

**El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court Program  
Comprehensive Report  
June 2004 through December 2007**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Accountability and responsibility are the primary focus of drug court programs, with offenders being held accountable through drug testing, intensive supervision, treatment, and graduated sanctions. These necessary program standards are reflected in the achievements drug court participants experience through reduced recidivism rates.

This study will provide a programmatic evaluation of the El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court Program (JDC). This study will evaluate the retention rates, recidivism rates for all participants during program participation and up to one-year post-graduation, and the drug testing results for all participants since the programs implementation in June 2004.

The findings of this evaluation will provide the juvenile probation department, juvenile board, the El Paso Independent School District and the JDC program with data, which can be utilized to measure whether the program is meeting the outlined objectives and outcomes and whether the program should continue its operation. The findings will also assist in future funding decisions for the program's continuation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Drug Courts are specialized courts, which divert offenders who are dependent on illicit drugs into treatment rather than into the traditional criminal justice system. They have been in operation in our country since 1989. Since the implementation of the first drug court in Dade County, Florida, there are approximately 2,500-drug courts nationally. The therapeutic jurisprudence established through effective collaboration and communication between the justice and treatment communities have lead to remarkable reductions in recidivism and future criminal involvement by those who complete the programs.

Drug courts are recognized for their strong collaboration between the judiciary and the treatment community. The collaboration and constant communication between these two entities enhance the outcomes of substance abusing offenders. A strong emphasis is placed on treatment, intensive court supervision, frequent randomized drug testing, and regular judicial contacts which is the cornerstone to the effective

management of drug court programs. Drug courts have grown dramatically across our nation since their inception in 1989. In 2004, the total number of operational drug court programs in the United States reached 1,621 (Huddleston, Freeman-Wilson, & Marlow, 2005). Currently the State of Texas has a total of 55 drug courts of which, 15 are juvenile programs. The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court is the only program in the West Texas region.

The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court Program is unique in that it is a gender specific program, which combines intensive judicial supervision, mandatory random drug testing, gender specific services, and immediate therapeutic interventions for behavior and treatment to help drug-abusing juveniles break the cycle of substance abuse. Each participant is thoroughly assessed by a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor and an individualized treatment plan is developed. The drug court cases are reviewed on a weekly basis by the Judge in collaboration with a team of professionals which include: Defense Attorneys, Prosecuting Attorneys, substance abuse and mental health professionals, law enforcement, school representatives, probation staff, and case managers. The cases are reviewed individually in an effort to assure that the juveniles and their parents are in compliance with program and probation requirements and also to ensure that their needs are being met. Juveniles are praised for their accomplishments no matter how small they are and are held accountable for their negative behaviors.

The program targets juveniles between the ages of 13-16 who have been adjudicated for non-violent offenses. The program was initially designed to provide a four-phase treatment program that lasts a minimum of 12 months and is followed by a 3-month aftercare component. In November 2007, the program design was modified to shorten the length of the program to 9 months rather than 12 months. This modification was made in an effort to move participants along in the program quicker thus allowing the department to service an increased number of juveniles during the fiscal year resulting in an increased yearly capacity. The program has a capacity of 24 participants plus their family members. On average the program provides services to approximately 50 individuals at any given point in time. The program provides services to the parents and siblings as it is recognized that the family dynamics are a major contributor to the

participant's delinquency and substance abuse in many cases. Family members are provided with parenting classes, and parent-child relationship building classes. Parents are referred to substance abuse counseling services if needed, and other social service referrals are made through our case manager. The program anticipates being able to serve approximately 30 juveniles plus their family members for the upcoming year.

Although drug courts are diverse in their approaches and procedures, they share a common goal: to help offenders overcome their drug dependence and thus end their associated criminal/delinquent behavior through court enforced and supervised treatment programs. These programs incorporate various treatment modalities and levels of supervision to meet the offenders' needs. Randomized and observed drug testing is essential, intensive court monitored supervision and regular judicial contacts are also essential components of drug court programs.

Drug Court programs have been recognized for reducing recidivism, retaining clients in the treatment process, and improving judicial outcomes for substance abusing offenders. According to the National Drug Court Institute, "studies indicate that drug courts reduce criminal recidivism by roughly 15 to 20 percentage-points as compared to the traditional adjudication of drug related offenses, and they enhance offenders' exposure to substance abuse treatment nearly six-fold as compared to standard or intensive probationary conditions" (Marlowe, 2006, pg. 4).

The purpose of this bi-annual evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the program in El Paso County and to assist the probation department in making future funding and programmatic decisions that could positively or adversely affect the continuation of the program. This evaluation study will seek to identify whether the program is effective in deterring recidivism. This evaluation will measure recidivism amongst the juveniles while participating in the treatment program and will further track the participants' one-year post-graduation. Additionally, the evaluation will measure the retention rate amongst the program's participants. Finally, this evaluation will attempt to discern whether the rate of positive drug screens progressively diminishes as they progress through the program. Therefore, all drug screens administered will be analyzed and the results documented along with the phase level in which they were administered.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Drug courts have achieved considerable local support and have provided intensive, long-term treatment services to offenders with long histories of drug use, criminal justice contacts, previous treatment failures, and high rates of health and social problems. Program completion rates are generally consistent with previous findings, with an average of 47% of participants graduating. Drug use and criminal activity are relatively reduced while participants are in the program (Belenko, 2001). Belenko (2001), less clear are the long-term post-program impacts of drug courts on recidivism and other outcomes. It is critical that data be collected at post-program completion in an effort to conduct a longitudinal study. The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court program gathers recidivism data on all participants who successfully complete the program for 2 years after their completion date.

Substance abuse and delinquency are often closely related. Research indicates that juvenile drug use is connected to recurring, chronic and violent delinquency that can continue well into adulthood (VanderWaal, 2001). Common factors such as academic and family problems, negative peer groups, a lack of neighborhood social controls, and a history of physical or sexual abuse can lead to higher risk for both drug abuse and delinquency (Dickinson & Crowe, 1997). Increasingly, certain elements within the juvenile justice system, such as juvenile drug courts, are realizing the importance of earlier and more comprehensive intake assessments (Drug Court Clearinghouse, 1997).

Available programmatic evaluations from similar programs across the nation exist and research indicates that drug courts do in fact lower recidivism and substance abuse amongst participants and graduates (Guerin, 2002). For example, the evaluation of the Bernalillo County DWI Drug Court found that the study has systematically shown that drug court graduates are committing new offenses at a lower rate than probation clients, both successful and unsuccessful. Not only are they committing fewer offenses overall, but they are also committing a lower percentage of DWI's and violent offenses (Guerin, 2002).

As treatment-based interventions, drug courts seek to maximize offenders' engagement in long-term services. Treatment research has consistently noted that longer time in treatment is associated with better outcomes (Carroll, K.M., Onken, L., Blaine, J., Boren J., (1997); Chou, C.P., (1998); Lang, M., Belenko, S.R., (2000); Simpson et al., (1997). Although there is some variation among drug courts, previous reviews of drug court research have noted that overall treatment retention is substantially better than in other community-based treatment programs for offenders (Belenko, S.R., 1998, 1999; U.S. GAO, 1997).

Consequently, virtually all drug courts have as their primary goals to lower recidivism and drug use reduction. Many evaluations collect at least some re-arrest data. Among the studies examined for this review, none had sufficient data to enable the calculation of one-year post admission retention rates.

Crowe and Sydney (2000) further contend that while drug testing can help identify needs and suggest appropriate referrals, it can also increase demands on the juvenile justice system because of a higher number of technical violations and increased costs in the short-term. Juvenile drug courts involve frequent drug testing and match for participation in appropriate treatment and counseling programs (Drug Court Clearinghouse, 1997). Drug testing is a common tool, and some experts recommend it when necessary for the initial screening and assessment, as well as monitoring treatment compliance (Nissen et al., 1999; Crowe & Sydney, 2000).

Research indicates that the lack of uniform data collection and measurement across sites makes it difficult to compare programs across jurisdictions (Heck, 2006). Recent evaluation recommendations released by the National Drug Court Institute (Heck, 2006) discuss uniform drug court data collection recommendations and measurements that will be incorporated into this evaluation study. The National Drug Court Institute reports that, "it is imperative that their good work be documented and reported in a meaningful and uniform manner" (Heck, 2006).

This programmatic evaluation is seeking to demonstrate that the El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court program is demonstrating a reduction in recidivism amongst those who participate and successfully complete the program, increased program retention rate in the program and in the treatment process longer yielding higher completion

rates, and demonstrate that the use of illegal substances is reduced as participants' progress through the various phases of the program. While substance abusing youth in the juvenile justice system differ from youth in community treatment programs in that their participation is mandatory, there is still a clear need to engage juveniles in their own treatment process in order to promote positive results. One effort currently in place in the juvenile justice system to engage adolescents in treatment is graduated sanctions, which are applied in juvenile drug courts in order to hold juveniles accountable for their actions and reward them for positive ones (VanderWaal, 2001). These positive or negative sanctions should be consistently and predictably implemented in order to help youth take responsibility for their actions (Drug Court Clearinghouse, 1997).

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court, in partnership with other community resources, is to reduce substance use and delinquent behavior; strengthen family and community ties, and emphasize education to non-violent juvenile offenders and their families by utilizing a strength based approach. The primary goals of the program are to reduce illegal substance use by the program participants, increase school attendance and academic performance and increase effective parent/child communication.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court (JDC) Program was designed as a ***gender specific program*** to serve female youth offenders between 14-16 years of age during its first year of operation. In August 2005, the program expanded to include a separate track for male offenders. Juveniles are court ordered to participate in the program whereby they will be receiving intensive substance abuse treatment, supervision, and case management services. The program focuses on the needs of the participants and provides educational, psychological, physiological, emotional, and spiritual support to all of its participants. The program is strength based and the youth are recognized for their accomplishments during their approximate one-year

participation while being held accountable for their negative behaviors. Education is an integral part of our program. Participants are required to attend school where their attendance and progress is monitored on a regular basis and reported to the Judge weekly during the drug court review sessions. Family participation is also important and is required as part of this program. Families are provided with parenting classes, and parent-child relationship building classes. The Drug Court's case manager based on need and requests from the families provides social service outreach, referral services, and follow-up case management.

The JDC provides services to male and female youth who are predominately from low-income households who reside in a HIDTA region (high intensity drug trafficking area) of El Paso County as designated by the federal government. El Paso County is approximately 1,058 square miles with a population of approximately 720,000 residents and borders the State of New Mexico and Juarez, Mexico.

This program offers a four-phase substance abuse treatment component and a 90-day aftercare program whereby the juveniles continue to be randomly drug tested. The case management services are intensified during this time to assure that the juveniles are properly linked to community resources and supportive recovery services in the community. If youth and/or family are in need of ancillary services such as mental health (for those with a co-occurring disorder), medication management, and/or housing the Case Manager will facilitate the coordination of the referrals. Currently, the El Paso County Juvenile Probation Department which operates the program, employs one full-time Special Programs Coordinator whose responsibilities include the JDC, the Special Needs Diversionary Program (SNDP), family preservation program, and the administration of state grants received from the Governors office, two full-time probation officers dedicated to the drug court caseload, one full-time grant funded Administrative Assistant, a Case Manager, and a Field Compliance Officer.

## **OVERVIEW**

Since the programs implementation on June 16, 2004, the El Paso Juvenile Drug Court(JDC) program has been in constant evolution and regularly seeking the means of enhancing services for the participants and family members. Thus far, the program has

provided services to 47 juveniles. During the period between June 2007 through December 2007 a total of 25 juveniles and their families were served by the program. The importance of any drug court program is the collaboration with other agencies interested in addressing the needs of the youth consuming illegal drugs. This Drug Court is committed to expand our collaboration with other agencies in an effort to enhance the services and opportunities for the program participants. The Drug Court has been fortunate to have a team of highly dedicated professionals who have a strong desire and commitment to work closely with our program and the youth. The team is composed of representatives from the Court, Juvenile Probation, El Paso Independent School District, El Paso Police Department, County Attorney's Office, Defense Counsel Representatives, Aliviane Inc., Pinnacle Inc., Providence Corporation, and other social service agencies.

In September 2007, the program was awarded a continuation grant from the Governor's Office totaling \$127,500. Funds have been allocated for substance abuse treatment services and one full-time Administrative Assistant. The funding allocated through this grant ends in July and a continuation grant application has been submitted to the Governor's Office and pending review in Austin, TX. During the 2007 legislative session our State government passed legislation on HB 530 which allows jurisdictions to assess a \$50.00 fee for all individuals convicted of a drug offense to include DWI's. The counties are authorized to keep 50% of the revenue collected to reinvest in drug court programs. Additionally, 10% of fees collected are retained by the county for administrative costs and the remaining 40% for the fees collected are returned to the state. Although the juvenile courts across our State are not authorized to assess this fee because juveniles are not "convicted", our program will benefit from the fees collected in our County. The funds collected within our county will be equally divided amongst all five drug courts in our jurisdiction.

The JDC and Aliviane have collaboratively enhanced the treatment component by implementing Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT®) and the Girls Circle Curriculum in 2005. The Drug Court is proud to report that since the implementation of this therapeutic model the direct service providers have noticed a dramatic improvement in behavior and cognitive decision making by our participants.

MRT® is an evidenced based objective, systematic treatment system designed to enhance ego, social, moral, and positive behavioral growth in a progressive, step by step fashion. MRT® has 12 to 16 steps, depending on the treatment population. MRT® attempts to change how drug abusers and alcoholics make decisions and judgments by raising moral reasoning from Kohlberg's perspective. Briefly, MRT® seeks to move clients from hedonistic (pleasure vs. pain) reasoning levels to levels where concern for social rules and others becomes important. Research on MRT® has shown that as clients pass steps, moral reasoning increases in adult drug and alcohol offenders and juvenile offenders. MRT® focuses systematically on seven basic treatment issues: confrontation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, assessment of current relationships, reinforcement of positive behavior and habits, positive identity formation: enhancement of self-concept, decrease in hedonism and development of frustration tolerance, and development of higher stages of moral reasoning.

The Girls Circle model is a structured support group for girls from 9-18 years of age, which integrates relational theory, resiliency practices, and skills training in a specific format designed to increase positive connection, personal and collective strengths, and competence in girls. It aims to counteract social and interpersonal forces that impede girls' growth and development by promoting an emotionally safe setting and structure within which girls can develop caring relationships and use authentic voices. Additionally, the Girls Circle Association has launched "Boys Council" a curriculum designed specifically for boys involved in or at-risk of entering the juvenile justice system in the fall. The Juvenile Drug Court Program is planning on incorporating this curriculum as part of the treatment component for the male participants of the program.

For the future the JDC plans to continue building its collaborative working relationships with our partners and expand our collaborations with other agencies in our community. The Drug Court will continue to seek funding to continue the program at its current capacity and possibly expand the program in the future. With the data gathered and the support of parents and participants who participate and/or have previously participated in the program, the JDC will advocate for additional financial support from the Probation Department in the future. The Juvenile Probation Department has absorbed the case manager position that was previously funded through a grant from

the Governor's Office. Grant funds received from the Governor's office diminish on yearly basis and efforts to sustain the program at the local level are ongoing. The program is striving to provide the El Paso County Juvenile Probation Department with data demonstrating the program is working, reducing substance abuse and recidivism amongst its participants, improving academic retention and performance, and improving the relationship amongst the family.

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

### **Goal #1. Collaborative Planning – Engage all team members in creating an Interdisciplinary, coordinated and systemic approach to working with youth and their families.**

The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court team members have formed a cohesive unit that involves several agencies during the planning and implementation stages of the Drug Court program. The advisory team includes representatives from various local agencies who work together to develop policies and procedures regarding Drug Court operations.

The advisory board for the program is comprised of the presiding Judge for the program, a juvenile court referee, private defense council, prosecuting attorneys from the County Attorney's Office, substance abuse treatment team, representatives from the El Paso Independent School District, probation officers assigned to the program, a field compliance officer, representative from the City of El Paso Police Department, Chief and Deputy Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, mental health professional, and a case manager. The advisory board meets an average of 4 times a year and focuses on discussing the areas of the programs that are working and what goals are being met and also focuses on addressing those areas or approaches that are not yielding the desired results.

**Goal #2. Teamwork – Develop and maintain an interdisciplinary, non-adversarial work team.**

The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court team interacts in a non-adversarial approach together and collaborates when making decisions about participants. Together the members equally respect one another's views, thus ensuring collaboration around the program goals of promoting public safety and recovery from drug abuse and for the protection of each participant's rights.

**Goal #3. Clearly Defined Target Population and Eligibility Criteria – Define a target population and eligibility criteria that are aligned with the program's goals and objectives.**

The target population and eligibility criterion established by the Drug Court team was adjusted in September 2005 due to retention issues. It was documented the Drug Court Program was admitting young men and women with extensive delinquent and runaway histories that were not lending themselves to the services of the program. For example, their extensive involvement in the juvenile justice system was impeding their success in our program. As a team, it was decided to look closer at the delinquent histories of those referred. The eligibility criteria focuses on including drug-involved youth between the ages of 14-16 and excluding those with a violent offense history, sex offender history, extensive runaway history, or history of transporting, distribution or manufacturing of drugs.

The program orientation was enhanced with the DVD produced by EPISD, which provides a thorough overview of the program for potential participants and their parents. It is critical that the program gauge the family support to assure that the juveniles will succeed in our supportive environment along with an encouraging home environment, which is needed to successfully complete the program.

**Goal #4. Judicial Involvement and Supervision – Schedule frequent judicial reviews and be sensitive to the effect that court proceedings can have on youth and their families.**

Based on observation of drug court sessions, the Drug Court Judge has demonstrated a high level of judicial involvement and commitment to the program. During the weekly court sessions, the Judge relates well to participants and takes an obvious interest in their lives and with the needs of the family as well. Between court sessions, the Judge stays in contact with staff and team members to remain updated on participants' progress. The Judge facilitates a well-balanced atmosphere of legal supervision and personal relationships with the participants. Since September 2005 through May 2007 there have been 134 judicial drug court review hearings which represents approximately 402 judicial contact hours with the juveniles, families, and team members. The program design requires juveniles in the first two phases of the program to attend weekly court review hearings and those in the third and fourth phase attend on a bi-weekly basis. Those participants whom have completed and graduated from the program and are participating in the aftercare program are required to attend court on a monthly basis.

**Goal #5. Monitoring and Evaluation – Establish a management information system for program monitoring and evaluation to maintain quality of service, and assess program impact.**

The Information Technology Department for El Paso County has worked diligently with the JDC over the last six months and has developed a database for the program. The prototype of this database was provided to the program in May 2007 and is currently being tested and is not fully operational at this time. The program anticipates to have all the necessary data entered and reports

created and validated within the next six months. The program director currently gathers data utilizing an Excel database.

**Goal #6. Gender – Appropriate Services – Design treatment to address the unique needs of each gender.**

Since the programs implementation, the focus has been to provide female gender specific services. Currently, the male and female clients are scheduled for group treatment sessions on separate days and court hearings are also held separately. Specifically, the female group is utilizing the Girls Circle curriculum as previously described. The program anticipates implementing a model similar to Girls Circle titled “Boys Council” in the winter of 2008 for the male participants.

**Goal #7. Family Engagement – Recognize and engage the family as a valued partner in all components of the program.**

The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court program recognizes the importance of family involvement in the treatment of the juvenile participants. Parents are required to complete a 10 week parenting class and if needed they will be required to complete a 10 week parent-child relationship building course to facilitate effective communication between the parents and teens. Both the parents and participants attend classes together and are required to complete “homework” assignments prior to each class. Members of the drug court team understand family members may influence the juvenile to make important choices throughout the duration of the program. Therefore, the team makes every effort to engage the family in all components of the program. Parents or other family members are required to attend and participate in court sessions, parenting classes, and family sessions as deemed necessary by the team. Additionally, parents are engaged in planning recreational events such as picnics and other recreational activities with the program team. These events allow siblings and extended family members an opportunity to interact in a social

environment with the team; including the Judge and other administrative staff. By involving the participant's family members during the drug court program, the participant's progress is enhanced and the family's relationship is strengthened.

**Goal #8. Educational Linkages – Coordinate with the school system to ensure each participant enrolls in and attends an educational program appropriate to their needs.**

The JDC program is extremely fortunate to have a strong relationship with the El Paso Independent School District. This enables the program to closely monitor participants' attendance, grades, and teacher assessments. Because team members stay in contact with school officials, they can quickly address any issues that might arise in order to best meet the needs of participants. All participants are required to attend school. All of the drug court participants remained in school, and while participating in the program truancy issues have been addressed by the court and eliminated. Student report cards indicate an improvement in grade and credit achievement in comparison to the semester prior to entering the program. This is due to the increased vigilance by program personnel and family members. There have been occasions in which parents have been court ordered to attend school with their child in an effort to address behavioral issues that the juveniles were exhibiting. This approach has proven to be an effective tool for the program. The juveniles' behaviors quickly change and become engaged in the learning process.

**Goal #9. Drug Testing – Design drug testing to be frequent, random, and observed. Document testing policies and procedures in writing.**

The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court program administers frequent and random drug tests to all participants throughout the duration of the program. As outlined in our policies and procedures, participants must undergo drug testing a minimum of three times per week in Phase I, two times per week in Phase II, and

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once per week in Phases III and IV. Additional tests are administered if team members believe it is necessary.

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## PROGRAMMATIC SUMMARY

**Table 1: Characteristics of Drug Court Participants**

| Participant Demographics    | MALES     |               | FEMALES   |               | TOTAL     |               |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
|                             | No.       | %             | No.       | %             | No.       | %             |
| <b>AGE AT PROGRAM ENTRY</b> |           |               |           |               |           |               |
| 13-14 years of age          | 4         | 18.2%         | 3         | 12.0%         | 7         | 14.9%         |
| 15-16 years of age          | 18        | 81.8%         | 22        | 88.0%         | 40        | 85.1%         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                | <b>22</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>47</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |
| <b>ETHNICITY</b>            |           |               |           |               |           |               |
| Hispanic                    | 21        | 95.5%         | 22        | 88.0%         | 43        | 91.5%         |
| Caucasian                   | 1         | 4.5%          | 1         | 4.0%          | 2         | 5.3%          |
| African American            | 0         | 0.0%          | 2         | 8.0%          | 2         | 5.3%          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                | <b>22</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>47</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

The vast majority of juveniles referred to the drug court program are of Hispanic decent and between 15-16 years of age. Referrals are made to the program by probation officers, defense attorneys, prosecuting attorneys and the Judge based on the substance abuse history. The majority of the juveniles referred and accepted into the program have been on probation in the past and community based supportive outpatient services have been provided in an attempt to meet their substance abuse issues. Unfortunately, the least intensive interventions did not meet the needs of the juveniles and they failed to maintain their sobriety and make behavioral changes resulting in a need for a higher level of intervention services in order to prevent removal from their homes and placement in a residential treatment facility or commitment to the Texas Youth Commission (TYC). Due to the juvenile's persistent substance abuse as evident by drug testing, problem behaviors at home and/or school and other reasons

trigger the referral process. The majority of the females in the program have a primary offense of assault family violence while the males in the program have a primary offense of possession of marijuana under 2 ounces.

## RETENTION IN DRUG COURT

Keeping participants in the Drug Court program is an essential and crucial element of the program. If a participant is removed from the program, they usually will not continue to receive treatment, which reduces the likelihood of successful long-term outcomes. Nevertheless, not everyone may have indefinitely long stays in the program. Some participants will be terminated to restore a therapeutic atmosphere and to provide an example to the remaining participants that they will be held accountable for criminal and deviant behavior. During the time frame covered by the current report (June 16, 2004 – December 31, 2007), forty-seven juveniles were accepted into the program and seventeen have successfully completed the program since its inception.

Program retention is the number of people who complete the program (numerator) divided by the number who entered the program (denominator). Overall, program retention is the ratio of those who complete the program divided by those who entered the program since the beginning. The program currently demonstrates a **73% retention rate** since implementation.

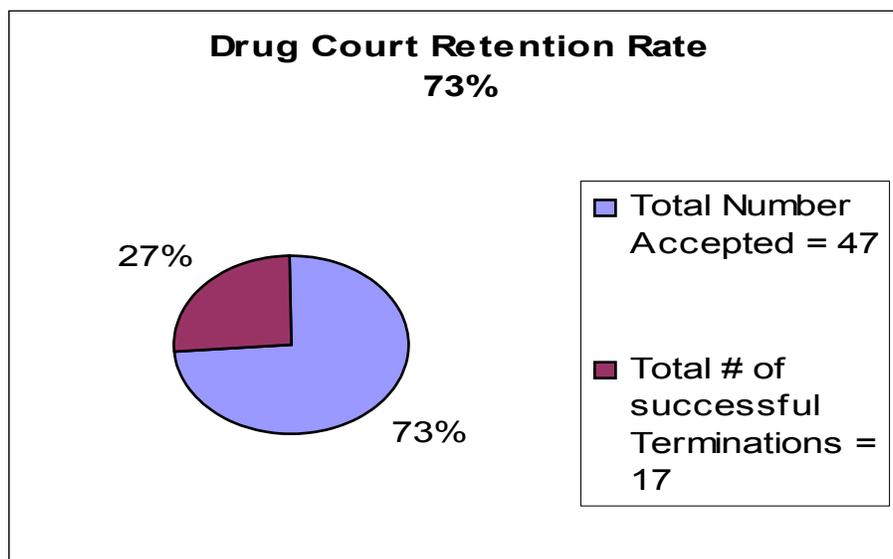
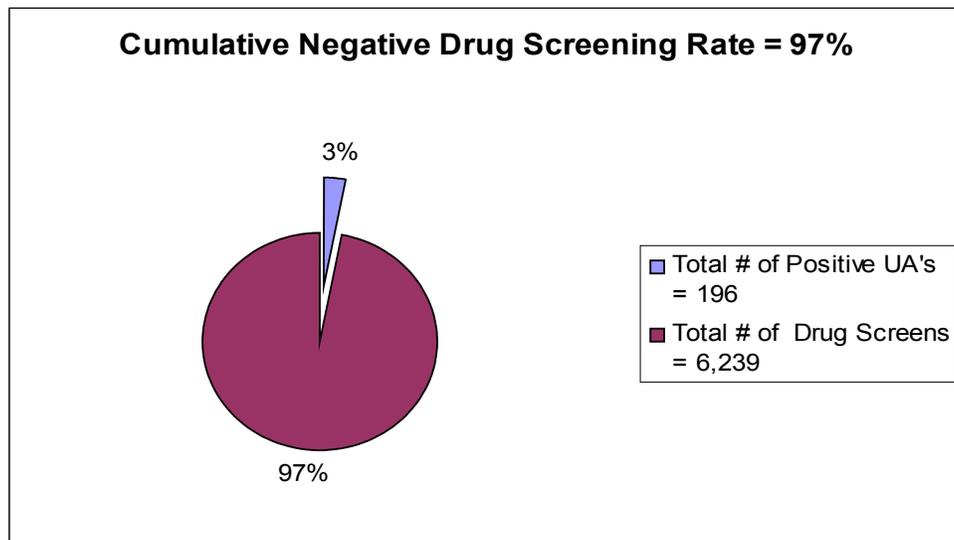


Figure 1

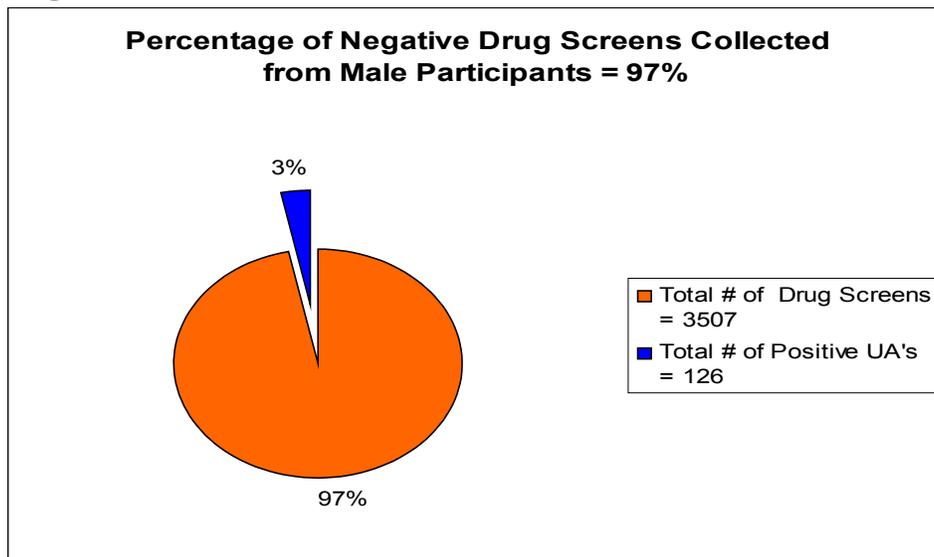
## DRUG TESTING

Since the programs implementation, a total of 6,239 urinalysis and/or breathalyzers were administered by our probation department, which yielded 196 positive tests. **This results in a 97% negative UA rate.**

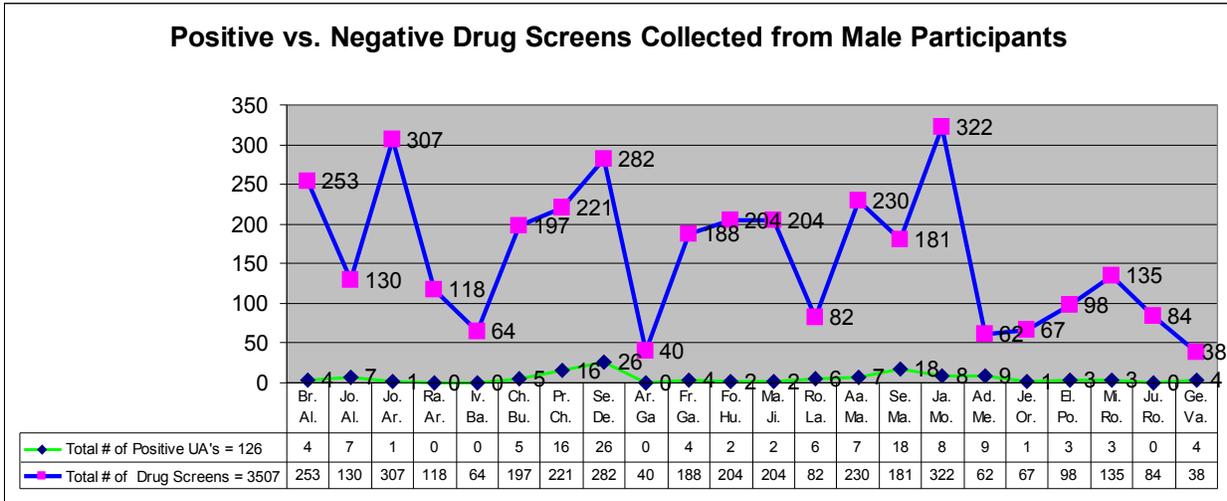
Comparing the first year statistics to the cumulative statistics for the two years since the programs implementation it is evident there has not been a significant change in the percentage of positive drug screens by phase. The results clearly indicate the participants are weaning off of the illegal substances as they progress through the treatment program.



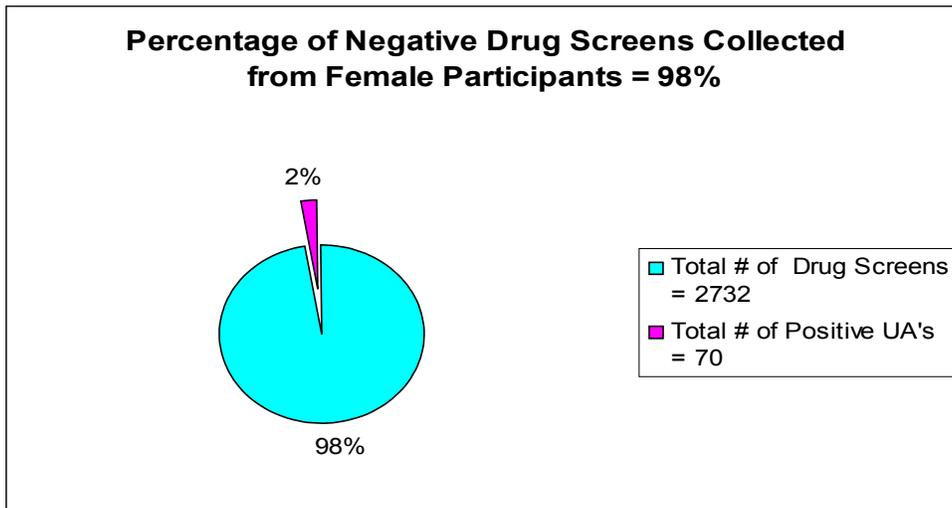
**Figure 2**



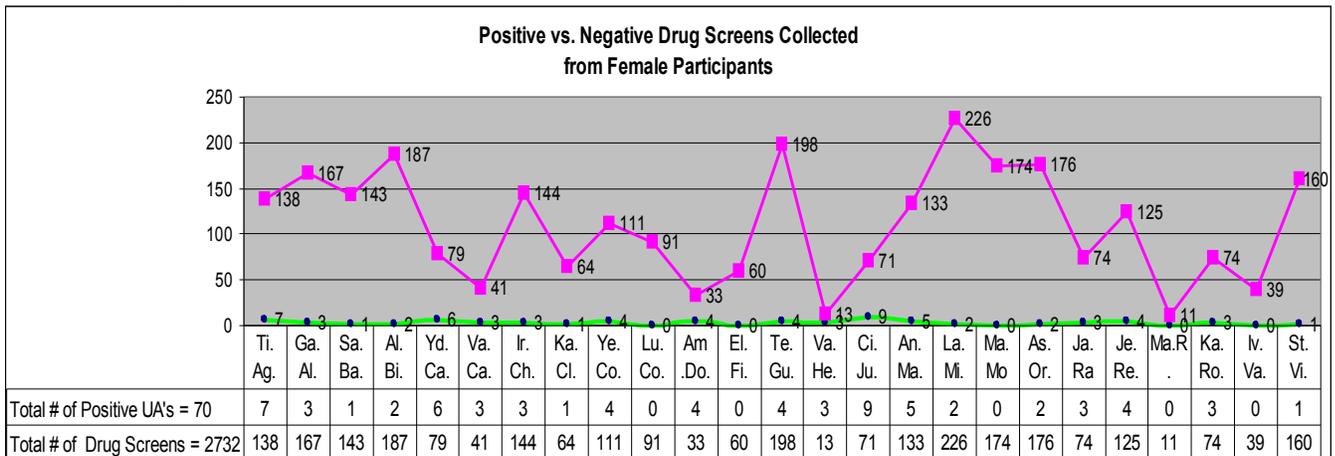
**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**

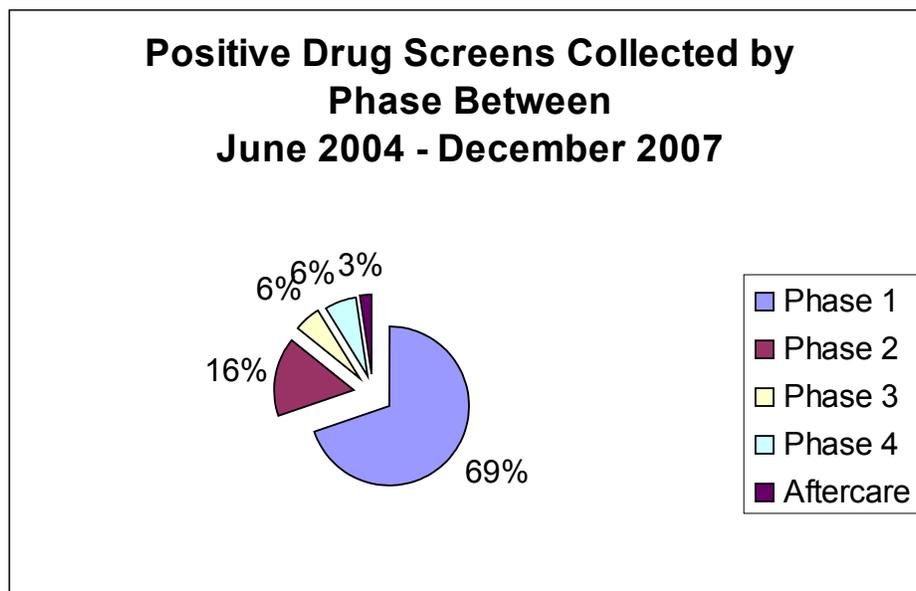


**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

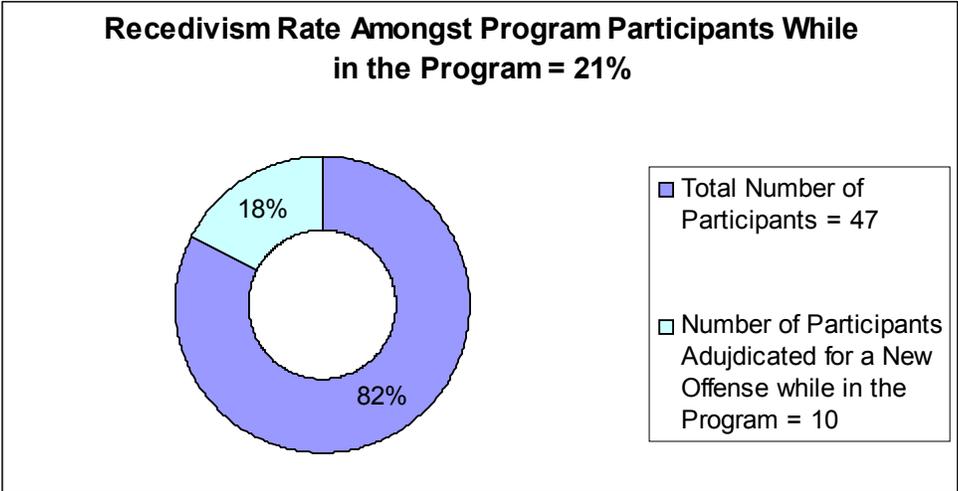
Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the positive test results were collected during the first phase of the program, 16% were collected during the second phase of the program, and 6% were collected during the third and fourth phase of the program, and 3% during aftercare. Our figures clearly illustrate the participants begin to internalize treatment and begin to focus on making changes to their behaviors and are able to maintain their sobriety as they continue progressing through the phases of the program.



**Figure 7**

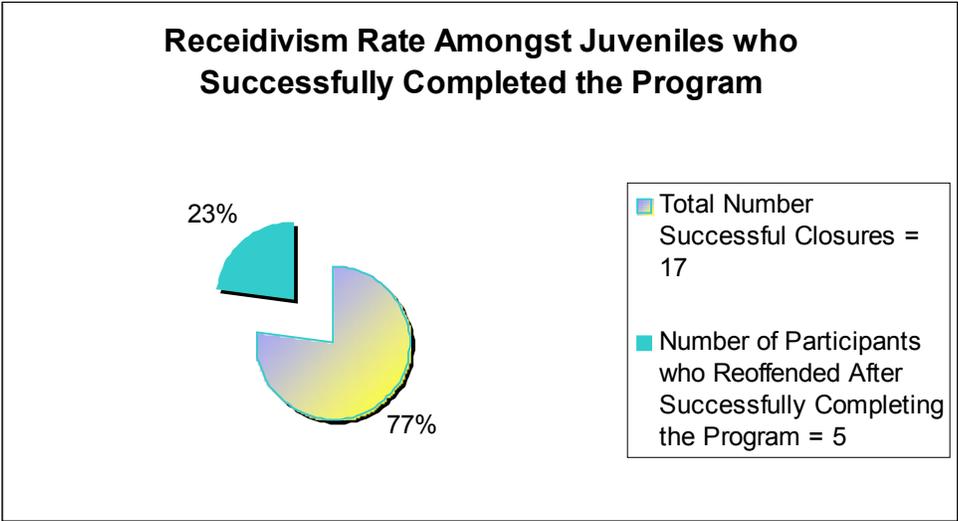
## **RECIDIVISM**

Recidivism is a straightforward outcome indicator used to judge the effectiveness of criminal justice-based programs. Therefore, one of the primary performance measures for the program is the number of participants adjudicated for a new delinquent offense while they are under the program's supervision. Since the programs implementation, 21% of the juveniles have committed new offenses.

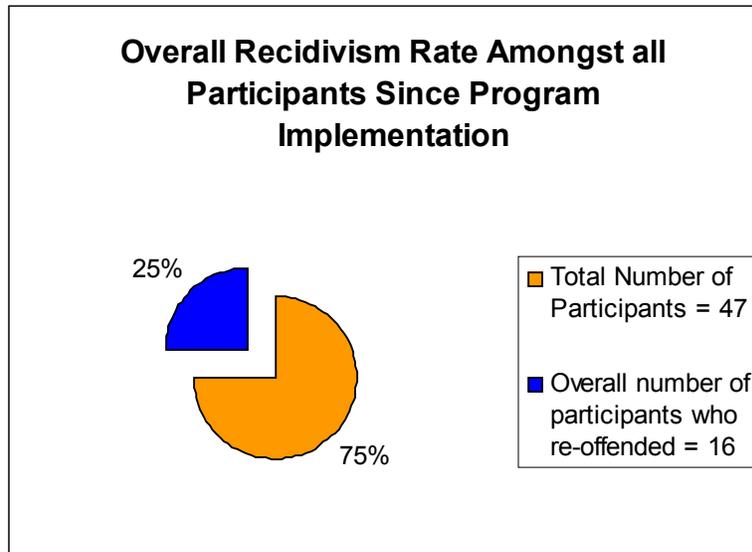


**Figure 8**

To date, seventeen juveniles have successfully completed the program and five of the graduates have re-offended in the adult criminal justice system. As demonstrated below, the recidivism rate amongst graduates is 23%.



**Figure 9**



**Figure 10**

The overall recidivism rate of all participants whether they graduated, were unsuccessfully terminated, or reoffended while in the program is 25%, which is slightly lower than the national average of 27.5% (Roman, 2003, pg. 2).

## **EDUCATION**

Education is strongly emphasized by the El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court. The vast majority of the participants remained in school during the program (including alternative schools/Charter Schools). Four of the participants gained their General Education Diploma (GED) while in the program and of those participants one joined the Army and has completed boot camp and another was enrolled at EPCC at the time of their program completion. Three participants graduated from high school, two of which were enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution at the time last contact was made with them.

During all of the court sessions, the Drug Court Judge pays particular attention to how the participants are doing in school. By paying special attention to the educational achievement of its participants, the program strives to achieve reduction in the high school dropout rate/truancy problems amongst its participants, which has shown to be positively and linearly related to employment earnings.

Following is a breakdown of the number of students per school district, GED program, charter school or college/vocational school attended by participants since the programs implementation in 2004. More than 50% of the participants enrolled in the program since implementation are or were EPISD students. Two of the three high school graduates were from EPISD and one from YISD.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| El Paso Independent School District:   | 20 |
| Ysleta Independent School District:    | 9  |
| Socorro Independent School District:   | 5  |
| Canutillo Independent School District: | 1  |
| Fabens School District                 | 1  |
| Charter Schools                        | 1  |
| EPISD GED Prep Program:                | 5  |
| High School Diploma Obtained:          | 3  |
| GED Certificates Obtained:             | 4  |
| El Paso Community College:             | 2  |
| Vocational Schools:                    | 1  |

NOTE: several students either graduated from high school or obtained a GED and have enrolled in post secondary education.

### **PROBATION SUPERVISION**

The intensity of home supervision provided by the probation officers, field compliance officer, law enforcement, and the case manager total 5,255 home visits during the reporting period covered by this report. The frequency of contact in the program is crucial in establishing a positive trusting relationship with the juvenile and their family members. The treatment component of the program is enhanced once the participants begin to trust the team and communicate their problems, concerns, likes, and dislikes. Communication is critical and we strongly believe working with the juveniles and their families in their home environment is important in establishing the communication and trust desired.

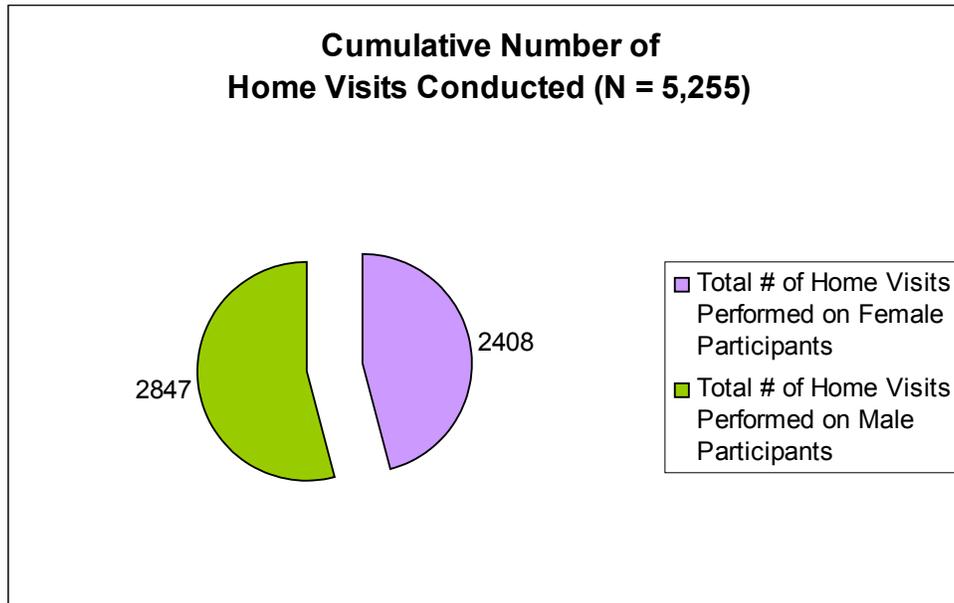
Considering that the program operates in an open group format, participants are accepted into the program throughout the year. That is, no two individuals will necessarily begin on the same date. The frequency of home contacts varies by the participants depending on the need for supervision. As juveniles progress through the program the frequency begins to diminish to allow the juvenile and family to work through issues without the need for our intervention or supervision.

The Probation Officers and Field Compliance Officer conduct frequent, unannounced home visits to monitor compliance with their court established curfew, conduct randomized-unannounced drug testing in the field, and to check on the electronic monitor if needed. Home visits by these officers occur in the late evening or early morning. Once a month or as frequently as necessary based on the officer's discretion, the officers conduct "sweeps" where they work from approximately 9 p.m. – 2 a.m. The purpose of these visits is to assure the participants are not sneaking out of their home to attend parties or cross the border into Mexico for traditional teen parties. The officers are diligent in seeking information pertaining to parties, raves, or clubs in the city or across the border that are attracting teenagers. Following is a breakdown of the total number of home visits conducted with the participants.

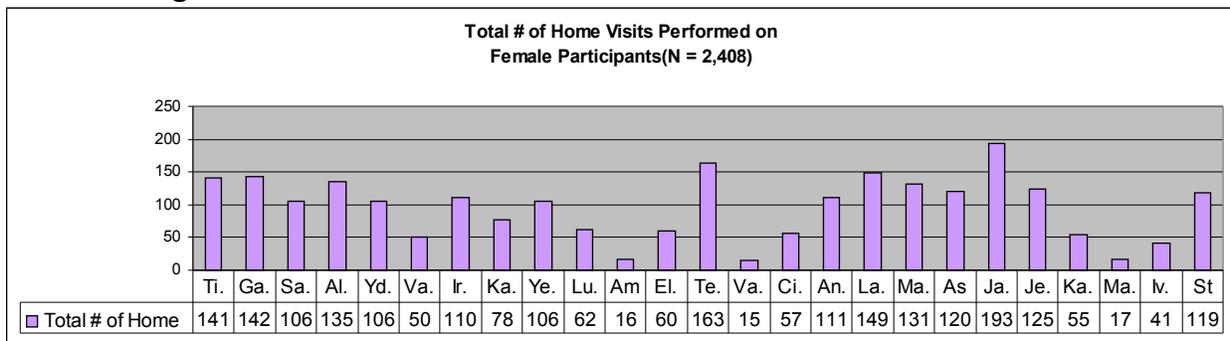
The El Paso Police Department has committed two police officers to assist the drug court team in conducting home/field visits to the participants of the program. The police officers monitor curfews and serve as mentors for the participants. The officers attend recreational and social events as organized and time permitting. These events allow the participants to interact with the officers in a non-threatening environment where they can communicate and interact in a positive way.

The Drug Court Case Manager coordinates the services of the program participants and family members when necessary in order to assist them to better meet their needs and attain specific goals as outline in the treatment and probation case plans. The Case Manager conducts home visits and attends meetings and appointments with the juveniles and family when necessary and serves as an advocate when appropriate. The case manager is responsible for linking the family to the appropriate resources and monitoring referrals when necessary. This individual also makes referrals and provides transportation when necessary to assure the participants

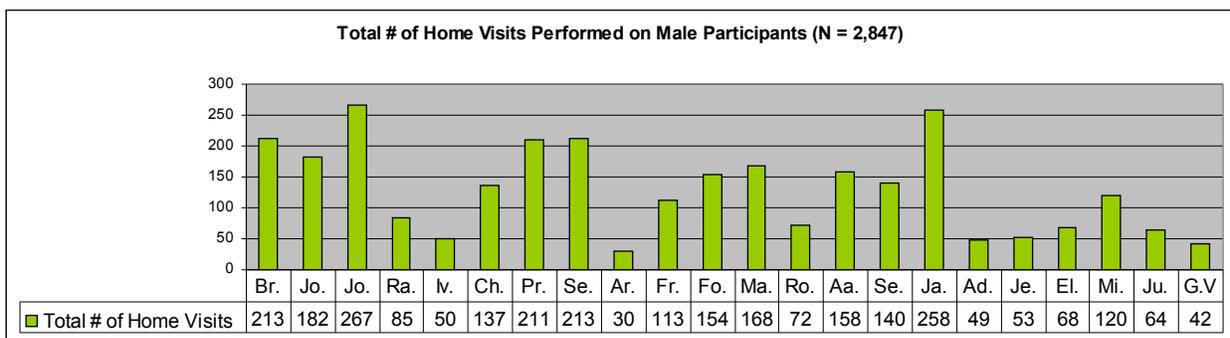
and/or family members access the services in the community when transportation is an issue. During the aftercare phase, the case manager contacts with the participant and family increases to a minimum of two contacts per week one of which must be face-to-face.



**Figure 11**



**Figure 12**

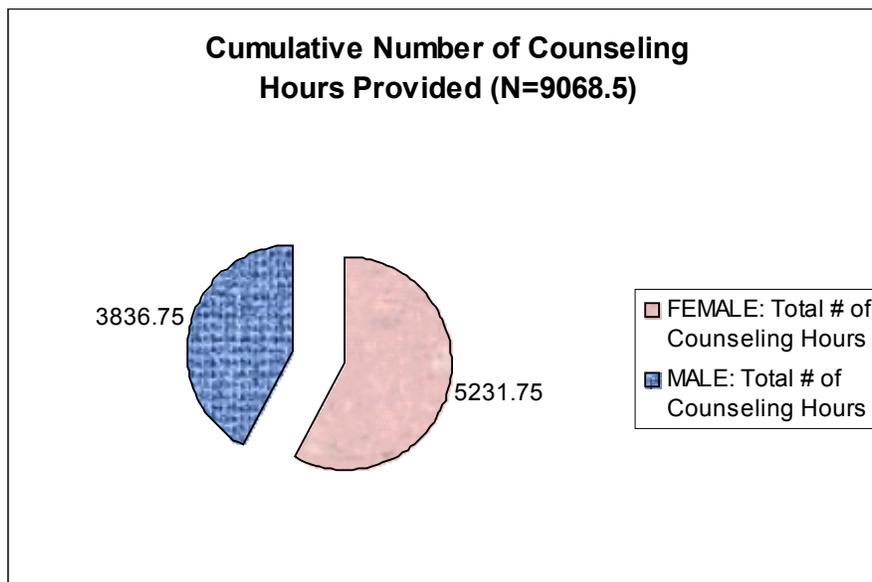


**Figure 13**

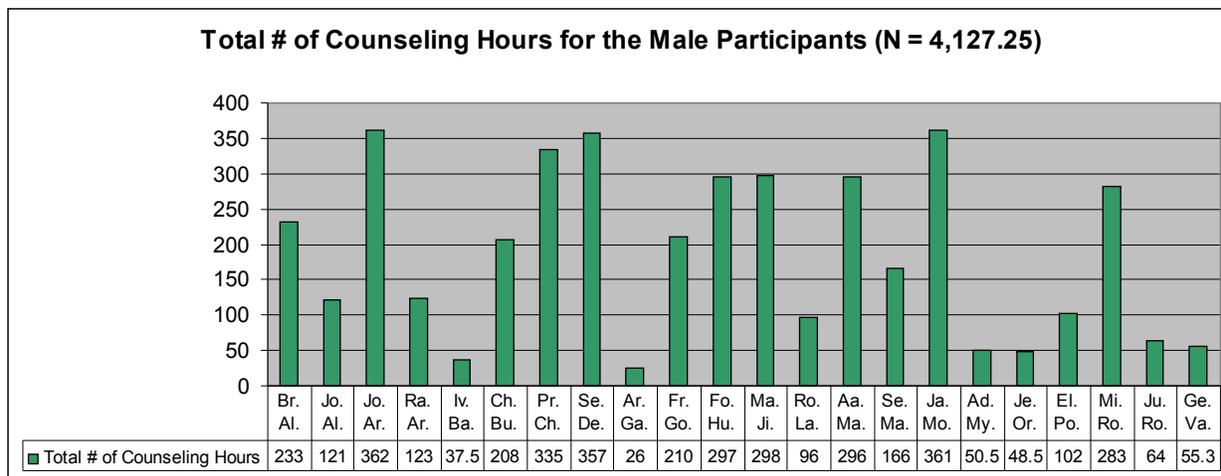
## TREATMENT HOURS

Substance abuse treatment services are the heart of the El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court program. Aliviane, Inc. has been providing the treatment services since the programs implementation and has been the leading force behind the monumental changes made in the lives of the juveniles participating in the program. Aliviane has been providing various services to the participants and in September 2005 they implemented the MRT and Girls Circle model previously mentioned in the introduction. Since implementing the cognitive behavioral model (MRT) the drug court participants, parents, and team members have noticed a dramatic change in the behavior, thinking process and communication skills of the juveniles.

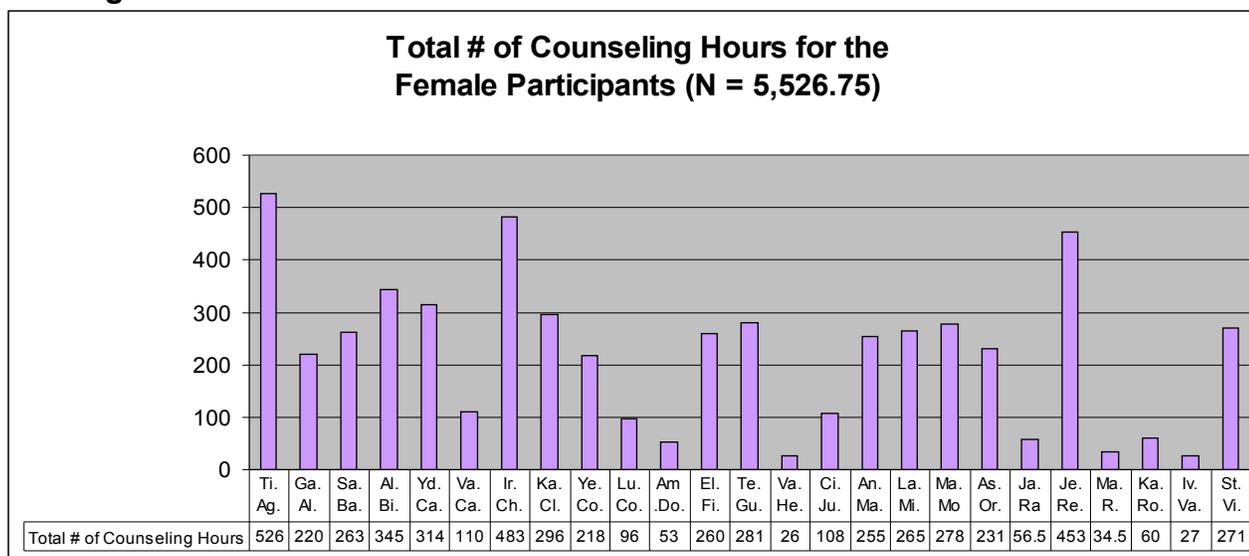
Since the JDC's program's implementation in June 2004, Aliviane has provided a total of 9,654 hours of services to the participants of the program. Below is a breakdown of those hours by participant.



**Figure 14**



**Figure 15**



**Figure 16**

## CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS

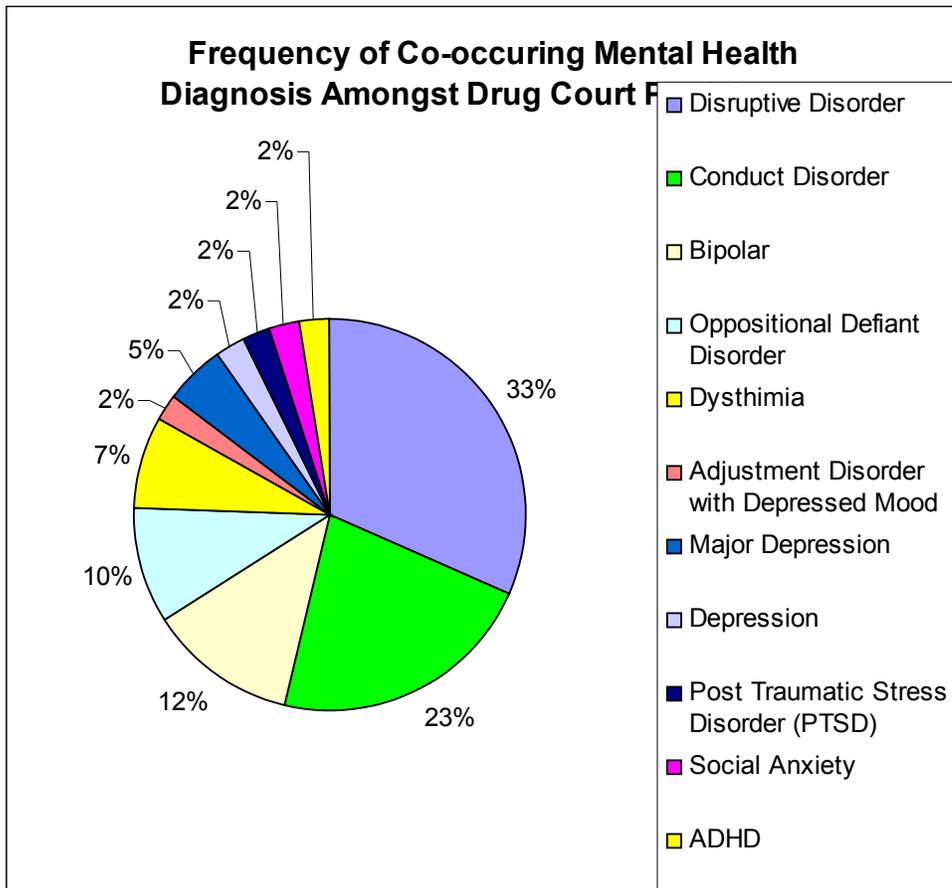
The high incidence of juveniles with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders in the program have required the diversification of services for the drug court program. Approximately 87% of the juveniles who have participated in the program have been diagnosed with a co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorder. According to national statistics At least 10 million people in the U.S. have co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders (SAMHSA, 1997). This group is defined as individuals with at least one substance use disorder in the presence of at least one Axis I major mental disorder, such as major depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia (Matthews, 2001). Individuals with co-occurring disorders typically have

multiple co-occurring disorders and problems, and as a group have high rates of physical illness, death, unemployment, homelessness, and criminal justice involvement, which often lead to greater costs for public services (Matthews, 2001). People with mental disorders are typically much more susceptible to the negative effects of substance abuse. Even using a small amount of drugs or alcohol can rapidly destabilize someone who has a mental illness and make their symptoms much worse. Additionally, when someone has a mental disorder, it can also make it more difficult for them to maintain abstinence or comply with treatment due to associated cognitive impairments. Such impairments associated with mental disorders include increased confusion, impaired judgment, impulse problems, memory problems, limited attention span or problems concentrating, and difficulty planning ahead. In addition to making mental disorders worse, substance abuse and withdrawal can also mimic or induce symptoms of mental disorders (Matthews, 2001).

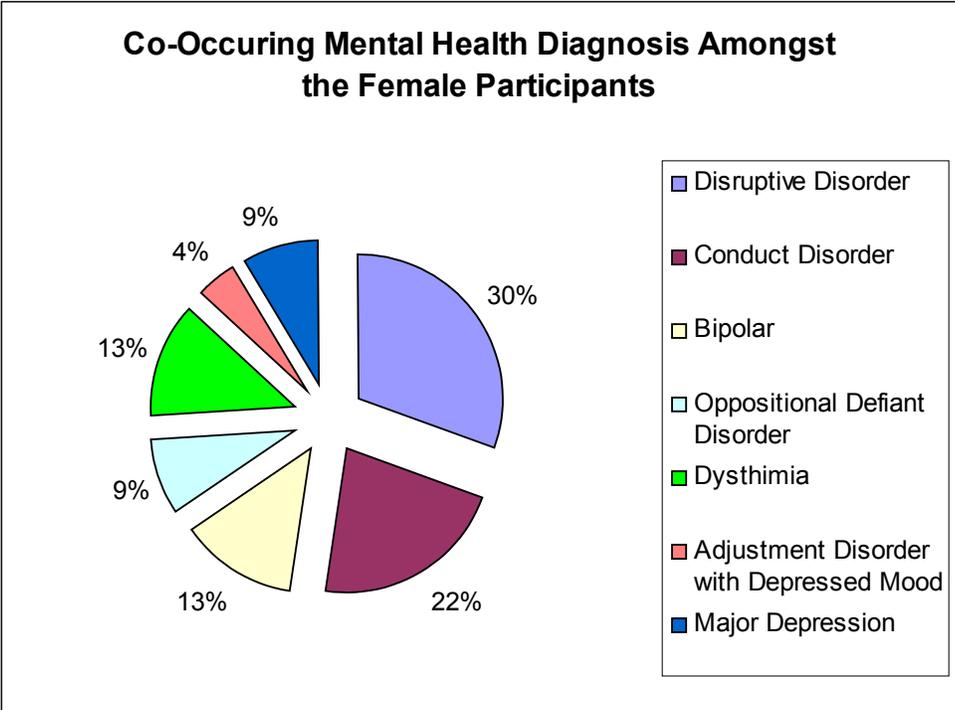
Programmatic statistics indicate that 87% of those enrolled in the program were diagnosed with a mental health disorder prior to or while in the program. Although the drug court program is designed to address the substance abuse issues of the juveniles, the program had to make the necessary modifications to integrate linkages, resources, and services to address the mental health needs of the participants. This is critical because both diagnoses must be addressed therapeutically in an effort to restore the child to a healthy lifestyle, address the family dysfunction, prior victimization, substance abuse issues, and all other areas on an individualized basis. Referrals are made to mental health therapists and the Border Children's Mental Health Collaborative when necessary to provide appropriate services in support of the juveniles individualized case plan.

The charts below reflect the diagnosis prevalence amongst participants of the JDC. The three primary diagnosis amongst the male and female groups are similar and they include; disruptive disorder, conduct disorder, and bipolar disorder. The program has utilized the grant funding received through EPISD to contract with Pinnacle Services for in-home therapeutic services for the juveniles that are in need of mental health services and family based counseling. Additionally, the program coordinates

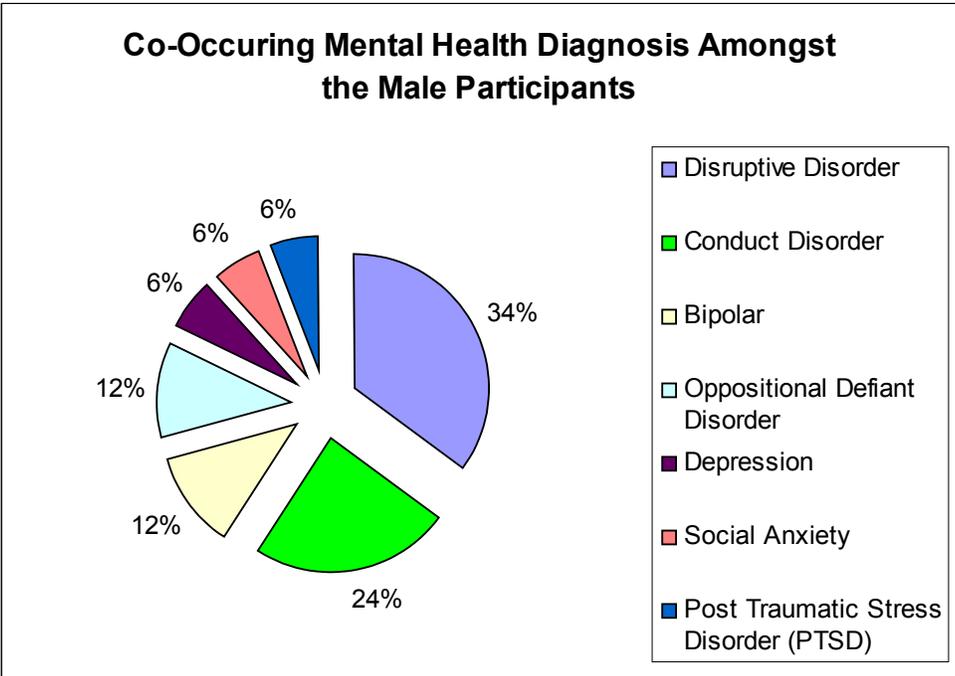
services with El Paso MHMR for psychiatric and medication management services as well as coordinates services with private mental health providers on occasion.



**Figure 17**



**Figure 18**

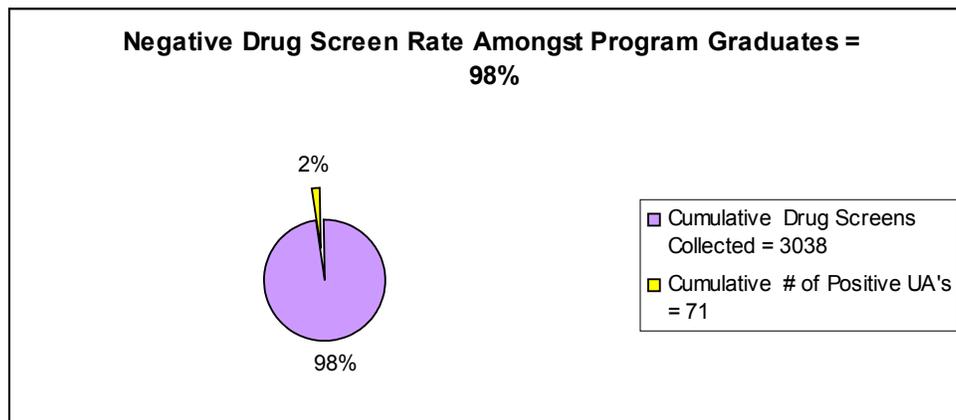


**Figure 19**

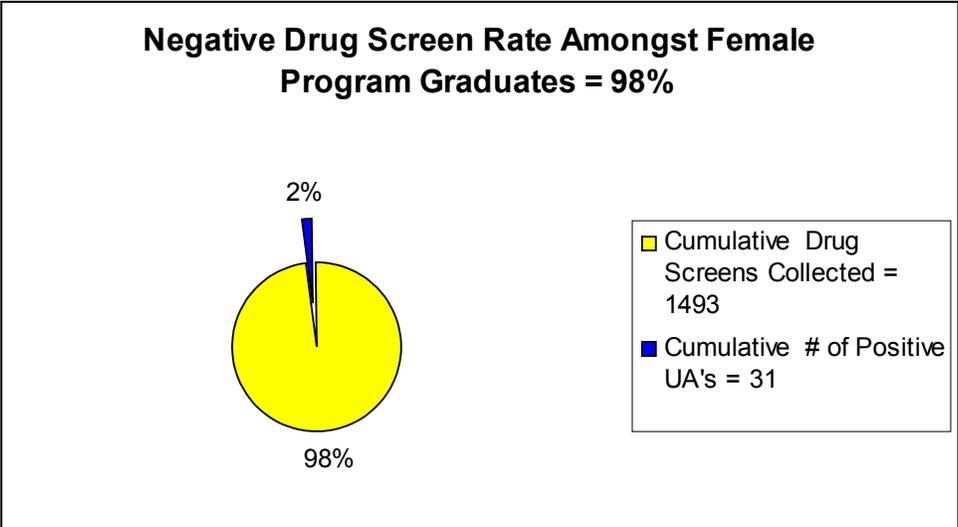
## **Overview of Drug Court Graduates**

As of December 31, 2007, a total of seventeen participants have successfully completed the program. Of the seventeen juveniles who have graduated, only two have been re-arrested for a new offense and all have maintained contact with our program. Of the seventeen juveniles who successfully completed the program, three graduated from high school since the programs implementation and four obtained their GED's. Of the seven who completed their high school education or GED, two were enrolled at El Paso Community College prior to completing the program, one enrolled at Western Technical Institute after completing the program and graduated in April 2008 as a Vocational Nursing Assistant, and one enlisted in the Army. Without the El Paso Juvenile Court's Drug Court program's intervention and services the parents reported they believed their children would not have made it through high school. Program staff is very proud that their emphasis on the importance of education, vigilance, and communication with the schools has facilitated this accomplishment for the participants.

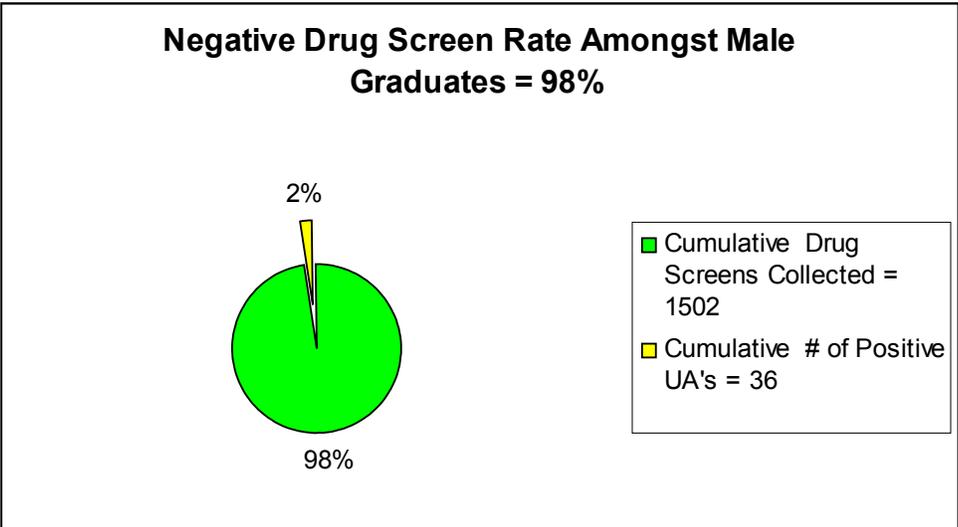
In reviewing the data of all of the participants who successfully completed the program, it is noted 98% of all drug screens collected by the program amongst those who successfully completed the program yielded negative results.



**Figure 20**

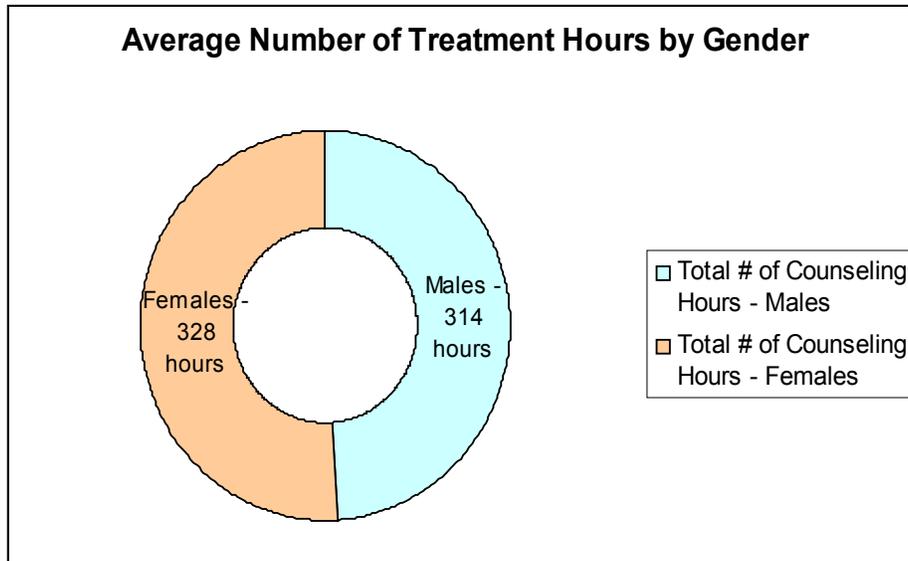


**Figure 21**



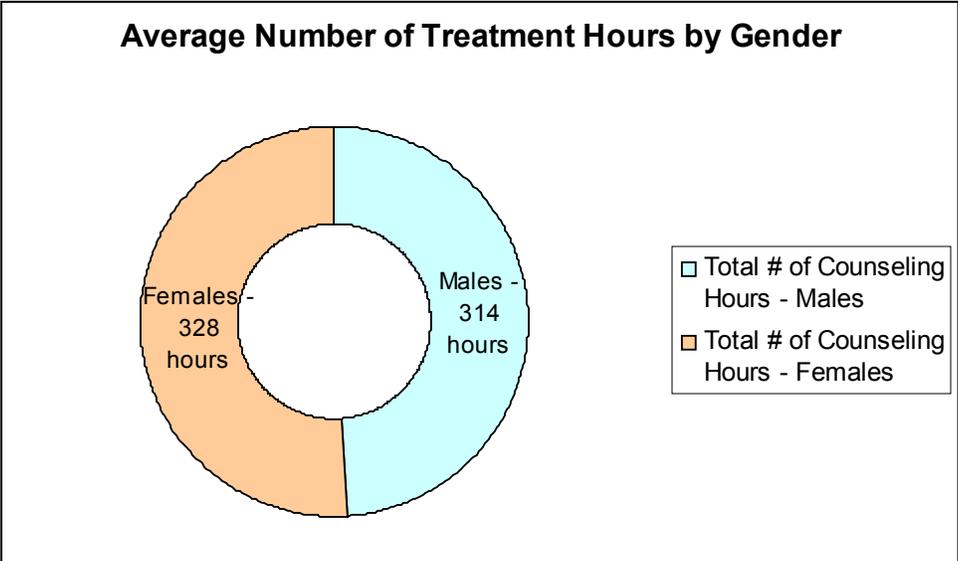
**Figure 22**

After reviewing the number of treatment hours provided to each participant who successfully completed the program, the data indicates an average of 328 group and individual hours were completed by the female group and 314 hours with the male group.



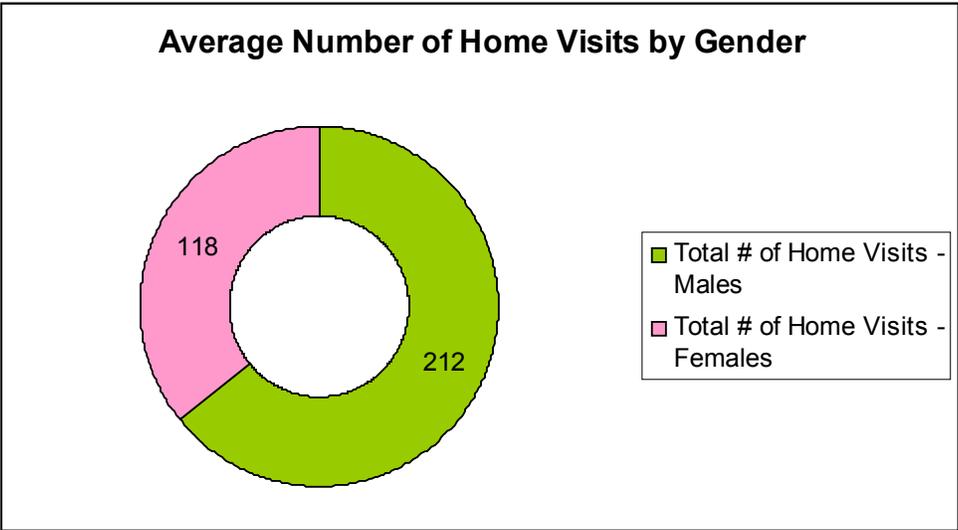
**Figure 23**

Additionally, the average length of stay in the program is 448.5 days for the participants who successfully completed the program. Although the program design required a minimum of 12 months to complete the program several factors influence the length of stay in the program. The length of time in the program is determined by each individual's progress through the program and the phases. Positive drug screens, behavioral issues, detention, and several other factors influence the length of stay. On average the majority of the participants remained in the program 83 additional days. Upon stratifying the gender variable and length of stay in the program it is noted that both groups are fairly equitable.



**Figure 24**

Moreover, an average of 118 home visits were conducted with the female participants and 212 home visits with the male participants who successfully completed the program.



**Figure 25**

**SUMMARY**

The first year of the program’s implementation focusing on the female offender proved to be a success and thus, the policy makers at the El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court program decided to expand the program and implement a separate track for

the male offender in August 2005. During the past 3.5 years the program has provided intensive services to 47 participants and their family members with much success. The dedication of the program staff and team members has contributed to the success of the program along with the commitment of the parents to support their children along this journey. With a 73% retention rate and a 97% negative drug screen rate, the program is clearly identifying a population that is amenable to changing their substance abuse behaviors to lead a drug free lifestyle.

The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court program has seen an increase in academic attendance, grades, and credit attainment since the programs implementation. The program is proud of its efforts in assisting educational campuses with increasing the attendance rates and enhancing the academic performance of the juveniles who participate in the program. This could not have been achieved without the dedication and commitment of the educators and administrators at the various campuses. The program's relationship with EPISD has been an integral part of our success in the educational realm of the lives of the young men and women we have worked with throughout the past three years. Without the dedication and support of the school board, administrators, and school teachers the JDC program would not be where it is today. The El Paso County Juvenile Drug Court program's dedication to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduates throughout the years has demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the program succeeds.

## **CONCLUSION**

The commitment and dedication of the personnel from Aliviane Inc. and Pinnacle Services has contributed to the success of the participants. The participants have engaged in treatment and have learned a great deal that will equip them with the necessary skills to lead a substance free lifestyle upon their successful completion of our program. This is evident with the reduction of substance abusing behaviors as indicated by the intensive drug testing conducted by the program. Pinnacle Inc. and Providence Services have provided intensive home based services, case management and/or parenting classes to the participants and their families. By providing home-based

services the program has noted an outstanding improvement in the communication, relationships, and decision-making amongst the participants and their family members.

The assigned Probation Officers and Field Compliance Officer to this program have demonstrated a caliber of professionalism and passion for their careers. They have diligently been able to blend their criminal justice roles with a therapeutic approach to enhance the outcomes of the juveniles they supervise. The probation officer's ability to effectively communicate with the juveniles and their parents, has contributed to their ability to establish trusting relationships, which enhance the communication and effectiveness of their jobs. Their commitment to work a varied schedule, which includes conducting home visits till 2 a.m. or waking up and seeing juveniles at 5 a.m., has proved to be a success in keeping the randomness of the visits and drug testing a surprise to the participants.

The support staff of the program provides endless hours of clerical, case management, drug testing, data entry, and support to the program and its participants. The programs field compliance officer assures that his field contacts and drug testing are conducted in a respectful and ethical manner and assures the confidentiality of all clients' information. The case manager conducts regular home visits to assure the participants are maintaining their medication compliance logs, to assure any ancillary needs of the juvenile and family are addressed and proper referrals are made and followed through.

As the El Paso Juvenile Drug Court program looks ahead to the coming years we will continue our efforts to seek funding for our program, community support, and training opportunities for our team to enhance our service delivery to the young women and men in our program. The program will also be exploring alternate means of drug testing such as the hair follicle testing. This will allow the program to closely monitor the juveniles and reduce the incidences of adulteration of the specimens collected. As the El Paso Juvenile Drug Court program looks to the future it plans to continue to enhance its services and expand them to serve a greater number in the future.

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