



**PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE LAKE COUNTY
ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT'S
COGNITIVE OUTREACH GROUPS (COG) PROGRAM**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the efficacy of the Lake County Adult Probation Department's Cognitive Outreach Groups (COG) Program, which is based on the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) cognitive behavioral program for adult offenders on probation - *Thinking for a Change (T4C)*. Eighty-nine (89) male and thirty-one (31) female high-risk probationers were studied. A quasi-experimental program design was utilized with COG Program completers matched to a comparison group of earlier probationers who had not been assigned to the program. The groups were followed for the duration of their respective probation terms and for three years after completion of probation service, and assessed for recidivism, as measured by successful completion of probation, new offenses resulting in arrest, and new offenses resulting in conviction. Results demonstrate that COG group completers were more than twice as likely to successfully complete probation than those in the comparison group, and that new criminal offense (as measured by either new arrest or conviction) rates for group completers were significantly lower than that for comparisons. *This study provides supportive evidence for the continued use of cognitive behavioral group treatment among high-risk offenders in Lake County as a means of reducing continued criminal activity.*

LAKE COUNTY ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT – COGNITIVE OUTREACH GROUPS
(COG) PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

There are an increasing number of adults in the United States under some sort of correctional supervision. In 2005, over 7 million people were under some form of correctional supervision including those incarcerated in jails and prisons, as well as those on parole and probation supervision (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). Over the past several decades, there has been increased focus on community-based offender rehabilitation in an effort to curb prison overcrowding and increase the number of treatment options available to offenders in their communities-of-origin. This emphasis has created rising demands on local probation departments and the development of numerous rehabilitative programs, many of which are of questionable quality.

Nationwide, recidivism rates for offenders on probation supervision have ranged between 30-60% (Beck & Shipley, 1989). The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (Adams, Olson & Adkins, 2002) indicated that while on supervision 30% of Illinois probationers were arrested for another crime, almost 40% had at least one technical violation, and probation was revoked for approximately 15% of probationers. An outcome evaluation of Lake County Adult Probation during that same period (Kuzmickus*, 2000; see Table 1) revealed similar outcomes for all cases assigned to probation, though High-Risk cases (based on the Illinois Adult Investigation & Supervision Classification System; AOIC, 1996) generally performed poorer than cases classified as Low- or Medium-Risk.

Table 1: Lake County Probation Outcomes – 2000

Successful Termination defined as:

- No new convictions or Petition to Revoke (PTR) filed for a Class A Misdemeanor or Felony offense.
- No court action taken for a technical Violation.
- Not closed on Warrant Status for a probation violation.

	Successful Termination	Unsuccessful Termination
All Probation Cases (n = 97)	41 (42.3%)	56 (57.7%)
Low – Medium Risk Cases (n = 53)	39 (73.6%)	14 (26.4%)
High Risk Cases (n = 44)	2 (4.5%)	42 (95.5%)

Successful Termination defined as:

- No new convictions or Petition to Revoke (PTR) filed for a Class A Misdemeanor or Felony offense.

	Successful Termination	Unsuccessful Termination
All Probation Cases (n = 97)	74 (76.3%)	23 (23.7%)
Low – Medium Risk Cases (n = 53)	45 (84.9%)	8 (15.1%)
High Risk Cases (n = 44)	29 (65.9%)	15 (34.1%)

Successful Termination defined as:

- No revocation to Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC).

	Successful Termination	Unsuccessful Termination
All Probation Cases (n = 97)	82 (84.5%)	15 (15.5%)
Low – Medium Risk Cases (n = 53)	53 (100%)	0 (0%)
High Risk Cases (n = 44)	29 (65.9%)	15 (34.1%)

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Despite the voluminous literature regarding the treatment of criminals, there appears to be little agreement regarding what works in reducing recidivism – especially among offenders released to community supervision. There is stronger consensus in the literature concerning which approaches do not work with offenders than those that do. Traditional psychodynamic and nondirective client-centered modes of psychotherapy have each proven to be ineffective in reducing antisocial behavior or decreasing criminality (Serin & Preston, 2001; Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990). Also ineffective in reducing recidivism rates are those treatments aimed at increasing offenders' self-esteem without addressing antisocial characteristics, increasing the cohesiveness of antisocial peer groups, improving neighborhood living conditions without focused work with high-risk families, and attempts to focus on vague personal and emotional problems (Andrews et al. 1990). Approaches that are relationship-dependent or rely on self-reflection are also considered ineffective (Andrews, 1995). Particularly lacking in the correctional research are empirical studies of interventions that are clinically sound, include a control or comparison group, and utilize solid research methodology. Thus far, the available acceptable research suggests that programs containing a cognitive component and/or based on a cognitive-behavioral framework yield the best results in terms of decreasing pro-criminal attitudes and behavior and improving the deficient problem solving and social skills that are associated with continued criminal activity.

Cognitive-behavioral therapies represent a broad category of clinical interventions that target an individual's thinking, as these approaches are based on the assumption that thoughts (cognitions) influence mood and direct behavior. Consequently, changing one's thinking leads to changes in behavior, feelings, and the underlying beliefs upon which they are based (Beck, 1976; Ellis, 1962). Cognitive behavioral therapies, as used with correctional populations, have been conceptualized as cognitive restructuring, coping-skills, problem-solving therapies (Wilson, Allen & MacKenzie, 2000), and cognitive skills training (Taymans & Parese, 1997). Cognitive restructuring therapies view problem behaviors as a consequence of maladaptive, dysfunctional thought processes. These include cognitive distortions, misperceptions of interpersonal interactions, and faulty logic. Cognitive restructuring programs, also referred to as cognitive self-change, address the content of offenders' thinking in order to change the underlying attitudes and beliefs that lead to criminal acts (Taymans & Parese, 1997). These are usually thoughts and values that justify antisocial activities (Cullen & Gendreau, 2001). For example, offenders may justify the crimes they commit by seeing themselves as a victims and crime as a reasonable response to the perceived injustices. Through cognitive restructuring, an offender would examine this thought, connect it to related emotions and actions, and learn how to intervene and change such risk-related thinking patterns. The coping-skills approach focuses on improving deficits in one's ability to adapt to stressful situations, such as improving interpersonal skills, critical reasoning and planning (Wilson et al., 2000). Skills training techniques tend to focus on identifying and teaching specific behavioral skills (Coleman, Wheeler & Webber, 1993). Problem-solving approaches teach offenders how to think, problem-solve, and act pro-socially and in a manner that will keep them out of trouble in stressful situations. Most successful cognitive-behavioral programs for offenders involve some combination of the above-described approaches.

Several studies have examined the efficacy of cognitive behavioral interventions for adult offenders. Taken as a whole, the collection of evaluations supports that group cognitive-behavioral treatment approaches are effective at reducing future criminal behavior among offenders.

The *Thinking for a Change* program was developed by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) as a cognitive behavioral program resource and designed to be employed within probation, parole, and prison settings. The program has been widely utilized since 1997, but until recently virtually no outcome data has been published on it. Its wide implementation, prior to any assessments on its effectiveness, is attributable to its low cost and flexibility. The program consists of 22 group sessions with each group lasting two hours and program providers can copy materials and make adjustments to the curriculum as needed. Limited outcome data concerning this program has been gathered to date (Golden, 2002; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2006).

In 2002, Lori Golden, Ph.D., of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, published the first outcome evaluation of *Thinking for a Change*. Her dissertation, entitled *Evaluation of the Efficacy of a Cognitive Behavioral Program for Offenders on Probation: Thinking for a Change*, focused on the program implementation with probationers in Dallas County, Texas. A sample of 120 program participants was used to assess the effects of the program on recidivism. Re-arrest data was collected at three months or one-year after program completion. Program completers showed a 13.2% re-arrest rate for new crimes; dropouts showed an 18.2% re-arrest rate. The matched comparison group showed a 20% re-arrest rate. Statistical analyses showed no significant differences between any of the groups. The recidivism rate of all participants in the *Thinking for a Change* group was 15.1% while the comparison group recidivism rate was 20%. This difference was also non-significant.

In 2006, Christopher Lowenkamp and Edward Latessa of the University of Cincinnati's Center for Criminal Justice Research evaluated the *Thinking for a Change* program utilized with probation offenders in Tippecanoe County, Indiana. 121 Treatment cases, who received *T4C* and standard probation services, and 96 Comparison cases, who received probation alone, were followed during the course of their respective probation periods (range 6 – 64 months; average 26 months) for any new arrest for criminal behavior. All *T4C* participants (n = 121) demonstrated a cumulative recidivism rate of 23%; successful program participants (n = 90) showed an 18% recidivism rate. The comparison group (n = 96) showed a thirty-five percent (35%) recidivism rate at the conclusion of the follow-up period. Statistically significant differences were found among each of the three groups.

The purpose of the present study is to evaluate the efficacy of a structured cognitive behavioral group program developed specifically for high-risk probationers in Lake County, Illinois, the Cognitive Outreach Groups (COG) Program. COG is based on *Thinking for a Change* (Bush, Glick & Taymans, 1997), a program developed by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) that is currently used with many probationers nation-wide. Although slight modifications were made from the original *T4C* curriculum, such as language use and lesson sequencing (K.

Grzanich* personal communication, 05/29/2008), the program continues to focus on cognitive restructuring of the thoughts and attitudes that put one at risk of engaging in harmful or criminal behavior.

Unpublished, preliminary research of the COG Program (Figeas*, 2005; see Table 2) indicated that from January 2002 through December 2004, 234 probationers entered the program and 165 of those probationers (134 men and 31 women) had completed the program successfully. Brief comparisons among COG program completers; those participating in COG, but were terminated or otherwise failed to complete the program (CPG program terminators), and those referred to COG, but did not enroll in the program (Referred to COG, but not enrolled) regarding successful termination of probation were also made at that time, revealing the following:

Table 2: Lake County COG Statistics & Outcome Measures – Probation Termination Status (c.2004)			
	COG Program Completers (n = 95)	COG Program Terminations (n = 46)	Referred to COG, but not enrolled (n = 52)
Successful Completion	56 (58.9%)	9 (19.6%)	8 (15.4%)
Unsuccessful Completion	39 (41.1%)	37 (80.41%)	44 (84.6%)

The present study involved comparing group completers with a matched comparison group on the following outcomes: successful completion of probation, new arrests and convictions during probation supervision, and new arrests and convictions for three years following discharge from probation supervision. This study is designed to extend the research literature on this program’s efficacy, adding to the body of literature on cognitive behavioral approaches for offenders generally, and adding to the knowledge concerning “what works” in community supervision and corrections.

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METHODOLOGY

Beginning in January 2002, the Lake County Adult Probation Department has been offering Cognitive Outreach Groups (COG). The program is based on the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) *Thinking for a Change* Program (NIC, 2001). The underlying concept of this program is that one's thinking controls his or her behavior, and by taking control of one's own thinking one can take control of their behavior and effect change in their life. The goals of this program include: 1) increasing the number of clients who successfully complete probation; 2) reduce recidivism; and 3) improve clients' abilities to take control and responsibility over their thoughts, behaviors and lives.

Prior to implementing the program, members of the 19th Judicial Circuit Division of Psychological Services Division (e.g., Dr. J. Dunne & K. Grzanich) were trained by NIC on the program components and conducted an intensive review of the *T4C* curriculum. Several changes were made to the original curriculum, which included relevant language changes and the consolidation of lessons within the body of the program. The three main components of the program – Social Skills, Cognitive Self-Change, and Problem Solving remained imbedded in the program curriculum. The number of lessons was reduced from 22 to 20, each designed to be presented in approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours at one-week intervals. Similar to *T4C*, COG is an interactive program that requires members to share personal experiences, provide feedback and to participate in role-playing exercises. Group participants are also given written assignments at the end of each lesson that they are required to present to the group the following week.

Most COG program participants are referred to the program by their probation officers in an effort to increase the likelihood of success on probation. These members voluntarily agree to participation in the program. Probation officers may also utilize COG as an alternative to possible court action for clients who are not complying with the technical conditions of their probation. These offenders participate in the program with the understanding that they may be referred back to court if they fail to complete the program. In addition, since June 2002, Judges have ordered selected high-risk clients to participate in COG as a condition of their original probation sentences, as well as an alternative to imprisonment for probationers who were found to be in violation of their original probation sentences.

In 2004, graduate student researchers from Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, under the direction of Dr. David Kosson, Ph.D., initiated an intensive study of the efficacy of the COG program developed in Lake County. A treatment group of 120 COG participants who had successfully completed the program between 2002 and 2004 was matched with a comparison group of probationers who had completed their probation terms before the COG program was initiated. Treatment and Control groups were controlled for gender, race, age, education, offense history (including prior felonies, prior probation terms, history of revocation, and violence), and length of probation sentence. (Table 3 below offers demographic characteristics of both groups.) This quasi-

experimental method provided the preferred method of investigation due to the selection of COG participants (non-randomized) and ethical considerations of withholding treatment due to the evidence-based principles on which COG is established.

Table 3: Probation Period Outcome Study Demographic Characteristics			
Variables		Comparison Group (n = 120)	COG Treatment Group (n = 120)
Gender	Male	99 (82.5%)	89 (74.2%)
	Female	21 (17.5%)	31 (25.8%)
Ethnicity	Caucasian	52 (43.3%)	68 (56.7%)
	African-American	49 (40.8%)	31 (25.8%)
	Hispanic	19 (15.8%)	21 (17.5%)
Age at start of study	Mean	25.4 Years	25.5 Years
	Median	23.0 Years	21.5 Years
Education	< 12 Years	60 (50.0%)	42 (36.2%)
	12 Years	48 (40.0%)	67 (57.8%)
	> 12 Years	12 (10.0%)	7 (6.0%)
	Mean	11.28 Years	11.59 Years
Length of Probation Sentence	Mean	24.5 Months	25.7 Months
	Median	24 Months	24 Months
	Range	12 – 60 Months	12 – 60 Months
Actual Length of Supervision	Mean	17.16 Months	18.67 Months
	Median	13 Months	18 Months
	Range	1 – 52 Months	4 – 43 Months
Prior Felony Convictions	None (0)	40 (33.3%)	54 (45.0%)
	One (1)	29 (24.1%)	12 (10.0%)
	Two or More (2+)	40 (33.3%)	32 (26.7%)
	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>11 (9.2%)</i>	<i>22 (18.3%)</i>
Prior Probation Terms	None (0)	55 (45.8%)	42 (35.0%)
	One (1)	62 (51.7%)	53 (44.2%)
	Two or More (2+)	2 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)
	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>1 (0.8%)</i>	<i>25 (20.8%)</i>

- No significant differences between groups on any of the above-noted variables.

In reviewing the post-probation offense behaviors of study participants, it was necessary to remove some of the participants from subsequent analysis due to death or long periods of incarceration. Inclusion of these participants in the subsequent study would have given the false impression that they were successful upon termination of probation, when in fact they were not exposed to risk for failure. Table 4 indicates those cases that were removed from the subsequent analysis.

Reason for Removal	Comparison Group	COG Treatment Group
Incarcerated DOC > 3 Years	3	3
Incarcerated DOC 1 – 3 Years	4	1
Incarcerated DOC 6 – 12 Months	3	3
Incarcerated DOC Unknown Duration	3	1
Deceased at Time of Probation Termination	4	0
Total Removed from Subsequent Study	17	8

A number of cases, though incarcerated in DOC at the termination of their probation cases were included in the subsequent analysis because it was determined that the time incarcerated in DOC was comparable to a short county jail sentence and that the time in DOC did not allow for the provision of offense-related treatment interventions. These cases are outlined in the Table 5. In these cases, time in the community and time to offense (both re-arrest and reconviction) were adjusted to account for the time that offenders spent in DOC.

Reason for Inclusion	Comparison Group	COG Treatment Group
Incarcerated DOC 5 months	2	1
Incarcerated DOC 4 months	2	2
Incarcerated DOC 3 months	2	1
Incarcerated DOC 2 months	5	3
Total Included in Subsequent Study	11	7

The resulting demographic characteristics for the post-probation phase of this study are presented in Table 6. There were no significant differences noted between groups, with the exception of ethnicity as revealed by an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Within the COG treatment group there was a disproportionate number of Caucasians and significantly fewer African-Americans than occurred in the control group.

Table 6: Post-Probation Period Outcome Study Demographic Characteristics			
Variables		Comparison Group (n = 103)	COG Treatment Group (n = 112)
Gender	Male	85 (82.5%)	82 (73.2%)
	Female	18 (17.5%)	30 (26.8%)
Ethnicity*	Caucasian	42 (40.8%)	66 (58.9%)
	African-American	44 (42.7%)	30 (26.8%)
	Hispanic	17 (16.5%)	16 (14.3%)
Age at Probation Termination	Mean	26.7 Years	27.1 Years
	Median	24.7 Years	23.5 Years
Education	< 12 Years	51 (49.5%)	37 (34.3%)
	12 Years	41 (39.8%)	64 (59.3%)
	> 12 Years	11 (10.7%)	7 (6.5%)
	Mean	11.33 Years	11.59 Years
Length of Probation Sentence	Mean	24.2 Months	25.4 Months
	Median	24 Months	24 Months
Actual Length of Supervision	Mean	17.23 Months	18.66 Months
	Median	14 Months	18 Months
Prior Felony Convictions	None (0)	35 (34.0%)	52 (46.4%)
	One (1)	25 (24.3%)	11 (9.8%)
	Two or More (2+)	32 (31.1%)	29 (25.9%)
	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>11 (10.6%)</i>	<i>20 (17.9%)</i>
Prior Probation Terms	None (0)	49 (47.6%)	40 (35.7%)
	One (1)	51 (49.5%)	49 (43.8%)
	Two or More (2+)	2 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)
	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>1 (1.0%)</i>	<i>23 (20.5%)</i>

* ANOVA revealed significant difference, $p > .05$

Demographic information, probation violations, and probation outcomes were accessible through Prober-Plus (PROBER), a software database customized exclusively for probation departments in Illinois and currently utilized by the Lake County Probation Department. Re-offense and incarceration data was accessible using three independent sources of information: Lake County Court Records Information Management System (CRIMS), Law Enforcement Accessible Database System (LEADS), and Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA). CRIMS provides arrest and conviction data exclusive to Lake County. LEADS provides statewide and interstate arrest and conviction data, though court-action related data is limited in some cases. Also, due to the proximity of Lake County to Wisconsin and the number of probation offenders residing in that state, WCCA was utilized in order to more accurately capture arrest and conviction data from the state of Wisconsin. Of the four databases used to retrieve information on program participants, only WCCA is accessible to the general public. All statistical data was analyzed using the software Statistical Program for Social Sciences – Version 13 (SPSS v.13).

RESULTS

The current results are in advance of a larger study in cooperation with researchers from Rosalind Franklin University. Further analysis of the data, including a comprehensive comparative analysis on each of the study measures and predictive analysis to assess the predictive power of the variables in regard to recidivism, is considered forthcoming. For this reason, the current analysis will focus exclusively on the area of broad comparisons between the COG Treatment group and Control group in terms of successful completion of probation, recidivism during probation and recidivism after termination of probation services. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

Successful Completion of Probation Supervision

Termination codes were available in PROBER for all study participants. As previously noted, there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of the length of supervision. COG Treatment group participants were tracked from the date of completion of COG through their termination from supervision. Control group participants were tracked from their intake date at Lake County Adult Probation through their termination from supervision. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the total number of termination categories between groups. This analysis revealed significant differences between groups for termination categories, $F(1, 238) = 56.45, p < .001$. Post hoc analysis revealed significant differences between groups for each of the termination categories (see Table 7).

Termination Category	Comparison Group (n = 120)	COG Treatment Group (n = 120)	Positive Impact of COG vs. Traditional Probation
Scheduled Termination	17 (14.2%)	59 (49.2%)	👍
Early Termination	2 (1.7%)	14 (11.7%)	👍
Administrative Termination	5 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	
Transfer Out	2 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	
Other	10 (8.3%)	3 (2.5%)	
Absconder/Warrant	19 (15.8%)	5 (4.2%)	👎
Unsatisfactory Termination	5 (4.2%)	25 (20.8%)	
Revoked-Technical	34 (28.3%)	10 (8.3%)	👍
Revoked-New Offense	10 (8.3%)	3 (2.5%)	👍
Revoked DOC-Technical	9 (7.5%)	1 (0.8%)	👍
Revoked DOC-New Offense	7 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)	👍

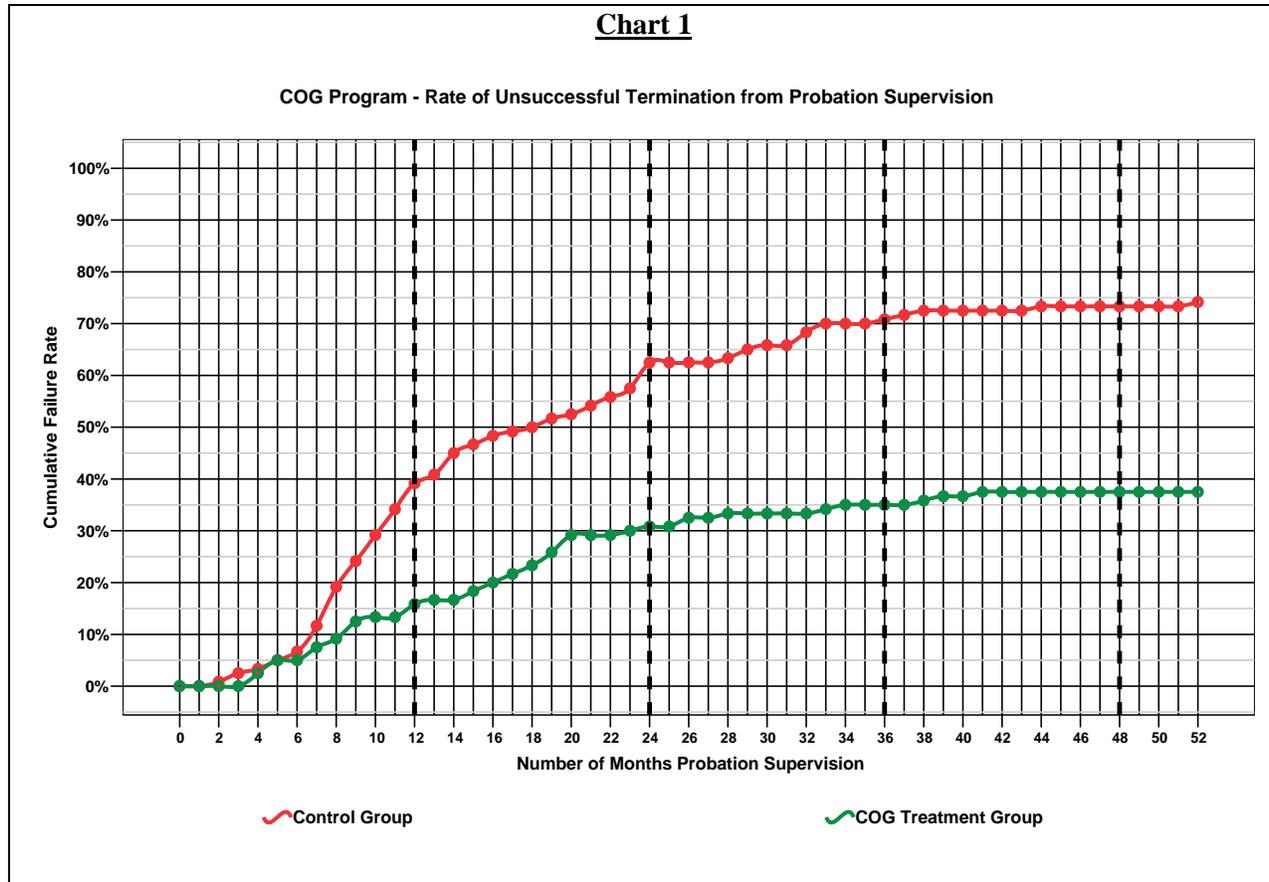
Each of the above-referenced termination categories were further collapsed into dichotomous categories reflecting successful or unsuccessful termination of probation supervision (see Table 8). Scheduled and Early Terminations were considered successful; Absconders, Unsatisfactory Terminations, and all categories of Revocation were considered unsuccessful. Generally neutral termination categories (e.g., Administrative Terminations, Transfer Out, and Other terminations) were investigated through both PROBER discharge notes and CRIMS court case data to reveal the underlying cause for termination. In the five cases of “Administrative

Termination”, either the conviction or imposed sentence was overturned. Each of the “Transfers Out” were originally courtesy supervisions from other jurisdictions who returned to their place of origin. In only one case was this to face new charges in that state, which was recorded as an unsuccessful completion. Four cases of other termination were due to the death of the participant, others were incorrectly classified as several participants were in custody with pending charges at the time of termination. In those remaining cases in which an arrest immediately preceded “Other Termination,” termination was considered as unsuccessful. As evaluated by Chi Square test, there were statistically significant differences between the groups in the resulting rate of successful termination from probation services, $\chi^2 = (1, N=240) = 42.20, p < .001$.

Table 8: Successful Termination of Probation Supervision

Type of Termination	Comparison Group (n = 120)	COG Treatment Group (n = 120)	Positive Impact of COG vs. Traditional Probation
Successful Termination	31 (25.8%)	75 (62.5%)	+ 141.9% in Rate of Successful Completions
Unsuccessful Termination	89 (74.2%)	45 (37.5%)	

COG program completers successfully completed their probation terms at a significantly higher rate than those in the control group. An additional time-series analysis (Chart 1) illustrates the cumulative failure rate over the course of probation. For the purposes of this illustration, a time-scale of **52 months (the maximum duration of probation follow-up)** is used; hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. After a 52-month follow-up period, COG Group participants demonstrated a **49.4% reduction in the rate of unsuccessful completions**.



Recidivism for New Offenses during Probation Supervision

Criminal records data was available for all study participants to track recidivism through CRIMS, LEADS, and WCCA. In some cases there were discrepancies in the date of offense recorded between CRIMS and LEADS pertaining to Lake County data. In these cases, CRIMS data was used to record the date of offense during the recording period. This recording period was the date of COG completion for the COG Treatment Group and the date of Lake County probation intake for the Control Group. Each group was followed through the termination of Lake County probation services. Two measures of recidivism are presented here: 1) First Offense Resulting in Arrest, and 2) First Offense Resulting in Conviction. In both cases, recidivism is based on the first incidence of a Class A Misdemeanor or Felony class offense. There are several reasons for presenting both measures of recidivism. First of all, many program outcome studies present only arrest data as a measure of recidivism. This is due to both the accessibility and convenience of obtaining this data. Although this may be an inaccurate measure of criminal behavior, it does offer a means of comparison with existing studies. Conviction data is often considered a more reliable measure of criminal behavior.

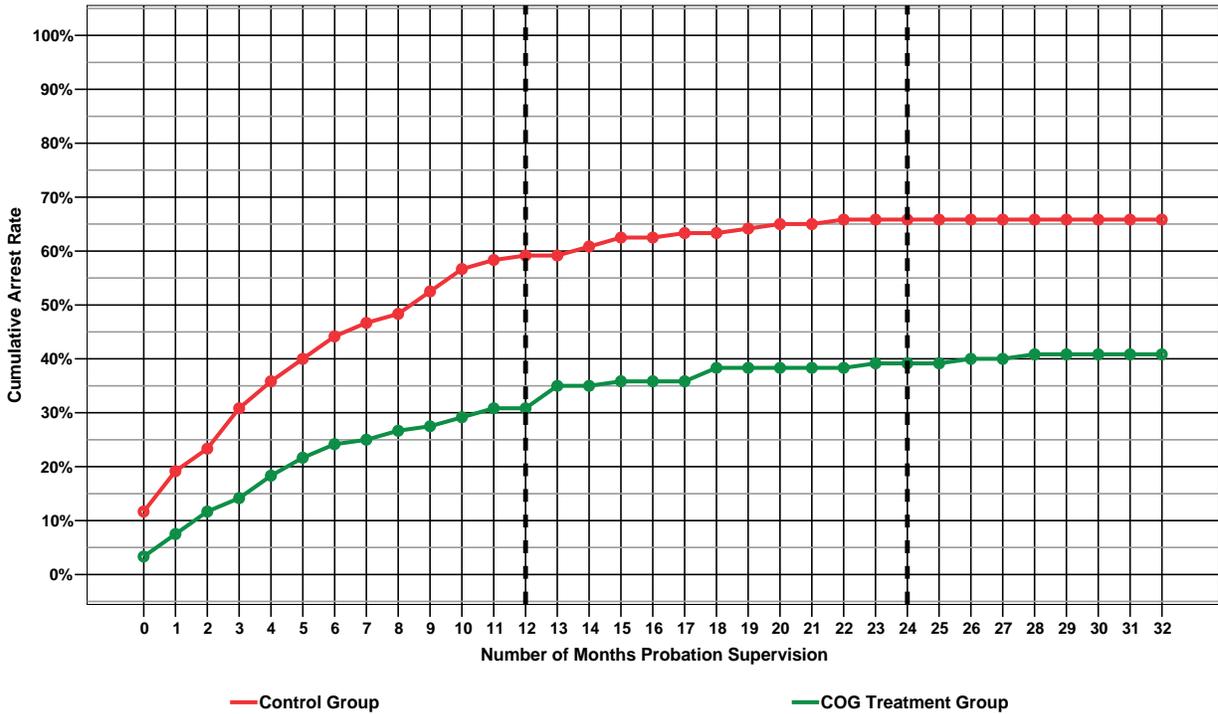
The recidivism rate for group completers having been charged with a new offense during the probation follow-up period was 40.8%, compared to 65.8% for the comparison group (see Table 9). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was statistically significant difference in new arrest rates between the groups, *chi-square* = (1, N = 240) = 15.08, *p* < .001.

Table 9: First Offense Resulting in Arrest During Probation Supervision			
	Comparison Group (n = 120)	COG Treatment Group (n = 120)	Positive Impact of COG vs. Traditional Probation
No Arrests	41 (34.2%)	71 (59.2%)	38.0% Reduction in Rate of New Arrests during Probation Supervision
At least one new arrest	79 (65.8%)	49 (40.8%)	

The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of probation. For the purposes of this illustration, a time-scale of **32 months** is used because recidivism resulting from re-arrest among both groups does not occur after that time. Hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. This illustration does not start at a true-zero in order to indicate the percentage of new arrests that occur within the first month for each group.

Chart 2

COG Program Analysis - First Offense Resulting in Arrest During Probation Supervision



The recidivism rate for group completers having been convicted of a new offense during the probation follow-up period was 29.2%, compared to 44.2% for the comparison group (see Table 10). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was statistically significant difference in new conviction rates between the groups, *chi-square* = (1, N = 240) = 5.81, *p* < .05.

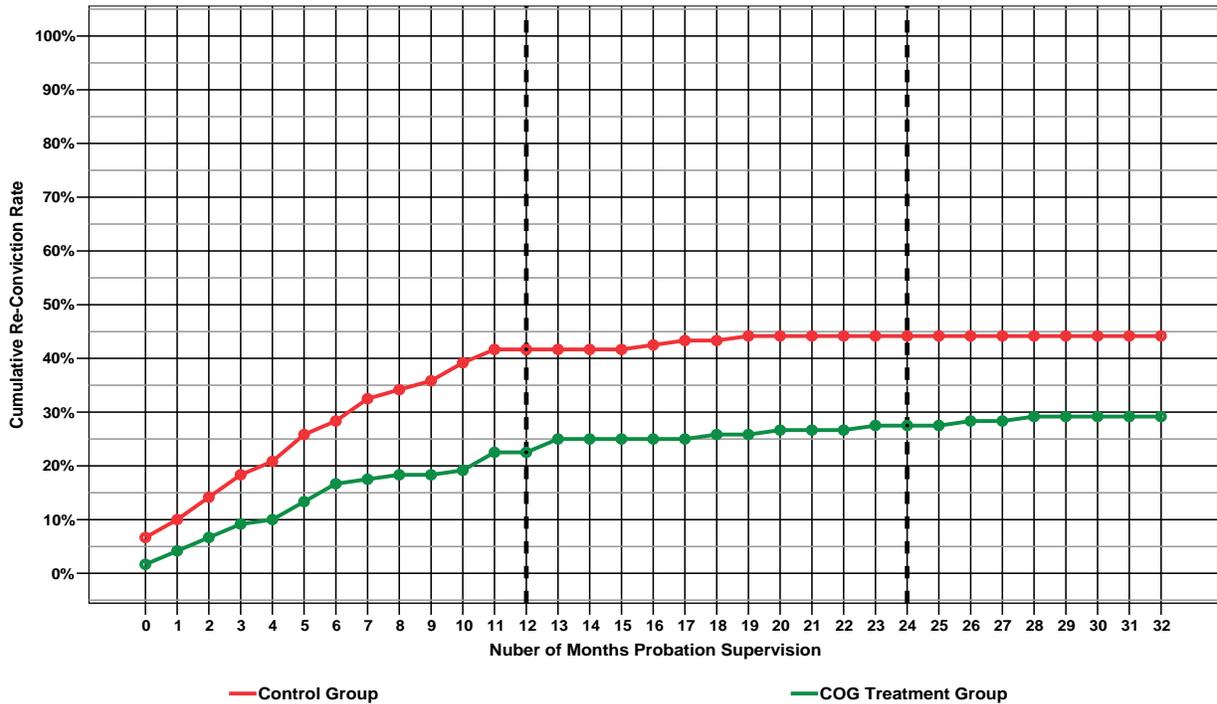
Table 10: First Offense Resulting in Conviction During Probation Supervision

	Comparison Group (n = 120)	COG Treatment Group (n = 120)	Positive Impact of COG vs. Traditional Probation
No Convictions	67 (55.8%)	85 (70.8%)	34.0% Reduction in Rate of New Convictions during Probation Supervision
At Least One New Conviction	53 (44.2%)	35 (29.2%)	

The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of probation see Chart 3). For the purposes of this illustration, a time-scale of **32 months** is used because recidivism resulting from re-arrest among both groups does not occur after that time. Hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. This illustration does not start at a true-zero in order to indicate the percentage of new offenses resulting in conviction that occur within the first month for each group.

Chart 3

COG Program Analysis - First Offense Resulting in Conviction During Probation Supervision



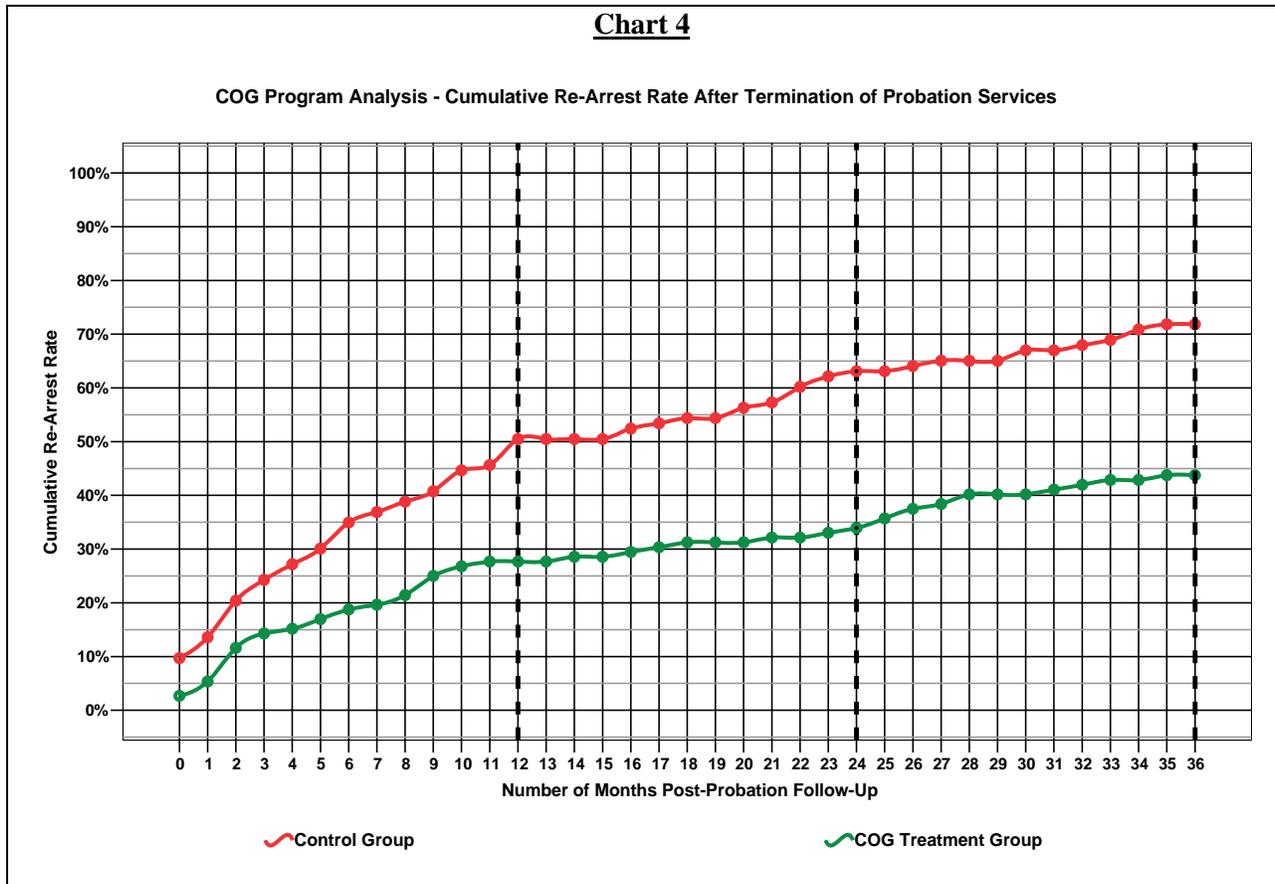
Recidivism for New Offenses following Probation Supervision

The tracking period for both the COG Treatment Group the Control Group following the termination of probation services was the date of probation termination. The exception to this rule were those participants who had periods of DOC incarceration less than five months (7 within the COG Treatment Group and eleven within the control group), whose tracking periods began the date of release from DOC. Each group of participants experienced population losses from one phase of the study to the next due to death and incarceration. Control Group participants for the second phase of the study numbered 103 (85.8% of the original sample) and the GOG Treatment Group numbered 112 (93.3%). Each of the remaining participants was tracked for a post-probation period of thirty-six months. The same two measures of recidivism are presented here: 1) First Offense Resulting in Arrest, and 2) First Offense Resulting in Conviction. In both cases, recidivism is based on the first incidence of a Class A Misdemeanor or Felony class offense.

The recidivism rate for group completers having been charged with a new offense during the post-probation follow-up period was 43.8%, compared to 71.8% for the comparison group (see Table 11). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was statistically significant difference in new arrest rates between the groups, *chi-square* = (1, N = 215) = 15.30, *p* < .001.

Table 11: First Offense Resulting in Arrest After Probation Supervision			
	Comparison Group (n = 103)	COG Treatment Group (n = 112)	Positive Impact of COG vs. Traditional Probation
No Arrests	29 (28.2%)	63 (56.3%)	39.0% Reduction in Rate of New Arrests After Probation Supervision
At Least One New Arrest	74 (71.8%)	49 (43.8%)	

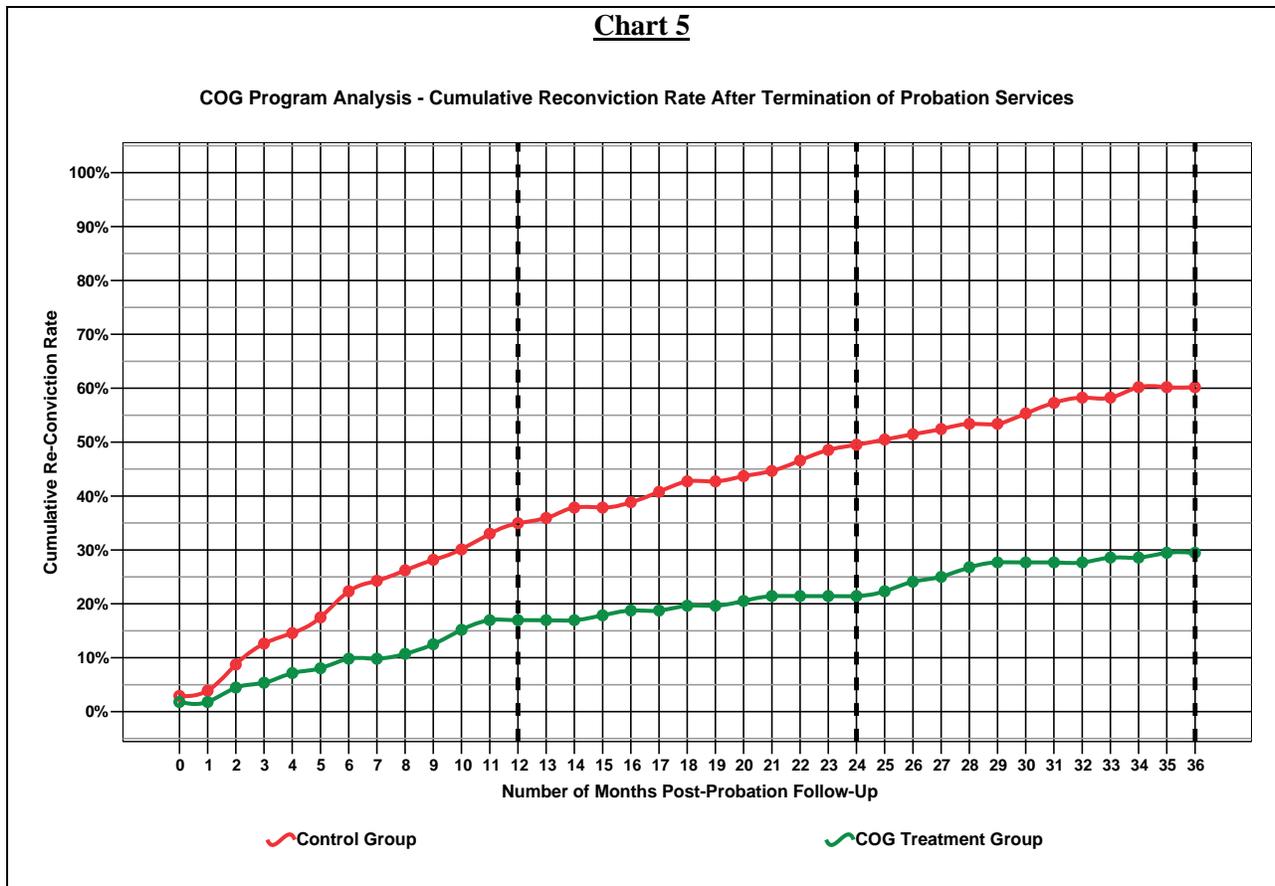
The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of the post-probation follow-up period. A time-scale of **36 months** is used because of the standardized follow-up period. Hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. This illustration does not start at a true-zero in order to indicate the percentage of new arrests that occur within the first month for each group.



The recidivism rate for group completers having been convicted of a new offense during the post-probation follow-up period was 29.5%, compared to 60.2% for the comparison group (see Table 12). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was statistically significant difference in new conviction rates between the groups, *chi-square* = (1, N = 215) = 20.54, *p* < .001.

Table 12: First Offense Resulting in Conviction After Probation Supervision			
	Comparison Group (n = 103)	COG Treatment Group (n = 112)	Positive Impact of COG vs. Traditional Probation
No Convictions	41 (39.8%)	79 (70.5%)	51.3% Reduction in Rate of New Convictions After Probation Supervision
At Least One New Conviction	62 (60.2%)	33 (29.5%)	

The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of the post-probation follow-up period (see Chart 5). A time-scale of **36 months** is used because of the standardized follow-up period. Hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. This illustration does not start at a true-zero in order to indicate the percentage of new offenses resulting in conviction that occur within the first month for each group.



DISCUSSION

This investigation was designed to evaluate the efficacy of Lake County Adult Probation Department's Cognitive Outreach Groups (COG) Program. COG is closely based on the National Institute of Corrections' (NIC) cognitive-behavioral program for Adult probationers, entitled *Thinking for a Change*. 120 probationers who successfully completed the program were contrasted to a matched comparison group of 120 offenders who had completed their probation terms prior to the implementation of COG in Lake County. Probationers in the two groups were tracked for the duration of their probation terms (COG Completers from the date of program completion, and Comparisons from the date of their probation intake), up to 52 months. All participants were assessed for the completion status of their probation supervision and any new criminal offense charges and/or convictions. In addition, offenders who remained in the community at the conclusion of their probation terms (or shortly thereafter) were tracked for an additional 36 months and assessed for any new criminal charges and/or convictions.

Completion of Probation Supervision

The results concerning participants' completion status at the termination of Probation Services strongly favored those in the COG Group Completers. The COG Treatment Group had a successful probation termination rate nearly one and on-half times (+141.9%) that of the Comparison Group (62.5% compared to 25.8%). In addition, the COG Treatment Group had a *scheduled termination* rate of 49.2% compared to 14.2% for the Comparison Group. Early termination (an incentive for positive compliance on supervision) rates, likewise, favored the COG Treatment Group, being 11.7% compared to 1.7% for the Comparison Group. Each of these results are statistically significant in terms of a *p*-value less than .05, meaning that there is less than a 5% chance that the measured differences between the groups are due to chance.

Further analysis of the dataset and predictor variables by researchers at Rosalind Franklin University will reveal which particular sub-groups of participants are most likely to benefit from COG Program participation. Early analysis of these predictor variables in terms of successful completion of supervision, for example, revealed that there are significant differences favoring the COG Treatment Group for both Caucasian and African-Americans, but no significant differences for Hispanics (personal communication with D. Kosson on 05/06/2008). Such conclusions indicate that there might be ethnic, or more specifically language, impediments inherent in the program contributing to these differential results. To date, the COG Program has only been offered in an English-language format.

Recidivism during Probation Supervision

The results concerning recidivism while on probation supervision were also favorable towards COG Program Completion. There appears to be a strong trend toward a reduced number of future criminal offenses among those

who completed COG. Differences between the COG Treatment Group and the Comparison Group are evident not only in the percentage of first arrests (40.8% for COG Completers compared to 65.8% for Comparisons, a reduction of 38.0%), but also in the percentage of new convictions (29.2% for COG Completers compared to 44.2% for Comparisons, a reduction of 34.0%). Each of these results was also considered to be statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Even small percentage differences in recidivism can have very large practical implications. Committing a new criminal offense while on probation supervision, especially that of a Felony or Class A Misdemeanor offense, usually results in revocation and incarceration at the county or state level. If new offense rates can be impacted by the provision of services at the community level, the potential savings could be in the millions of dollars. All staff involved in facilitating the COG Program do so voluntarily, and receive no extra salary, overtime pay, or compensation time. The materials needed to maintain the program are approximately \$400 annually and are purchased using funds available from the Adult Probation Department's yearly budget allowance. The initial training program that certified staff to facilitate, as well as the training program for trainers, were both made possible through a grant provided by NIC.

Recidivism after Probation Supervision

This investigation also provides compelling evidence that COG program completers do not recidivate as quickly as untreated groups while in the community, free of the additional scrutiny provided probation services. A majority of the COG Treatment Group did not have an appreciable new offenses resulting in arrest during the three-year follow-up period after the termination of probation services (43.8% compared to 71.8% in the Comparison Group, a reduction of 39.0% in the rate of new arrests after probation supervision). These differences are even more dramatic when recidivism is defined in terms of conviction for a new offense. Following the termination of probation services, the COG Program Treatment Group posted a 29.5% re-conviction rate compared to 60.2% for the Comparison Group, a reduction of 51.3%. Despite the unequal number of participants entering the post-probation phase on this study, these results were also considered to be statistically significant. These results suggest that COG Group participation is effective in at least forestalling, if not preventing, continued criminal activity, and that its effects may also be long-lasting.

Future Goals for the Lake County GOG Program

Since the Lake County COG Program began operating in 2002, more than 40 Lake County Adult Probation and Psychological Services staff have been trained to facilitate GOG. Of these, four additional staff have completed Train-the-Trainer instruction, and now train other facilitators to conduct the program (R. Gray, K. Grzanich, F. Morelli, & J. Ross). Lake County staff have conducted COG training in Springfield for the Administrative Office of

the Illinois Courts (AOIC) and other Probation departments in Illinois for approximately 80 new facilitators, as well as training 20 new COG facilitators in Lake County. Two related goals of the COG Program are:

- To train 20 more probation staff in the principles of the COG program, if not to act as new group facilitators then to add a level of relapse prevention to their work with COG Program completers, by 2009.
- To reduce probation failure and re-conviction among COG Program Completers by 10% in 2010.

Although the rates of failure, as measured by probation outcomes and recidivism, among the COG Treatment Group were significantly less than those of the Comparison group, the first 12 - 24 months following program completion represent a critical time for COG Program completers. The rate of unsuccessful termination from Probation Supervision was 15% per year for the first two years following program completion (see Chart 1). In addition, most new offenses resulting in arrest or conviction occurred during the first 12 months after program completion (75% of all new arrests and 80% of new convictions among the COG Treatment Group). The creation of a relapse prevention component to the standard curriculum, which may be as non-intrusive as the reinforcement of group concepts and practices during the regular course of probation supervision, may provide an additional level of intervention that may have a profound impact on behavior.

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