

Three Year Recidivism Tracking of Offenders Participating in Substance Abuse Treatment Programs



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Criminal Justice Policy Council

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Note From The Director

This report presents the results of tracking for three years the recidivism of offenders participating in Texas' largest correctional substance abuse treatment programs. These programs are the In-Prison Therapeutic Community (IPTC) for prisoners and the Substance Abuse Felony Punishment (SAFP) for probationers. This report follows a series of previously published reports evaluating these programs.

The reincarceration rate after program participation has been tracked for four groups of offenders: two completing the IPTC program in 1993 and 1994 and two completing the SAFP program in 1994 and 1995. The two year reincarceration rate was reported to the last legislature for the first IPTC group. One year rates were reported for the other groups. In this report, three year reincarceration rates are reported for all groups. These rates are what we refer to as recidivism rates. The recidivism rates of program participants are compared to the recidivism rates of offenders who did not participate in the program. Additional groups completing the programs at later dates are also being tracked. There is currently not enough tracking history to report the recidivism rates of these new groups to this legislature.

The results of the IPTC tracking are in essence no different from what was reported to the legislature in 1997. Offenders who completed the IPTC programs have lower recidivism rates than comparison offenders who did not participate in the program. However, the higher recidivism rate of offenders who participated in but did not complete the program negatively impacted the overall recidivism rate of all participants and the cost-effectiveness of the program. Of the offenders who completed the IPTC program in the first group, 34% were reincarcerated after three years compared to 42% for all program participants and 42% for the comparison group. For the second group the equivalent rates were 33% for completers, 37% for all program participants and 37% for the comparison group. Because there was no reduction in recidivism associated with IPTC program participation there are no savings associated with reduced reincarceration costs. For both groups, the state lost \$1 for each \$1 of program costs.

The results of the SAFP tracking are different from what was previously reported to the legislature in 1997. The three year reincarceration rates for both SAFP groups, unlike the one year rates previously reported, showed program participants having a higher recidivism rate than a comparison group not participating in the program. Of the offenders who completed the SAFP program in the first SAFP group, 32% were reincarcerated after three years compared to a 38% rate for all program participants and 35% for those not participating in the program. For the second SAFP group it was not possible to collect program completion information due to prior administrative problems with the program. However the recidivism rate for all program participants was 44% compared to 35% for those not participating in the program. For both groups, the state lost \$1 for each \$1 of program costs.

Note From The Director

While the SAFP program was not successful in reducing overall recidivism rates for the first two groups tracked, the program was cost-effective in diverting offenders from prison. A great proportion of the probationers sentenced to SAFP (approximately 70%) were sentenced to

SAFP for nine months in lieu of receiving prison sentences. Therefore, SAFP unlike IPTC, diverted offenders from a more costly prison sanction which made the program cost-effective in spite of the failure to reduce overall recidivism rates. The state spent \$11.2 million for the treatment and housing in SAFP for the first group of offenders, while it would have cost the state \$17.5 million to incarcerate those in this group who would have been sentenced to prison if SAFP would not have been available (a savings of \$6.3 million). Because of this diversion savings, the state saved \$0.56 for each \$1 spent on the program. No comparable information can be calculated for the second group tracked because, as mentioned above, administrative problems with the program at the time made it difficult to collect the information needed to make cost estimates.

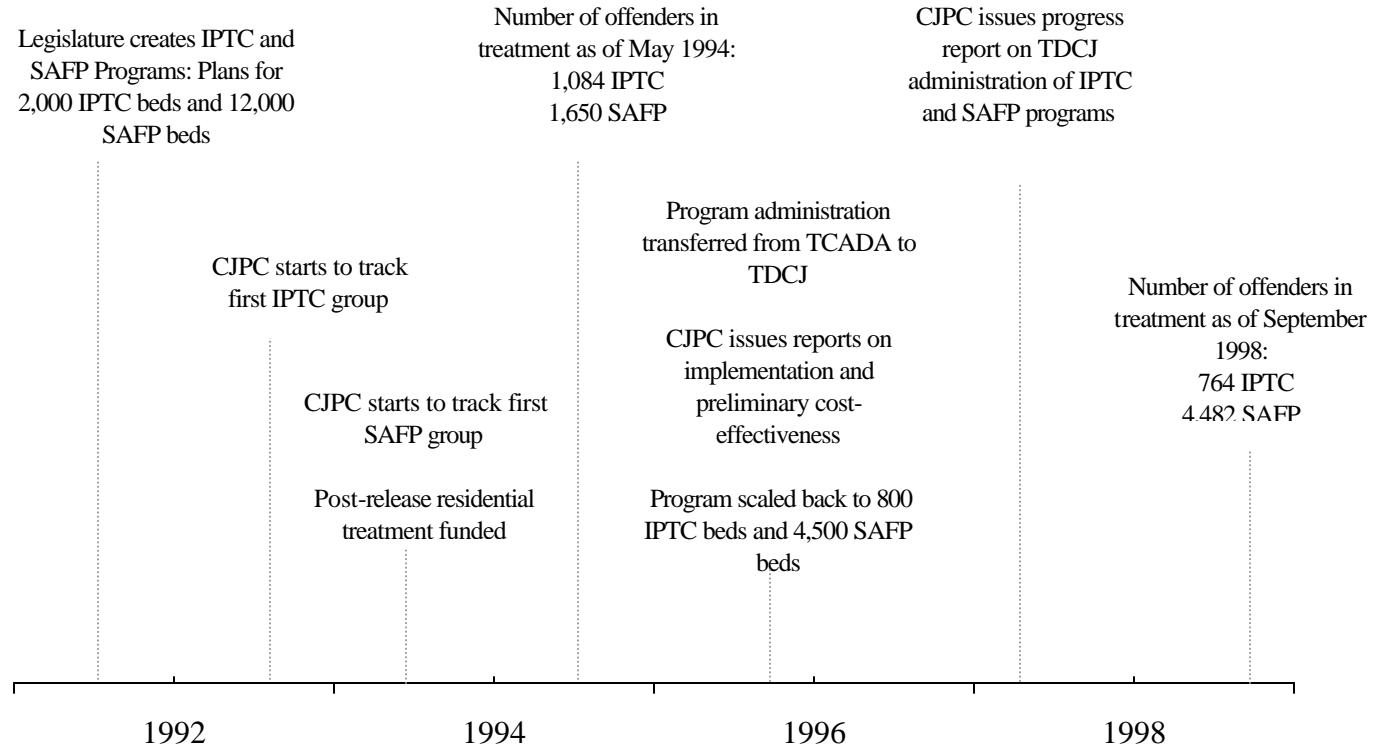
It is important to note that the groups above participated in the initial IPTC and SAFP programs which were negatively impacted by implementation problems discussed in prior reports. Some of these problems, such as the administration of the aftercare component of the program, have been corrected. Outcome information on more recent participants will be presented to the legislature in 2001 to determine if program improvements have lead to better performance in terms of recidivism. Finally, a note of caution for those who want to compare outcomes in Texas with outcomes reported in evaluations of drug treatment programs in other states or localities. A careful review of research methodologies is essential for meaningful comparisons. Particular attention should be placed on reviewing whether outcome results are stated only for program completers and whether program dropout rates are reported. Some evaluations of substance abuse treatment programs report only on the outcomes of program completers, ignoring the traditional high dropout rates of therapeutic community drug treatment programs and the higher recidivism rate of those program participants who drop out before completing the program.

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Introduction



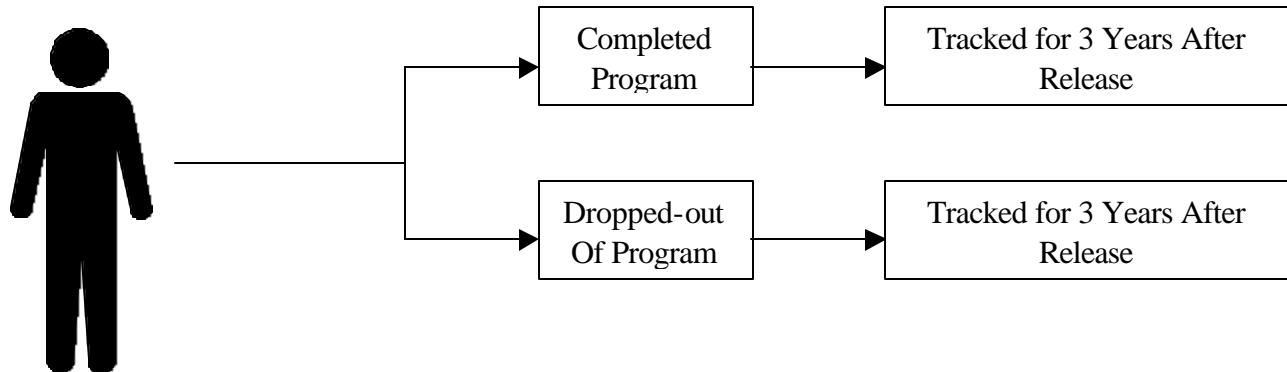
- In 1991, the Texas legislature created the In-Prison Therapeutic Community (IPTC) treatment program and the Substance Abuse Felony Punishment (SAFP) treatment program.
 - ✓ These programs were created as a result of the growing population of offenders whose substance abuse was linked to their crimes and research indicating that substance abuse treatment in prison could effectively reduce substance abuse and crime upon release.
 - ✓ The IPTC program serves offenders incarcerated in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Institutional Division (TDCJ-ID). The SAFP program primarily serves probationers.
- Initial evaluations of the programs by the Criminal Justice Policy Council (CJPC) indicated that offenders completing the programs had significantly lower recidivism rates than offenders not completing or not participating in these programs.

Introduction (cont. 2)

- High proportions of offenders entering the IPTC and SAFP programs did not complete treatment. High drop-out rates were associated with problems caused by the size and rapid expansion of the program. Factors affecting the “nuts and bolts” of program development included:
 - ✓ There were not enough qualified counselors experienced with the program to adequately staff the programs.
 - ✓ Some offenders selected were not appropriate or ready for the program.
 - ✓ The post-release aftercare program was not adequately developed.
- As a result of these and other problems, in 1995 the IPTC and SAFP programs were reduced to 800 IPTC beds and 4,500 SAFP beds. Although reduced, these programs were still the largest initiatives of their kind in the country.
 - ✓ The legislature also transferred program administration from the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA) to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) in 1995 to improve fiscal management and accountability.
- This report presents the three year recidivism tracking results of the initial groups of IPTC and SAFP program participants.

How the CJPC Tracked Outcomes

Program Participant



Comparison – Eligible
But Did Not Participate



- The CJPC identified groups admitted to the IPTC or SAFP programs.
- Information was collected on each offender participating in treatment. Information collected includes:
 - ✓ Dates of treatment admission, treatment termination in prison, release from prison, and termination of post-release treatment
 - ✓ Cost of treatment
 - ✓ Demographic information
 - ✓ Offense and criminal history information
 - ✓ Post-release arrests and reincarceration information

How the CJPC Tracked Outcomes (cont. 2)

- Comparison groups were identified from groups of offenders who have substance abuse problems and were eligible for the program, but did not participate in the IPTC or SAFP program.
 - ✓ A comparison group was identified for each IPTC and SAFP group tracked.
- Key variables were analyzed for each treatment and comparison group.
 - ✓ Differences in the composition of treatment and comparison groups can result in differences in outcome that are not the result of the program.
 - ✓ In instances where there were significant differences in the identified groups, an analysis was conducted to determine if the outcomes were the result of differences associated with a particular variable. No differences in outcome were associated with differences in the composition of the groups.
- The CJPC calculated the recidivism rate of each group based on the percent of offenders in each group that return to prison after three years of “street time”.
 - ✓ Information was obtained from the Department of Public Safety’s (DPS) computerized criminal history (CCH) records as well as from TDCJ admission records.
 - ✓ “Return to prison” was defined as an admission to TDCJ-ID or to TDCJ-State Jails Division (TDCJ-SJ) that occurred after the offender was released from the IPTC or SAFP facility. Offenders admitted to Intermediate Sanction Facilities (ISF) or who enter relapse programs are not considered “return to prison”.
 - In general, program participants are subject to more stringent supervision requirements than comparison group offenders. These additional requirements, such as participation in post-release counseling and frequent drug testing, place participants at a higher risk of returning to prison for technical violations of supervision.

CJPC Tracked the Recidivism of the Initial Groups of IPTC and SAFP Program Participants

Group	Number in Group	Started Treatment	Released from Prison	Total Cost of Treatment for the Group	Percent Completing Treatment
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IPTC 1	672	1992	1993	\$2.6 million	42%
IPTC 2	482	1993	1994	\$2.2 million	56%
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SAFP 1	723	1993	1994	\$3.4 million	62%
SAFP 2	950	1994	1995	*	*

* Offenders in the SAFP 2 group were released during a period when post-release treatment funding was not available (due to funding shortfall when the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse was administering the program), preventing calculation of total treatment costs and percent completing treatment.

- The CJPC identified four groups of offenders admitted to the IPTC and SAFP programs between 1992 and 1994.
- “Cost of treatment” was based on actual expenditures for treatment and aftercare. Cost does not include expenditures for security staffing and housing for IPTC or SAFP participants.
- “Percent completing treatment” was defined as the percentage of offenders who completed the 9-12 month in-prison phase of the program as well as completing at least 4 months of post-release treatment.
 - ✓ Post-release treatment includes approximately 3 months of residential treatment followed by 3 to 9 months of outpatient counseling.

The Three Year Outcomes of the Initial Groups Are Not As Promising as the Short-Term Outcomes Previously Reported

Group	Group Category	Percent in Prison After One Year	Percent in Prison After Two Years	Percent in Prison After Three Years
IPTC 1	Completers	7%	28%	34%
	All Participants	14%	37%	42%
	Comparison	19%	38%	42%
IPTC 2	Completers	10%	18%	33%
	All Participants	17%	25%	37%
	Comparison	19%	26%	37%
SAFP 1	Completers	5%	15%	32%
	All Participants	9%	23%	38%
	Comparison	18%	27%	35%
SAFP 2	Completers	*	*	*
	All Participants	14%	32%	44%
	Comparison	18%	27%	35%

- Overall program outcome is calculated using all program participants compared to non-participants (comparison group). While offenders who completed the IPTC and SAFP programs had lower recidivism rates than comparison group offenders, the higher recidivism rates of offenders who participated in the programs but dropped out negatively impacted the overall recidivism rates of all program participants.
 - ✓ For instance, while 34% of IPTC 1 program completers were back in prison after three years, 48% of program drop-outs were back in prison, lowering the overall recidivism rate of all program participants to 42%, the same recidivism rate as the comparison group.
 - ✓ For all groups the 3 year recidivism rate of program participants was not significantly different than the recidivism rates of the comparison groups.
- Problems associated with the initial implementation of these programs may have negatively impacted program outcomes. These problems, reported in previous CJPC reports (*Overview and Recommendations from the Criminal Justice Policy Council Program Evaluations*, 1995; *Evaluation of Texas Correctional Substance Abuse Treatment Initiative: Progress Report*, 1996), included:
 - ✓ the negative impact of the size and rapid expansion of the program
 - ✓ the lack of funding and program consistency for post-release treatment
 - ✓ problems associated with the selection of offenders appropriate for the program and infrastructure development

Treatment Programs Were Effective for Certain Groups of Offenders

Selected Offender Characteristics and 3 Year Recidivism Rates IPTC 1 and Comparison Group

Offender Characteristic	Completed Treatment	All Participants	Comparison Group
African-Americans	34%	48%	50%
Anglos	35%	40%	35%
Hispanics	32%	31%	36%
<30	34%	43%	47%
30-40	34%	44%	43%
>40	32%	36%	30%
Violent Offense	30%	40%	44%
Property Offense	44%	50%	43%
Drug Offense	26%	34%	39%

- Certain groups of offenders, completing treatment in the IPTC and SAFP programs, had significantly lower recidivism rates than similar comparison group offenders.
 - ✓ Results for the IPTC 2 and SAFP 1 groups are similar to those presented in the table above.
- Additional research should focus on identifying those offenders most likely to complete and benefit from treatment. Higher success rates and more cost-effective returns can be achieved by selecting appropriate program participants who are likely to complete and benefit from treatment.

The Initial IPTC and SAFP Groups Were Not Cost-Effective Based on Reduced Recidivism

Group	Number in Group	Cost of Treatment	Cost-Effectiveness: For Each \$1 in Program Costs Return in Recidivism Savings
IPTC 1	672	\$2.6 million	Lost \$1
IPTC 2	482	\$2.2 million	Lost \$1
SAFP 1	723	\$3.4 million	Lost \$1
SAFP 2	950	*	Lost \$1

* Offenders in the SAFP 2 group were released during a period when post-release treatment funding was not available (due to funding shortfall when the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse was administering the program), preventing calculation of total treatment costs and percent completing treatment.

- The CJPC calculates cost-effectiveness based on the cost of the program in relation to any savings associated with reduced reincarceration costs.
 - ✓ Because there was no reduction in recidivism associated with program participation in the IPTC and SAFP groups there are no savings associated with reduced reincarceration costs. For each dollar spent on treatment, there was no monetary benefit from reduced recidivism. This resulted in \$1 being lost for each \$1 spent on treatment.

The SAFP 1 Group Was Cost-Effective Based on Diversion Savings Alone

Treatment Cost	Prison Costs Avoided by Diversion	Diversion Cost-Effectiveness
723 Program participants	70% of 723 participants considered diversions = 506	<i>Formula for Calculating Diversion Cost-Effectiveness</i>
Average Cost of treatment \$4,702 per offender	506 offenders would have served 2.4 years in prison if not diverted to treatment	Prison - Treatment Costs / Treatment Costs
Average Cost of facility (9 months in facility) \$10,786 per offender	Average Prison cost (2.4 years in prison) \$34,634 per offender	\$17.5 million - \$11.2 million / \$11.2 m.
Treatment Cost = (\$4,702 + \$10,786) x 723 \$11.2 million	Prison Costs Avoided = \$34,634 x 506 \$17. 5 million	Diversion Cost-Effectiveness = \$6.3 million / \$11.2 million \$0.56
<i>For each \$1 spent on treatment</i> →	<i>\$1.56 avoided in prison costs (\$17.5 million / \$11.2 million)</i>	<i>For each \$1 spent on treatment state saved \$0.56</i>

- The CJPC estimated that 70% of offenders admitted to the SAFP program would have gone to prison if the SAFP program wasn't available. By diverting these offenders from prison for 2.4 years (average time served in prison) the state saved approximately \$17.5 million (prison costs avoided) in incarceration costs for the SAFP 1 group. The state spent \$11.2 million on treatment and incarceration costs for the SAFP 1 offenders.
- Future diversion savings estimates will utilize a blended savings rate based on the number of offenders diverted from TDCJ-ID and offenders diverted from State Jails, a felony punishment created after the SAFP offenders in the sample were sentenced.

Why Aren't Texas Outcomes As Positive As the Program Evaluations of Other States?

- The Texas IPTC and SAFP programs were modeled after substance abuse programs in other states reporting success in reducing recidivism. The results from the Texas program to date have not shown the positive results reported in other states. Three primary reasons can be cited for these differences.
 - ✓ *Outcome evaluations for programs in other states have focused primarily on reporting the outcomes of offenders completing the program and not on all program participants.*
 - Outcome evaluations reported in other states generally do not focus on the outcomes of offenders dropping out of the program and the higher recidivism rate of those offenders. The Texas evaluations report the recidivism rate of all program participants.
 - For example, an evaluation of a California therapeutic community program for prisoners reported that 25% of offenders completing the program were arrested in one year versus 67% of the comparison group arrested. When the recidivism rate of offenders not completing the program is included, the recidivism rate of all program participants is 53%.
 - ✓ *The size of the Texas program and the speed with which the program was implemented may have negatively impacted Texas outcomes compared to other states.*
 - The Texas program was modeled after the New York "Stay'n Out" therapeutic community treatment program for offenders. The New York program involved 120 treatment beds implemented over a 7 year period. Texas implemented 5,300 treatment beds in three years. The size and rapid expansion of the Texas program caused a number of problems which New York may have avoided because of its slower development and smaller size.
 - ✓ *The methodology used in calculating cost-effectiveness can significantly impact results.*
 - Texas examines the state's cost of treatment in relation to the state's benefits in reduced reincarceration costs when calculating cost-effectiveness. Other evaluations have incorporated more subjective costs and benefits into their cost-effectiveness calculations. These costs and benefits have included taxes and welfare payments made by offenders successfully returning to society, medical savings and disability payments avoided because of substance abuse treatment, victim losses, court and police costs associated with crime, and other costs and benefits that might be associated with recidivism and substance abuse treatment.

Can These Programs Work? CJPC Tracking New Groups After Programs Have Worked-Out “Nuts and Bolts” Problems

Group	Number in Group	Started Treatment	Released from Prison	Total Cost of Treatment for the Group	Percent Completing Treatment
IPTC 3	275	1996	1997	\$1.3 million	64%
SAFP 3	2408	1996	1997	\$12.1 million*	67%*

* = Estimate based on sample of SAFP participants/data not available on total group

- Many of the “nuts and bolts” issues affecting the programs and the initial groups evaluated have been addressed (see CJPC report, *Evaluation of the Texas Correctional Substance Abuse Treatment Initiative: Progress Report*, July 1996).
- The CJPC is tracking new IPTC and SAFP groups to determine if changes in the program have impacted outcomes.
- The IPTC 3 and SAFP 3 groups were admitted to treatment in 1996, released in 1997 and will be tracked for three years.
 - ✓ Cost-effectiveness calculations will incorporate the latest costs of treatment and recidivism as well as adjust for changes in the calculation of diversion savings.