

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS FOR REPEAT DWI OFFENDERS REDUCE RECIDIVISM

Repeat DWI offenders are a continuing traffic safety problem. About a third of all drivers arrested for DWI are repeat offenders, according to data gathered from 12 states. And one out of eight intoxicated drivers in fatal crashes has had a prior DWI conviction within the past three years. The increasing problem of jail overcrowding often puts judges in the difficult position of trying to reduce recidivism and overcrowding, without knowing which alternative sanctions are effective.

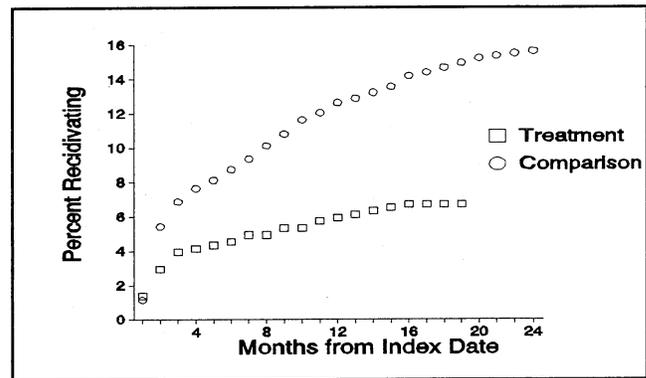
Mid-America Research Institute recently completed a study for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to examine the effectiveness of two alternative programs for repeat offenders -- an intensive supervision probation (ISP) program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and an electronic monitoring program in Los Angeles County, California.

Intensive Supervision Probation

The ISP program is a pre-trial intervention program that began in 1992. By participating in the program, offenders are offered (but not guaranteed) the hope of a reduced jail sentence. The program tries to reduce impaired driving by addressing the drinking habits and drinking problems of its clients. It provides frequent, regular monitoring of clients in combination with an individual assessment of their needs and referral to appropriate treatment providers. Most offenders contact their monitor twice a week, but the number of contacts will vary depending upon the individual and time in the program. The average stay in the program is four to five months.

Recidivism of ISP participants was compared with another group of repeat DWI offenders from the

same courts who did not participate in the program. Factors that may affect recidivism, such as age, sex, and number of priors, that might differ between the two groups, were statistically controlled.



Alcohol-Related Arrest Recidivism of Treatment and Comparison Groups in Milwaukee County

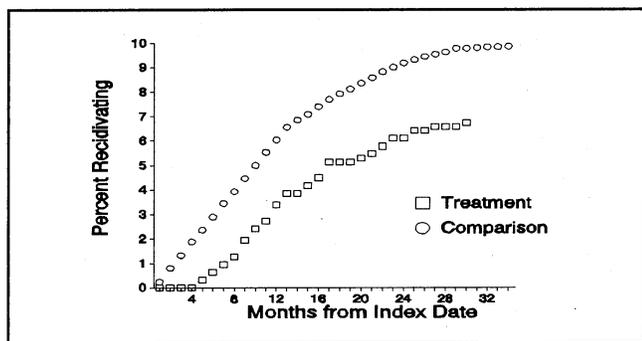
Recidivism in the program group was significantly lower than that in the comparison group. *One year after entering the ISP program, the rearrest recidivism of the treatment group was only about half that of the comparison group, 6 percent compared to 11 percent.*

Electronic Monitoring Program

The electronic monitoring program also started in 1992. Eligible offenders are sentenced to home confinement enforced by electronic monitoring devices in lieu of active jail sentences. The nature of the restrictions vary by client. For instance, some are allowed to leave home for work or school. The offenders are contacted at random three to four times per day to verify their presence



at home. Some are required to provide breath samples to verify that they have not been drinking. The average cost per day to participate in the program is \$15. This is collected on a sliding scale. Average home confinement duration for the study group was 83 days.



Alcohol-Related Conviction Recidivism of Treatment and Comparison Groups in Los Angeles County

Recidivism of the program participants was significantly lower than that of a comparison group. *One year after entering the program, the reconviction recidivism of the treatment group was about 33 percent less than that of the comparison group, 4 percent compared to 6 percent.*

Program Costs

To date, the costs of the ISP program are running higher than savings in jail costs. The program cost \$227,000 to operate. The estimated number of

"saved" days in jail was 4,598 -- at a cost of about \$90,600. The ISP, however, is working towards self-sufficiency by having clients pay for the costs of services on a sliding scale.

In Los Angeles County, clients pay the costs of the electronic monitoring, thus the cost to the County is minimized. The average time spent in the program during the study period was 83 days, with no additional time spent in jail. At a cost per day for jail of about \$50, this would amount to a savings of almost \$2.7 million had the 639 clients spent the same amount of time in jail. At the more likely sentence of 30 days in jail, the savings still would have been nearly \$1 million.

Conclusions

Both the intensive supervision probation and electronic monitoring programs demonstrated decreases in offender recidivism, and each offers a viable alternative to jail. It is likely that either program could be tailored to meet the unique needs of a jurisdiction, or could even be combined to decrease drinking and driving, while reducing jail costs.

Limited copies of *Alternative Programs for Repeat DWI Offenders* are available. Write to the Office of Research and Traffic Records, NHTSA, NTS-31, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590, or send a fax to (202) 366-7096. Amy Berning was the contract manager of this project.

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
 400 Seventh Street, S.W. NTS-30
 Washington, DC 20590

TRAFFIC TECH is a publication to disseminate information about traffic safety programs, including evaluations, innovative programs, and new publications. Feel free to copy it as you wish. If you would like to receive a copy contact: Linda Cosgrove, Ph.D., Editor, Evaluation Staff (202) 366-2759, fax (202) 366-7096 EMAIL: lcosgrove@nhtsa.dot.gov

FORWARDING AND ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED