



# CJIBULLETIN

## San Diego Community Justice Initiative (CJI) Smart Prosecution Initiative

March 2019

### Research findings from the Criminal Justice Clearinghouse

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As of January 23, 2019

# Acknowledgments

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For more information about the evaluation, please contact SANDAG at (619) 699-1910 and for more information about the CJI program, please contact the Neighborhood Justice and Collaborative Courts Unit (NJU) of the Office of the City Attorney at (619) 533-5500.

# CJ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## San Diego Community Justice Initiative (CJI) Smart Prosecution Initiative

### Introduction

In 2011, California embarked on one of the most historical criminal justice reforms with the passage of AB 109 (Public Safety Realignment). This sweeping reform, which shifted responsibility of housing, supervision, and rehabilitation of certain offenders from the State to the local counties ushered in a new approach to mass incarceration and followed a period of drastic budget cuts to superior courts across California. Since then, additional legislation has passed that aligns more with diversion and rehabilitation than with the traditional approach of control and punishment that contributed to the mass incarceration of the 1990s. Most germane to CJI was the passage of Proposition 47 (Prop 47) by California voters in November 2014 which changed state statute to reclassify certain felonies (including drug possession and property crimes valued under \$950) as misdemeanors. The spirit of the law was to offer individuals caught in the very costly (economically and socially) criminal justice system an opportunity to address the underlying, non-criminal, reason that led to their involvement in illegal acts (e.g., addiction). As a result of this legislation, the number of Prop 47 cases referred to the City Attorney increased by 77 percent, from an average of 2,467 annually from 2012 to 2014, to 4,360 annually from 2015 to 2017.

### What this project did

Funding through this grant was used to enhance and expand the Community Justice Initiative (CJI), which was created in 2014 through a partnership between the City Attorney and the San Diego County Public Defender, San Diego County Sheriff's Department, and two non-profit service providers – Urban Corps of San Diego County and Alpha Project. The additional funds were utilized to hire a CJI Program Coordinator through the City Attorney to achieve expansion goals, provide case management services through Alpha Project to clients assessed as being at medium- to high-risk and need, and conduct a process and impact evaluation of the program. The four expansion goals included (1) conducting standardized assessments on clients to understand risk and need; (2) improving linkages of clients to service providers; (3) strengthening the current documentation effort to ensure decisions and strategies are informed by data; and (4) engaging with the community to a greater degree. As part of the expansion, the Applied Research Division of SANDAG was included as the evaluator to support the third goal (using data to inform decisions), as well as to document the process and assess what effect, if any, the enhancements had on CJI.

## Evaluation highlights

Over the 17-month period between late April 2016 and early October 2017, a total of 1,354 individuals accepted the offer to participate in CJI, an average of about 20 per week. Complete assessment and progress data were available for 605 of these individuals and revealed that 59 percent of clients were male, the median age was 27.0, and two-thirds were either Hispanic (37%) or White (35%). Just over one in three (36%) reported no prior arrests and official records revealed that 9 percent had a conviction in the previous 12 months. Around two-thirds (68%) of the clients scored “very low” to “low/medium” risk on the Proxy assessment and of those assessed with the COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions), the highest level of needs were related to criminal thinking, financial status, residential instability, and substance abuse. Challenges were noted in terms of encouraging some higher risk clients to be assessed with the COMPAS and others to receive case management services who might have benefited from them. Program partners gave high ratings to the program and the enhancement efforts that were undertaken as part of this grant and demonstrated their commitment to collaboration through increased documentation, information sharing, and an openness to change policies and procedures when data indicated a need to do so. By the end of the grant period, all of the proposed enhancements were put into place, including conducting client assessments, offering case management, implementing a new system for sharing data, increasing the use of data to inform decisions, and increasing contact with the community. Areas noted for possible further improvement included continuing to outreach to the community; strengthening the assessment process and creating even stronger linkages to services, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) (if a curriculum could be identified which would be compatible with the program structure); and offering community service opportunities that are appropriate to the client to the greatest degree possible. Clients gave the program high ratings overall and often noted they enjoyed giving back to the community and working as part of a team on such efforts as homeless outreach, planting trees, and removing graffiti.

Clients who did receive case management received an average of three services, which most often included life skills training, individual counseling, and financial assistance. More than four in five (83%) of clients completed all program requirements and had their case dismissed. Just under half who did not successfully complete failed to pay the program fee and do their community service hours. Clients who scored as higher risk on the Proxy and had a prior booking or conviction in the past 12 months were significantly less likely to complete program requirements than those with a lower risk score and no prior filings or convictions. In terms of recidivism, the treatment group was significantly less likely to be arrested and have a conviction in the 12-month follow-up period, compared to a matched historical comparison group. For the difference in convictions, this related to the comparison group having more misdemeanor and property-related convictions. Eleven percent (11%) of the treatment group overall was convicted of an offense during follow-up (2% for a felony and 8% for a misdemeanor). Post-hoc analyses revealed that 7 percent of those who completed CJI had a conviction during follow-up, compared to 32 percent of those who failed.

## Lessons learned

- For sites considering adding an assessment to what may already be a complicated process for an offender, it is essential that all partners are on the same page, that training is ongoing so that procedures to encourage participation are followed, and that the ease of completing the assessment is increased to the greatest degree possible.
- Engaging partners and keeping them on-board is essential.
- Programs considering offering more intensive service options for those clients with the greatest risk and need are encouraged to explore innovative ways to engage them and to scope and budget the resources necessary to conduct the level of contact necessary to achieve this.
- Reliable information sharing is not a one-time effort; information is only as good as it is regularly reviewed. Data can only effectively guide program decisions when it is understood, and all partners are on-board with the implications.
- Flexibility is essential. Being able to work collaboratively is a key part of successful partnership and supports positive outcomes.
- Should a validated CBT curriculum that is appropriate for this population become available, its use should be explored.
- Partnering with the community and creating restorative justice opportunities can take time, but are worthwhile.
- Efforts to address substance abuse that could be an underlying risk factor for some of the individuals in this client population are important.

## San Diego Community Justice Initiative (CJI) Smart Prosecution Initiative

### Introduction

In January 2015, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, released a competitive grant solicitation as part of its “SMART Suite” of crime fighting programs with the goal of supporting criminal justice professionals in building evidence-based, data-driven, criminal justice strategies that are effective, efficient, and economical. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) partnered with the City of San Diego’s Office of the City Attorney’s (City Attorney) to prepare and submit a proposal that was selected for funding. The original two-year grant project started on October 1, 2015, with the evaluation continuing through September 30, 2017<sup>1</sup>.

Funding through this grant was used to enhance and expand the Community Justice Initiative (CJI), which was created in 2014 through a partnership between the City Attorney and the San Diego County Public Defender, San Diego County Sheriff’s Department, and two non-profit service providers – Urban Corps of San Diego County and Alpha Project. The additional funds were utilized to hire a CJI Program Coordinator through the City Attorney to achieve expansion goals, provide case management services through Alpha Project to clients assessed as being at medium- to high-risk and need, and conduct a process and impact evaluation of the program. The four expansion goals included (1) conducting standardized assessments on clients to understand risk and need; (2) improving linkages of clients to service providers; (3) strengthening the current documentation effort to ensure decisions and strategies are informed by data; and (4) engaging with the community to a greater degree.

As part of the expansion, the Applied Research Division of SANDAG was included as the evaluator to support the third goal (using data to inform decisions), as well as to document the process and assess what effect, if any, the enhancements had on CJI.

### Targeted problem

In 2011, California embarked on one of the most historical criminal justice reforms with the passage of AB 109 (Public Safety Realignment). This sweeping reform, which shifted responsibility of housing, supervision, and rehabilitation of certain offenders from the State to the local counties ushered in a new approach to mass incarceration and followed a period of drastic budget cuts to superior courts across California. Since then, additional legislation was passed that aligns more with diversion and rehabilitation than with the traditional approach of control and punishment that contributed to the mass incarceration of the 1990s. Most germane to CJI was the passage of Prop 47 by California voters in November 2014 which changed state statute to reclassify certain felonies (including drug possession and property crimes valued under \$950) as misdemeanors. The spirit of the law was to offer individuals caught in the very costly (economically and socially) criminal justice system an opportunity to address the underlying, non-criminal, reason that led to their involvement in illegal acts (e.g., addiction). As a result of this legislation, the number of Prop 47 cases referred to the City Attorney increased by 77 percent, from an average of 2,467 annually from 2012 to 2014, to 4,360 annually from 2015 to 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> A one-year no-cost extension to September 30, 2018 was granted in 2017 due to delays that resulted from new requirements implemented locally to access individual-level criminal justice data for research processes.

In addition, with 70 percent of arrestees booked into local jails reporting they have ever been homeless (SANDAG, 2018), helping to address the needs of individuals coming into contact with the justice system for minor offenses with this issue has the potential of increasing public safety effectiveness and efficiency in both the short- and long-term, as Figure 1 shows.

Figure 1

**Overview of CJJ logic model that guided project implementation and expansion**



SOURCE: *Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019*

**Community outreach and collaboration**

*Project partners and partnership facilitation*

Staff from the **City of San Diego’s Office of the City Attorney**, Neighborhood Justice and Collaborative Courts Unit were the lead for this project. The role of the City Attorney included making CJJ offers and dismissing convictions of eligible misdemeanor offenders; closely working with the evaluator to facilitate the cleaning and transfer of data; using data to improve the program; building relationships with community members to incorporate elements of restorative justice; maintaining the Google Drive cloud data platform database and overseeing the effort to secure an improved data sharing platform; interacting with service providers to resolve data entry inaccuracies or community service process problems; and training the City Attorney, Public Defender, and private counsel attorneys to ensure CJJ adoption and risk/needs assessment. The City Attorney facilitated partnerships on this project by convening the Steering Committee meetings, supervising all offer and assessment logistics in the courthouse, following up on ongoing data analysis with partners, closely working with SANDAG to facilitate data transfer and identify blind spots, visiting partner sites to learn more about what they do, inviting community members to participate in the effort through participation on the Community Advisory Board, and asking for program feedback from partners.



As the evaluator, **SANDAG** worked closely with the City Attorney to finalize research protocol and instruments; finalize data transfer for the historical comparison group and treatment group; compile ongoing performance analysis data sharing with partners to improve CJJ processes by identifying strengths and weaknesses and identifying solutions to address gaps or issues; clean and analyze data from the City Attorney, service providers, and the Sheriff's Department; attend project team and Community Advisory Board meetings; create and submit semi-annual reports to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA); survey and conduct listening sessions with project partners; and observe training sessions. In terms of facilitating partnerships, SANDAG held research meetings geared toward sharing data and exchanging ideas; attended Steering Committee and Advisory Group meetings; and worked one-on-one with partners to nurture strong researcher-practitioner partnerships. During the grant period, the evaluator met with partners 27 times (as documented in BJA semi-annual reports), which did not include other written and phone communication.

The **County of San Diego's Public Defender's Office** worked closely with the City Attorney and service providers to identify any issues with the CJJ process and to implement solutions to resolve them; advise clients on accepting CJJ terms; encourage clients to complete the assessments and case management; remind their own staff to route clients to complete the Proxy assessment; and assist indigent clients to participate in the CJJ process. The Public Defender facilitated partnerships by working closely with the City Attorney in a collaborative fashion and supporting the implementation of program enhancements and hosting a Community Advisory Board meeting.

The **San Diego County Sheriff's Department** was responsible for administering the COMPAS<sup>2</sup> assessment, sharing results with Alpha Project and SANDAG, and providing programmatic input at research meetings. The Sheriff's Department facilitated partnerships by declining grant funding and providing in-kind services to conduct the assessment and being flexible to ensure the assessment administration went as smoothly as possible.

For this project, **Alpha Project**, served clients 30 years of age and older, as well as those who were eligible for case management services. Responsibilities also included using the COMPAS results to create case management plans; sharing data and success stories with CJJ partners; participating in research and other partner meetings; supporting lawyer trainings; attending Advisory Board meetings; and entering and providing data. Grant funding was provided to Alpha Project to hire the Case Manager for the project. To facilitate partnerships, Alpha Project offered meeting space for the Advisory Board meeting; hosted a community outreach event to expand awareness of the program; conducted tours for community groups, including the Community Advisory Board, as well as the Public Defender and City Attorney's Office; and was open to the feedback they received from the other partners.

**Urban Corps** served clients under 30 years of age and those assessed as not being at a risk and need level that would be appropriate for case management. For this project, Urban Corps offered community service opportunities; participated in research meetings; attended Advisory Board meetings; and entered and provided data. Urban Corps facilitated partnership by offering meeting space for Community Advisory Board meetings and conducting tours for community groups, the Public Defender, and the City Attorney's Office.

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<sup>2</sup> The Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS) is a standardized risk and needs assessment tool that was developed by Northpointe. Additional information regarding the COMPAS is available at [northpointeinc.com/files/downloads/FAQ\\_Document.pdf](http://northpointeinc.com/files/downloads/FAQ_Document.pdf).

## *Other collaboration*

In addition to these individual partner agencies, two formal groups supported the CJI effort. The **Steering Committee** for the project was composed of the project partners, as well as a representative from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). During the period of the evaluation, the Steering Committee met annually. Members included staff working directly on the project, as well as those in managerial and leadership roles at the partner agencies, and offered an opportunity for a more formal check-in regarding what was working well, where there were areas for possible improvement, and discussions on future program priorities to be considered.

The second formal group was the **CJI Advisory Board** which included five community members. This group first met in March 2017 with community members and program partners discussing how restorative justice principles could be incorporated into CJI, including having impact panels or creating a video impact panel, supporting efforts related to cultural competency, and utilizing prior clients as mentors. Over the course of the project, this group offered community members the opportunity to tour Alpha Project, Urban Corps, the City Attorney's Office, and the Public Defender's Office. The feedback from the group was also used in the creation of new program promotional material and community members shared information about CJI with other networks they were a part of. This group met a total of five times at the time of this evaluation report.

It should also be noted, as documented in the semi-annual reports to BJA, the City Attorney conducted 24 community outreach efforts during the evaluation period to inform the broader community about the CJI effort.

## **Strategies employed**

### *Key strategies*

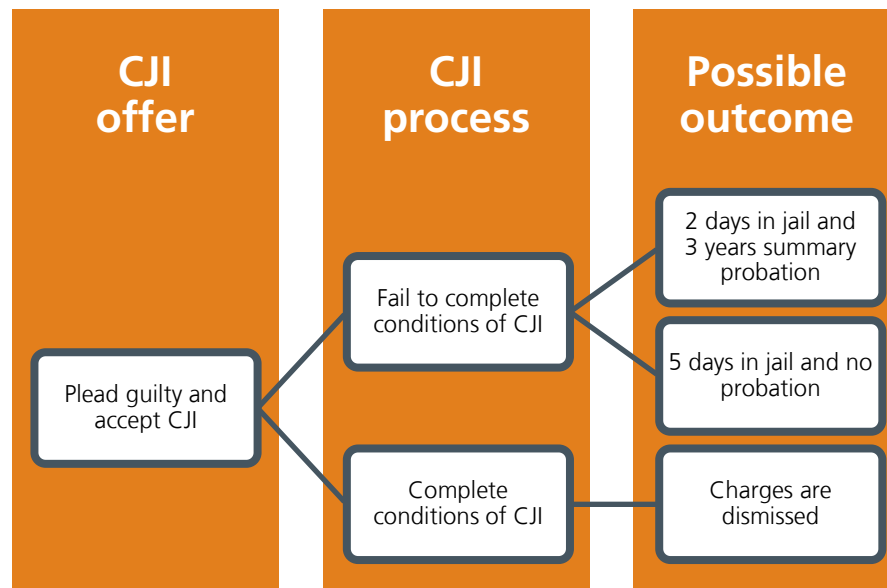
To get in front of the influx of new cases and move towards a more rehabilitative approach, the City Attorney created CJI (first named San Diego Community Court) as an innovative approach to handle low-level misdemeanor offenses by providing these individuals with an opportunity to pay their debt back to the community through targeted work service and other conditions. CJI was set up as a post-plea diversion program for individuals who committed lower-level offenses.<sup>3</sup> CJI allows the City Attorney to focus more resources on the higher-level offenses, while also offering individuals the opportunity to give back to their community and remove a mark on their record that could hinder future job and/or military opportunities, since all cases that have their requirements successfully completed are dismissed without requiring the defendant to return to court.

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<sup>3</sup> During the evaluation period, while prosecutors reserved the right to exercise discretion as to which cases are eligible to participate, offense exclusions included driving under the influence, domestic violence, sex offenses, child abuse, elder abuse, hate crimes, cases eligible for other statutory diversion, cases with restitution, and infractions. Offender exclusions included registered sex offenders, offenders with strike priors within the last ten years, chronic offenders, arsonists, and offenders with open warrants.

The strategy to address the increase in misdemeanor cases was based on the best practices established through community courts, which have shown positive results in holding low-level offenders more accountable, increasing the likelihood of completing community service obligations, and reducing jail days (Center for Court Innovation, 2005; Lee et al., 2013; Rempel et al., 2018). Driven by a commitment on the part of the City Attorney, in 2014 City Attorney staff worked closely with the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA) to learn from other sites with community courts. As a result, the first iteration of CJI was created in which once a criminal complaint is filed, an offer to divert an eligible case to CJI is made at the initial Superior Court appearance. The offer includes an addendum setting forth specific conditions that the defendant is required to fulfill. If rejected (participation is completely voluntary), the offer is withdrawn and the case proceeds through the normal process. If accepted, the defendant enters a guilty plea and accepts the CJI conditions. CJI conditions include referral to one of two non-profit agencies to complete 16 hours of community service (e.g., plant trees, recycle, remove graffiti, clear neighborhoods of illegally dumped trash) and pay the administrative fee (\$120.00 at the time of the evaluation). For those who are unable to pay, indigent<sup>4</sup> spots are available and require 8 hours of additional service in lieu of paying the administrative fee. The court then sets a sentencing date approximately 90 days later. If the offender successfully completes all conditions within the time allotted, the offender earns a dismissal of the case and the sentencing date is vacated administratively by the City Attorney effectively requiring only one court appearance. If the offender fails to complete the conditions, the offender is sentenced to two days in jail and three years of summary probation, or alternatively, five days in jail and no probation (Figure 2).

Figure 2  
Flow of the CJI process



SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

<sup>4</sup> An individual's indigent status is based solely on self-report and at the time of this report did not require independent verification.

Experiencing initial success, the CJI partners recognized the opportunity CJI provided for this population to link those in need with identified services in the community. Utilizing the grant funds, CJI implemented four strategic enhancements to incorporate elements of best practices, in addition to the enhanced communication and collaboration that was described in the previous section. Specifically, the following enhancements were implemented:

- **Utilize a validated screening and secondary assessment to identify and respond to clients' risks/needs.** Partnering with the Sheriff's Department, CJI incorporated two tools to identify higher risk clients, in order to link them to services. Each CJI eligible client was asked to complete the Proxy (a three-question pre-screening tool to distinguish high- and low-risk offenders). Individuals who accepted the CJI offer and had a Proxy score in the medium to high range received the COMPAS assessment to identify specific needs and risks.
- **Connect medium- to high-risk clients to case management services to link them with needed interventions.** Utilizing the same two service providers, clients who met the higher threshold of risk were referred to Alpha Project which utilized grant funds to hire a Case Manager whose purpose was to work with CJI clients. During the initial meeting, the Case Manager used the COMPAS, along with a program assessment, to create a case plan for that individual. Alpha Project then leveraged its connections internally or in the community to link individuals to needed services (e.g., employment training, housing) to encourage engagement in this higher level of care. Participation in case management services supplanted community service hours.
- **Create a more reliable data platform to capture client information and data sharing system.** Efforts were made to design a data sharing platform that maintained client confidentiality, but also allowed additional information to be shared among partners. This data platform also served as a means to collect information for the evaluation and future monitoring of the program. After a thorough review of the options, the City Attorney selected Salesforce software platform as its new data tracking system and began to transition away from the Google Document system that had been in place with an initial training in September 2017.
- **Expand the collection and use of data to drive decisions.** In addition to redesigning the data sharing system, the City Attorney included a research partner in the enhancement grant to conduct a process and impact evaluation. The evaluation was dynamic and designed to provide timely updates (a minimum quarterly) that were used to make any adjustments in the process.

### *Evolution of innovations and use of data to inform them*

During the evaluation, project partners made modifications to ensure the program was best assessing and engaging clients and information was effectively being shared with clients and partners. The following list highlights some programmatic changes that were made throughout the grant and how data were used to inform these decisions. It should be noted that the City Attorney and SANDAG were actively engaged with the Technical Advisor to this project throughout the grant period, seeking their feedback and support through the 34 conference calls that were held, as well as seeking additional technical assistance to ensure efforts were evidence-based.

- While the Sheriff's staff was initially scheduled to be at the Superior Court on three set days each week, it was quickly noticed that it was not the most efficient plan, with some Proxy high-risk clients being in Court the day the Sheriff's staff was not (and it was unlikely the client would return) and a large amount of "dead time" when no assessments were needed. The program partners discussed this issue when it was identified and agreed that the Sheriff's staff would be on-call Monday through Friday. As a result, all clients who were identified through the Proxy as

eligible for the COMPAS could be assessed while the client was still at court. Later, when eligible clients were documented as not having completed the COMPAS during regular data review, partners agreed to offer clients one hour of community service credit in exchange for doing an initial meeting with the Case Manager, even if the client chose to not engage in case management.

- The Public Defender sought more information from Alpha Project regarding the case management services to ensure their clients were being treated equitably. Acknowledging these concerns, the City Attorney asked Alpha Project to provide a monthly case management form to the City Attorney and Public Defender that summarized the services provided. Alpha Project readily complied with this request and this additional information-sharing component strengthened trust between the partners and supported transparency and information sharing. In another instance, inconsistencies in the service provider's data documentation were noted. Again, the City Attorney asked for the service providers' cooperation in conducting monthly audits of their data which they agreed to. This willingness to work together improved relationships and the quality of the information that was documented.
- Because data were reviewed regularly, the fact that a greater proportion of Alpha Project clients were requesting indigent status was noted. As a result, Alpha Project and Urban Corps were able to communicate and discovered how different processes to identify this status may have been contributing to this difference. Alpha Project modified its standardized communication with clients as a result to be more consistent with Urban Corps. In another instance, the review of client information revealed that clients who had completed the COMPAS and were eligible for case management from Alpha Project were either declining it before meeting with the Case Manager or being incorrectly directed by Alpha Project staff working at their front desk to regular community service rather than the Case Manager. This timely review of client information and the regular meetings with partners allowed for this issue to be quickly addressed with additional procedures to ensure case management eligible clients were directed to the Case Manager as needed before services were declined to increase their chances of engagement.
- During research meetings, which provided a formal opportunity to share research updates, program partners noted the low response rate for the exit surveys. As a result, the partners brainstormed ways to increase the rates, including offering a monthly drawing for those who completed it and alternative ways for clients to complete it, so it was not lost. At the same time, research staff were able to remind program staff of the necessity of balancing the need to have clients complete the survey, but also having the privacy to do so to ensure honest feedback.
- Because fewer clients than expected were being identified on the Proxy as medium- to high-risk, but the service providers had noted that some of these lower-risk individuals could benefit from case management, the partners, with the support of the Technical Advisors, adjusted the criteria for the administration of the COMPAS to low/medium and higher.
- Client data review also revealed that the policy to require clients complete their program requirements two weeks prior to their court date was overly restrictive and as a result, a larger number of program extensions were being requested which increased client burden and the workload of staff. As a result, the partners agreed to adjust the cut-off to balance client convenience with fairness to staff, which lowered the number of extensions that were needed. In another effort to support client successful completion, Alpha Project reintroduced weekend shifts to complete community service hours when it was determined individuals who worked traditional business hours were finding it difficult to complete their requirements while still maintaining their employment.

- As the numbers regarding client offers and acceptance were reviewed on a regular basis by the partners, the City Attorney recognized the importance of regular trainings to defense attorneys, so they were more likely to offer it to their clients. Throughout the project, the City Attorney, in cooperation with the service providers, increased the number of trainings that were held, extended them to the private defense bar, and took steps to enable attorneys to receive educational credits from attending the training. Demonstrating their commitment to the partnership with the Public Defender, the City Attorney also undertook their own data collection effort, surveying attorneys at the Public Defender’s Office, with the support of the research partner, regarding their perception of the CJI program.

## Data and analysis

At the center of the CJI enhancement strategy was the improved use of data to inform decisions and to document the process for future efforts. To accomplish this goal, the Applied Research Division of SANDAG was engaged as an active partner from the beginning (i.e., grant development) and throughout the entire process. Working closely with the City Attorney and other key partners (i.e., the Sheriff, Public Defender, and service providers), SANDAG designed and conducted a process and impact evaluation to determine if the CJI was enhanced as planned, including any modifications, and what impact the enhancements had on outcomes. To accomplish these goals, SANDAG employed a mix-method, quasi-experimental pre/post design using a historical comparison group. Propensity score matching was used to select a comparison group.

### *Treatment and comparison group selection*

Because random assignment to receive CJI or “treatment as usual” was not an option, propensity score matching was used to draw a historical comparison group to compare to the treatment group. The treatment group was defined as an offer of CJI by the City Attorney to a prospective client that was accepted with an intake date between April 26, 2016 (the start of enhanced CJI) and October 5, 2017 (an extended sampling period made possible with the grant extension). The comparison group was drawn from the universe of all filed cases by the City Attorney between November 1, 2012 and November 1, 2013, where the case reached disposition prior to November 1, 2014, the start of CJI. Propensity score matching was then used to select a comparison group from the universe that best matched the treatment group on demographic and prior criminal activity. The sample size of CJI participants who signed an informed consent to participate in the evaluation and had data available in the City Attorney data systems was 605. No client was included in the treatment group more than once or in both the treatment and comparison groups. Additional information regarding the techniques used to select the comparison group and the matching criteria are included as an appendix to this report.

### *Data elements and sources*

To carry out the evaluation design, SANDAG gathered data from multiple sources, which are detailed below.

- **Meeting minutes** To document the implementation process and program modifications, and provide consistent and timely feedback, research staff attended and documented all CJI meetings. These meetings included research meetings with CJI partners (i.e., City Attorney, Public Defender, Alpha Project, and Urban Corps) where data updates were shared and the CJI Steering Committee and Advisory Group meetings with stakeholders. The documentation of these meetings also informed the lessons learned section of this report.

- Program partner survey** Research staff designed (with feedback from the City Attorney's Office) a survey to gather feedback from partners about the implementation of CJI, areas of success, as well as opportunities to improve the project. In June 2017, 29 surveys were sent electronically (via SurveyMonkey) to partners and 19 completed surveys were returned (66% response rate). Of these 19 completed surveys, 5 were returned by staff from the Sheriff's Department, 4 from Alpha Project, 3 from the City Attorney, 3 from Urban Corps, 2 from the Public Defender, 1 from the ACLU, and 1 from the San Diego Superior Court. Half (50%) of the respondents had been in their current position for at least five years and over two-thirds (68%) had been involved prior to or since the enhancement described here began. Eighty-four percent (84%) were still involved with the program. The information gathered informed the process evaluation and lessons learned, with frequencies and measures of central tendency provided (to ensure confidentiality) and common themes identified. In addition, a listening session/focus group was held with representatives from each of the partner agencies in July 2017 to delve deeper into the themes and feedback provided through the surveys. This listening session was recorded and transcribed for additional qualitative feedback.
- Crime data** Individual level crime data from official San Diego County records were accessed to document the prior criminal history (bookings, filings, and convictions) for both the treatment and comparison groups for the 12-month period prior to the group entry. These data were accessed through a repository of automated Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) provided by the Sheriff's Department, City Attorney, and San Diego County District Attorney. Because SANDAG staff have successfully passed law enforcement background checks, completed CORI training, and completed a data sharing agreement with all the partners, SANDAG was able to query and extract agreed-upon aggregate and individual level data. Recidivism data included these three measures, as well as arrest data that were made available through the Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS). These data were accessed with local agency approval and linked to the other system data through standardized identifiers. Because of the grant extension, the recidivism follow-up period was able to be extended from 6 months to 12 months. For both prior criminal history and recidivism outcomes, data were also compiled regarding the level of the offense (felony/misdemeanor) and the type, using standard codes that were available for aggregation (violent, property, drug, weapons, and other). Data are presented in the aggregate with frequencies, measures of central tendency, and cross-tabulations, and inferential statistical tests (univariate and multivariate) done to identify predictors of program completion and how recidivism outcomes varied within the treatment group as a function of program completion.
- Assessment data** To be more responsive to participants' risks and needs, every offender eligible for CJI (and not in custody and present at court) is offered an opportunity to take the short Proxy Risk Assessment. The Proxy serves as a screening assessment for CJI and asks three questions: current age, date of first arrest, and number of times arrested. Based on those answers, an individual is scored somewhere between a low- and high-risk of reoffending. Clients who fall within specified risk level (low/medium at the end of this evaluation) and above are typically referred to take a more in-depth assessment, the COMPAS risk/needs assessment, although this assessment could be declined, or special reasons could lead to the COMPAS being administered to someone with a lower Proxy score. COMPAS is another validated tool designed to identify the factors underlying an individual's propensity to engage in criminal behavior and the services required to address those factors. Data gathered from these two assessments are used to describe the target population and identify any possible predictors of recidivism, with frequencies and measures of central tendency presented. Assessment information from the Proxy was available for 605 clients which comprised the treatment group. COMPAS information was available for 135 of the 605 who completed it.

- **Program completion and service data** Client status information, including documentation of completing payment and community service requirements, as well as the services received for those who were case managed, also were compiled. Case management data was available for 78 clients for this report and complete data regarding program completion was available for 578 of the 605 treatment group clients. Aggregate data are presented with frequencies, measures of central tendency, and cross-tabulations.
- **Client exit surveys** A total of 334 exit surveys were provided by Alpha Project and Urban Corps during the period of the program evaluation. These surveys asked clients to describe their experience in the program, to note how they participated in it, and their overall level of satisfaction. Clients were explained their responses would be anonymous and only presented in the aggregate. Surveys were administered electronically with the option of completing a paper survey if the client preferred this method for sharing their feedback. Frequencies and measures of central tendency are used to present these data.

It should be noted that some data collection efforts included in the original grant proposal were not possible as hoped for. First, the documentation of why clients refused to participate in CJJ proved to be unsuccessful due to the number of cases that flow through the system on a given day, the large number of defense attorneys working with clients, and the reality of competing priorities where criminal justice procedures take precedence over data collection for research purposes. In addition, because the community was engaged in a different way than was initially envisioned when the grant was written, their input was documented in Advisory Board meeting minutes, rather than through a formal survey.

## Analysis and evaluation

### *Process evaluation results*

#### ***How many individuals were offered CJJ and how many accepted the offer?***

Between April 26, 2016 and October 5, 2017, a total of 1,354 individuals accepted the offer to participate in CJJ, according to program records. While attempts were made to reliably compile information on offers and refusals, due to the multiple entry points, limited resources, and competing priorities, only nine refusals were documented over the approximate 17-month sampling period. In addition, another 20 individuals accepted the CJJ offer, but did not consent to be part of the project, so their information is not included here. Of the nine who refused and had a documented reason, three did so because they did not want to complete community service hours, three had an infraction offer, and one each said s/he just did not want to participate, took another plea, or had an immigration issue.



### What were the characteristics of those who accepted the CJI offer?

Information for the 605 CJI clients considered the treatment group revealed that more females were included than is typically seen in justice populations (41% female and 59% male) and that the median age of these individuals was 27.0 years (range 18 to 78). For those individuals with ethnicity information available, 37 percent were described as Hispanic, 35 percent as White, 14 percent as Black, and 14 percent as “other” (Table 1).<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1**

#### CJI client characteristics

Gender	
Male	59%
Female	41%
Age	
Mean	30.8
Median	27.0
Range	18-78
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	37%
White	35%
Black	14%
Other	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>605</b>

*Almost 3 in 5 CJI clients were male, the average age was 27, 36 percent had no prior arrests, and 9 percent had a conviction in the past year.*

*NOTE: Individuals with unknown race included in “other” for propensity score matching to create a comparison group.*

*SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019*

As Figure 3 shows, over half (56%) of the CJI clients were described as having an “other” offense as their instant offense. According to the City Attorney, examples of these types of offenses could include violations of city ordinances, disturbing the peace, minor in possession of alcohol, and illegal lodging. Around one in three (36%) had a property-related instant offense, and the rest, at 3 percent each or less, included misdemeanors related to weapons, a violent offense, or a drug offense.

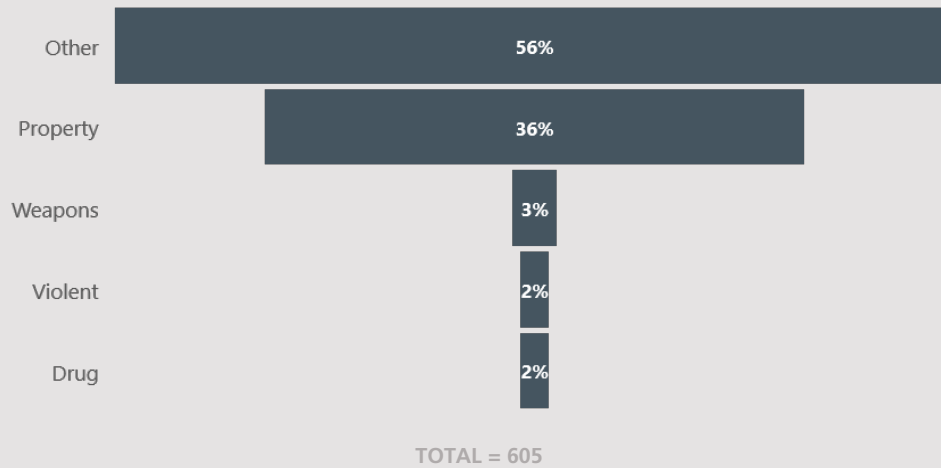
In terms of their criminal history, clients, as part of the Proxy assessment process, reported that on average, they were 21.0 years old when they were first arrested (median, range 9 to 77) and that they had been arrested an average (median) of one time in the past (range 0 to 60). Thirty-six percent (36%) reported having no prior arrests.

Additional information from Sheriff’s booking data and conviction data from the District Attorney and City Attorney for the one year prior to the filing date of the instant offense revealed that 12 percent had a prior booking (5% for a felony-level charge and 8% for a misdemeanor-level charge) and 9 percent had a prior conviction (1% for a felony and 8% for a misdemeanor).

<sup>5</sup> According to SANDAG population estimates, in 2016, the population for the City of San Diego was 44 percent White, 31 percent Hispanic, 6 percent Black, and 18 percent “other.”

Figure 3

**CJI clients' instant offense type**



NOTE: Individuals with an unknown instant offense included in "other" for propensity score matching to create a comparison group.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

**What were the assessed risks and needs of clients?**

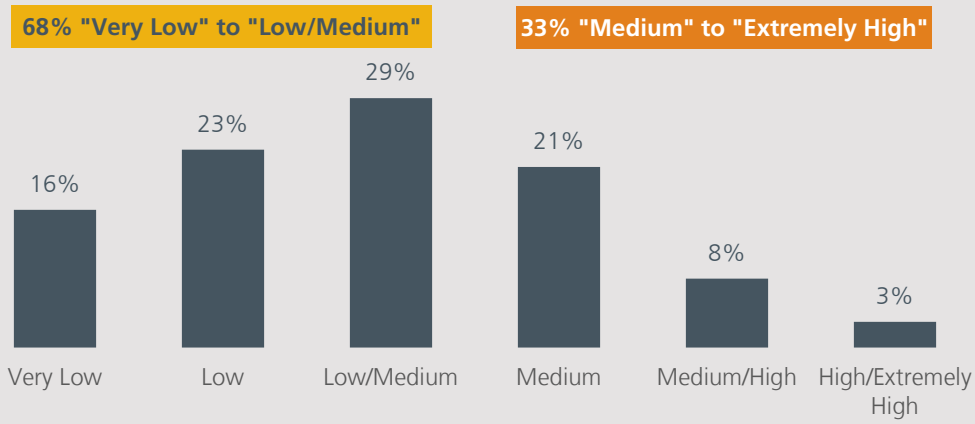
As previously noted, the Proxy assessment, which asks three questions (an individual's age, age at first arrest, and number of times arrested), was completed with 605 clients, 597 of whom had a risk score available for analysis. As Figure 4 shows, the distribution of Proxy risk scores was a slightly skewed bell-shaped curve, with around two-thirds (68%) of the clients scoring as "very low", "low", or "low/medium" risk.

As previously described, 135 of the 605 CJI clients had the COMPAS assessment administered by Sheriff's Department staff. It should be noted that while the original intention was to conduct the assessment with individuals who the Proxy rated as being at medium or higher risk, some individuals who scored higher declined this assessment and others who scored lower, expressed an interest in having it done and to receive services and case management. In addition, in August 2016, the criteria for completing the COMPAS was lowered from "medium" to "low/medium" in response to some clients who were scoring "low/medium" and also requesting case management.

As Figure 5 shows, 43 percent who scored at the medium to extremely high level on the Proxy (the original scoring criteria) agreed to take the COMPAS, but 36 percent declined stating they preferred to go to Urban Corps and 21 percent declined the more formal assessment and possibility of case management without specifying why. The median age of the individuals who requested doing their community service at Urban Corps was 20.0 (range 18 to 30).

Figure 4

CJI clients' Proxy risk scores



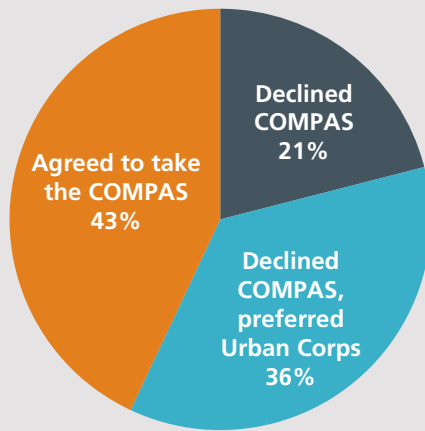
TOTAL = 597

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

Figure 5

Medium and higher risk CJI clients response to being asked to take the COMPAS



TOTAL = 260

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

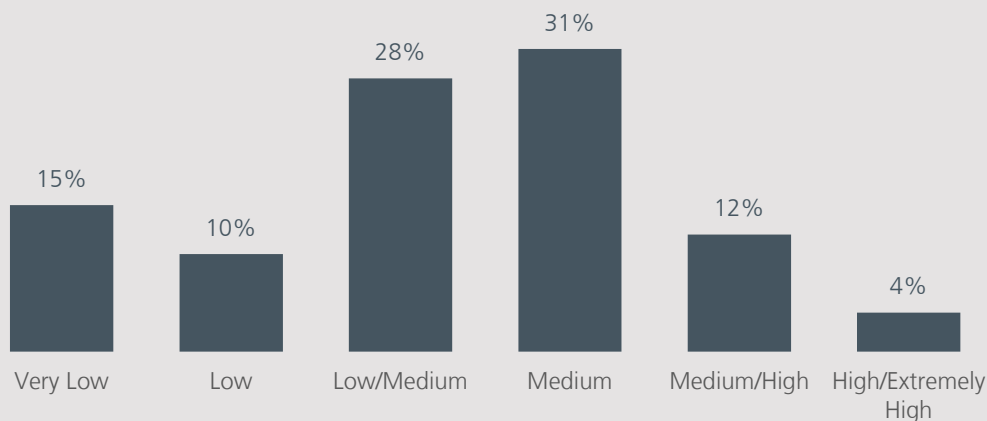
In addition, of those who were assessed with the COMPAS, one in four (25%) scored “very low” or “low” on the Proxy (Figure 6).

Figure 6

**Proxy risk level of CJJ clients who completed a COMPAS assessment**

25% "Very Low" to "Low"

75% "Low/Medium" to "Extremely High"



TOTAL = 134

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

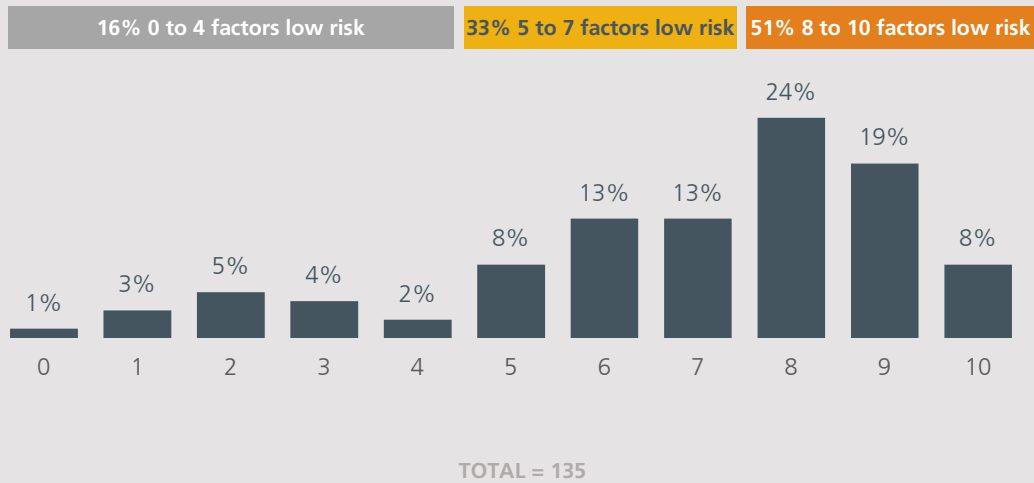
COMPAS assessment data were coded and summarized to better understand their level of risk (low, medium or high) for violence, general recidivism, and non-compliance, as well as other needs related to substance abuse, criminal thinking, financial, vocational/education, and residential instability. Of the ten rated factors, the median number that clients were rated as “low” on was 8.0, with the full range from zero to ten. Figure 7 shows that fewer than one in five (16%) of the clients were rated as “low” on four or fewer of the ten items, one-third (33%) were rated as “low” on five, six, or seven, and over half (51%) were rated as “low” on eight, nine, or all of the factors.

In terms of which of the ten factors were more or less likely to be rated as “low”, “medium”, or “high” risk, Table 2 shows the proportions for those COMPAS-assessed CJJ clients. Interestingly, the factors in which the greatest percent of clients were rated as “medium” or “high” were needs, including criminal thinking (21% medium and 30% high), financial (19% and 27%), residential stability (16% and 29%), and substance abuse (16% and 24%).

Additional information captured after the COMPAS assessment during the client case plan creation related to documenting the strengths, goals, and tasks for clients. This information highlights how the program aimed to build on existing strengths, as well as how goals and tasks were linked to assessed risk and need. As Figure 8 shows, the most common strength was having a high school degree or equivalent, noted for almost nine in ten (89%) clients. Following this, almost three in five (59%) currently were employed, and another quarter had been employed within the past six months (7%) or year (16%). Around half also were described as having a skill or trade (49%) and being 30 years of age or older (47%). Only two in five (40%) were described as having residential stability. Overall, clients were identified as having a median of 3.0 strengths (range 1 to 6).

Figure 7

Percent of CJJ clients by number of risks/needs rated as “low” on the COMPAS



SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

Table 2

CJJ clients’ COMPAS risk and need scores at intake

	Low	Medium	High
Criminal involvement	90%	5%	5%
General recidivism	78%	14%	8%
History of violence	76%	13%	12%
Vocational/educational need	76%	12%	13%
Violent recidivism	75%	19%	6%
History of noncompliance	74%	19%	7%
Substance abuse need	59%	16%	24%
Residential stability need	56%	16%	29%
Financial need	54%	19%	27%
Criminal thinking need	49%	21%	30%
<b>Total</b>		<b>133-135</b>	

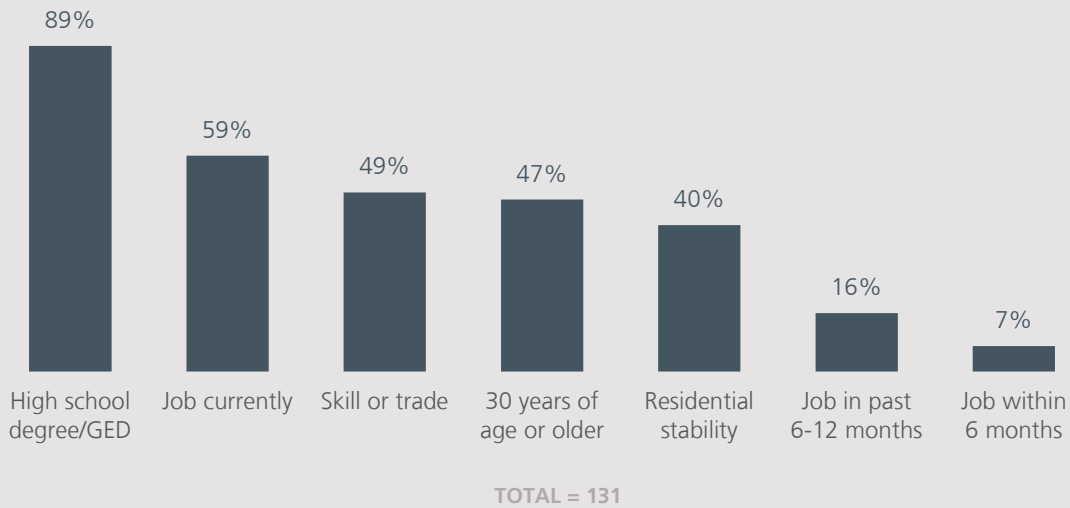
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

About one in three CJJ clients scored medium- to high-risk on the Proxy, but over half of these individuals declined further assessment and case management. The greatest client needs of those further assessed included criminal thinking, financial assistance, residential stability, and substance abuse.

Figure 8

**COMPAS-assessed CJJ clients' strengths at intake**



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

In terms of the clients' goals and tasks, the ones that were most often noted reflected the needs in the COMPAS that clients were most likely to score medium to high need on. Specifically, 69 percent had the goal of addressing criminal thinking, 51 percent achieving financial stability, 47 percent residential stability, and 42 percent addressing substance abuse and developing coping skills (Table 3).

**Table 3**

**COMPAS-assessed CJJ clients' goals and tasks at intake**

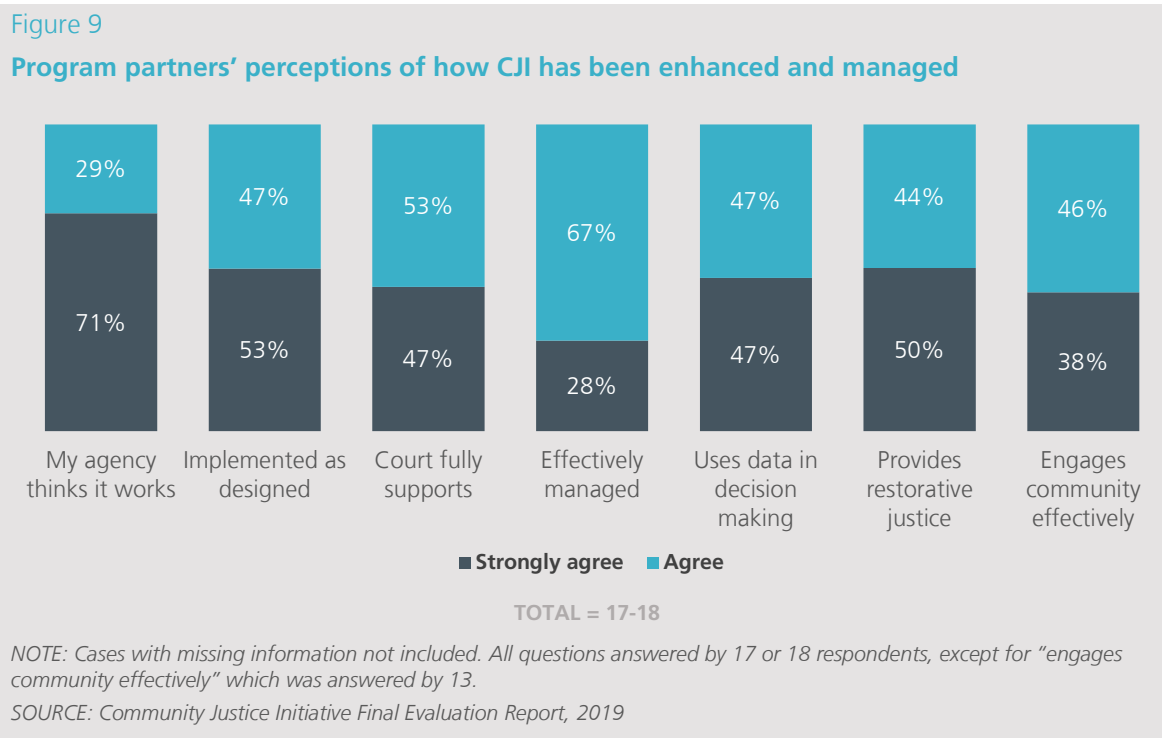
<b>Goals</b>	
Address criminal thinking	69%
Financial stability	51%
Stable living situation	47%
Manage substance abuse and develop coping skills	42%
Obtain and maintain employment	25%
<b>Tasks</b>	
Attend cognitive-behavior class	68%
Develop a plan for obtaining a stable living situation	46%
Create a realistic budget	35%
Obtain and maintain employment	34%
Create a plan to obtain employment	25%
Attend a substance use class	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>

NOTE: Percentages based on multiple responses. Cases with missing information not shown.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

**How did project partners view implementation and expansion and where was there room for improvement?**

**Overall perceptions:** Program partners gave relatively high ratings to the program and how the enhancements had been implemented and managed, as Figure 9 shows. One hundred percent (100%) of respondents either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statements that CJI is viewed as an effective program by their agency, that CJI was implemented as designed, and that it has the full support of the court. In addition, more than nine in ten agreed that the program has been effectively managed, data have been used in decision making, and the program provides a high-quality restorative justice model to the community. The statement with the least agreement was the degree to which the community had been engaged.

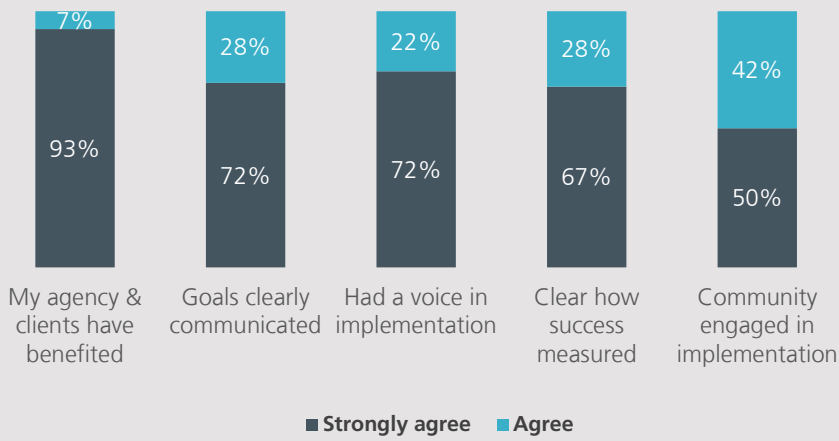


In another question, when asked how effective they thought CJI was in reducing recidivism, 13 partners offered an opinion, including 38 percent who said “very effective” and 62 percent who said “somewhat effective.”

**Views on the collaborative process:** Program partners were also provided with five statements related to the CJI collaborative process and asked to rate their level of agreement with each on a four-point scale. As Figure 10 shows, 100 percent of the respondents expressed agreement that “being involved with CJI benefited my agency and those we serve” and that “the purpose of goals of CJI were clearly articulated.” While more than nine in ten respondents agreed with the other statements, the possibility that additional outreach to the community could be explored was noted with the smallest percentage “strongly agreeing” with this statement. Two quotes were offered by partners regarding this involvement that included: (1) “Not sure how well CJI reached out to directly impacted populations, including those with justice-system involvement” and (2) “I understand the delicate balance in attempting to inform the community of CJI as it may not be available to all defendants (limited access point through the court process). But more publicity may help in keeping the community informed for this target population.”

Figure 10

**Program partners' perceptions of CJJ collaboration**



TOTAL = 17-18

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included. All questions answered by 17 or 18 respondents, except for "community engaged in implementation" which was answered by 12.

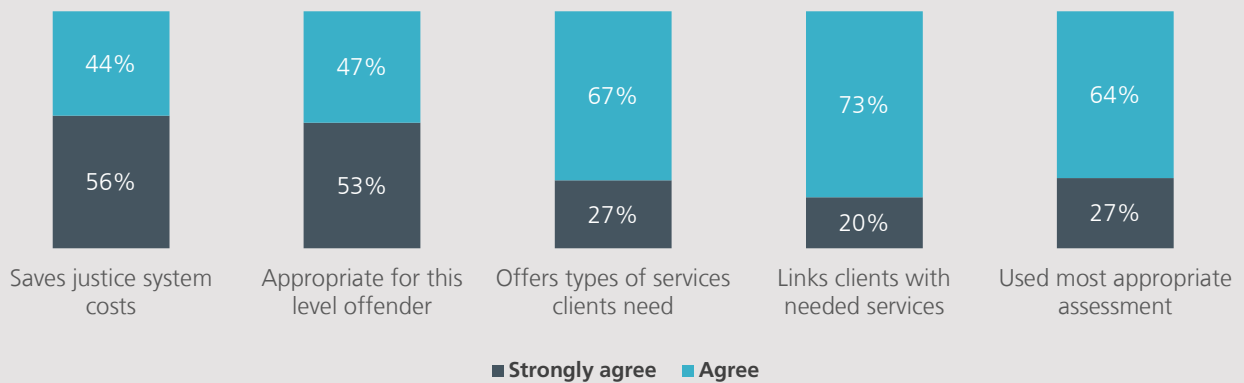
SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

Program partners surveyed in 2017 gave high ratings for how CJJ was enhanced and the collaboration that was in place. Possible areas for continued improvement related to more community engagement, strengthening assessment and service provision, better engaging clients and community, and improving partner communication.

**Perception of the program design:** In another series of rated questions, program partners were asked to use the same four-point scale to describe their views on the appropriateness of CJJ for the level of offenders currently included, the ability to link clients to needed services, the appropriateness of the COMPAS, and whether the program results in cost savings to the justice system. As Figure 11 shows, the highest level of agreement related to current client eligibility and the potential of justice system cost savings, with lower agreement levels voiced regarding linking clients, the appropriateness of the COMPAS, and the types of services offered to clients.

Figure 11

**Program partners' perceptions of the CJJ program design**



TOTAL = 15-17

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included. All questions answered by 15 to 17 respondents, except for "used most appropriate assessment," which was answered by 11.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

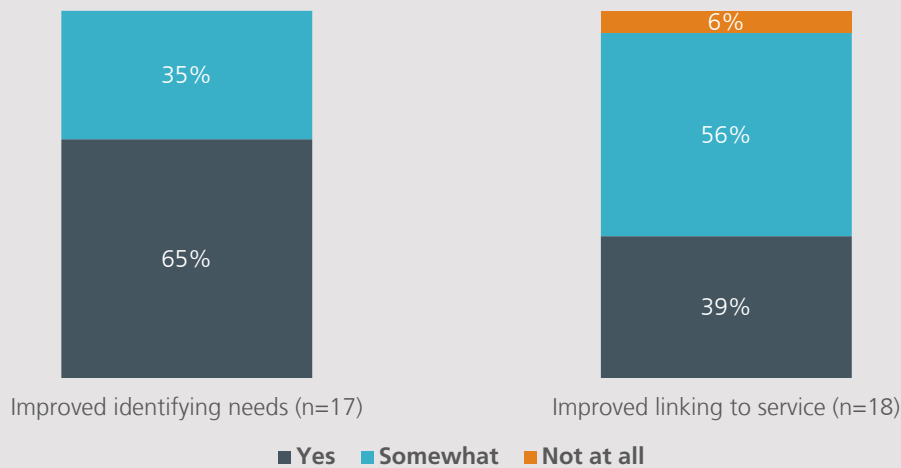


**Usefulness of the assessment:** When asked if they thought the addition to the assessment process to CJJ had improved the identification of clients' needs, 65 percent said "yes" and 35 percent said "somewhat" (Figure 12). When further probed if the assessments had improved linking clients to services, only 39 percent said "yes", 56 percent said "somewhat" and 6 percent said "not at all." These sentiments echo some of the feedback also provided regarding program design as shown in Figure 11, as well as feedback in the focus group where attendees noted the Proxy was effective, but the COMPAS could be improved upon. When those who gave less positive ratings on the survey were asked where areas for improvement were in terms of identifying and meeting needs, some views that were expressed included:

- Finding ways to ensure that clients complete the Proxy assessment on a reliable basis and requiring all clients complete all assessments (Proxy and COMPAS);
- Identifying a more appropriate assessment tool that would provide more useful information;
- Focusing tasks and goals on the clients' needs, not just what is "convenient" ("Case management should be more client and criminal justice centered. The recommended tasks/goals should get at the center of the criminal issues, not mandated unrelated community work service.");
- Thinking of creative ways to engage clients in services because many may be looking for the easiest way to complete the requirements instead of making real change; and
- Making cognitive behavioral therapy available to clients since it is a common need (should a validated curriculum become available that can work with program criteria).

Figure 12

**Program partners' perception if assessments better identified CJJ clients needs and linked them to services**



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

**Areas for possible improvement:** When asked if they felt there were possible areas for improvement to the program, almost half (47%) responded affirmatively. Interestingly, a variety of responses were offered, which possibly reflected the varying background the partners had. These responses, which highlight some themes already noted, included:

- Offering more programming to clients (3);
- Better engaging clients, including providing them with more information, doing more warm hand-offs, and more creatively engaging them to receive services (3);
- Expanding client eligibility criteria (2);
- Getting more client feedback about the program more consistently and in more detail (1);
- Improving communication between partners (1); and
- Increasing the involvement of the community (1).

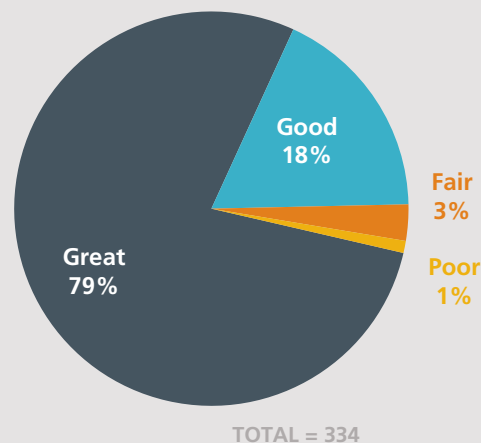
In another question, partners were asked if they thought any changes to the program design would help improve CJI, with 39 percent responding affirmatively. When probed for what these changes would be, responses were similar to those offered as areas for possible improvement, including better engaging clients (2), expanding client eligibility (1), offering more programming (1), and increasing the involvement of the community (1). In addition, one individual noted that a better assessment instrument was needed. During the focus group, attendees expressed the desire to expand client eligibility to cases that included victim restitution and continuing to expand training on CJI so that it becomes the default option when appropriate that is offered to clients.

#### **How did CJI clients describe their experience and view the program?**

To better understand how clients felt about the program, the feedback of 334 clients who were completing community service/case management at Alpha Project (250) or Urban Corps (84) between July 2016 and October 2017 was compiled. Overall, over three-quarters (79%) of the clients described their experience as “great” and another 18 percent said it was “good”; only 3 percent described it as “fair” and 1 percent as “poor” (Figure 13).

Figure 13

#### **CJI clients’ rating of their overall experience with Alpha Project or Urban Corps at program exit**



NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

When further probed regarding their experiences and asked to rate their level of agreement on a five-point scale, the greatest level of agreement related to statements expressing a positive experience with their community service supervisor (90%), that they enjoyed giving back to the community (89%), and that the experience was positive overall (88%). In terms of the statements with the lowest level of agreement, 60 percent agreed to some degree they learned a new skill and 21 percent felt the tasks they worked on were difficult (Table 4). When those who felt they learned a new skill were asked what it was, Alpha Project clients were most likely to say teamwork (85%), leadership (46%), or something else (30%). Urban Corps clients were most likely to say teamwork (75%), landscaping (38%), leadership (33%), or something else (14%).

*Almost 9 in 10 CJI clients who completed the exit survey expressed positive feelings about the program, with more than 4 in 5 enjoying giving back to the community and working as part of a team.*

**Table 4**  
CJI clients who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the following statements on the Alpha Project and Urban Corps exit survey

I had a good experience with the supervisor	90%
I enjoyed giving back to the community	89%
I thought the experience was positive	88%
I enjoyed working with the team	83%
It was a valuable experience	79%
I learned new skills	60%
I felt the tasks were difficult to perform	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>334</b>

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

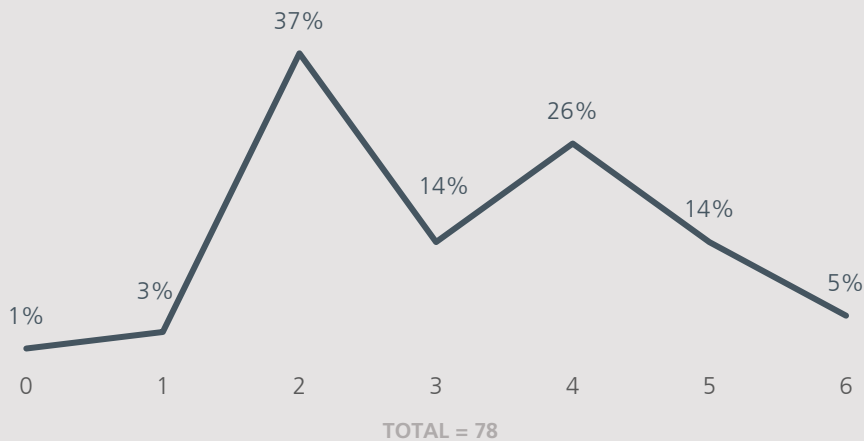
When asked to describe what type of community service they were required to perform, clients at Alpha Project most often described it in the “other” category (51%, with many referencing cleaning facilities), 41 percent reporting they accepted some type of assistance from Alpha Project, 25 percent worked with permanent supportive housing, 21 percent in homeless outreach, and 12 percent in transitional housing. Clients at Urban Corps reported collecting recyclables (61%), planting trees or conducting weed abatement (36%), doing another task (31%), or removing graffiti (14%).

## Impact evaluation results

### How many clients accessed services they were referred to?

Information regarding whether clients accepted services was available for 78 CJJ clients who were documented in the program's process datafile as accepting case management services. As Figure 14 shows, all but 1 percent of these clients received at least one service, with the greatest percentage receiving two services (37%). The median number of services received was 3.0 (range 0 to 6).

Figure 14  
Number of services case managed CJJ clients accepted

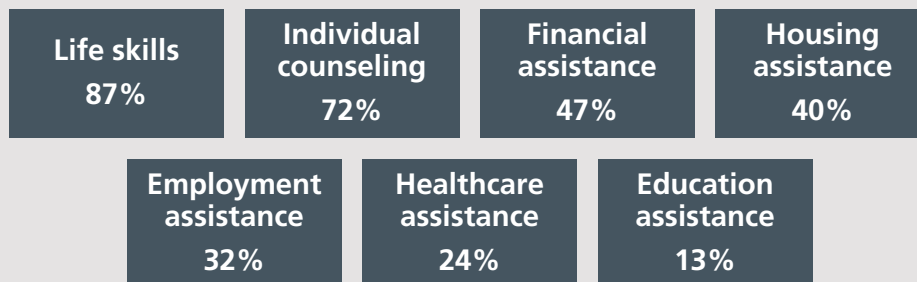


SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

According to program records, around 1 in 10 CJJ clients received services. These clients received 3 services on average, with life skills, counseling, and financial assistance being the most common.

As Figure 15 shows, the most common service received by these case managed clients were life skills (87%) and individual counseling with the Case Manager (72%), followed by financial assistance (47%), housing assistance (40%), employment assistance (32%), healthcare assistance (24%), and education assistance (13%). Other services received by 4 percent or fewer included assistance obtaining government assistance (4%), support with immigration issues (1%), assistance from another service organization regarding children (1%), and 12-step class for substance use (1%).

Figure 15  
Services case managed CJJ clients accepted



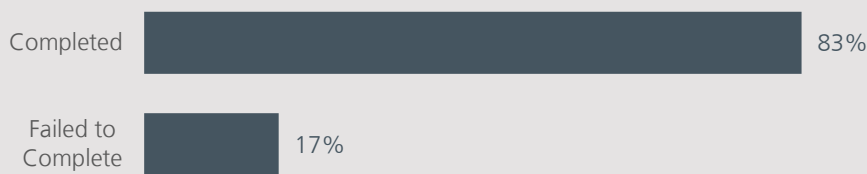
SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

### How many clients completed CJI and were any factors predictive of this?

At the time of final data collection, program data revealed that over four in five (83%) CJI clients with status information were documented as having completed all terms of the CJI program, with 17 percent failing to do so (Figure 16). Additional analyses of 93 of the 97 clients who were documented as having failed to complete program requirements also had information available about whether they completed the program payments and whether they had completed their community service hours. As Figure 17 shows, just under half (49%) of these 93 individuals failed to make their payments and also did not complete community service. The next most common statuses related to failure included making payments but not completing the service hours (17%), and for indigent clients, either not completing community service (14%) or completing some but not all of it (13%).

Figure 16

#### Percentage of CJI clients who completed program requirements

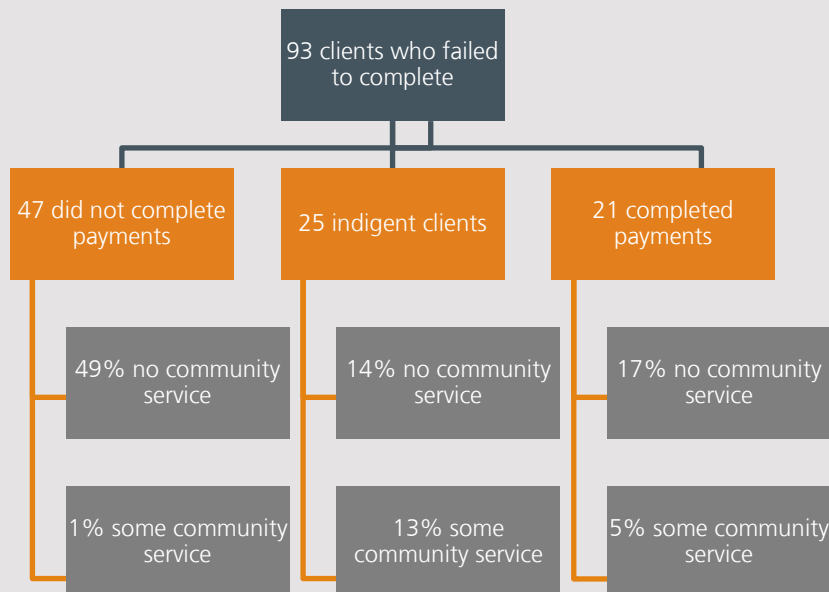


TOTAL = 578

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

Figure 17

#### Unsuccessful clients payment and work service completion statuses



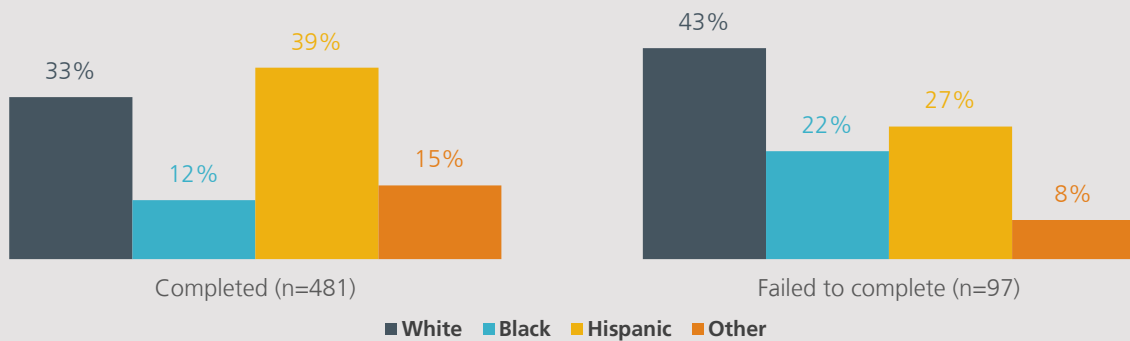
NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

Overall, more than 4 in every 5 CJI clients completed all program requirements. Further analysis of those who did not revealed half failed to pay fees and complete community service and that those rated as high-risk on the Proxy and those with a prior criminal history were more likely to not complete.

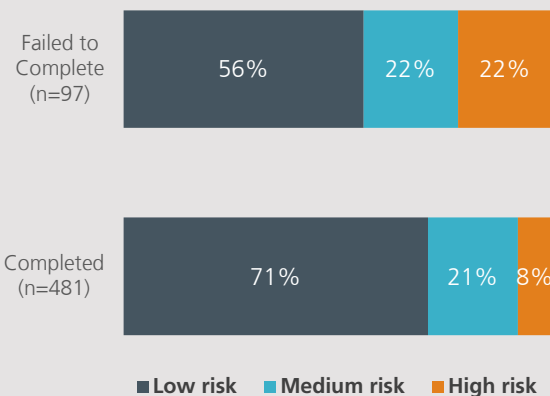
To better understand what client characteristics were associated with completing the program, univariate and multivariate statistics were used and revealed that there were several predictors. Specifically, while gender was not a predictor, race, assessed risk, and prior criminal history as individual factors were, as Figures 18 to 20 show. This finding, combined with the refusal for case management by some individuals who may have been higher risk and needed it, offers some insights to the program regarding the need for additional outreach or assistance to those who are hardest to engage or who may be best matched for this effort.<sup>6</sup> While age was also related in the initial analysis (with those successful being younger with a median age of 27, than those who were older, with a median age of 33), this characteristic was related to other factors that remained in the multivariate analysis, similar to ethnicity.

**Figure 18**  
**CJ client ethnicity a significant predictor of program completion, but confounded with other factors**



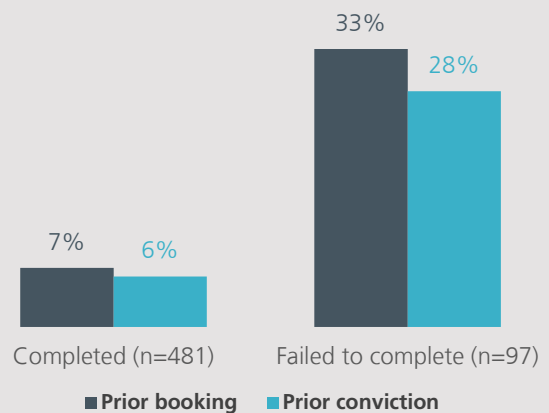
SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

**Figure 19**  
**CJ client Proxy risk score a significant predictor of program completion in univariate and multivariate analyses**



SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

**Figure 20**  
**CJ client booking and conviction significant predictors of program completion in univariate and multivariate analyses**



SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

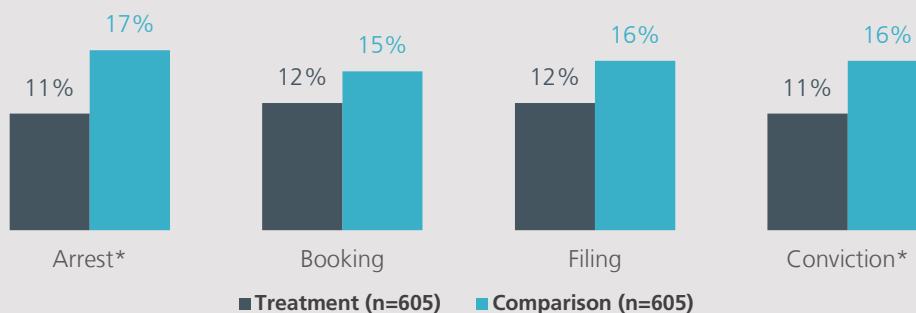
<sup>6</sup> The focus group participants also noted they perceived the program was best geared to those without a lengthy history of justice system involvement.

**What was the recidivism rate for a new offense in the 12-month period following the offer of CJI for the treatment and comparison groups?**

For this evaluation, recidivism data included arrests, bookings, filings, and convictions in the 12-month period following intake for the treatment group or post-filing date of the instant offense for the comparison group.<sup>7</sup> As Figure 21 shows, the treatment group was significantly less likely to be arrested in the follow-up period, compared to the comparison group (11% versus 17%). In addition, they were significantly less likely to have a conviction (11% versus 16%); the differences in bookings and filings were not significant. In terms of the level and type of convictions, 2 percent of the treatment group had a felony-level conviction, compared to 3 percent of the comparison group which was not significantly different. However, the treatment group did have significantly fewer misdemeanor arrests (8% versus 13%). In terms of the type of conviction, 5 percent of the treatment group was arrested for an “other” offense, 3 percent for a property, 1 percent for a violent, 1 percent for a drug, and less than 1 percent for a weapons offense. An arrest for a property offense was the only significant difference with the comparison group more likely to have one than the treatment group (6% versus 3%).

Figure 21

**Percent of CJI treatment and comparison group that recidivated in the 12-month follow-up period**



\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

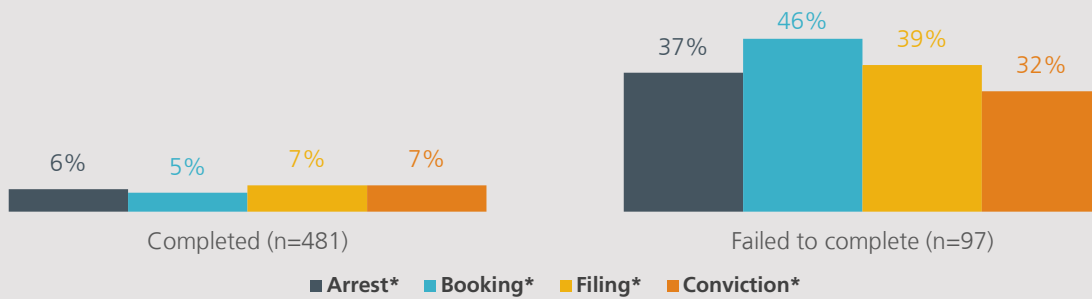
SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

Post-hoc analysis revealed however that the outcomes did significantly vary between the 481 individuals who completed the CJI program and the 97 who failed to do so. That is, when one considers individuals who successfully completed CJI, only 6 percent had an arrest, 5 percent had a booking, 7 percent had a filing, and 7 percent had a conviction, compared to 37 percent, 46 percent, 39 percent, and 32 percent, respectively, of those who did not complete (Figure 22).

<sup>7</sup> The follow-up time period for the historical comparison group was November 2013 to November 2014, prior to the passage of Prop 47 on November 4, 2014 which reduced a number of property- and drug-related offenses from felonies to misdemeanors and prior to the passage of Proposition 64 on November 8, 2016, which legalized the recreational use of marijuana for individuals 21 years of age and older in California. The treatment group’s follow-up period was April 2017 to October 2018, following the changes these propositions made. While the groups were matched on characteristics, justice system changes, both formal and informal, cannot be totally controlled for, which should be acknowledged.

Figure 22

### CJI clients who completed program requirements less likely to recidivate in 12-month follow-up period compared to those who did not complete



\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019

## Integration and sustainability

### Organizational changes and policy practice

As a result of this project, the City Attorney was able to utilize data and best practices to strengthen an existing post-plea diversion program for low-level offenders. Through the evaluation period, the City Attorney and partners demonstrated their commitment to best meet the needs of this offender population in a way that was consistent with literature that “overly treating” this population can cause harm, but also trying to provide support and access to services to clients who may have underlying issues that could be addressed and prevent further justice system contact (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004).

Because of this grant, the following enhancements and strategies were put into place and are continuing at the time of this report:

- Client assessment with the Proxy through an automated process;
- The availability of additional assessment and provision of case management services for those in need;
- Formal channels to reach out to the community for their input and support;
- A new data software system to facilitate program documentation and information sharing; and
- Stronger partnerships as a result of collaborative efforts to build a stronger CJJ program.

### New initiatives

Two new initiatives in San Diego County can be tied back to the CJJ program. First, in December 2016, the City Attorney launched a new program called the S.M.A.R.T. (San Diego Misdemeanants At Risk Track) Program that built on the CJJ effort and the lessons learned. S.M.A.R.T. targets and enrolls chronic offenders with acute drug addictions who have cycled through the system without access to services or care coordination. In partnership with the San Diego Police Department, San Diego County Probation Department, and Family Health Centers of San Diego, S.M.A.R.T. has now been effectively providing services to those more chronic misdemeanor-level offenders for two years. Second, though not directly affiliated, the DA’s Office implemented its version of CJJ (DA CJJ) in 2018. As part of DA CJJ, low-level defendants in other parts of San Diego County have the opportunity to earn a dismissal of their case upon successful completion of a 12-hour CBT class and four hours of volunteer work.



## *Sustainability*

At the time of this report, CJJ is continuing to operate and clients are benefiting from the enhancements such as implemented assessments, case management, better data sharing and ongoing analysis, and the involvement of the community. Because a kiosk for clients to self-administer the Proxy was put into place, the cost of City Attorney staffing and training was lowered. According to program staff, the transition to this automation has gone very smoothly and was a key piece in the sustainability. In addition, to allow the enhanced services from Alpha Project and Urban Corps with the end of the grant funding, the partners agreed to increase the administrative fee from \$120 to \$150, with indigent spots still available for those who are unable to pay this amount. The Office of the City Attorney is committed to CJJ and is committed to work collaboratively with the project partners to continue to offer it as an alternative to those who are eligible and interested.

## **Summary and conclusions**

As described in this final evaluation report, over the 17-month period between late April 2016 and early October 2017, a total of 1,354 individuals accepted the offer to participate in CJJ, an average of about 20 per week. Complete assessment and progress data were available for 605 of these individuals and revealed that 59 percent of clients were male, the median age was 27.0, and two-thirds were either Hispanic (37%) or White (35%). Just over one in three (36%) reported no prior arrests and official records revealed that 9 percent had a conviction in the previous 12 months. Two-thirds (68%) of the clients scored “very low” to “low/medium” risk on the Proxy and of those assessed with the COMPAS, the highest level of needs were related to criminal thinking, financial status, residential instability, and substance abuse. Challenges were noted in terms of encouraging some higher risk clients to be assessed with the COMPAS and others to receive case management services who might have benefited from them.

Program partners gave high ratings to the program and the enhancement efforts that were undertaken as part of this grant and demonstrated their commitment to collaboration through increased documentation, information sharing, and an openness to change policies and procedures when data indicated a need to do so. By the end of the grant period all the proposed enhancements were put into place, including conducting client assessments, offering case management, implementing a new system for sharing data, increasing the use of data to inform decisions, and increasing contact with the community. Areas noted for possible further improvement included continuing to outreach to the community; strengthening the assessment process and creating stronger linkages to services, including CBT (should a validated program become available); and offering community service opportunities that are appropriate to the client to the greatest degree possible. Clients gave the program high ratings overall and often noted they enjoyed giving back to the community and working as part of a team on such efforts as homeless outreach, planting trees, and removing graffiti.

Clients who did receive case management received an average of three services which most often included life skills training, individual counseling, and financial assistance. More than four in five (83%) of clients completed all program requirements and had their case dismissed. Just under half who did not successfully complete failed to pay the program fee and do their community service hours. Clients who scored as higher risk on the Proxy and had a prior booking or conviction in the past 12 months were significantly less likely to complete program requirements than those with a lower risk score and no prior filings or convictions. In terms of recidivism, the treatment group was significantly less likely to be arrested and have a conviction in the 12-month follow-up period compared to the comparison group. For the difference in convictions, the treatment group was significantly less likely to have a misdemeanor-level property conviction. Eleven percent (11%) of the treatment group overall was convicted of an offense during follow-up (2% for a felony and 8% for a misdemeanor). Post-hoc analyses revealed that 7 percent of those who completed CJI had a conviction during follow-up, compared to 32 percent of those who failed.

## Lessons learned

- Early in the grant period, data showed there was a low completion rate of the Proxy assessment. Ongoing efforts followed to increase the completion rate that included staff training, requiring the Proxy be completed (as opposed to being voluntary), and the installation of a kiosk in a convenient location outside the court. For sites considering adding an assessment to what may already be a complicated process for an offender, it is essential that all partners are on the same page, that training is ongoing so that procedures to encourage participation are followed, and that the ease of completing the assessment is increased to the greatest degree possible. “Warm hand-offs” that facilitate an individual going to where s/he needs to be is also encouraged as resources allow.
- Engaging partners and keeping them on-board is essential. The City Attorney was committed to ongoing training of the Public Defender’s staff to ensure they were aware of this program and would remember to offer it. Over the course of the evaluation, the City Attorney was able to offer continuing education credit to attorneys who attended the training and expanded the training to private attorneys. These efforts helped to ensure the program remained in people’s minds as an option to offer to clients.
- A high percentage of clients who were eligible for case management declined it. The program explored options to increase engagement, such as offering an hour of community service for doing the COMPAS assessment with mixed success. Programs considering offering more intensive service options for those clients with the greatest risk and need are encouraged to explore innovative ways to engage them and to scope and budget the resources necessary to conduct the level of contact necessary to achieve this.
- Because program staff and attorneys, who had competing priorities were the entities primarily responsible for data collection, there were gaps in information that was required for research purposes, as well as some gaps in information transfer that resulted in missing or erroneous case status information. With one of this project’s goals being the strengthening of information sharing, strides were made in this area by the completion of the grant. However, it is important to acknowledge that reliable information sharing is not a one-time effort, information is only as good as it is regularly reviewed, and data can only effectively guide program decisions when it is understood, and all partners are on-board with the implications.

- Flexibility is essential. Over the course of the project, how the Sheriff's Department administered assessments was revised, as was policies and procedures for meeting with the clients, the administration of exit surveys, the timeframe to complete community service, and the amount of information shared with partners related to case management. Being able to work collaboratively is a key part of successful partnership and supports successful outcomes.
- While addressing criminal thinking was often an unmet need for the CJI population, a validated proven curriculum for low-level offenders that could be provided with the time and resources available could not be identified. As a result, none of the CJI clients received CBT as part of this program. Should such an option become available, the use of it is encouraged.
- While an expansion goal of this project was to increase the restorative nature of the project, and the City Attorney did conduct outreach to the community, some partners felt this component was not fully realized. In addition, others voiced concerns about the value of some of the community service was to clients and the desire that it be tied more directly to the individual's background, skills, and needs. While this was done to some degree, it would have been beneficial to the clients and community if this had been strengthened.
- While substance abuse was a need noted for about two in five of the COMPAS assessed clients, it was not clear that services to address these issues were readily available or utilized by those with this need. This lack of documented services could reflect that engaging clients in services that are not required can be challenging or that services were provided through other providers. Further discussion by the program partners regarding how to best address substance abuse as an underlying risk factor for some of the individuals in this client population is also encouraged.

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# Appendix: Propensity score matching and the comparison group

To select the comparison group from the universe of all filed cases by the City Attorney between November 1, 2012 and November 1, 2013, where the case reached a disposition prior to November 1, 2014, the following variables were used in the matching process: (1) gender; (2) ethnicity; (3) age; (4) defendant complaint type; (5) charge type; (6) prior booking; (7) prior booking for a felony; (8) prior filing; (9) prior filing for a felony; (10) prior conviction; and (11) prior conviction for a felony. It should be noted that for ethnicity and charge type, unknowns were coded to other and that arrest information was not available at the time of sample selection and could not be used as a factor. Age was calculated as the age at CJI intake for the treatment group and age at the filed date or the instant offense for the comparison group. The universe the comparison group was selected from was 14,667 cases.

Appendix Table 1 shows the characteristics of the treatment and comparison group after propensity score matching was completed.

**Appendix Table 1**

CJI treatment and comparison group after propensity score matching

	Treatment	Comparison
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	59%	60%
Female	41%	41%
<b>Age</b>		
Mean	30.8	31.2
Median	27.0	27.0
Range	18-78	18-73
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	37%	34%
White	35%	36%
Black	14%	14%
Other	14%	15%
<b>Instant offense type</b>		
Violent	2%	3%
Property	36%	37%
Drugs	2%	1%
Weapons	3%	2%
Other	56%	56%
<b>Jail booking in year prior</b>		
Yes, any	12%	11%
Yes, felony	5%	5%
Yes, misdemeanor	8%	9%
<b>Filing in year prior</b>		
Yes, any	10%	11%
Yes, felony	0%	0%
Yes, misdemeanor	10%	11%
<b>Conviction in year prior</b>		
Yes, any	9%	9%
Yes, felony	1%	1%
Yes, misdemeanor	8%	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>605</b>

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Community Justice Initiative Final Evaluation Report, 2019