The Judge Ed Emmett Mental Health Diversion Center

Final Report

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Executive Overview

Across the country, jail populations continue to grow despite lower crime rates. In 2018, there were nearly 1 million people incarcerated in jail. Moreover, recent studies have found that nearly 31 percent of women and 14.5 percent of men in jail suffer from a serious mental illness. In fact, the jail has been cited as the "de facto mental health facility" for many local systems. Harris County is no exception. Even with access to several psychiatric facilities, the jail is still identified as one of the largest providers of mental health services in the country. While the National Sheriff's Association recognizes the national crisis regarding jailing individuals with mental illness, there have been very few initiatives that have had significant impact on deflecting individuals with serious mental health issues from entering the jail.

Over the past three years, Harris County has been developing a diversion center for individuals with significant mental health issues who have been arrested by law enforcement for a minor misdemeanor. While early indicators suggest that the program has been successful at diverting the target population, it is important to understand the impact that the Diversion Center has had on individuals with mental health issues, the jail, law enforcement, and Harris County. To this end, this study set forth to answer the following research questions:

1) How does the implementation of the Harris Center Jail Diversion Program impact Harris County's footprint for individuals with mental health issues who have engaged in low-level misdemeanor behavior?
2) Does the Harris Center Jail Diversion Program improve the lives of those individuals who have been diverted from jail?
3) Has the Harris Center Jail Diversion Program reduced the number and frequency of law enforcement contacts for people that have been diverted to the program?

As noted previously, there are very few examples throughout the country of effective programs to divert individuals with mental health issues from jail. This study collected data from The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD and the Harris County Jail to determine if the program had an impact on future jail bookings for new offenses. The treatment group was comprised of 692 people who were referred to the Diversion Center. First, we examined the in-person differences between pre and post periods of 12 months to determine if there was a substantive effect on reducing jail bookings. Second, the treatment group was matched to a comparison group who was booked into the jail previously and both were tracked 12 months after the initial intake/booking.

Overall, the persons who went to the Diversion Center had fewer jail bookings than the comparison group even after controlling for the differences in the two groups. In fact, the comparison group was 1.4 times more likely to be booked into the jail on a subsequent new charge than the treatment group. Examining the populations in greater details, individuals from the comparison group who had no prior bookings in the past year were also 44.9 times more likely to return to jail for a new offense. Interestingly, those individuals who were booked into jail five or more times in the previous year were 2.9 times more likely to be booked into jail within the next 12 months than the similarly situated treatment group. In addition to the improved outcomes, the Diversion Center proved to be a valuable investment in that, for every $1 spent on the program, the program avoided spending $5.54 on future jail bookings.

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Introduction

Across the country, jail populations continue to grow despite lower crime rates. In 2018, there were nearly 1 million people incarcerated in jail. Moreover, recent studies have found that nearly 31 percent of women and 14.5 percent of men in jail suffer from a serious mental illness (references?). In fact, jails have been cited as the "de facto mental health facility" for many local systems. Even in communities who have psychiatric facilities available, jail are still often identified as one of the largest providers of mental health services in the country. While the National Sheriff's Association recognizes the national crisis regarding jailing individuals with mental illness, there have been very few initiatives that have had significant impact on deflecting individuals with serious mental health issues from entering the jail.

As jurisdictions begin to explore ways to divert people with mental health issues from the front-end of the jail, there are several paths that can be taken—generally split into two groups: diversion and deflection.

Diversion Programs

Diversion programs are generally categorized as post-arrest interventions. Often initiated by a judge or prosecutor, diversion programs are often utilized to avoid the conviction/punishment phase of the court process. Most diversion programs are offered at some point after arrest but before adjudication. Often, diversion programs operate to avoid the collateral consequences of a conviction, but still result in an official arrest report.

Deflection Programs

Deflection programs have historically been featured at the front-end of the criminal justice system in which law enforcement officers have the discretion to deflect people from a formal charge—generally choosing to drop them off to a community provider—to receive alternative services. Often, deflection programs take form of a sobering center or a mental health

program in which law enforcement officers choose to divert or deflect the individual from jail into the program. Other examples of deflection programs, especially working with adolescents, include shelters or short-term respite care facilities.

The Judge Ed Emmett Mental Health Diversion Center

The Judge Ed Emmett Mental Health Diversion Center is a deflection program operated by The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD. The program opened in September 2018 to reduce the number of people charged with misdemeanor offenses who have a serious mental health diagnosis from being booked into jail. Working with the District Attorney's office and local law enforcement agencies, the Diversion Center offers peer support, triage and assessment services, psychiatric and medical evaluations, mental health stabilization plans, psychosocial programming, rehabilitative services, respite beds, and discharge planning to people referred to the program. While individuals are not mandated to stay in the program, Diversion Center staff work to keep the people engaged in the residential services for as long as needed to get them stabilized and connected to aftercare services. As people transition from the program, they are linked to community services through The Harris Center or other services to ensure successful transitions.

Purpose of this Study

Over the past three years, Harris County has been developing a deflection/diversion center for individuals with mental health issues who have been arrested by law enforcement for a minor misdemeanor. While early indicators suggest that the program has been successful at diverting the target population, it is important to understand the impact that the Judge Ed Emmett Mental Health Diversion Center (from here on referred to the as the Diversion Center) has had

on individuals with mental health issues, the jail, law enforcement, and Harris County as a whole. This study set forth to answer the following research questions:

1) Does the Diversion Center successfully reduce future jail bookings for participants in the program compared to the previous year?

2) Does the Diversion Center successfully reduce future jail bookings for participants compared to similarly situated individuals from the prior year?

3) Does the Diversion Center successfully reduce the costs associated with the use of jail for individuals with mental health issues?

As noted previously, there are very few examples throughout the country of effective programs to divert individuals with mental health issues who are homeless. This evaluation will provide an opportunity to establish whether the program has positive impacts while adding to the extant research available on alternatives to jail.

Methodology

We deployed a mixed-method, quasi-experimental design study in which we used two unique samples to answer the research questions posed in this study. The first set of analyses examine the participants for a year prior to entering the program and compares them the year following their initial intake into the program. The second set of analyses were conducted comparing the treatment population and a set of similarly situated individuals who were booked into the jail during the year prior to the Diversion Center opening to determine if the program had a positive impact. The data for this study were provided by The Harris Center for MH and IDD. The Harris Center research team provided JSP with deidentified data for the entire population served through the Diversion Center as well as the data for the external comparison group. The data provided included demographics, services rendered through The Harris Center and each person's jail booking data since 2011.

Treatment Sample

The treatment sample used for the initial analyses represents the entire population of participants served in the program from September, 2018 through February, 2020. This sample was used to describe the total population served by the program. From there, JSP drew a subsample of participants from the larger pool of individuals who participated in the Diversion Center services from September, 2018 through May, 2019 in order to allow a minimum of one year follow-up after the individual's initial intake to the program. This sample allowed for JSP to analyze the within-person pre/post program changes as well as to compare to the matched comparison group.

Comparison Sample

Two unique comparison groups were used for these analyses. First, a within-person design allowed for the pre/post comparison of jail stays by program participant. Second, a

historical comparison group was drawn from individuals served by The Harris Center who were booked into jail on a misdemeanor offense between June 2016 and December 2017. From there, JSP randomly selected a jail booking for a new misdemeanor that occurred during that time period. That booking date was selected as the instant event for the purposes of the pre/post follow up.

Measurement

Recidivism

For the purpose of this study, recidivism was measured in two separate ways. First, whether a person returned to jail for a new crime during the 12-month period after the initial intake into the program. The second measure of recidivism for this study was the number of times a person was booked into jail for a new misdemeanor or felony within a 12-month period of entering the program. For the within-person analysis, a 12-month period prior to entering the program was used as the baseline to determine if participating in the program had an effect. For the matched comparison group, recidivism was calculated for the first 12 months after the initial intake and for the comparison group 12 months after the "selected" jail booking. While individuals in both the treatment and comparison group were booked into jail for several different reasons (e.g., bond violation, probation violation), only those booked into jail for a new criminal offense were used in these analyses.

Analysis

To better understand the impact that the Diversion Center had on participants in the program, a series of independent analyses were conducted to answer each of the above research questions. First, we conducted a series of descriptive analyses that provided zero order correlations between the pre-test and post-test timeframes to determine if there were any

significant differences between populations. Second, chi-square and ANOVA were used to determine if these differences were significant.

Third, negative binomial regression was conducted to determine the impact of the program in relation to recidivism. Negative binomial regression model was used due to the limited dispersion of the outcome variable. Specifically, the outcome was skewed towards zero jail stays and negative binomial regression adjusts for the overdispersion.

Fourth, a cost-benefit analysis was conducted using the results of the multivariate regression. The costs of the program were estimated along with costs of subsequent returns to the program. Ultimately, a benefit to cost ratio was calculated.

Results

The Diversion Center was opened in September 2018. The primary focus of the Diversion Center is to provide an alternative to jail for individuals with mental health issues who have encountered law enforcement officers. While the program initially targeted individuals charged with trespassing, it was eventually expanded to serve anyone who had engaged in a low-level misdemeanor as their instant offense. Table 1 provides the demographics for the people served in the program since its inception.   As noted, 1,172 people were served in the program from September 2018 through February 2020. The average person served through the program was male (76.9%), African American/Non-Hispanic (58.2%), and 36 years or older (56.5%). While participants had a range of primary diagnosis, nearly 40 percent of the participants were diagnosed with a Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder. Another 23 percent were diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and 13.2 percent with Major Depressive Disorder, resulting in just over 75 percent of the participants being diagnosed with a serious mental illness.

Regarding housing and education, participants of the program varied significantly. For housing, 49.9 percent were homeless with another 12.3 percent living in temporary housing or a

shelter at the time of their initial intake. Interestingly, and somewhat unexpectedly, 33.6 percent of the participants were assessed as having stable housing at the time of their intake. As for highest education completed, high school diploma was the largest group (27.5%), with those completing 9th through 11th grades as the second largest group (23.9%). Interestingly, just over 15 percent of the population had some post-high school education.

Table 1
Demographics of Individuals for The Harris Center Diversion Program[a]

	N	%
Gender		
Male	1235	76.9
Female	371	23.1
Race/Ethnicity[1]		
African American/Non-Hispanic	935	58.2
Caucasian/Non-Hispanic	405	25.2
Hispanic	202	12.6
Asian	61	3.8
Age[2]		
17 and under	3	.2
18 to 21	55	3.5
22 to 28	272	17.5
29 to 35	329	21.2
36 to 45	369	23.8
46 to 55	269	17.3
56 and older	254	16.4
Primary Axis I Diagnosis[3]		
Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder	533	39.6
Major Depressive Disorder	177	13.2
Bipolar Disorder	310	23.0
Substance Use Disorder	68	5.1
Other Diagnosis	349	19.1
Living Arrangements		
Homeless/Unsheltered	801	49.9
Temporary Housing/Sheltered	197	12.3
Institutional/Permanent	60	3.7
Stable Housing	539	33.6
Unknown	9	.6
Highest Education Completed[4]		
8th grade or less	98	6.2
9th to 11th grade	377	23.9
GED	152	9.6
HS Diploma	433	27.5
Post-High School	237	15.1
Unknown	279	17.7

While Table 1 provided the demographics for unique people who have entered the program, Table 2 is the demographics for all intakes, ultimately counting individual people multiple times. As noted here, 78.8 percent of intakes were male, while 61.5 percent were African American/Non-Hispanic. The population is slightly older with 57.2 percent being 36 or older. Nearly 50 percent of the population was identified on the Schizophrenia Spectrum with another 21 percent being diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. As for living arrangements, 55.2 percent of the intakes were homeless or unsheltered while 28.9 percent had stable housing.

Table 2

Demographics by Intakes[a]

	N	%
Gender		
Male	1956	78.8
Female	525	21.2
Race/Ethnicity[1]		
African American/Non-Hispanic	1525	61.5
Caucasian/Non-Hispanic	551	22.2
Hispanic	294	11.9
Asian	108	4.4
Age[2]		
17 and under	4	.2
18 to 21	67	2.8
22 to 28	400	16.8
29 to 35	546	23.0
36 to 45	573	24.1
46 to 55	407	17.1
56 and older	381	16.0
Primary Axis I Diagnosis[3]		
Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder	1001	46.5
Major Depressive Disorder	247	11.5
Bipolar Disorder	452	21.0
Substance Use Disorder	102	4.7
Other Diagnosis	349	16.2
Living Arrangements		
Homeless/Unsheltered	1369	55.2
Temporary Housing/Sheltered	299	12.1
Institutional/Permanent	88	3.5
Family Member/Permanent	716	28.9

Table 2

Demographics by Intakes[a]

Unknown	9	.4
Highest Education Completed[4]		
8th grade or less	139	5.6
9th to 11th grade	565	23.2
GED	279	11.2
HS Diploma	689	28.2
Post-High School	358	14.7
Unknown	409	16.8

[a] These data represent the number of intakes into the program; therefore, if a person returned to the program several times they would be represented in this table based on the number of times they entered the program.

While Tables 1 and 2 provided the demographics for the individual people as well as all intakes (duplicated across people), Table 3 compares the two tables to examine the differences in demographics between those individuals who were seen in the program one time and those that were seen two or more times. As noted in Table 3, men were slightly more likely to return to the program than women. Non-Hispanic, African Americans and Asians were more likely to have multiple intakes than Caucasians and Hispanics. Examining age, there was no distinctive pattern; people under age 28 were less likely to return to the program, while people between ages 29 and 35, and 46 and older were slightly more likely to return to the program.

As for primary diagnosis and living arrangements, this is where the marked differences are found. People who were diagnosed with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder were significantly more likely to return to the program again, while those with every other diagnosis were less likely to be brought back to the program. Similarly, individuals who were homeless/unsheltered were significantly more likely to return to the program while those in temporary housing were slightly more likely to return compared to those who had stable housing who were significantly less likely to return to the program multiple times. Interestingly, there were not substantive

differences in highest education, with almost every level having similar proportion of people

returning to the program.

Table 3
Comparison of Individuals who entered the program 1 time only to 2 or more times

	1 Time Only	2 or More Intakes
Gender		
Male	75.6	80.8
Female	24.4	19.3
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Non-Hispanic	55.6	66.3
Caucasian/Non-Hispanic	27.0	19.8
Hispanic	13.4	10.0
Asian	3.7	4.0
Age		
17 and under	.1	.3
18 to 21	4.1	1.9
22 to 28	18.2	14.9
29 to 35	20.4	24.1
36 to 45	24.0	22.5
46 to 55	17.2	19.2
56 and older	16.0	17.1
Primary Axis I Diagnosis		
Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder	34.7	53.2
Major Depressive Disorder	14.2	10.2
Bipolar Disorder	24.0	20.5
Substance Use Disorder	5.7	3.3
Other Diagnosis	21.4	12.8
Living Arrangements		
Homeless/Unsheltered	47.3	57.8
Temporary Housing/Sheltered	11.7	14.0
Institutional/Permanent	3.8	3.5
Stable Housing	36.5	24.8
Unknown	.7	--
Highest Education Completed[4]		
8th grade or less	6.3	6.2
9th to 11th grade	23.7	23.9
GED	9.1	9.6
HS Diploma	27.0	27.5
Post-High School	15.2	15.1
Unknown	18.7	17.7

As noted previously, Harris County is served by multiple law enforcement agencies. Table 4 provides a review of those law enforcement agencies that made the most referrals to the Diversion Center. As noted, 66.5 percent of the referrals were made by the Houston Police Department with next highest (6.9 percent) coming from the Harris County Sheriff's Department.

Table 4
Referral Sources—10 most prevalent

	N	%
Houston Police Department	1651	66.5
Harris County Sheriff	172	6.9
No Law Enforcement Interaction	120	4.8
Houston Independent School District Police Department	102	4.1
Constable Precinct 6	41	1.7
UH Central Campus Police Department	41	1.7
Metro Transit Authority	34	1.4
Texas Medical Center Police Department	31	1.2
Constable Precinct 7	30	1.2
Constable Precinct 1	27	1.1

While the Diversion Center was initially slated to target only those who were charged with Trespassing, over time this shifted to include more Class B misdemeanors as well as a few Class A and C misdemeanors. Overall, 85.8 percent of the charges were for a Class B misdemeanor with only 2.8 percent for a Class A misdemeanor and 11.4 percent for Class C offenses.[1]

[1] Class A Misdemeanors are the highest level misdemeanors in Texas while Class B misdemeanors and C are consider lesser offenses.

Table 5
Level of Underlying Charge

	N	%
Misdemeanor A	57	2.8
Misdemeanor B	2756	85.8
Misdemeanor C	234	11.4

As a true law enforcement deflection program, once individuals were released to the Diversion Center any pending charges associated with the law enforcement encounter were released and the participant was no longer in custody. As noted in Figure 1, 45.7 percent of the intakes left within four hours while almost 16 percent remained in the program for a minimum of five days.

Figure 1
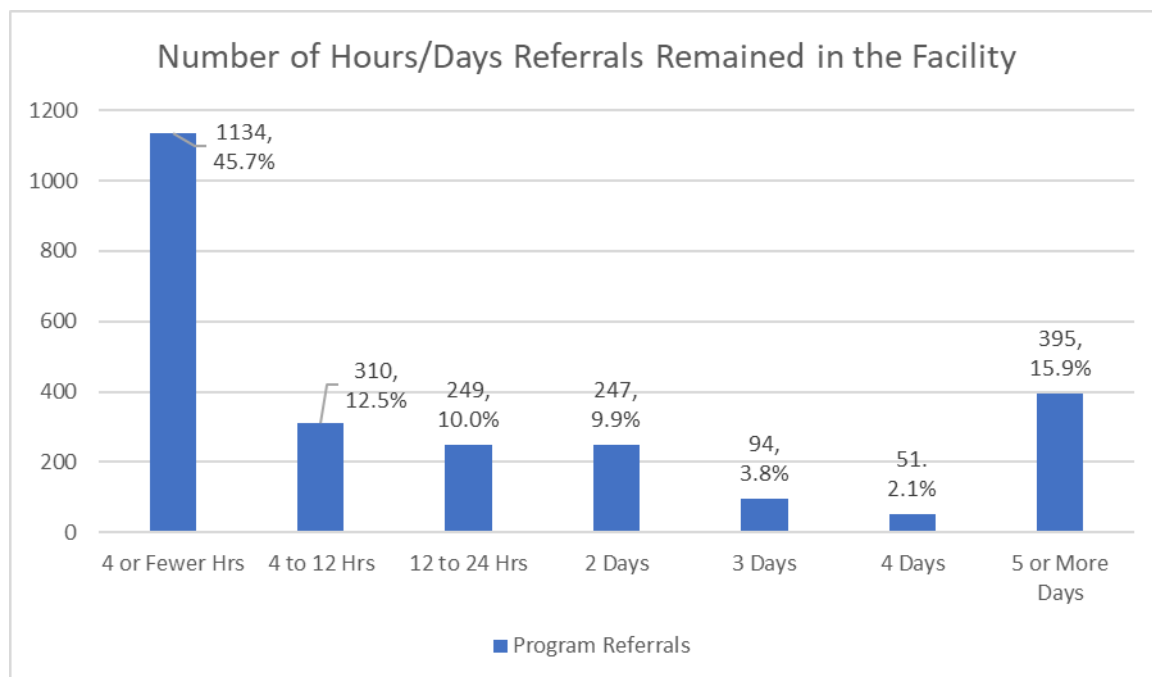
While Figure 1 provided the length of stay for all referrals, Figure 2 separates the length of stay for a person's first referral from length of stay on subsequent referrals. As noted, individuals' first referral tends to result in longer stays and significantly fewer people left the

first four hours of being referred. For those that on a subsequent return, 48.2 percent remained in the program less than four hours.

Figure 2

% of Time Remained in Program by Repeat Stays
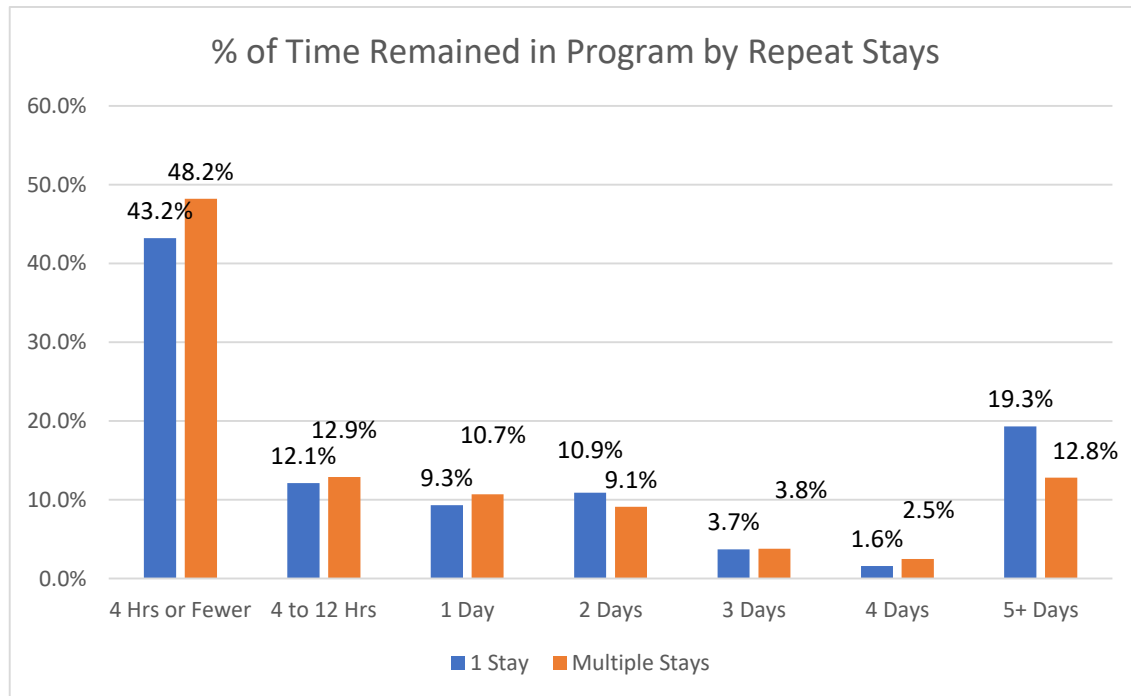
To better understand the population who are referred to the Diversion Center and remain engaged in the facility for longer periods of time, Table 6 provide the predicted probabilities of a person staying in the facility based on the specific characteristic while controlling for the differences across other characteristics. The overall probability of a person remaining in the program for at least 24 hours, controlling for number of visits, gender, race/ethnicity, primary diagnosis, and housing situation is 30 percent while remaining in the program for five days drops to 13 percent.

For those who are referred to the program for the first time, there is a 36 percent chance that they will remain beyond 24 hours and an 18 percent chance of remaining in the program for 5 days. This is compared to a 24 percent chance that people referred a second time will remain

longer than 24 hours and 9 percent chance that they will remain in the program for 5 or more days.

Overall, females are slightly more likely to remain in the program over both 24 hours and 5 days. As for the differences across race and ethnicity, Caucasians were significantly less likely to remain in the program for 5 days compared to individuals of different race and ethnicity. Examining types of diagnosis, individuals diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder and Substance Use Disorder were significantly more likely to remain in the program for a minimum of 24 hours and those with Substance Use Disorder were more likely to remain in the program for 5 or more days compared to individuals with other diagnoses. As for people diagnosed with schizophrenia spectrum disorder, they had the lowest probability of remaining in the program for 24 hours or 5 or more days.

As for living arrangements, it is not surprising that those who were referred to the program that lived with family members or had stable housing were more likely to leave the program earlier (both at the 24 hour mark and the 5 day mark) than any other individuals. In addition, those that were in an institutional stay most recently (e.g., residential treatment program, jail for competency restoration, etc.) were more likely to remain in the program for 5 or more days than those that were homeless regardless of whether they were unsheltered or sheltered.

Table 6
Predictors of 24 Hours or Longer Stay in the Program

	Predicted Probability	
	Minimum of 24 Hours	Minimum of 5 Days
All Intakes	30%	13%
First Time in the Program	36%	18%
2nd Time or More in the Program	24%	9%
Gender		
Male	29%	12%
Females	32%	13%
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian	25%	4%
African American	32%	14%
Hispanic	31%	13%
Asian	30%	15%
Primary Diagnosis		
Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder	30%	15%
Major Depressive Disorder	44%	18%
Bipolar Disorder	32%	17%
Other Diagnosis (including Deferred, no DX, V/Z Codes)	27%	15%
Substance Use Disorder	58%	37%
Housing Situation		
Homeless/Unsheltered	35%	15%
Homeless/Sheltered	31%	15%
Institutional Stay	35%	21%
Stable/Family	21%	8%

Outcome Evaluation: Pre/Post Comparison Group

The following tables are based on the study sample used for the matched comparison group. As noted earlier, the treatment group was selected to allow for a minimum of 12 months post initial intake into the program. There were 692 participants selected for the study sample. Table 7 provides the demographics for the study sample as well as the percentages by category for all participants who were referred to the Diversion Center. As noted, there are no substantive

differences between the demographics for the treatment group and the larger program

population.

Table 7
Demographics of Study Sample (N = 692)

	N	%	All Program Participants %
Gender			
Male	533	77.0	76.9
Female	159	23.0	23.1
Race/Ethnicity[1]			
African American/Non-Hispanic	422	61.2	58.2
Caucasian/Non-Hispanic	159	22.9	25.2
Hispanic	78	11.3	12.6
Asian	31	4.5	3.8
Age[2]			
17 and under	1	.1	.2
18 to 21	20	3.0	3.5
22 to 28	118	17.8	17.5
29 to 35	147	22.1	21.2
36 to 45	158	23.8	23.8
46 to 55	114	17.2	17.3
56 and older	106	16.0	16.4
Primary Axis I Diagnosis[3]			
Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder	238	40.3	39.6
Major Depressive Disorder	70	11.8	13.2
Bipolar Disorder	144	24.4	23.0
Substance Use Disorder	31	5.2	5.1
Other Diagnosis	108	18.3	19.1
Living Arrangements			
Homeless/Unsheltered	335	48.7	49.9
Temporary Housing/Sheltered	98	14.2	12.3
Institutional/Permanent	27	3.9	3.7
Family Member/Permanent	228	33.1	33.6
Highest Education Completed[4]			
8th grade or less	41	6.0	6.2
9th to 11th grade	173	25.4	23.9
GED	71	10.4	9.6
HS Diploma	199	29.3	27.5
Post-High School	95	14.0	15.1
Unknown	101	14.6	17.7

[1] 3 missing race/ethnicity; [2] 28 missing age; [3] 101 missing diagnosis; [4] 4 missing living arrangements

Next, we examined the overall jail bookings for the study sample. As noted in Table 8, there were a total of 661 jail bookings for a new criminal charge over the course of two years. While participants could be booked into jail for multiple reasons (bond revocation, jail sentence as part of adjudication), this table only reflects jail bookings for new criminal offenses. Furthermore, participants could be booked into jail for multiple charges at the same time. This table provides only the most serious charge per jail booking. With that, there were 118 jail bookings for a new felony offense while there were 543 jail bookings for misdemeanors or charges resulting from Justice of the Peace Court (JP).

Table 8
Total Jail Stays by Most Serious Charge within the Past 2 Years

	N	%
Felony	118	17.9
Misdemeanor/Justice of the Peace	543	82.1

While there were 692 people in this study, only 129 of them had been booked into the jail in the previous year accounting for a total of 661 bookings. Of these 129 individuals, Table 9 shows that 19 of them were booked into jail one time while the other 110 had two or more jail bookings for a new criminal offense. At the high end, 15 individuals were booked into the jail 10 or more times for a new offense.

Table 9
Number of Jail Stays by Person within the Past 2 Years

	N	%
0	563	81.4
1	19	2.9
2	12	2.0
3	14	2.0
4	22	3.2
5	17	2.5
6	10	1.4
7	7	1.0
8	4	.6
9	6	.9
10 or more	15	2.1

To better understand the characteristics of those booked into jail at least one time during the study time period, Table 10 provides the demographics for these individuals as well as the percentage of the sample that they represent. As noted, 21.0 percent of males in the program had been booked into jail at least one time compared to only 6.6 percent of females. Non-Hispanic African Americans were more likely to have been booked into jail than any other race or ethnicity. Those with a legal guardian were significantly more likely to experience a jail stay as well as those in temporary housing. Participants that ranged from 22 years of age to 35 years of age were significantly more likely to be booked into the jail one or more times during the study period. As for psychiatric diagnosis, 52.5 percent of those diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder were booked into jail at least one time during the study period.

Table 10
Characteristics of Individuals Booked into Jail 1 or More Times

	1 or More Jail Bookings	%
Gender[1]		
Male (N = 533)	112	21.0
Female (N = 159)	17	6.6
Race/Ethnicity[1]		
African American/Non-Hispanic (N = 422)	96	22.7
White (N = 159)	18	11.3
Hispanic (N = 78)	11	14.1
Asian (N = 31)	4	12.9
Legal Status		
No Guardian (N = 675)	122	18.1
Guardian (N = 17)	7	41.2
Living Arrangement[1]		
Homeless (N = 335)	61	18.2
Temporary/Sheltered (N = 98)	32	32.7
Institutional (N = 27)	8	29.6
Stable (N = 228)	31	13.6
Age at Intake[1]		
18 to 21 (N = 20)	3	15.0
22 to 28 (N = 118)	34	28.8
29 to 35 (N = 147)	39	26.5
36 to 45 (N =158)	27	17.1
46 to 55 (N = 114)	8	7.0

Table 10
Characteristics of Individuals Booked into Jail 1 or More Times

56+ (N = 106)	12	11.3
Primary Diagnosis[1]		
Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder[2] (N=238)	69	29.0
Major Depressive Disorder (N=40)	21	52.5
Bipolar Disorder (N=144)	26	18.1
Substance Use Disorder (N=31)	6	19.4
Other Diagnosis (N=108)	27	25.0

[1]Statistically significant < .01

The following table provides a review of the overall differences between the number of prior jail stays for a new offense compared to the number of jail stays after entering the program for the first time. As noted, the overall number of jail stays for a new offense was reduced by slightly more than half after entry into the Diversion Center. When disaggregated by offense level, the program reduced the overall raw number of felony offenses, but it did not reach statistical significance. As for misdemeanor and JP offenses, participants in the program went from 381 unique jail stays for a new offense in the year prior to entering the program compared to just 162 jail stays post-entry into the Diversion Center resulting in a 57.5 percent reduction in the number of jail bookings for a new criminal offense.

Table 11
Number of Times Participants are Booked into the Jail Before and After Initial Intake to the Diversion Center

	Pre-Diversion Center Jail Stays		Post-Diversion Center Jail Stays	
	N	%	N	%
All Jail Stays[1]	443	66.0	218	33.0
Felony	62	52.5	56	47.5
Misdemeanor/JP [1]	381	70.2	162	29.8

[1] p < . 01

In examining the total number of jail stays before and after the initial intake in Table 12 below, 83.2 percent of the people in the program had not been in jail for a new offense in the prior year compared to 86.1 percent post-entry into the program. Moreover, 92 percent of the participants in the program only had one or fewer jail stays for a new offense after entering the

program for the first time compared to only 86.5 percent of the population prior to entering the program. Interestingly, there were only seven participants that had returned to jail for a new offense five or more times after entering the program compared to 34 participants that had five or more jail stays prior to entering the Diversion Center.

Table 12
Number of Times Participants Booked into Jail Before and After Intake to Diversion Center

	Pre-Diversion Center Jail Stays		Post-Diversion Center Jail Stays	
	N	%	N	%
0	576	83.2	596	86.1
1	23	3.3	41	5.9
2	28	4.0	26	3.8
3	18	2.6	14	2.0
4	13	1.9	8	1.2
5	10	1.4	1	.1
6	7	1.0	2	.3
7	5	.7	0	-
8	2	.3	2	.3
9	3	.4	2	.3
10+	7	.8	-	-

Table 13 compares the number of pre-Diversion Center jail stays for a new offense to the number of post-diversion jail stays for a new offense and also displays the number of people who returned to the Diversion Center. As noted, 83.2 percent of the people had no prior jail stay for the past 12 months for a new offense compared to 86.1 percent of people who did not return to jail for a new offense during the next 12 months, while only 66.5 percent of the sample had no returns to the Diversion Center within 12 months of release. As noted in the total stays, participants in the program were booked into jail 443 times prior to entering the program and 218 times after entering the program. Additionally, participants in the program returned to the Diversion Center 554 times over the course of the following year.

Table 13

Number of Times Participants Booked into Jail and Returns to Diversion Center Before and After Intake

	Pre-Diversion Program Jail Stays		Post-Diversion Jail Stays		Return to Diversion Program	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	576	83.2	596	86.1	460	66.5
1	23	3.3	41	5.9	116	16.8
2	28	4.0	26	3.8	51	7.4
3	18	2.6	14	2.0	26	3.8
4	13	1.9	8	1.2	13	1.9
5	10	1.4	1	.1	7	1.0
6	7	1.0	2	.3	5	.7
7	5	.7	0	-	4	.6
8	2	.3	2	.3	1	.1
9	3	.4	2	.3	2	.3
10+	7	.8	-	-	7	1.0
Total Stays	443		218		554	

[1]Total post-intake contacts is the number of people who either returned to the Diversion Center or were booked into jail for a new criminal offense.

Table 14 is a continuation of Table 13 demonstrating the total number of times people returned to either jail for a new offense or the Diversion Center one year after their initial intake. Note that the total post-intake contacts are not additive because some participants have more than one type of return. Overall, 59.5 percent of the program participants did not return to the program or booked back into jail for a new offense. When the total impact of the program is taken into consideration, participants had 772 stays (218 in jail for a new offense and 554 returns to the Diversion Center) compared to 443 stays prior to entering the program. If we assume the 692 people who entered the Diversion Center initially would have been booked into jail if the program was not available, 1,135 total jail bookings would have occurred resulting in a 47 percent increase in the number of jail bookings compared to combination of post-Diversion Center jail stays plus returns to the Diversion Center.

Table 14
Number of Times Participants Combined Returns to Diversion Center Before and After Intake

	Pre-Diversion Program Jail Stays		Post-Diversion Jail Stays		Return to Diversion Center		Total Post-Intake Contacts[1]	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	576	83.2	596	86.1	460	66.5	412	59.5
1	23	3.3	41	5.9	116	16.8	129	18.6
2	28	4.0	26	3.8	51	7.4	57	8.2
3	18	2.6	14	2.0	26	3.8	35	5.1
4	13	1.9	8	1.2	13	1.9	13	1.9
5	10	1.4	1	.1	7	1.0	13	1.9
6	7	1.0	2	.3	5	.7	7	1.0
7	5	.7	0	-	4	.6	5	.7
8	2	.3	2	.3	1	.1	5	.7
9	3	.4	2	.3	2	.3	6	.9
10+	7	.8	-	-	7	1.0	10	1.3
Total Number of Stays	443 + 692 Initial Intakes		218		554		772	

While it is important to examine the total number of jail stays, it is equally important to examine the seriousness of new offenses that occur for program participants. Table 15 provides a summary of the most serious offenses that participants were booked into post-initial intake to the Diversion Center. As noted, there were a total of 56 jail bookings for a new felony of which assault with injury/weapon was the highest number with 17 (7.9%). There were 162 misdemeanor charges with criminal trespass as the highest with 55 new jail bookings or 25.6 percent of all new offenses.

Table 15
Most Serious Arrests Post-Diversion Intake (N=218)

	N	%
Felony (N = 56)		
Assault with Injury/Weapon	17	7.9%
Drug Related	13	6.0%
Theft/Criminal Mischief	8	3.7%
Burglary	5	2.3%
Other	4	1.9%
Robbery	5	2.3%
Assault/Public Servant	2	0.9%
Unauthorized Use of Vehicle	2	0.9%
Misdemeanor (N = 162)		
Criminal Trespass	55	25.6%
Criminal Mischief	17	7.9%
Indecent Exposure	13	6.0%
Terroristic Threat	15	7.0%
Theft	8	3.7%
Interfere Duties of Public Servant	12	5.6%
Failure to ID	13	6.0%
Assault	9	4.2%
Drug Related	4	1.9%
Other	0	0.0%
Evading	4	1.9%
Burglary of Vehicle	4	1.9%
Resisting Arrest	3	1.4%
DWI	2	0.9%

Table 16 demonstrates the results for the initial linear regression model, examining the predictors of post-Diversion Center reoffending. For the purpose of this analysis, recidivism was measured as a continuous variable with the total number of jail bookings for new offenses post-initial intake into the Diversion Center. Age, gender, living arrangements, race, ethnicity, number of days in the program for the initial stay, and type of diagnosis were included in the analysis. As noted in Table 16, age (younger participants) and gender (men) were the only characteristics that were predictive of higher incidences of jail bookings. The participant's living arrangement at

time of initial intake, their race/ethnicity, primary diagnosis, length of stay in the Diversion

Center, or the number of times in jail in the prior year for a new offense were not predictive of

the number of times a person returned to jail for a new offense.

Table 17
Predictors of Re-offending for Diversion Center Participants

	B	Std Error	Beta	t
Age*	-.007	.003	-.097	-2.395
Gender (Female = 1)*	-.206	.093	-.087	-2.218
Living Arrangements				
Homeless	.331	.495	.167	.668
Sheltered	.489	.503	.169	.973
Institutional stay	.249	.530	.048	.470
Stable	.155	.497	.074	.312
Race/Ethnicity				
Black/Non-Hisp	.277	.575	.137	.482
White/Non-Hisp	.233	.579	.099	.402
Hispanic	.186	.584	.060	.319
Asian	.160	.601	.034	.267
Length of Stay-Diversion Center (days)	-.031	.018	-.071	-1.691
Primary Diagnosis				
Schizophrenia	.221	.124	.106	1.782
Major Depressive Disorder	.112	.161	.035	.696
Bipolar	.109	.135	.045	.811
Other	.108	.140	.040	.769
Substance Abuse	.265	.220	.054	1.206
Prior Jail Bookings in Last Year	.001	.000	-.032	-.818

*Significant $p \leq .05$

Outcome Evaluation: Matched Comparison Group

The following section describes the analyses examining the difference between the

treatment group and the matched comparison group. There were 692 participants selected for the

study sample and each participant was matched to a comparison case. The comparison group was

selected from a pool of Harris Center clients who had been booked into jail on a misdemeanor

offense between June 1, 2016 and December 31, 2017. Table 18 provides the demographics for

both the treatment and comparison groups. As noted, there were differences between the

treatment and comparison groups as it pertains to race/ethnicity, education, and living arrangements. Specifically, the treatment group had more black, non-Hispanic participants as well as Asian participants. As for education and living arrangements, the treatment group was more likely to have a high school diploma and identified as homeless.

Table 18
Demographics of Samples for Outcome Evaluation

	Treatment Group		Comparison Group	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	533	77.0	546	79.0
Female	159	23.0	145	21.0
Race/Ethnicity[1]				
Black/Non-Hispanic	422	61.2	382	55.4
White	158	22.9	174	25.2
Hispanic[a]	78	11.3	129	18.7
Asian[b]	31	4.5	5	.7
Age at Intake				
17 and Under	1	.2	-	-
18 to 21	20	2.9	23	3.3
22 to 28	118	17.8	147	21.2
29 to 35	147	22.1	159	23.0
36 to 45	158	23.8	179	25.9
46 to 55	114	17.2	104	15.0
56+	106	16.0	80	11.6
Education[1]				
8th Grade or Lower	41	6.0	55	8.6
9th thru 11th Grade	173	25.4	190	29.5
GED	71	10.4	68	10.6
High School Diploma	199	29.3	131	20.4
Post-HS	95	14.0	97	15.2
Unknown	101	14.9	102	15.9
Living Arrangements[1]				
Homeless/Unsheltered[c]	335	48.7	121	18.6
Homeless/Sheltered	98	14.2	104	16.0
Institutional/Permanent	27	3.9	44	6.7
Stable[d]	228	33.1	383	58.7

[1] p < .05

Beyond demographics, Table 19 provides a comparison of the number of prior jail bookings for new crimes by group membership. As noted, there were no significant differences in the number of prior misdemeanor bookings but there were significantly higher numbers of previous bookings for felony offenses.

Table 19
Number of Prior Jail Bookings by Offense Level for Treatment and Comparison Group

	Treatment Group		Comparison Group	
	N	%	N	%
Total Prior Jail Bookings	443	42.3	604	57.7
Felony[1]	62	23.3	204	76.7
Misdemeanor/JP	381	48.8	400	51.2

[1] $p \leq .05$

Table 20 provides the number of jail bookings for a new offense after the initial program date. For the comparison group a jail booking for a misdemeanor was selected as the equivalent to the program intake event. This event was treated as the comparison group's initial intake and 12 months prior to that date as well as after that date were used to determine the number of pre and post jail bookings for any new offense. As noted, the treatment group accounted for 42.3 percent of the overall jail bookings during the pretest phase and only 16.6 percent of the total bookings post-intake. Specifically, the treatment group accounted for 23.3 percent of the felony bookings during the pretest phase and only 13.3 percent during the follow-up period and 48.8 percent of the misdemeanor bookings during the pretest phase and only 18.3 percent during the follow-up period.

Table 20
Number of Return Jail Bookings by Offense Level for Treatment and Comparison Group

	Treatment Group		Comparison Group	
	N	%	N	%
Total Return Jail Bookings	218	16.6	1098	83.4
Felony	56	13.3	364	86.7
Misdemeanor/JP	159	18.3	712	81.7

To better understand the differences between groups, Table 21 examines the number of times both treatment and comparison groups were booked into jail prior to the intake date. For the treatment group, 83.2 percent of the participants were not booked into jail during the prior year compared to only 49.1 percent of the comparison group. At two or fewer prior bookings, each group was relatively similar with 93.1 percent of the treatment group having two or fewer priors compared to 92.2 percent of the comparison group.

Table 21
Number of Times People Were Booked into Jail for a New Offense Prior to Intake by Treatment/Comparison

	Treatment Group		Comparison Group	
	N	%	N	%
0	576	83.2	340	49.1
1	23	3.3	204	29.5
2	28	4.0	94	13.6
3	18	2.6	35	5.1
4	13	1.9	8	1.2
5	10	1.4	2	.3
6	7	1.0	4	.6
7	5	.7	2	.3
8	2	.3	0	-
9	3	.4	3	.4
10+	7	.8	0	-

Next, we examine the number of people who are booked into the jail during the follow-up period to better understand how often each group was booked into jail for a new offense. As noted in Table 22, 86.1 percent of the treatment group was not booked back into the jail for a new offense after the initial intake to the Diversion Center compared to only 32.4 percent of the comparison group. In addition to fewer numbers of new bookings, the treatment group also had significantly fewer returns.

Table 22
Number of Times People Were Booked into Jail for a New Offense during the Follow-Up Period
by Treatment/Comparison

	Treatment Group		Comparison Group	
	N	%	N	%
0	596	86.1	224	32.4
1	41	5.9	202	29.2
2	26	3.8	119	17.2
3	14	2.0	67	9.7
4	8	1.2	35	5.1
5	2	.3	19	2.7
6	2	.3	7	1.0
7	0	-	6	.9
8	2	.3	2	.3
9	2	.3	4	.6
10+	0	-	7	1.0

Similar to the previous section in which we examined the combined number of returns to the program and jail bookings for the treatment group, Table 23 replicates that analysis to compare the total number of returns for the treatment group to the total number of jail bookings during the follow-up period. As noted, 59.6 percent of the treatment group did not return to either jail or the Diversion Center compared to only 32.4 percent of the comparison group.[2]

Table 23
Number of Times People Were Booked into Jail for a New Offense or Returned to the Diversion
Center during the Follow-Up Period by Treatment/Comparison

	Treatment Group (Combined Bookings and Returns to Diversion Center)		Comparison Group	
	N	%	N	%
0	412	59.5	224	32.4
1	129	18.6	202	29.2
2	57	8.2	119	17.2
3	35	5.1	67	9.7
4	13	1.9	35	5.1
5	13	1.9	19	2.7
6	7	1.0	7	1.0

[2] The Diversion Center was not available for the comparison group due to the follow-up time frame.

7	5	.7	6	.9
8	5	.7	2	.3
9	6	.9	4	.6
10+	10	1.3	7	1.0

Given the differences between the treatment and comparison groups on criminal history, race/ethnicity, living arrangements, and education we used linear regression to control for these differences in order to examine the impact that entering the Diversion Center had on future jail bookings compared to those individuals who did not receive the program. Controlling for each of these differences, being assigned to the Diversion Center shows a positive and significant relationship in fewer jail bookings within the following 12 months of entering the program for the first time. In fact, the comparison group was 7.3 times more likely to be booked into jail for a new offense than those who entered the Diversion Center while controlling for prior jail bookings.

Table 24
Outcomes: Any New Offense by Group Membership

	B	Std Error	Beta	Wald
Prior Jail Bookings in Last Year***	.346	.0274	1.413	159.115
Living Arrangements				
Homeless	.428	.4712	1.535	.827
Sheltered	.482	.4756	1.619	1.026
Institutional stay	.031	.5009	1.032	.004
Stable	.077	.4660	1.080	.027
Education Level	.012	.0152	1.013	.669
Group Membership (Treatment = 0)***	1.983	.1094	7.263	328.603
Intercept***	-2.120	.4744	.120	19.976

*** $p \leq .0001$

Table 25 provides the predictors of future bookings for any new offense for individuals who had no prior jail bookings for the 12 months prior to intake. While controlling for living arrangements and education level, participating in the Diversion Center resulted in significantly fewer jail bookings than the comparison group. Specifically, the comparison group was 44.9 times more likely to be booked into jail for a new offense.

Table 25

Predictors of Future Bookings for Any New Offense by Group Membership with No Jail
Bookings for the Past 12 months

	B	Std Error	Beta	Wald
Living Arrangements				
Homeless	.134	.7603	1.144	.031
Sheltered	.553	.7699	1.738	.516
Institutional stay	-.161	.7996	.851	.041
Stable	-.160	.7511	.852	.045
Education Level	.005	.0242	1.005	.050
Group Membership (Treatment = 0)***	3.805	.2575	44.917	218.296
Intercept***	-3.577	.7858	.028	20.725

*** p ≤ .0001

Table 26 shows the impact that attending the Diversion Center has over the comparison
group for individuals who have had one or more jail bookings for a new offense within the past
12 months. Controlling for the number of prior jail bookings within the past year, living
arrangements, and education, the comparison group was 1.6 times more likely to be booked into
jail than the treatment group over the next 12 months.

Table 26

Predictors of Future Bookings for Any New Offense by Group Membership with 1 or more
Previous Jail Bookings within the Past Year

	B	Std Error	Beta	t
Prior Jail Bookings in Last Year***	.104	.0297	1.109	12.179
Living Arrangements				
Homeless	.626	.6211	1.870	1.016
Sheltered	.415	.6257	1.514	.440
Institutional stay	.240	.6588	1.271	.132
Stable	.351	.939	.082	.374
Education Level	.017	.208	1.017	.695
Group Membership (Treatment = 0)***	.443	.1542	1.557	8.257
Intercept	-.415	.6300	.661	.433

*** p ≤ .0001

Table 27 examines the impact that going through the Diversion Center had on future bookings for those individuals who have five or more prior bookings within the past 12 months. As noted, the only variable in the model that was predictive is group membership, suggesting that the comparison group is 2.9 times more likely to be booked into jail on new crimes within the next 12-month period.

Table 27
Predictors of Future Bookings for Any New Offense by Group Membership with 5 or more Previous Jail Bookings within the Past Year

	B	Std Error	Beta	Wald
Prior Jail Bookings in Last Year	.105	.0684	1.110	2.347
Living Arrangements[1]				
Sheltered	-.051	.5493	.950	.009
Institutional stay	.892	1.145	2.439	1.911
Homeless	.471	.4511	1.601	1.090
Education Level	-060	.0764	.942	.617
Group Membership (Treatment = 0)***	1.050	.4344	2.857	5.842
Constant	-.339	.7534	.712	.203

*** $p \le .0001$; [1] There no participants who were rated as stable housing that had 5 or more prior bookings

Cost-Benefit Analysis

In addition to the outcome evaluation for the Judge Ed Emmett Diversion Center, the costs associated with the program were examined to determine the financial impact to the system. To best understand the impact of the program, this evaluation took into consideration the impact to law enforcement, the cost to operate the Diversion Center, the District Attorney's office to process cases, the Harris County Criminal Court of Law, and the Harris County Jail. While costs were available for the Harris County public defender's office it was not possible to identify which participants were assigned counsel from the Harris County Public Defender's office therefore those costs were not modeled in the analysis.

To determine the costs of each of the services, Harris County had previously identified the costs associated with several of these services. Table 28 provides a review of these costs as

well as the costs in 2019 dollars. To calculate the costs associated with this study the following

formulas were used:

Cost per diversion stay

(Total budget/number of participants served in 2019) + 15 minutes of law enforcement time.[3]

Cost per initial booking

4 hours of law enforcement time + District Attorney's cost + Cost of court + 1 day in jail.

Cost per subsequent booking of a felony

4 hours of law enforcement time + District Attorney's cost + Cost of court + average LOS in jail for a felony.

Cost per subsequent booking of a misdemeanor

4 hours of law enforcement time + District Attorney's cost + Cost of court + 1 day in jail

Cost per subsequent diversion stay

(Total budget/number of participants served in 2019) + 15 minutes of law enforcement time.

Table 28

Costs of Processing a Single Misdemeanor Case in Harris County (2019 dollars)

	Costs (year)	Inflation Adjusted Cost (2019)[4]
Law Enforcement	4 hrs = $138.48 (2016)	$148.00
District Attorney	$478 per case (2016)	$516.00
HC Criminal Courts of Law	$297 per case (2016)	$316.00
Jail	$285 per day (2016)	$304.00
Diversion Center	$2,109 + 9.22 (2019)	$2.118.00

To start, several assumptions were made regarding the costs associated with the program.

First, and foremost, since these data are from 2016 to 2019 the status of pretrial release has

significantly changed in Harris County during that time period, especially in reference to

misdemeanants. For the purpose of this study and for the clarity moving forward, we have

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[3] The program's budget is a fixed cost and therefore is based on the number of participants annually. The cost per diversion would be affected considerable if the program was to operate at full capacity.

[4] Rounded to the nearest dollar

conducted this cost-benefit analysis based on how the future will look—not the situation in which the program existed. Specifically, we assume that individuals charged with a low-level misdemeanor will be eligible for presumptive release and will remain in jail for no more than one day. For those that are booked in on subsequent offenses, we used the average length of stay in jail derived from the current data. Second, many of the participants would qualify for a public defender. Moving forward, the county has invested heavily in the Public Defender's Department in order to provide legal representation for low income people in court. While we could assume that the public defender represents a portion of the program participants, information was not available to determine accurately what percentage of the Diversion Center participants were assigned to the Public Defender's office and therefore, the costs associated with the PD's office were not included.

Third, the time to book a person into jail for law enforcement is approximately four hours at $36.87 per hour. The time to drop a person off to the Diversion Center is approximately 10 minutes. While this time varies significantly, we assume for the purpose of this study that it takes 15 minutes to process a person into the Diversion Center to account for possible fluctuations in time. Fourth, the cost for the District Attorney's office to process a case from start to finish is $516 per case. While there are some costs associated to managing the 24-hour intake process, the cost to process a case is heavily associated with the court process and therefore we did not include a cost associated with reviewing the initial call by law enforcement and determining if the person should be deflected to the Diversion Center. Fifth, there are a realized cost to many of the crimes associated with this population. From theft to criminal trespass, the impact of these crimes to the community can be costly. We only included the costs to the system and did not factor in the associated costs with loss of goods or community impact in this analysis.

Based on these assumptions, Table 29 provides the total costs associated with the program as well as the average cost per person based on the treatment and comparison samples. As noted, the total costs associated with the treatment group vary across service compared to the comparison group. In total, the comparison group costs the county $10,901,280 compared to $4,242,960 for the treatment group. To calculate a benefit to cost ratio, the following formula was applied:

(Total Comparison Costs) – (Subsequent Booking Cost for Treatment Participants + Cost per return to Diversion))/Total Cost for Initial Diversion

(($888,528 + $9,098,544 + $914,208) – ($1,399,776 + $204,156 + $1,173,372))/$1,465,656

Benefit to Cost ratio = For every $1.00 dollar invested in diverting low level misdemeanants from the program Harris County avoids spending $5.54.

Table 29
Total Costs to Operate the Diversion Center (N=692)

	Total Cost	Average Cost Per Person
Cost per Intake/Initial Booking		
Treatment	$1,465,656.00	$2,118.00
Comparison	$888,528.00	$1,284.00
Cost per Subsequent Booking		
Treatment		
Felony	$1,399,776.00	$2023.00
Misdemeanor	$204,156.00	$295.00
Comparison		
Felony	$9,098,544.00	$13,14.00
Misdemeanor	$914,208.00	$1,321.00
Cost per Return to Diversion Center		
Treatment	$1,173,372.00	$1.696.00
Comparison	$0	$0
Total Costs		
Treatment	$4,242,960.00	$6,131.00
Comparison	$10,901,280.00	$15,753.00

Limitations

This study has three primary limitations that should be noted. First, it was not possible to randomly assign participants to the program or the comparison group. While random assignment is ideal, the quasi-experimental design used in this study controlled for potential differences in the two groups. Second, the comparison group was drawn during a time period in which misdemeanants were held in jail for significantly longer periods of time. To adjust for the potential differences in jail stays, this study adjusted previous jail stays for misdemeanants to 1 day for the purpose of the cost-benefit analysis. Third, this study did not examine the calls for service only bookings to jail. While this study found that bookings to jail for new offenses were significantly lower for the comparison group, it is possible that the program did not have an impact on the number of calls for service.

Discussion/Findings

The Judge Ed Emmett Mental Health Diversion Center was initially born out of a need identified by the Harris County Criminal Court at Law Judges, the District Attorney's Office, and the Sheriff's Department to divert severely mentally ill people out of the jail who were booked in on low level misdemeanors. Focused initially on trespassing charges, the stakeholder group worked closely with The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD to develop a deflection program for Harris County law enforcement agencies to use in lieu of booking people with a mental health issue into the jail. While the program has had success in deflecting over 1,500 people from the jail, it is important to understand the impact of the program beyond just providing an alternative to jail.

Starting with the within-person comparison group, there is clear support for the impact of the program on subsequent jail bookings for new offenses. As noted in Table 11, the participants in the program had an overall reduction in new jail stays by 50 percent after they entered the

Diversion Center program for the first time. While there was a minimal decrease in new felony bookings (62 to 56), there was a substantive and significant reduction in the number of misdemeanor bookings from the pre-intake period to the post-intake period (381 to 162) resulting in a 57.5 percent reduction in the number of bookings for a criminal offense.

To better understand the overall impact of the program, we combined the number of post-Diversion bookings with the return to the Diversion Center. There was a total of 772 post-Diversion returns (jail + return to Diversion) for the treatment group. To put these in context, if the diversion center did not exist, the treatment group had 443 previous jail bookings along with the 692 initial entries into the Diversion Center resulting in what would have been a total of 1,135 bookings into jail for a new offense. Comparing the 1,135 bookings if the program was not in operation with the total number 772 post-diversion stays, there was a 31.9 percent decrease in the number of bookings into the jail for a new offense.

In addition to the within-person outcomes, we also compared the treatment group to a similarly situated group of people with mental health issues booked into the jail for a new misdemeanor between June 2016 and December 2017. While the comparison group had slightly more pre-intake bookings, it had significantly more jail bookings for new offenses during the follow-up period than did the treatment group. In fact, the treatment group saw a 50.8 percent reduction in the number of bookings for a new offense while the comparison group experienced an 81.8 percent increase during the same time period.

Next, we examined the differences between the comparison and treatment group controlling for prior jail bookings. For the overall population, the comparison group was booked into the jail on a new offense 1.4 times more than the treatment group suggesting that attending the Diversion Center is associated with a marked reduction in the number of bookings for new offenses. From there, we examined the impact of the program for individuals who had no jail

bookings for the previous year. Again, we found that the comparison group was booked back into the jail for a new offense at a rate of 44.9 times greater than the treatment group. Lastly, we analyzed the impact the program had for people with extensive jail histories resulting in five or more bookings for a new offense within the last year. Again, we found a marked reduction in the number of jail bookings for the treatment group with the comparison group being 2.9 times more likely to be booked back into the jail for a new offense.

Given that the program established a significant reduction in the number of people who returned to the jail for a new offense, we next explored the costs of the program to see if there were cost savings that could be associated with the implementation of the Diversion Center. Overall, the program produced a significant cost savings to Harris County by diverting low-level misdemeanants with mental health issues out of the jail. For every $1 spent at the diversion center, the county avoided spending $5.54.

The Judge Ed Emmett Mental Health Diversion Center was initially developed as a pilot to help Harris County reduce the number of people with mental health issues being booked into jail for low-level misdemeanors. While the original intent was to focus on familiar faces, those individuals who were repeatedly booked into jail for multiple misdemeanors, this report suggests that the Diversion Center does not only have positive benefits for this unique group, but also has significant impact for those individuals without prior exposure to the criminal justice system.