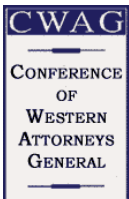


Intermediate Sanctions for Juvenile Offenders: A Utah Juvenile Court Case Study



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Michael R Phillips, MPA¹; Marie A Cecchini, MS²; John H. Wolfe, MS²; Robert Graves, MS²

¹ Utah Juvenile Court Administration (Retired), 635 South Mountain Road, Fruit Heights, UT 84037

² Foundation for Advancements in Science and Education, 4801 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 215, Los Angeles, CA 90010

Utah Fourth District Juvenile Court: New Intermediate Sanctions Model— Impact of the Narconon™ NewLife Program on High-Rate Juvenile Offenders

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In an effort to reduce juvenile recidivism — the return to criminal behavior after leaving the juvenile court — authorities in Utah implemented a new statewide intermediate sanction system in which each district could choose a treatment component. Noting the high rate of substance abuse among juvenile offenders, the Fourth District Juvenile Court chose to implement the Narconon program through a Utah licensed not-for-profit called NewLife, integrating it within court-directed probation services.

The Narconon outpatient substance abuse treatment program, based on secular materials developed by L. Ron Hubbard, consists of a series of modules that address physical aspects of substance abuse as well as underlying social and life skills that may be deficient in these youths. Participants complete a precise detoxification program designed to eliminate drug cravings by improving nutritional status and utilizing low heat sauna to reduce body stores of drug residues. The detoxification phase is followed by a series of social education modules designed to improve individual abilities in communication, study skills, cognitive function and ethical decisions. Participants also study a non-religious moral code.

This program was implemented in partnership with court officials and probation officers in the Utah Fourth District Juvenile Court, in the context of implementing new juvenile sentencing guidelines under the 1997 State Supervision Mandate. Juvenile court probation officers also played a treatment provider role by monitoring case progress through intensive ongoing contact with each juvenile, increasing family participation in treatment services, creating written correction plans, and applying justice actions to any anti-social behavior that occurred during the course of program delivery. The court hoped to reduce the rate at which these youth penetrated deeper into the justice system, and to achieve a reduction in placement costs.

Study Population:

In the Utah Fourth District, all youth sentenced into the new state supervision program were enrolled in the Narconon program as the single rehabilitation option for that district. There were no exclusionary criteria — the first 100 youth sentenced according to the state supervision program were enrolled in the Narconon program and automatically assigned to this study. It should be noted that more than half of these youth were candidates for confinement (jail) or community placement (removal from their homes) rather than state supervision, which is a sanction only slightly stiffer than probation.

An historical comparison group was selected from 517 youths of record from the 4th District Juvenile Court between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 1996. The Utah Juvenile Court Administration applied their 1997 sentencing guidelines paradigm to identify youths with sentencing profiles, sentencing guidelines, age at sentencing and age at first offense that were similar to those in the study group.

Key Findings:

Of main interest is the extent to which this intervention reduced criminal activity and recidivism. Therefore, data on this point was obtained from two court sources: 1) the juvenile justice system's computerized database, made available by the Utah Juvenile Court Administration; 2) Utah state's computerized adult criminal records database. Additional data was collected from Narconon program case folders for the youth in the experimental group.

Seventy-four of the 100 youth completed all modules of the Narconon program. The rest were unable to complete as a result of being removed from the program by the court for various reasons.

For the remainder of their juvenile history, 63.5 percent of the youth who received the full Narconon program remained completely misdemeanor and felony free – a 100 percent reduction in criminal activity. Among the youth who were unable to complete the entire program, 19.2 percent remained crime-free. A 30.1 percent crime-free rate was achieved in the comparison group.

Program participants who did not remain completely crime-free showed a 77.7 percent reduction in criminal activity for the duration of their time in the Utah Juvenile Justice System. This was true for all 100 youths who had participated in the Narconon program, irrespective of completion. This contrasts with a 46.7 percent reduction in the historical comparison group.

Youth who completed the Narconon program remained crime-free at more than double the rate seen in the historical comparison group. Juveniles who had no additional crime incurred no additional placement time in secure settings and Youth Corrections Services (YCS), and no associated costs.

A portion of youth who completed the Narconon program were involved in additional crime. Even among these, the reductions in costs were significant. The completions who returned to crime averaged 43 days in YCS over the two-year study period. Those who were unable to complete the full program committed more crime and averaged 156 days in YCS.

Based on a 2002 average cost of \$185 per day, program completion represented a minimum savings of \$28,875 per youth in placement costs alone. Savings in other costs, including costs of probation officers, court fees, the cost of the crime itself, and other considerable societal costs resulting from acts of crime, were not estimated.

Conclusions:

Delivery of the full Narconon program did achieve the reduction in placements that the court had hoped to see.

While this was not a randomized trial, juveniles in the fourth district did not select themselves into the Narconon program. One potential selection bias was the court's increased tendency to mitigate down the sentencing of youth who actually met more severe sentencing criteria in attempt to offer them a rehabilitation program.

In view of this, and the fact that the youths involved in the study did not choose rehabilitation, the completion rate and the reductions in recidivism noted are encouraging.

By a number of different measures, the integration of the Narconon program within the court system appears to yield better results than court-services alone, with a high percent of program completions remaining misdemeanor and felony free during the remainder of adolescence. It is hoped that other measures — including completion of high school and higher education degrees and employment and earnings status as adults — could be evaluated in future work. Presumably, youths who can be persuaded to embrace a crime-free lifestyle have a greater opportunity to focus on their education and life goals. Further, many of the skills learned in this program would be expected to improve education and employment-related outcomes.

From every perspective—whether government, the crime victim, society at large, or the juvenile offender himself — rehabilitation offers greater long-term benefits than punishment alone and appears to offset its costs. It is in the interest of all to implement such programs and to further evaluate their impact.

BACKGROUND

High risk and chronically offending juveniles are a unique problem in criminal justice. Identification of the chronic offender is generally ascribed to the research work of Wolfgang, et al in their 1972 study, *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*. Chronic recidivists constitute only 6-8 percent of youth in a given age group, yet account for approximately 50 percent of the crime of that group. Arrests and court appearances do little to deter chronic offenders. Punishment does not deter the chronic offender. The more severe the sanction the more likely the chronic offender will recidivate.

Substance abuse is a common thread in juvenile crime and has been shown to amplify the extent of criminal activity. States are incorporating a variety of treatment interventions to address drug-related crime and relieve the financial burden of substance abuse on the criminal justice system.

Treatment results for juveniles, however, have been disappointing. The first national study of substance abuse treatment outcomes (1,799 persons from 99 drug treatment facilities) reports a 13 percent increase in adolescent alcohol abuse and a 202 percent increase in adolescent crack use following treatment. The rate of adolescent driving under the influence (DUI), driving while intoxicated (DWI) and selling of drugs increased after treatment as well.

While the study did not explore the causes of poor outcomes, it is evident that new approaches are needed for this population. Lipsey found that useful treatments not only address substance abuse (found in the majority), but also must handle antisocial behavior.

The Situation in Utah

In 2001, Columbia University conducted a national survey, known as the “Shoveling Up” study, for the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse. It brought disturbing news for Utah, finding that 11.7 percent of Utah’s total 1998 state budget was spent on ‘shoveling up’ after the impact of addiction and substance abuse.

Of these expenditures — more than \$500,000,000 — very little went to prevention or treatment. As the authors of the “Shoveling Up” report noted, the situation in Utah mirrored a national problem:

“This report is the first comprehensive analysis of how much substance abuse and addiction cost each state budget. This unprecedented analysis shows that states spent a stunning \$81.3 billion in 1998 to deal with this issue—13.1 percent of their budgets. Even more striking is that of every dollar states spent on substance abuse, 96 cents went to shovel up the wreckage in state programs and only four cents went to prevent and treat the problem.”

In 1994, Phillips, the deputy court administrator of the Utah Juvenile Court, conducted a study that looked into criminal recidivism of 187 juvenile chronic offenders sentenced to Utah’s Juvenile Secure Facilities. These youths had failed all previous probation, community placement and treatment interventions and been sentenced to secure facilities (Utah’s highest juvenile sanction).

Almost all these youths had received drug treatment interventions. Each youth was tracked for 3 years into the adult criminal justice system and the findings analyzed. Fifty-seven percent were found serving a sentence in Utah prison; another 10 percent had a felony conviction with probation or jail, and another 11 percent had a misdemeanor conviction. An additional 9 percent were arrested in Utah and 3 percent had out-of-state arrests. Eleven percent could not be located. Ninety percent had involvement in the system as adults with almost 67 percent having at least one felony conviction.

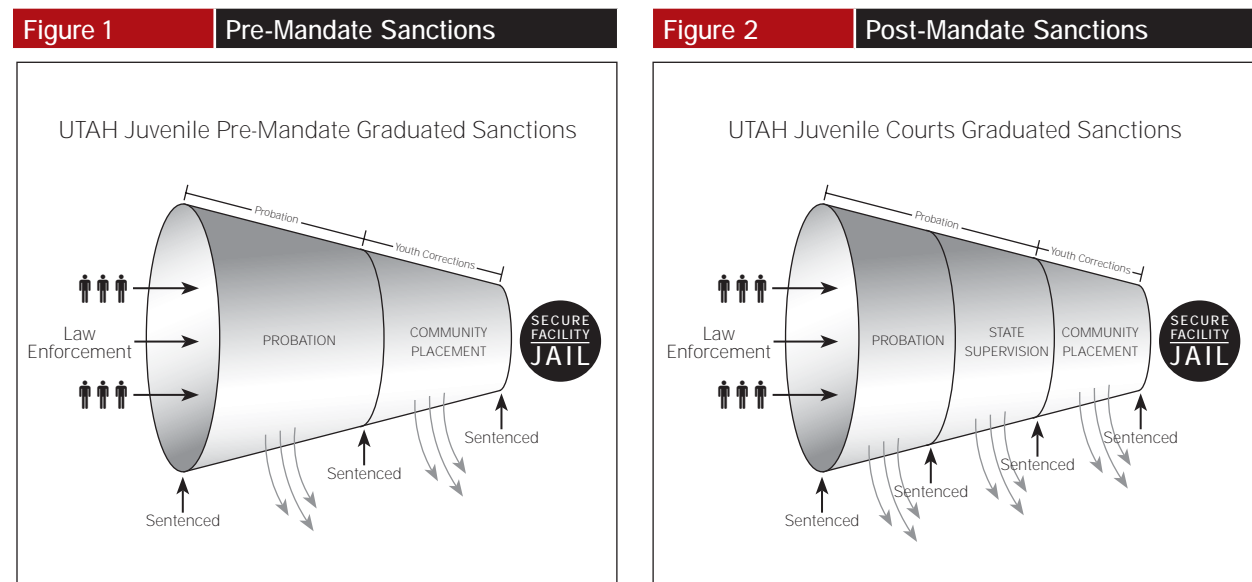
Costs of attempted rehabilitation of these young offenders (within the juvenile system) had amounted to almost \$20 million or roughly \$107,000 per individual. This investment was viewed as a dismal failure by policy leaders.

Early Intervention Mandate

"The key, unanswered question is whether prompt and more effective early intervention would stop high rate delinquents from becoming high rate criminals at a time when their offenses were not yet too serious. Perhaps early and swift though not necessarily severe sanctions could deter some budding hoodlums, but we have no evidence of that as yet."

James Q. Wilson, Criminologist

The Utah legislature took action. In 1997 they created new juvenile sentencing guidelines coupled with a new probation sanction entitled, State Supervision – An Early Intervention Mandate: The Juvenile Sentencing Guidelines and Intermediate Sanction in Utah. The new guidelines called for earlier sentencing to probation and created state supervision as an intermediate sanction, in the form of intensive supervision and enhancement of services between probation and removal from the home to a community placement. They also requested that each district implement treatment interventions and provided funding for them to do so.



It was envisioned that this sanction would consist of locally created intensive service programs that would largely be in-home efforts, with short-term community placements provided as needed. Juvenile Court would have primary responsibility as the case manager and provider of services. Specifically, the court would contact offenders at least five times weekly, increase outside-of-office contacts, provide programming during after school hours, increase substance abuse testing and treatment, develop alternative school programming, expand community service work crews, increase family participation in supervision and counseling, expand electronic monitoring statewide and construct a written correction plan outlining specific measurable goals for each offender.

Evaluations

Two statewide evaluations of the Utah Early Intervention Mandate have been initiated. One of these has been completed. In September 2001 the Final Report of Impact of An Early Intervention Mandate: The Juvenile Sentencing Guidelines and Intermediate Sanctions in Utah was issued.

Objectives of this evaluation included: a) assessing the effectiveness of the earlier intervention program in reducing criminal activity and rates of commitment to Youth Corrections, and b) identifying promising local approaches to the new program.

The evaluation measured two-year post-sentencing recidivism of first-time probationers, comparing those sentenced during the first 6 months of 1996 versus 1999. Statewide (8 juvenile districts) 871 youths were selected in 1996 and 1095 youths in 1999. Offenses were obtained from court records. Commitments to Youth Corrections facilities (community placement and secure care facility) were examined for 1996 versus 1999.

The researchers concluded: 1) effects of the new program on re-offense were modest, and reductions appeared to be related to sentencing less-frequent offenders to probation; 2) no statistical difference was noted pre- versus post- on commitments to Youth Corrections, and 3) differences between local intervention approaches in the districts were slight. Numerous factors were discussed as possible influences on the findings including "it may still be too early for a clear decrease to be evident".

The second statewide evaluation is being conducted by the Social Research Institute under a grant from the Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice. This study seeks to answer three questions: 1) Does state supervision make a difference in recidivism rates?; 2) Which specific contractual programs work well? and 3) What are the cost benefits to state supervision? The study is designed to evaluate different programs in various districts. Thirty youths from each district who have been on or are currently on state supervision will be studied from each area. The evaluation has not been released as of this writing.

This paper presents a third evaluation of the impact of the Early Intervention Mandate. It differs from previous evaluations in that it addresses the impact of a specific program implemented by the 4th District Juvenile Court, a program that continued for nearly two years after the period examined in the September 2001 report on the Early Intervention Mandate.

Under the 1997 mandate, the Fourth District Juvenile Court was directed to create a local approach for programming under state supervision. Previous experience had shown that the additional services they offered should focus on drug use and educational deficiencies.

The district's judges and administrative personnel, through a competitive bid process, selected the Narconon drug rehabilitation methodology provided by a local not-for-profit group called NewLife. The Fourth District Court initiated their state supervision program in conjunction with NewLife in March 1998.

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Treatment Setting

The NewLife program was based on materials developed by Narconon International, an organization utilizing a "manualized treatment" paradigm. Regardless of treatment setting, or intensity, treatment is delivered in a sequence outlined in 8 manual-based modules that constitute a comprehensive therapy. This program does not include pharmacologic treatment.

The first treatment phase is designed to handle the physical aspects of addiction. It utilizes a precise detoxification regimen incorporating exercise, low heat sauna, vitamin and mineral supplementation and other elements to reduce the body burden of drugs and drug metabolites associated with protracted substance abuse. Reduction of drug cravings and restoration of physical health is also accomplished by addressing the nutritional imbalances frequently noted in drug abusers.

The detoxification phase is followed by a series of social education modules designed to improve individual abilities in communication, study skills, cognitive function and ethical decisions. Participants also study a non-religious moral code. These modules are delivered in a classroom setting, with each youth progressing at his or her own rate based on successful completion of each program element.

Under the 1997 State Supervision Mandate, study group juveniles were enrolled in the NewLife outpatient treatment center. This facility was licensed by Narconon International and contracted to deliver services by the 4th District Juvenile Court in Provo/Orem, Utah. The program ran six to seven days per week for five hours after school. The duration of the program was approximately 6 months, depending on each individual and any intervening justice actions.

The Early Intervention Mandate provides for a unique court-directed program in which the youth caseload is managed directly by the juvenile court probation officers. In addition to the delivery of the program modules

by Narconon staff, juvenile court probation officers played a treatment provider role by monitoring case progress through intensive ongoing contact with each juvenile, increasing family participation in treatment services, creating written correction plans, and applying justice actions to any anti-social behavior that may occur during the course of program delivery. In this district, youth lived at home, went to school, were brought to the facility by probation officers and picked up by parents or a responsible adult.

Study Population

The first 100 youths sentenced according to the new state supervision guidelines were enrolled into the Narconon program and were automatically assigned to this study. In the Utah Fourth District, the Narconon program was selected as the single rehabilitation option; as there were no other program options, the study could not use a random assignment scheme. There were also no exclusionary criteria in the 4th District Juvenile Court—all youth sentenced into the new state supervision program were enrolled in the Narconon program. The decision to sentence into state supervision was made by 4th District Juvenile Court judges when the criminality of youth had not been reversed by prior probationary actions.

An historical comparison group was selected from 517 youths of record from the 4th District Juvenile Court between January 1 1995 and December 31 1996. The Utah Juvenile Court Administration applied their 1997 sentencing guidelines paradigm to this comparison group for the purposes of selecting youths with similar sentencing profiles. Inclusion in the historical comparison group was based on similarities with respect to sentencing guidelines, age at sentencing and age at first offense.

Data Sources

Data collection for this study was authorized by the 4th District Juvenile Court. Data available for this study came from three sources: 1) the juvenile justice system's computerized database, made available by the Utah Juvenile Court Administration; 2) Utah state's computerized adult criminal records database; and 3) Narconon program case folders. Court data was provided electronically in a single file from each database and included all data on record as of November 2003. The Narconon program case folder data was imported into the merged court records, including intervention start and end dates and whether or not the full program was completed.

Data Analysis

All study youths were assigned a unique study number for the purposes of linking records from different sources while protecting confidentiality. Youths enrolled on the Narconon program were separated into two groups — one group that completed the full program and a second group that completed only a portion of the program. (Among those who did not complete, duration of treatment ranged from a week or less to several months.)

All criminal activities were analyzed by category: Total crime, an analysis that also includes status offenses (acts illegal for youth only, e.g., curfew violations and truancy), probation violations and other infractions; misdemeanors; felonies; and drug charges, a category that includes any offenses such as possession, DWI, etc. that are directly drug-related.

Data was analyzed in two main ways. The first involved a quasi-experimental interrupted time series design where criminal activity was summed by quarter for two years prior to enrollment in the Narconon program and two years following completion of the program (or for time the youth remained in the juvenile system before turning eighteen). This analysis tabulated the number of juvenile offenses committed at 91-day quarterly intervals for two years before and two years following sentencing. Adult records were not included in this analysis.

A second analysis was undertaken to evaluate the potential loss of data when a youth reaches 18 years of age and/or is moved into an adult justice system, as well as the possibility that any reduction in crime rate is confounded by placement in a secure setting. This analysis calculated total crime two years before and four years after intervention as a rate per year, with days spent in jail or locked up removed from the time calculation. In this analysis, the numerator included all felonies and misdemeanors recorded in both the juvenile system and the adult database. Infractions were ignored. An additional analysis of total crime used a linear scale to weight the severity of crime by misdemeanor class and felony degree.

ANALYSES & FINDINGS

Study Group Characteristics

Of the 100 youth enrolled in the Narconon NewLife program, 74 completed the full program; 26 did not. Those who did not complete were removed from the program by the court prior to completion. While impossible to remove all confounding factors that might explain why the court found it necessary to remove a youth from the program, the high completion rate suggests that analysis by treatment exposure (indicated by completion status) is possible. Therefore the experimental group is further separated into those who completed the Narconon program and those who remained incomplete.

The demographic data for all groups in this study was generally similar and is described in Table 1. The youth were predominantly Caucasian males, with about 15 percent female and approximately 7 percent non-Caucasian.

Table 1	Demographics Summary		
	Complete (total number)	Incomplete (total number)	Comparison (total number)
Count	74	26	200
Ethnicity			
Caucasian	70	23	165
Hispanic	4	2	13
Black	0	0	1
Other	0	1	10
No Response	0	0	11
Gender			
Male	62	22	172
Female	12	4	28

While comparable overall, there were some differences between groups. As described in Table 2 juveniles who did not complete the Narconon program tended to be slightly younger at their age of first offense. The historical comparison group was slightly older at their age of first offense and slightly younger when sentenced than those placed into the Narconon program.

Table 2	Age Summary	
	Age at Sentencing	Age at First Offense
Narconon Complete	74	26
Narconon Incomplete	70	23
Historical Comparison	4	2

Table 3		Pre-Program Criminality Summary		
	Incomplete	Complete	Historical Comparison	
Total crime	17.0 ± 2.32	15.62 ± 2.08	17.88 ± 3.30	
Drug crime	3.24 ± .63	3.53 ± .74	1.75 ± .51	
Misdemeanor crime	11.16 ± 1.74	9.98 ± 1.42	10.89 ± 2.30	
Felony crime	1.92 ± .55	1.34 ± .53	2.87 ± .91	

There are also some differences in pre-program criminality as seen in Table 3. Those youth who completed the Narconon program had fewer total crimes, mostly in the numbers of misdemeanors, than did the other two groups. The comparison group had significantly fewer drug crimes but more felonies.

Table 4		Percent of Each Group Meeting Current Sentencing Guideline Criteria		
	Complete	Incomplete	Total	
Secure Facilities				
Narconon	1.0	0.0	1.0	
Historical Comparison	-	-	1.0	
Community Placement				
Narconon	25.0	7.0	32.0	
Historical Comparison	-	-	10.6	
State Supervision				
Narconon	11.0	11.0	22.0	
Historical Comparison	-	-	44.7	
Probation				
Narconon	37.0	8.0	45.0	
Historical Comparison	-	-	43.7	

Utah Juvenile Court Administration simulated the 1997 sentencing guidelines paradigm to the historical comparison group. In this way all study youths had similar guidelines applied. Table 4 shows the percent of each youth from each group that fit into each available sentencing guideline. The Narconon group had significantly higher numbers of youths who met the Community Placement criteria but were mitigated down for placement into the Narconon program and a correspondingly lower number of youths meeting State Supervision guidelines than in the historical comparison group.

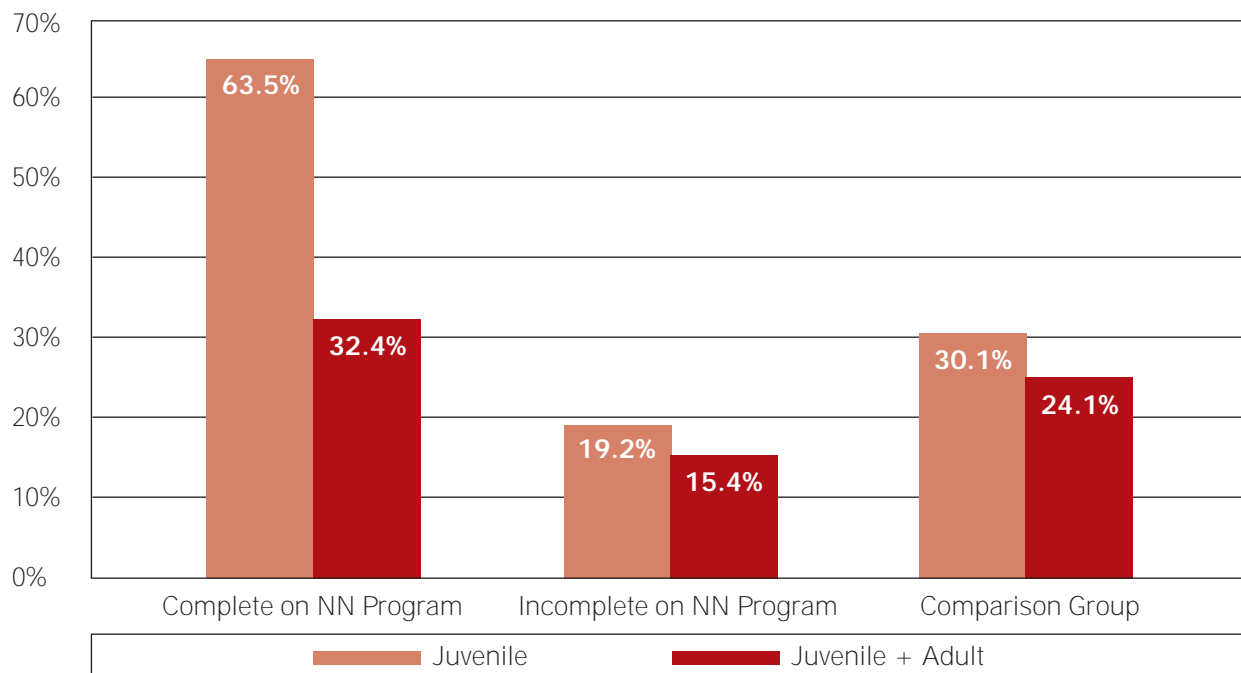
Recidivism Status

Of main interest is the extent to which this intervention paradigm reduced recidivism. Of the youth who completed the program, 63.5 percent remained completely misdemeanor and felony free during the remainder of their juvenile history. This compares with 19.2 percent of youths who did not complete the NewLife program and 30.1 percent of youth in the historical comparison group. Based on a combined analysis of juvenile and adult records, 32.4 percent of the treated group retained this crime-free state for four years post-treatment, still higher than the other two groups. (Figure 3)

Irrespective of program completion, juveniles who did not remain completely crime-free showed a 77.7 percent reduction in criminal activity for the duration of their records in the Utah Juvenile Justice System. This compares with a 46.7 percent reduction in the historical comparison group.

All groups had improved recidivism rates as adults and there were no detectable differences between groups. Figure 3 compares the crime-free status for the different groups across various time-frames within the study period.

Figure 3 Percent of Juveniles with no Misdemeanor or Felony Offenses Following Intervention



Time Series Analysis

The following graph depicts the quarterly mean crimes of youth who entered the Narconon program for two years before and after the intervention. Q-1 through Q-8 are quarters prior to intervention and Q+1 through Q+8 those quarters following intervention. Youths who reach the age of 18 are no longer tracked by the juvenile court.

Figure 4 Quarterly Total Offenses Before and After State Supervision Sentencing

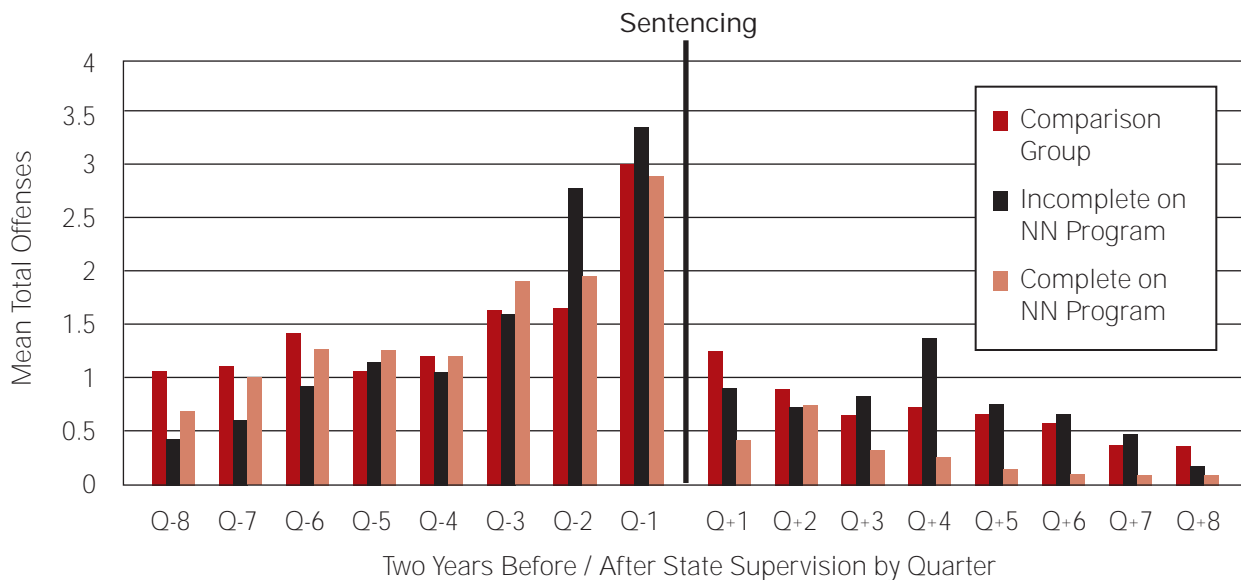


Table 5	Percent Remaining in Study Group by Quarter
Q+1	89.9%
Q+2	81.8%
Q+3	71.8%
Q+4	64.7%
Q+5	52.5%
Q+6	44.9%
Q+7	36.1%
Q+8	29.9%
Q+9	25.3%

Table 5 shows the percent of youths remaining in the analysis; attrition from the data set is similar for each group (data not shown).

Pre Treatment and Post Treatment Rate Analyses:

The purpose of these analyses is to address the possibility that youths were crime-free or committed fewer crimes because they had been placed in settings where the opportunity to commit offenses was restricted, e.g. a jail or other secure setting.

Placement data from court records for the three study groups were combined and analyzed, to evaluate the frequency of crime in various settings.

Table 6 shows the results of this analysis. The total number of crimes committed in a placement type divided by the number of days in that placement gives an annual rate of crimes committed in each setting, an index of the "risk" for each placement.

Table 6	Number of Offenses Committed, by Placement Setting	
Placement Name	# Cases w/ Placement	Offenses / Year
None	-	4.52
AWOL (Escape)	83	6.95
Detention	397	12.56
Jail	26	0.29
Observation & Assessment	92	1.11
Community Placement	214	1.84
Home Detention	267	3.46
Secure Facility	39	0.28
Shelter	7	0.00
Hospital	4	0.00
Total	1129	4.02

The opportunity to commit offenses was significantly reduced only on days when juveniles were placed into jail, locked facilities, a shelter or a hospital. A subsequent analysis (data not shown) verified that the crime-free status of each group was not a reflection of the fact that they had been placed in such settings.

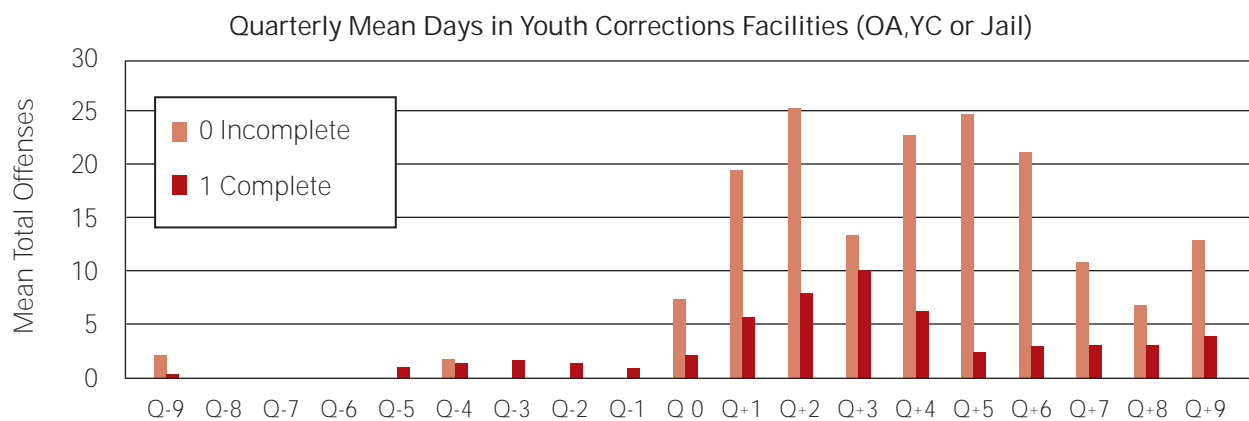
Placement Analysis:

A second analysis was undertaken in regard to the relationship between placement in secure settings (with reduced opportunity for offenses) and crime rate. This analysis also addressed the extent to which program completion reduced the need for placement in secure settings (one of the goals of the 1997 State Supervision Mandate).

At the time of this analysis, placement data was available for 98 of the 100 youth — 73 who completed the program and 25 who did not. Due to differences in sentencing guidelines, this data was not analyzed for the comparison group. An interrupted time series analysis (Figure 5) revealed that program completions — who committed the least crime — also spent the least time in secure settings. Those who did not complete the Narconon program, who committed more crime, spent more time in secure settings. Thus placement was further eliminated as an explanation for reduced recidivism.

In short, the delivery of the complete Narconon program achieved the reduction in placements that the court had hoped to see.

Figure 5 Corrections Placements: Program Completions vs. Non-Completions



Cost Savings Potential:

An important measure of success in any justice program is the extent to which that intervention reduces society’s burden of crime-related costs. The state of Utah provided the following table of placement costs for each year of the study period.

Table 7 Average Daily Cost Per Youth

Year	Residential*	Detention	Work Camp	O & A	Secure Facilities
1998	\$72.26	\$127.37	\$92.78	\$151.75	\$148.93
1999	\$91.13	\$126.86	\$101.68	\$147.10	\$146.58
2000	\$109.64	\$109.05	\$86.31	\$125.14	\$140.58
2001	\$109.27	\$118.54	\$125.56	\$163.85	\$191.37
2002	\$108.79	\$148.09	\$134.90	\$199.72	\$169.65

*Average of all Residential Service Codes

Nearly 64 percent of the juveniles who completed the program had no additional crime over the two-year post program study period and thus incurred no additional placement costs. Youth who did not complete the program averaged 156 days in Youth Corrections Services (observation and assessment or secure facilities). Based on the 2002 average cost of \$185 per day for these services, prevention of future crime represented a potential saving of \$28,875 per youth in placement costs alone.

This analysis does not include other costs, including costs of probation officers, court fees, the cost of the crime itself, and other considerable societal costs resulting from acts of crime.

A portion of youth who completed the Narconon program were involved in additional, but reduced, crime compared with those who did not complete the full program. These youth averaged 43 days in Youth Corrections services (113 days less than those who completed the full program), amounting to a potential saving of \$20,837 per youth.

Data was not available to compare the average time juveniles in the Fourth District spent in such services prior to implementation of the new guidelines.

Figure 6 | Estimated Cost per Youth of Youth Corrections Services for Two Years Following Intervention



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Elements of Effective Programs

Facing enormous financial and social burdens from drug-related crime, including the fact that more than half of prisoners are drug offenders, states are increasingly seeking to identify effective prevention and treatment programs. Programs for juveniles are perhaps the most crucial; if successful, they can alter life patterns that might otherwise lead to greatly reduced ability to contribute to society, if not to career criminality.

In 1992 Mark Lipsey conducted a meta-analysis of more than 400 evaluations of juvenile programs and reported an average 10 percent improvement in recidivism rates for all programs evaluated.ⁱⁱⁱ Such studies by Lipsey and others have identified components of programs that exceeded the average improvement.

The following were found to be components of less effective programs:

- Treatment provided in institutions or Boot Camps^{xi}
- Parole, supervised probation, diversion (after youths attain multiple arrests)^{xiv}
- Counseling (group, family or individual)ⁱⁱⁱ
- Deterrence including "shock incarceration"ⁱⁱⁱ
- Treatment provided by the researcher or where the researcher influenced the treatment had larger effects because those effects could not be replicated in practical settingsⁱⁱⁱ

The following were found to be components of more effective programs:

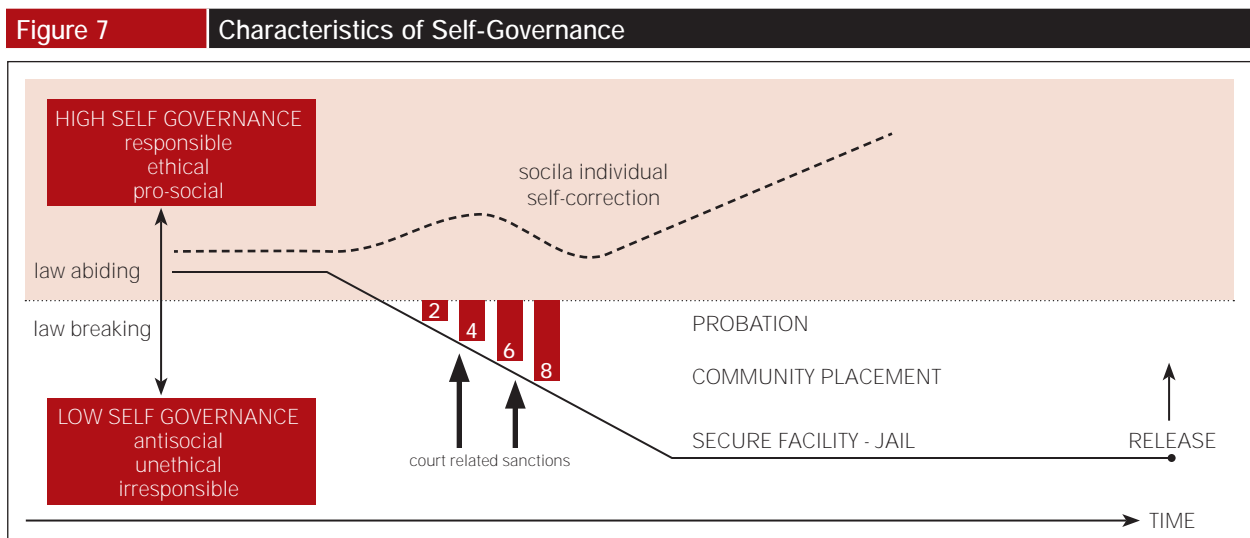
- Community based programs run by private providers^{xiii}
- Longer duration and frequency of treatment^{iii,xiii}
- More structured and focused programs^{iii,xiii}
- Skill-oriented, multimodal treatment^{xi,iii}
- Cognitive-behavioral treatments^{xii}
- Treatment that was more sociological and less psychological^{iii,xiv}

Goals of Treatment and Intervention

In order to make further discoveries regarding the components of effective programs, it is useful to examine the ideal outcome from a treatment or intervention program. While reducing recidivism is an accepted and valid measure from an administrative perspective, it is possible that there is a broader measure of rehabilitation.

In many respects, the concept of "self-governance" is more aligned to the goals of the justice system, and to the best interests of society. Individuals who are able to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own actions are net contributors to society.

Figure 7 depicts some of the characteristics of self-governance, and the progressive involvement of the justice system when individuals repeatedly fail to control their own actions.



The justice system is concerned solely with those individuals who are not accountable for their actions, and who cannot restrain themselves from acts that are destructive to themselves or others. It is forced to assume responsibility for these individuals for the sake of general safety.

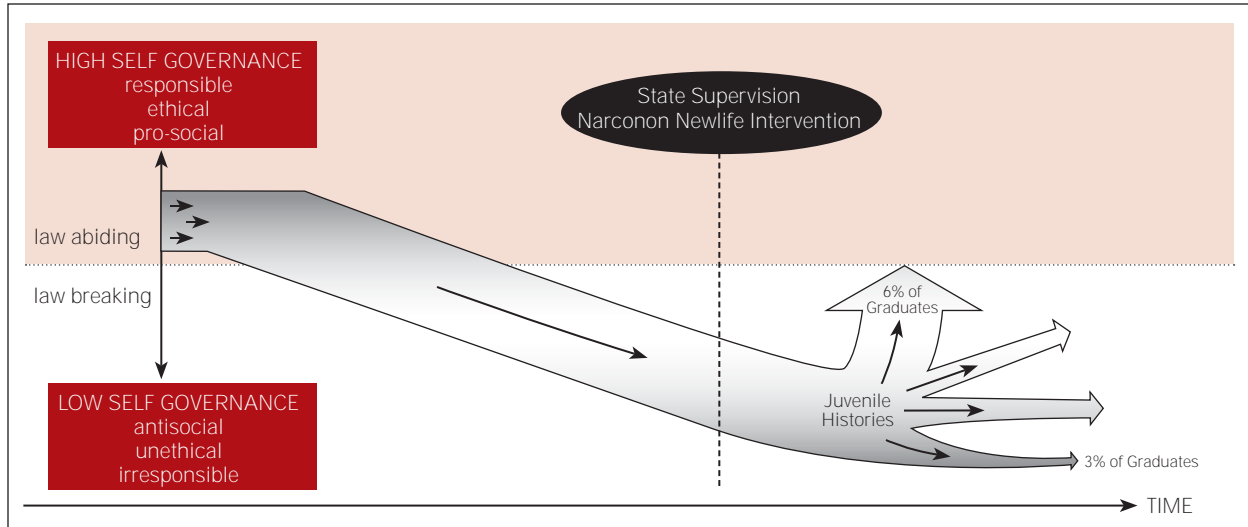
In some cases, punishment — at whatever level an offense merits — can awaken a desire for self-governance, whether to prevent future loss of liberty or because a basic goodness has been shocked into life. Unfortunately, this is not the norm.

While incarceration, or other sanctions, might bring an individual to a state where he or she lives in fear of the consequences of another offense, this is far short of self-governance. It is not an indication that the individual is now prepared to be a contributing member of society.

The various components of the Narconon program are designed to address the question of self-governance. This begins with detoxification, intended to give the participant control over the physical aspects of addiction (i.e., drug cravings) and continues through the other modules. Basic literacy and communication skills are essential for self-governance, as is a personal understanding of right and wrong behavior. These matters are addressed by the Narconon program.

Figure 8

Impact of the Narconon NewLife Program on Self-Governance



Ability of the Narconon Program to Achieve These Goals

The Narconon program involves a number of components identified as effective by Lipsey et al. In this implementation, it was a community-based program with the Fourth District Juvenile Court sharing in aspects of the intervention. In all delivery settings, the Narconon program is of long duration and frequency, with multi-modal treatment as a series of standardized delivery manuals or "courses" completed by each participant. It emphasizes skills that can enable participants to improve their interaction in their own environments (school, family, friends).

Seventy-four of the 100 juveniles completed the intervention. Those who did not complete were removed by the courts for various reasons (e.g. custody shifts) and given other forms of intervention similar to what had existed prior to inception of state supervision and the Narconon program. These included counseling, work projects, and other common tools but not a comprehensive rehabilitation program. However, the high Narconon program completion rate permits an attempt to disentangle the effects of this treatment from other factors by separating program completions from those who did not complete.

Program completion was associated with a reduction in crime well above the 10 percent average identified by Lipsey, with 63 percent of these completions committing no misdemeanors or felonies during the remainder of their juvenile history (100 percent reduction). Nearly a third of the completions sustained this 100 percent reduction for four years following the program.

As demonstrated by the comparison group, court services without the adjunct treatment intervention do appear to have a positive effect. However, by a number of different measures, the integration of the Narconon program within the court system appears to yield consistently better results than court services alone. The likelihood that youth who did not complete were inherently less stable and thus more likely to recidivate is mitigated by the fact that reduced crime was seen even in this sub-group.

It is very encouraging that so many youths who completed the Narconon program remained misdemeanor and felony free during the remainder of their adolescence. It is hoped that other measures such as completion of high school and higher education degrees as well as employment and earnings status as adults could be evaluated in future work. Presumably, youths who can be persuaded to embrace a crime-free lifestyle have a greater opportunity to focus on their education and life goals. Further, many of the skills learned in this program could be expected to improve education and employment-related outcomes.

As noted, youths from all groups studied seemed to be crime-free at a similar rate as adults. Possible explanations for this result were not explored by this study. This long-term outcome does not diminish the importance of reducing offenses, and associated costs, during adolescence.

Just under half the youths who completed the Narconon program and remained crime-free as youths did resume some criminal activity as adults. It was not possible to examine whether this was a reflection of re-entry into unstable family or community situations, gang contact, or other antisocial influences or with cessation of court supervision. It may be that additional preventive services or programs are necessary to ensure a stable transition into self-governing adulthood. This is another area that should be addressed in future evaluations.

The administration of a follow-up survey that assesses the status of each youth after they have left the juvenile system would be an important step in forming a more complete picture of the impact of intervention programs. The Fourth District Juvenile Court could evaluate the overall change in use of Youth Corrections services to determine whether this intervention scheme met the 5 percent reduction goal.

Given the encouraging results from this evaluation, the authors feel it is important to complete a prospective study of the full Narconon NewLife program that would permit random assignment and allow comparison to alternate programs that now exist within the Fourth District. Such a study would yield additional information from youths that could help to answer the question, "What works?"

From every perspective—whether government, the crime victim, society at large, or even the juvenile offender—rehabilitation offers greater long-term benefits than punishment alone. Earlier research has suggested that rehabilitative programs can reduce recidivism, an observation confirmed by the Narconon/Fourth District partnership. It is in the interest of all to implement more such programs and to further evaluate their impact.

Contact, Fourth District Juvenile Court:

Kimbal Bird, Chief of Probation
State of Utah
Fourth District Juvenile Court
2021 South State
Provo, UT 84606
801-354-7218
kimbalb@email.utcourts.gov

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