



**THE IOWA
CONSORTIUM**
FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

INVESTING IN JAIL-BASED SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

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INVESTING IN JAIL-BASED SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

In 2006, the Iowa Consortium for Substance Abuse Research and Evaluation (Consortium) issued a report comparing the annual cost of treatment provision for clients participating in the Jail Treatment Program in Iowa to the annual cost of an Iowa prison sentence. The report examined and provided analyses to identify benefits to the State of Iowa in funding these services, as well as economic and societal effects, including direct benefits to individuals participating in the program. The original report used annualized figures to compute the average cost per day for an individual participating in the Jail Treatment Program and compared that figure to the average cost per day for an individual incarcerated in prison in Iowa. The following information provides further explanation and data which may be useful to service providers and policy makers considering the benefits of investing in a similar program in their county.

There are many factors to include when considering investment in a jail-based substance abuse treatment program. It is rarely possible to identify and quantify all potential direct and indirect costs and benefits. However, there are common variables to examine. Costs will vary by county and geographical location, population, program design, and other factors, including available resources. Indirect costs will include court, police, community corrections, as well as time spent by clients in halfway houses, correctional facilities, shelters, etc. It is important to note that the selected time frame used when determining the cost of a program influences the interpretation and findings. Comparisons of costs spread over a one year period of time may yield a much different finding than costs of a specific treatment episode, or if costs are examined over a longer period of time. Additionally, the fluctuating numbers of clients participating in a program over time and the number of treatment days provided may influence costs and outcomes. Client's treatment needs (i.e. level of care) should also be taken into consideration as some clients will require additional and/or more intensive services, which may include longer lengths of stay in the program.

Multiple methods of analysis may be valuable in determining jail treatment program costs. The 2006 report presented a "snapshot" view of annualized averages of various costs associated with and incurred over the course of the year for 408 clients admitted to the Jail Treatment Program in Polk, Scott, and Woodbury counties between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005. The calculations and figures presented below (derived from the original 2006 data set) show the average costs for jail and treatment only during this particular one year time span. A portion of the 408 clients had treatment costs that extended into the next year; therefore, all of the costs for the clients treated within that year are not included.

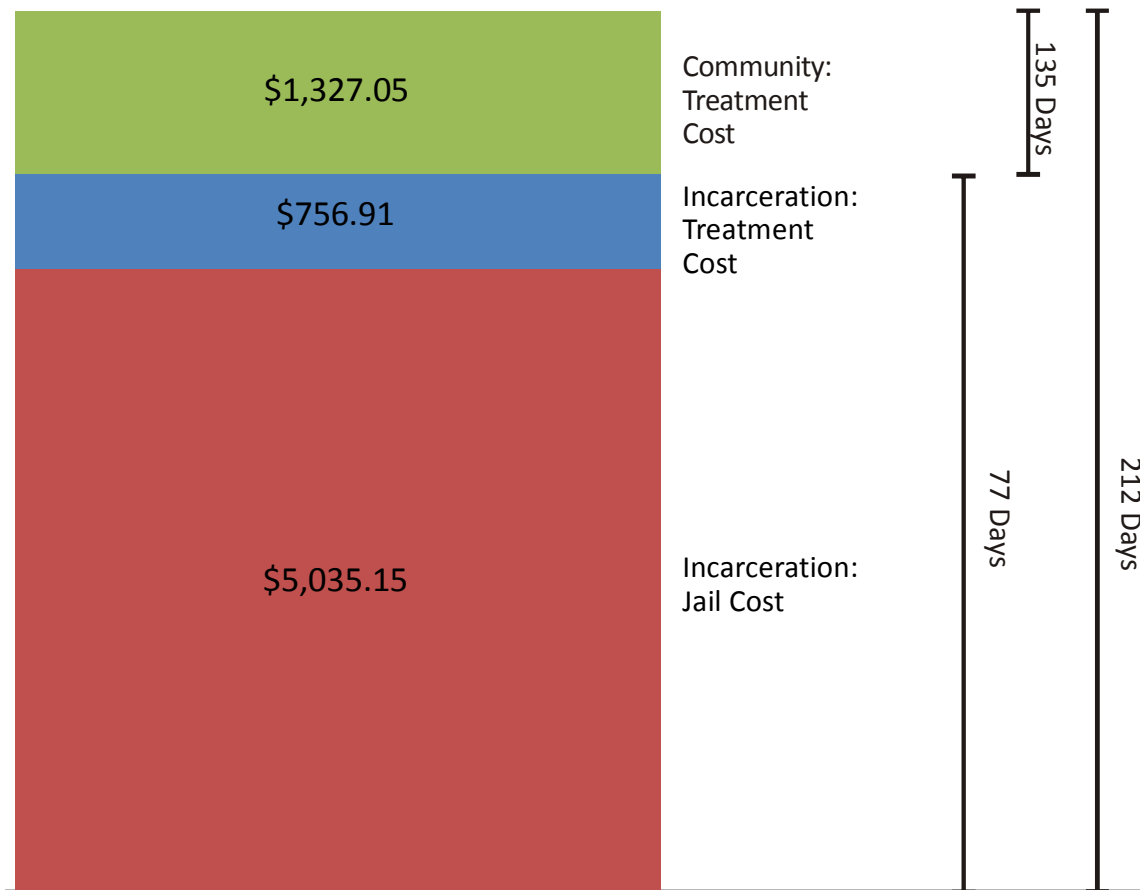
The average length of stay (number of days from admission date to discharge date) in the treatment program for the 408 clients admitted between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005 was 212 days: an average of 77 days was spent receiving treatment in jail and an average of 135 days was spent receiving outpatient treatment following jail release. The amount of time a client spent in treatment varied by county. In Polk County, clients spent an average of 110 days in the in-jail portion of treatment and 174 days in outpatient treatment; in Scott County, clients spent an average of 55 days receiving treatment in jail and 116 days in outpatient treatment; in Woodbury County, an average of 46 days was spent in the in-jail portion of treatment and 85 days in outpatient treatment.

The jail and treatment components of the program are presented by category so costs may be viewed for each service as well as the average cost for jail and treatment as a whole.

- The average total cost of incarceration for one year while the client was receiving treatment services in jail is \$5,035.15, based on an average of 77 days of jail at \$65.39 per day. [This figure was used to calculate an annualized average daily cost of \$13.79 per day in the original report, i.e., \$5,035.15 / 365.]
- Using the treatment cost calculated in the original report¹ and the average length of stay, the average cost for treatment while the client was in jail is \$756.91. The average cost for treatment following jail release is \$1,327.05, yielding a total average yearly cost of treatment per client of \$2,083.96.

Jail and treatment costs are added yielding an average cost of \$7,119.11 per client admitted during the July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005 time frame. Figure 1 displays the average cost of jail and treatment for these clients.

Figure 1. Average Cost per Person in Jail-Based Substance Abuse Treatment

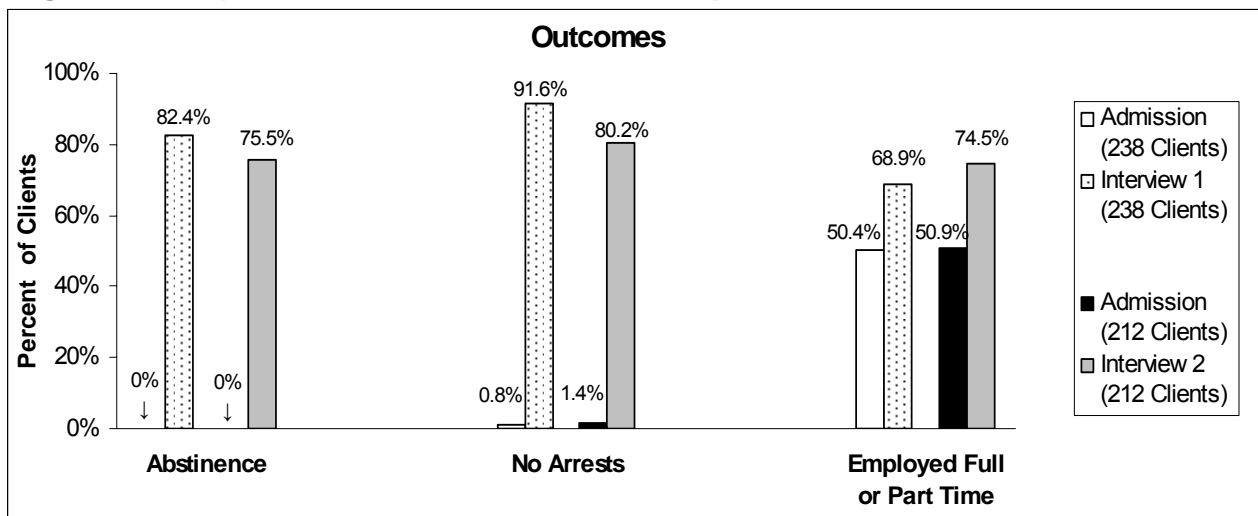


Average Cost per Person = \$7,119.11

¹ Five hundred ninety-five clients received 79,949 days of treatment between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005 for a total treatment cost of \$785,852.62.

To help identify and evaluate outcomes, the Consortium conducted follow-up interviews with clients who participated in the Jail Treatment Program as part of an Iowa Department of Public Health and U.S. Department of Justice sponsored evaluation. Two hundred thirty-eight of the 408 clients completed Interview 1, which occurred approximately six months following admission. Two hundred twelve clients completed Interview 2, which occurred approximately twelve months following admission. As shown in Figure 2, a large percentage of clients were abstinent, arrest-free, and employed full or part time at the time of the follow-up interview (the follow-up period refers to the six months preceding the interview). While the clients' income during their first year is probably not sufficient to warrant including their income tax dollars, clients will, hopefully, continue to make positive economic contributions to their communities in following years. Additional considerations of the costs and benefits include reduced hospitalizations and family reunification.

Figure 2. Comparison of Admission and Follow-Up Interview Outcome Data



“Abstinance” is defined as a response of “none” when asked at follow-up to name the substances used in the six months preceding the interview; it refers to abstinance from all substances. “No arrests” is defined as not having been arrested during the six months preceding the interview. “Employed full or part time” indicates the client’s employment status at the time of the follow-up interview.

As reported in the Jail-Based Substance Abuse Treatment Program Year Five Annual Report, 1,731 clients were admitted into jail-based substance abuse treatment programs in Polk, Jackson, and Scott counties, from November 1, 2002 through December 31, 2007. Eight hundred ninety-nine clients completed Interview 1 (six months after admission) and 677 clients completed Interview 2 (twelve months after admission). Results from the follow-up interviews conducted with clients include the following highlights:

Interview 1

- Six hundred ninety-four clients (77.2%) indicated abstinance.
- Eight hundred thirty-five clients (92.9%) interviewed were arrest-free.
- Four hundred sixty-five clients (51.7%) were working full time and 161 clients (17.9%) were employed part time.

Interview 2

- Four hundred sixty-nine clients (69.3%) indicated abstinance.

- Five hundred sixty-eight clients (83.9%) were arrest-free during the six to twelve month post-admission period.
- Three hundred ninety-six clients (58.5%) indicated full-time employment and 101 clients (14.9%) were employed part time.

Client Comments

“All the distractions were removed because I was in jail and it forced me to be honest with myself. I was helpless, desperate, and hopeless and they saved me.”

“I finally found my freedom in jail, freedom from drugs.”

“It is good to have counseling in jail because it forces you to be committed to your treatment and it gives you time to get sober.”

“The jail treatment program is amazing. They helped me find the root of my addiction and then solve it.”

“It was a brilliant idea. It is a great alternative to sitting in jail not doing anything. It got me to get the chip off my shoulder.”

“I have been to 26 different treatment programs and this one was the best by far. They focus on your thinking, not just your use of drugs.”

“They taught me how to change the way I think. No other program has ever done that.”

“After being in the jail treatment program, I feel I can do it on my own. I have willpower. I have been woken up by this.”

“They had my best interests in mind. It gave me the answers I was looking for and some I didn't know I was seeking. It changed me as a person and I deal with life in a new way.”

“The experience in jail made recovery possible.”

“The difference between this treatment is that other treatment programs tell you to change, but this program tells you how to change.”

“This program made me realize I need to hold myself responsible. I am accountable for my actions.”

“This program is the best thing that could have happened to me. The counselors helped save my life. I was very addicted and the time I spent in jail completely turned my life around.”

“I learned a lot. This program steered me in the right direction. The most important thing I learned was to think before I act. It changed my way of thinking. It has changed my life.”

“I am extremely grateful to this program for opening up a support network and giving me the education to cope with life. I went from homelessness to working full time and living in my own place.”

“They helped me see things in a new way. The program helped me find some self respect and helped me find a good feeling without alcohol. The workbooks, especially the criminal thinking book, were very good and made me see the similarities in what I really needed and how I got to that point in life.”

“I learned why I used and how to stay sober. The program has opened a lot of doors for me. I still have a long way to go, but now I have hope.”

“The time in jail was what I needed to dry out. This program got me refocused and allowed me to take a long look at my life.”

“This treatment program saved my life.”

Additional information may be found in the Year Five Annual Jail Treatment Program Report:
http://iconsortium.subst-abuse.uiowa.edu/downloads/IDPH/jail_based_annual_report_2007.pdf