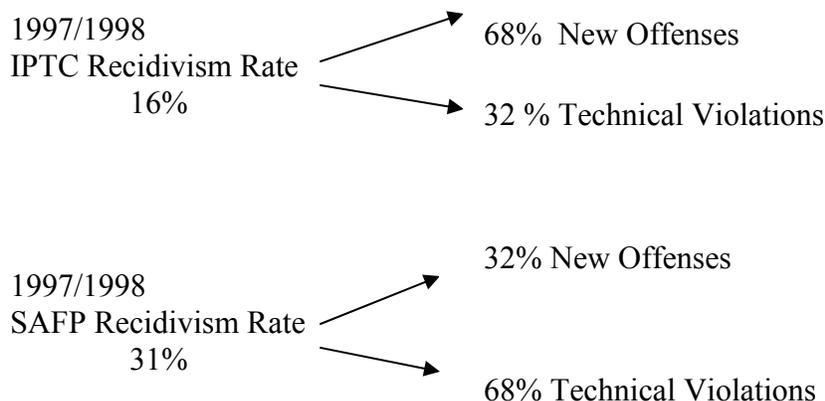


## SAFP Re-Entry Court Outcome Study

Evaluation of the Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Program (SAFP) conducted by the Criminal Justice Policy Council (CJPC) in 2001 and 2002 suggests a need for improvement in the performance outcomes of the program. CJPC reported two-year recidivism rates<sup>1</sup> of 31% for a 1997/1998 sample and 31.7% for a 1999/2000 sample of SAFP clients statewide. According to the CJPC 2001 report, SAFP recidivism rates were even higher for urban counties (37%) than other counties (31%). The 2002 CJPC report indicated that the SAFP program reduces recidivism rates among program completers but most participants (66%) fail to complete all three phases of the program.

CJPC tracked and compared the success rates of SAFP clients to those of individuals completing the In-Prison Therapeutic Community (IPTC) program for a period of two years during fiscal years 1997/1998 and 1999/2000. CJPC's 2002 report to the 78<sup>th</sup> legislature states "evaluations have shown both IPTC and SAFP programs to reduce recidivism rates among program completers but, over time, IPTC recidivism rates for all participants have improved while SAFP rates have not." CJPC reported recidivism rates of 16% for IPTC's 1997/1998 sample and 12.1% for the 1999/2000 sample in comparison to 31% and 31.7%, respectively for SAFP program participants. In his 2002 report to the 78<sup>th</sup> legislature, CJPC executive director, Tony Fabelo, Ph.D., noted that the "SAFP program has been negatively impacted by the large number of offenders revoked for technical violations and a lack of treatment responses to relapses in some localities." Dr. Fabelo noted that two-thirds of the 1997/1998 SAFP recidivism rate resulted from revocations due to technical violations, while less than 1/3 of the 1997/1998 IPTC recidivism rate resulted from revocations due to technical violations (see Figure 1). It should be noted that people who have graduated from SAFP are monitored by probation and people who complete IPTC are monitored by parole. Dr. Fabelo recommended that drug courts be considered as a possible solution to address this problem. He stated, "Drug courts may provide the best mechanism to more effectively breach the 'cultural' gap between criminal justice and treatment approaches."

Figure 1

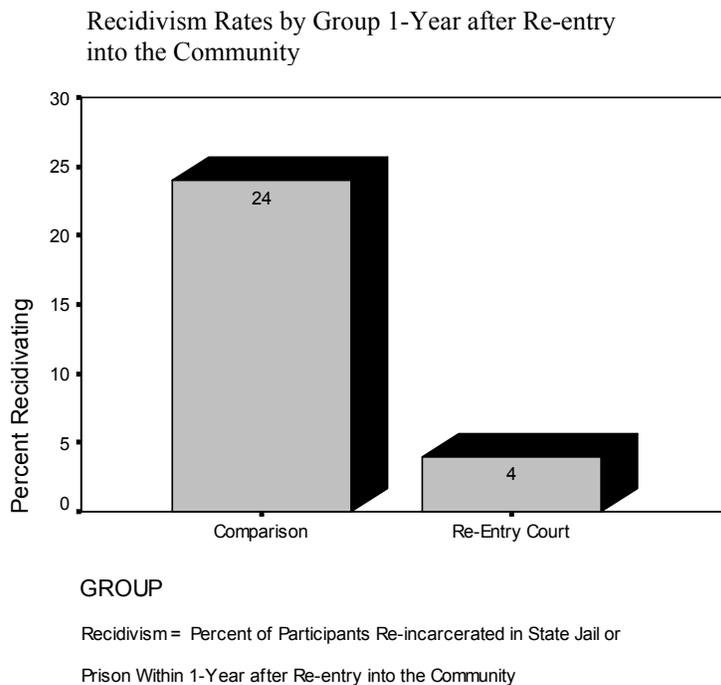


<sup>1</sup> Recidivism = percent of individuals re-incarcerated in state jail or prison

In 2001, District Court Judge Robert Francis created a re-entry court, using the drug court model, to improve performance outcomes of SAFP program participants in Dallas County. Early evaluation of Judge Francis' re-entry court supports Dr. Fabelo's assertion that drug courts may improve SAFP program outcomes. The evaluation compared the recidivism rates<sup>2</sup> of 50 re-entry court participants randomly selected from a pool of SAFP returnees to a comparable sample of 50 SAFP program participants (comparison group) selected from the same pool of SAFP returnees. Comparison participants were evenly distributed among 13 of the remaining district courts in Dallas County.

Within the first year following re-entry into the community,<sup>3</sup> 4% or 2 re-entry court participants recidivated compared to 24% or 12 comparison group participants (see Figure 2). These results show the addition of re-entry court to the SAFP program resulted in an 83% reduction in recidivism for Dallas County SAFP program participants. Three-fourths of the comparison group recidivism rates are due to revocations for technical violations while ½ of the re-entry court recidivism rates resulted from revocations for technical violations. In other words, nine of the 12 comparison group participants who recidivated were revoked for technical violations while one of the two re-entry court participants who recidivated were revoked for technical violations (see Figure 3).

Figure 2



<sup>2</sup> Recidivism rates include the percent of individuals re-incarcerated in prison or state jail within one year of re-entry into the community.

<sup>3</sup> Re-entry into the community begins when participants are released from the institutional portion of the SAFP program.

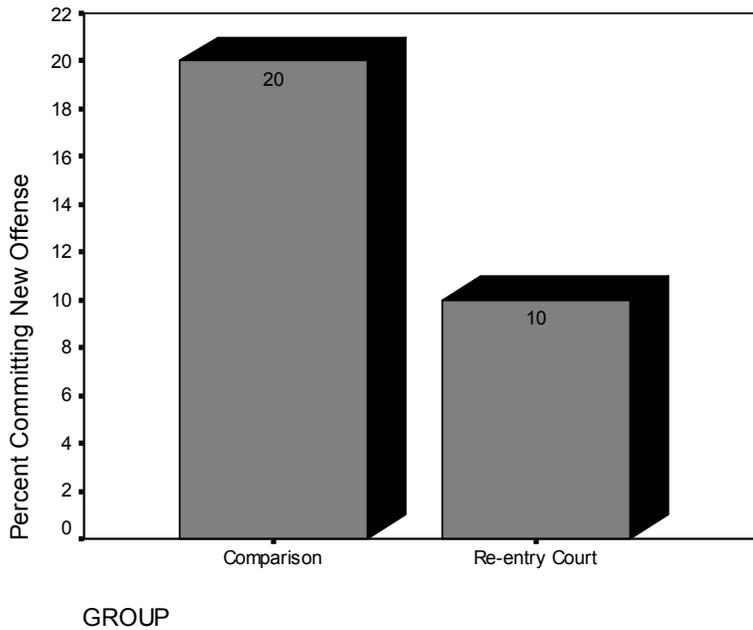
Figure 3



While CJPC reports on SAFP have defined recidivism as the percent of clients re-incarcerated in state jail or prison, district court judges statewide tend to define recidivism as the percent of offenders re-arrested for new offenses. Consequently, the re-entry court evaluation also tracked and compared the re-arrests rates of re-entry court participants to those of comparison group participants for 1 year following re-entry into the community. Twenty percent of comparison participants relative to 10% of re-entry court participants committed new offenses within one year after re-entry into the community, resulting in a 50% reduction in re-arrests for new offenses (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Percent Arrested for New Offense by Group  
1-Year after Re-entry into the Community



Figures 5 and 6 show the status of both groups within one year after re-entry into the community. It is noteworthy that approximately 70% of re-entry court participants relative to 33% of comparison group participants had completed or were still on probation within one year after re-entry into the community. Fifty percent of comparison participants had absconded (25%) or were revoked (25%) while only eleven percent of re-entry court participants had absconded (7%) or were revoked (4%) within one year after re-entering the community.

Figure 5

### Status of Comparison Group Within 1-Year after Re-entry into Community

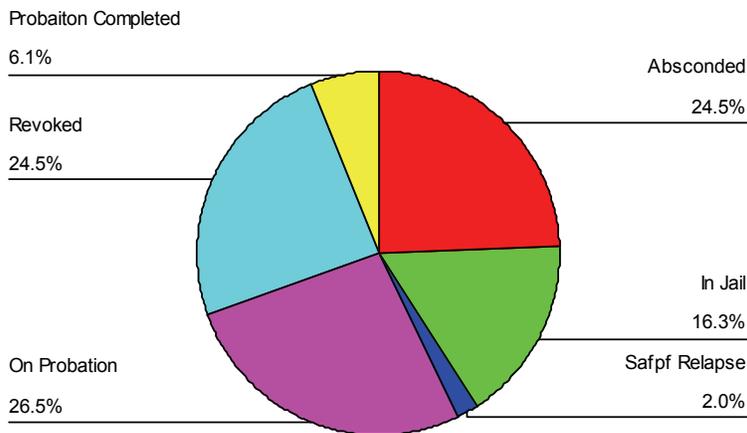
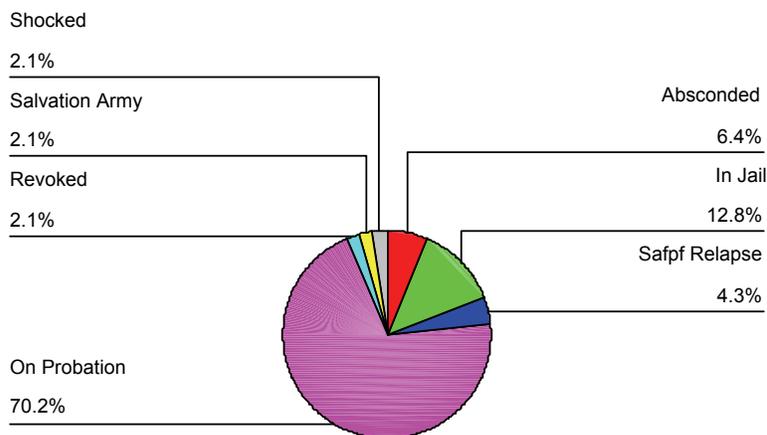


Figure 6

### Status of Re-entry Court Group Within 1-Year after Re-entry into Community



Overall, the initial evaluation of re-entry court shows promising outcomes for SAFP program clients who participated in the court. Results show a significant decrease in recidivism rates among SAFP program participants who participated in re-entry court relative to SAFP participants who did not receive the additional supervision and support provided by the re-entry court as they transitioned back into the community. While the sample (50 Re-entry, 50 Comparison) of study participants is relatively small compared to samples included in statewide evaluations of the SAFP program, these results support further consideration of using drug courts to improve performance outcomes of SAFP participants.