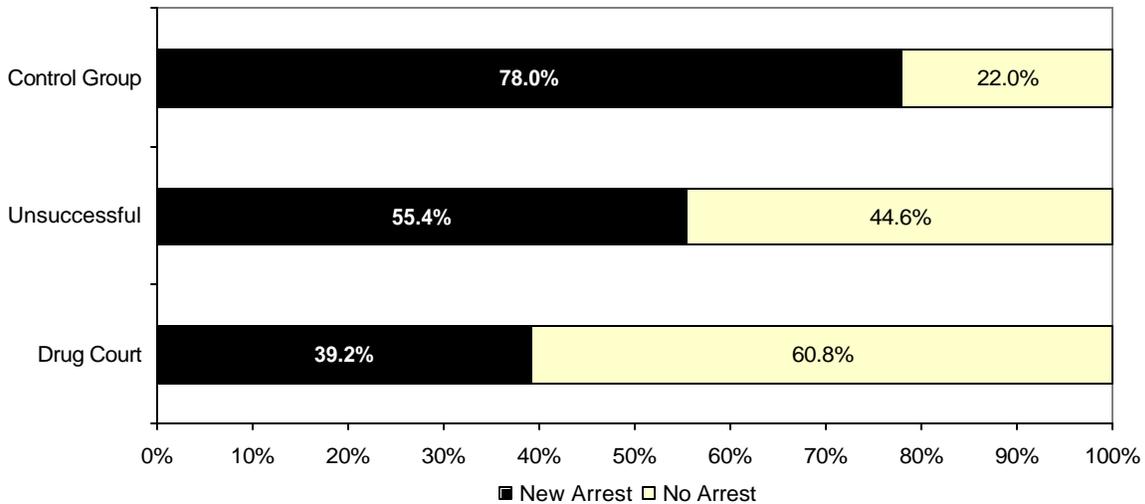
Finally, each group had about 6 to 7 arrests prior to program participation or prior to the offense identified as one that would have qualified the offender for Drug Court, in the case of the control group.

	<i>Drug Court Completers</i>	<i>Drug Court Unsuccessful</i>	<i>Control Group</i>
Average Age	31.8	33.3	31.1
Sex			
<i>Male</i>	67.1%	67.9%	70.0%
<i>Female</i>	32.9%	32.1%	30.0%
Race			
<i>Non-minority</i>	98.6%	96.4%	98.0%
<i>Minority</i>	1.4%	3.6%	2.0%
Prior Arrests	5.6	6.5	6.9

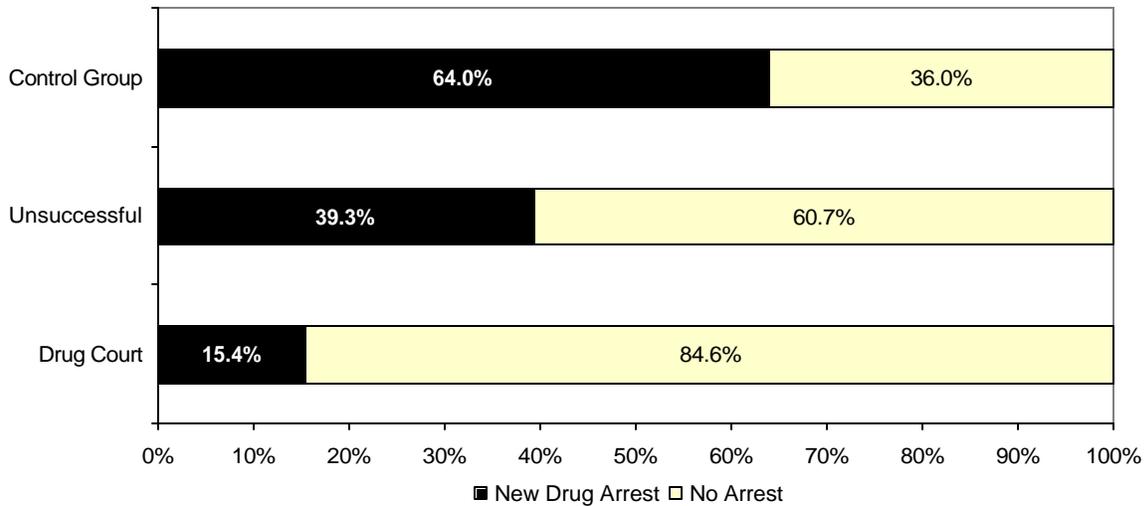
Outcomes

Looking at re-arrest for any offense, 39.2% of the Drug Court participants had a re-arrest within 18 months of release from the program. Of the control group, 78.0% had a re-arrest within 18 months from the initial arrest that would have qualified them for participation in the Drug Court. For the unsuccessful Drug Court participants, 55.4% had a re-arrest. The overall difference in outcome between the groups was found to be statistically significant ($p < .01$).

Outcome Analysis: Any New Arrest



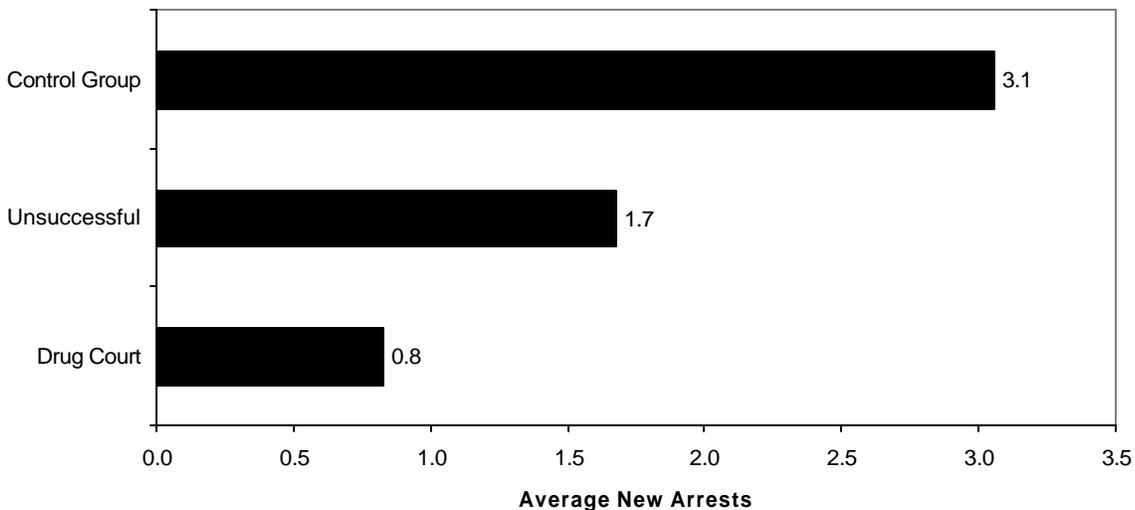
Outcome Analysis: New Drug-Related Arrest



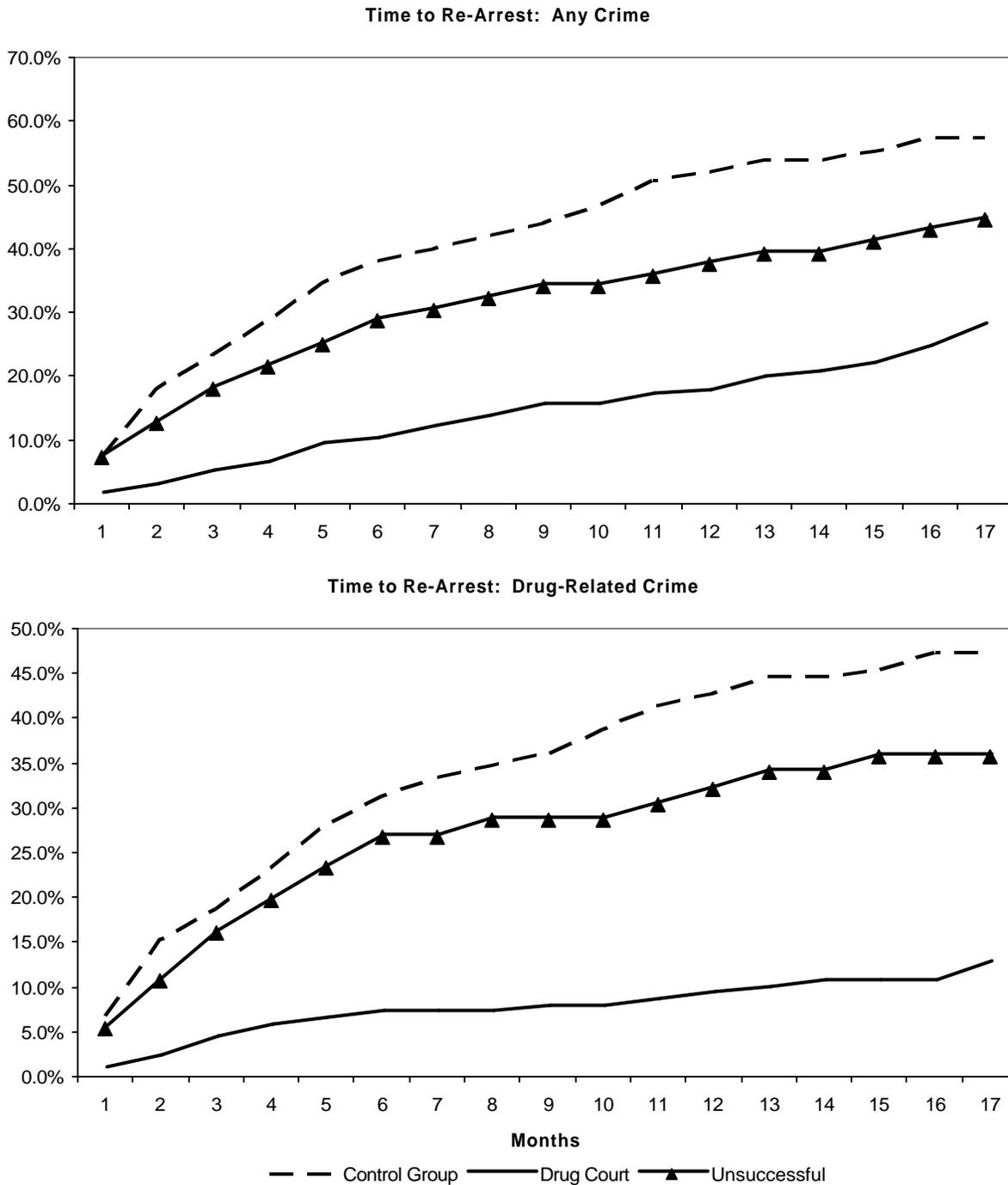
The figure above shows outcomes based upon re-arrest for drug related offenses. This is of particular interest because Drug Courts were designed to address the substance abuse problems of program participants. Looking at the groups, it is clear that Drug Court graduates fared better than those in either the control group or the group who did not successfully complete Drug Court. Of Drug Court graduates, 15.4% had a new arrest event for a drug related crime within 18 months of program completion. Nearly two-thirds, 64.0%, of those in the control group had a re-arrest for a drug related offense within 18 months. Finally, 39.3% of those not successfully completing Drug Court had a re-arrest for a drug related offense. The differences between the groups was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

The figure below shows the average number of new arrests for each group. On average, Drug Court participants had fewer new arrest events, with an average of 0.8 new arrests. Those in the control group had an average of 3.1 new arrests, while those who did not successfully complete drug court had an average of 1.7 new arrests. The differences between groups was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

Outcome Analysis: Average Number of New Arrests



Analysis was initiated to determine if there were any differences in Drug Court outcome based upon age or gender of the participant. Examining the group in this analysis, there were no statistically significant differences in re-arrests, or more specifically drug related re-arrests, between male and female participants in the Drug Court program. Additionally, no statistically significant differences were found in re-arrests of Drug Court participants when accounting for age differences.



The figures above look at the re-arrest patterns of the Drug Court participants, the control group, and the unsuccessful Drug Court participants. It is clear that the control group gets out of the re-arrest starting blocks at a faster pace than the other groups. At six months out, 9.1% of the Drug Court graduates had a re-arrest event, 34.7% of the control group had a re-arrest event, and 25.0% of the unsuccessful Drug Court participants has a re-arrest event.

After the large initial flood of re-arrests occur, the gap between the percent of Drug Court graduates and the other groups remain quite consistent. At 18 months, twice as many of the participants in the control group were re-arrested when compared to the Drug Court graduates (57.3% vs. 28.0%). Of the unsuccessful Drug Court participants, 44.6% had a re-arrest event by the 18 month mark.

Drug Court participants were much less likely to be re-arrested for a drug related crime, as is shown in the above graphic. At six months, 28.0% of the control group participants had an arrest for a drug related crime, while only 6.3% of Drug Court participants had a drug-related arrest. Of the unsuccessful Drug Court participants, 23.2% had a drug-related arrest within six months of program termination. The gap that existed at six months continued to widen over the remaining year of follow-up. At 18 months, only 12.6% of the Drug Court graduates had a drug-related arrest compared to 47.3% for the control group and 35.7% for the unsuccessful Drug Court participants.

As time passes, it may be interesting to continue to monitor these groups for further arrest events. At 18 months, the control group and unsuccessful Drug Court group appears to be beginning to level out. However, the Drug Court group appears to be gradually increasing.

The final table describes the types of offenses that occur among the groups when a re-arrest event occurs. As previously depicted, it is clear that a smaller portion of new arrests for Drug Court graduates are for drug related crimes when compared to the other two groups. Although there are a variety of offense types, the most common offenses of re-arrest include theft, assault, forgery, and traffic offenses (which were generally hit and runs and driving under the influence).

Control Group Re-arrest Events			Experimental Group Re-arrest Events			Unsuccessful Group Re-arrest Ever		
	<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%
Controlled Substances	524	49.8%	Controlled Substances	53	25.6%	Controlled Substances	94	44.5%
Obstructing Police	88	8.4%	Assault	38	18.4%	Theft	19	9.0%
Theft	82	7.8%	Traffic Offense	22	10.6%	Obstructing Police	14	6.6%
Forgery	50	4.7%	Theft	19	9.2%	Forgery	13	6.2%
Assault	39	3.7%	Obstructing Justice	13	6.3%	Assault	12	5.7%
Stolen Vehicles	34	3.2%	Obstructing Police	11	5.3%	Traffic Offenses	8	3.8%
Obstructing Justice	30	2.8%	Forgery	11	5.3%	Public Peace	7	3.3%
Stolen Property	25	2.4%	Damage Property	8	3.9%	Stolen Vehicles	6	2.8%
Privacy Violations	25	2.4%	Stolen Property	7	3.4%	Fraud	6	2.8%
Weapons Offense	24	2.3%	Privacy Violations	5	2.4%	Weapons Offenses	5	2.4%
Traffic	23	2.2%	Burglary	5	2.4%	Prostitution	4	1.9%
Fraud	22	2.1%	Prostitution	4	1.9%	Privacy Violations	4	1.9%
Burglary	18	1.7%	Fraud	2	1.0%	Burglary	3	1.4%
Prostitution	16	1.5%	Family Offense	2	1.0%	Stolen Property	3	1.4%
Public Peace (Riot)	15	1.4%	Weapons Offense	1	0.5%	Sex Offenses	3	1.4%
Damage Property	8	0.8%	Tax Revenue	1	0.5%	Flight or Escape	2	0.9%
Robbery	6	0.6%	Stolen Vehicles	1	0.5%	Obstructing Justice	2	0.9%
Family Offenses	6	0.6%	Sex Offenses	1	0.5%	Homicide	1	0.5%
Flight or Escape	6	0.6%	Public Peace	1	0.5%	Robbery	1	0.5%
Public Order	4	0.4%	Kidnaping	1	0.5%	Damage Property	1	0.5%
Homicide	2	0.2%	Homicide	1	0.5%	Family Offenses	1	0.5%
Kidnaping	1	0.1%				Bribery	1	0.5%
Sexual Assault	1	0.1%				Morals - Decency	1	0.5%
Extortion	1	0.1%						
Health or Safety	1	0.1%						
Property Crimes	1	0.1%						
Morals - Decency	1	0.1%						

Conclusion

The results of this brief study indicate there is strong evidence that the Salt Lake County Drug Court is effective in reducing recidivism among its participants. A concerted effort was put forth to draw a control group that was comparable to the Drug Court participants in nearly every meaningful characteristic, including time, geography, demographics, and criminal history. The most compelling difference between the groups was whether or not they participated in the Drug Court program or were able to complete the Drug Court program.

Although no effort was made to determine what, if any, programming the control group did receive, we did ensure they did not participate in the Salt Lake County Drug Court. Some may have received probation, short-term jail stays, fines, or restitution. Whatever the intervention, the results of this study indicates the Drug Court intervention was more effective in reducing recidivism with this type of offender.

Offenders who participated in the Salt Lake County Drug Court had fewer re-arrest events for all offense types and, also, fewer re-arrest events for drug related crimes. Additionally, not only did a larger proportion of the control group and unsuccessful Drug Court participants get re-arrested, but they also had more arrests events. The control group participants had an average of three re-arrest events compared to just short of one re-arrest events among Drug Court graduates. Evidence is especially clear that Drug Court had an impact on future drug related offending. This is critical because 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 analysis of new convictions should be studied. However, to adequately capture the outcomes of the new arrests cited in this study, another 12 to 18 months of time will be required. Second, another 12 to 18 months of data could also show whether or not re-arrests of both the control group and Drug Court participants will level off. The re-arrest curve for Drug Court graduates was still showing an increasing trend 18 months after program completion. Additional time and data would show at what point recidivism plateaus.

Finally, a cost/benefit analysis of these results can be conducted in coming months. CCJJ, in conjunction with the Justice Research Consortium, is in the process of developing 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 Drug Court costs outweigh the downstream victim and taxpayer costs attributed to those who recidivate.