

# Addressing the Health and Social Needs of Justice-Involved Young Adults

*Strategies to Achieve Alignment, Collaboration, and Synergy  
Across Delivery and Financing Systems*

Research-in-Progress Webinar  
October 13, 2021  
12-1pm ET

**Welcome:** **Carrington Lott, MPH**

*Program Manager for Systems for Action*

**Presenters:** **Georges Naufal, PhD | Terence Davis**

*Texas A&M University | Transformative Justice of Williamson County*

**Q&A:** **Carrington Lott, MPH**



Georges Naufal, PhD is an Associate Research Scientist at the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M University and a research fellow at the IZA Institute of Labor Economics. George is also a Visiting Scientist at the Center for Outcomes Research at Houston Methodist. Previously he was the Technical Director at Timberlake Consultants. He was also an Assistant/Associate Professor of Economics at The American University of Sharjah (2007 to 2014) in the United Arab Emirates. George earned his PhD in Economics in 2007 from Texas A&M University. His area of expertise is applied econometrics with applications to labor economics including criminal justice, and public health.



Terence Davis is the Program Director for the Transformative Justice Program of Williamson County (<https://tj-wc.org/>). Terence has a degree in Criminal Justice from Texas State University and a law degree from St. Mary's Law School. Mr. Davis has more than 20 years of experience handling civil litigation defense, personal injury, and became board certified in family law in 2014. Terence has been highly involved in Williamson County Bar Association, Inn of Court, and the Christian Legal Society.

Terence is a grandfather, father, and husband. He has been married to his sweetheart, Romy, since 1997 and have two daughters, one grandson and one granddaughter.

## Research Team

- Public Policy Research Institute – Texas A&M University
  - Georges Naufal, Emily Naiser, and Heather Caspers
- Access to Justice Lab – Harvard Law School
  - Jim Greiner and Renee Danser
- University of Texas Health Science Center
  - Vanessa Schick

## Program Team

- Williamson County
  - Judge Stacey Mathews, District Attorney Shawn Dick, Terence Davis

- Criminal justice system is failing emerging adults
  - Emerging adults make up 11% of Texas' population but account for 29% of arrests
  - Distinct health needs are being ignored: substance abuse, co-occurring disorders, emotional and physical trauma
  - Underlying factors focusing an individual to engage in criminal behavior are not being addressed
- Transformative Justice (TJ) is a program that offers a multi-dimensional intervention to reduce recidivism and improve health outcomes
  - Specifically targets emerging adults 17 – 24 years of age

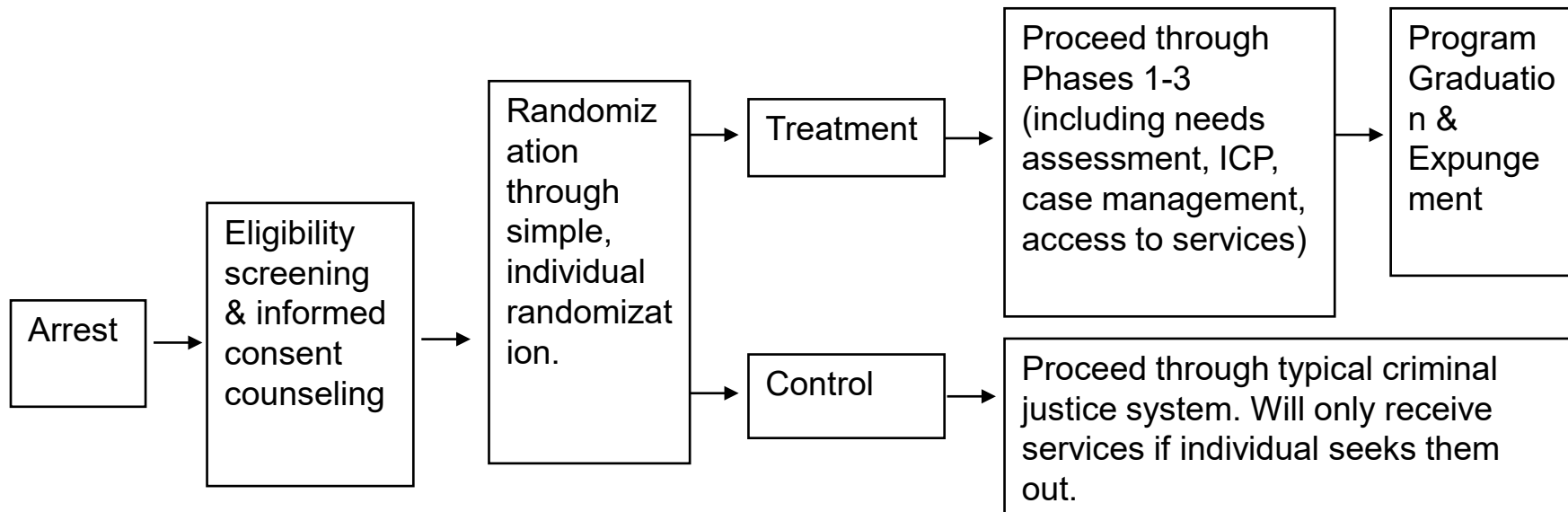
- Does a community-based services program led by team-based decision-makers improve emerging adults physical and mental health and reduce recidivism compared to the current criminal justice system? (RCT)
- What features of the program are driving these outcomes? How has the program changed over time? (Process Evaluation)

- Arrested emerging adults in treatment group will receive:
  - A needs assessment to determine factors contributing to criminal behavior
  - A case review team (CRT) will review the assessment and propose community-based services to best address these factors
  - The CRT will devise an Individual Care Plan (ICP) for each defendant
  - Each defendant will have a case management team (CMT) that will act as a liaison between the defendant and the CRT
  - The CRT will liaise with the county's criminal justice stakeholders

# Systems Approach

Key Ingredients of Systems for Action Research Projects	Our Proposed Project
Delivery and financing systems of interest	The TJ intervention is situated in the <b>criminal justice system</b> but will rely on a combination of <b>health care, mental health, substance use treatment, public health, housing and transportation services and systems in the community.</b>
Novel mechanisms for system alignment to be studied and tested	These complex systems and services will be primarily aligned through the <b>case review team (CRT) and case management team (CMT)</b> . The CRT will be an interprofessional team that shares information and creates a care plan for each program participant based on assessed care priorities and cross-sector planning. The CMT will be relying on interorganizational partnerships to assist the participant in accessing services.
Community settings and populations groups to be engaged	The focus of the research is improving the health of emerging adults who are recently arrested. <b>Racial and ethnic minorities and individuals with mental illness or substance abuse issues will be a significant proportion of this.</b> Additionally, the TJ program will be <b>engaging a variety of community-based organizations including state agencies, local non-profits and other social service organizations.</b>
Multidisciplinary methodological approaches	The evaluation consists of 1) <b>Survey research</b> methods to collect data from program participants; 2) <b>Qualitative analysis</b> through process evaluation of program; and 3) <b>Data science</b> linking of administrative and survey data.

# Study Flow



## Evaluation data collection

Treatment and control will both:

- receive surveys on health outcomes for two years from randomization.
- be assessed via administrative records on recidivism

- Eligibility
  - Any defendant between 17 and 24 arrested in Williamson County with an eligible offense
- Selection/Enrollment Process
  - Program manager and a defense attorney will inform and consent eligible defendants
  - Assignment occurs through random selection
  - *We expect 12 enrollees per month*
    - *Expect about 144 participants*

- Recidivism
  - Defined as arrest within a specific period of time
- Health outcomes
  - Collect quarterly surveys using SF-12
- Potential other outcomes
  - Employment
  - Educational attainment
  - Housing

- RCT launched on November 2, 2020
- Enrollment: 27 (12 in treatment, and 15 in control)
  - Averaging 2.4 participant per month far lower than the expected 12
- Reason for low enrollment
  - Less booking

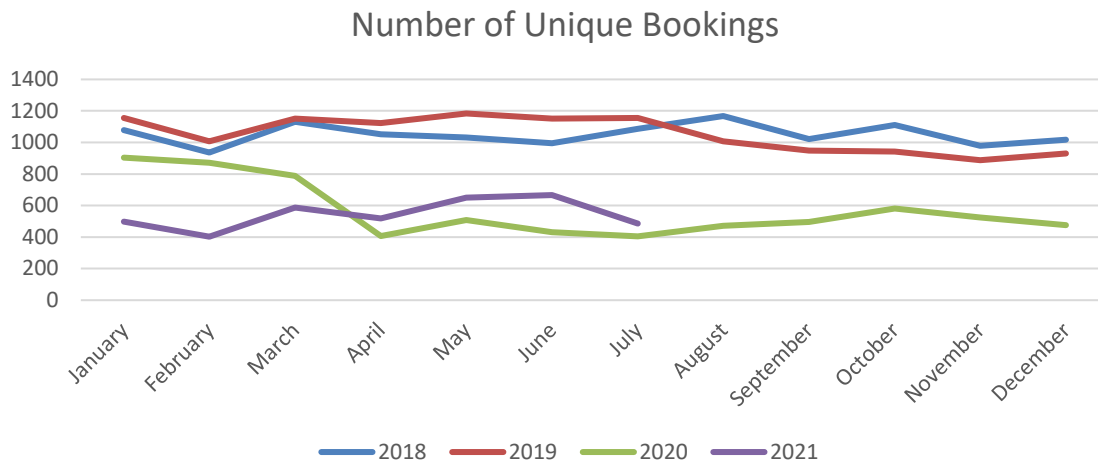
- Reason for low enrollment
  - Less booking → how much less booking?

Full Sample	Unique Bookings	Defendants
2018	12,606	10,384
2019	12,644	10,306
2020	6,861	6,056
2021 (until 8/15)	3,989	3,671
Total	36,100	25,570

Until 8/15 of each year	Unique Bookings	Defendants
2018	7,883	6,838
2019	8,398	7,210
2020	4,560	4,109
2021	3,989	3,671
Total	24,830	19,047

- Jail bookings declined by more than 50%
- For our eligible sample, the drop is more than 70%

- Reason for low enrollment
  - Less booking → how much less booking?



- The decline seems to be more of a paradigm shift

- Reason for low enrollment
  - Less booking → how much less booking?
- Reasons for less booking
  - Pandemic related reasons
    - Less people out and about
    - Less cops out and about
    - Keep jail population low (delay serving warrants, not arresting for small offenses, etc.)

- Reason for low enrollment
  - Less booking → how much less booking?
- Reasons for less booking
  - Shifts in the criminal justice system
    - Decarceration movements
      - Decriminalization of small drug offenses
      - Changing arrest patterns

- The research team is working with Williamson County to adjust eligibility criteria to expand enrollment
- The struggles in enrollment emphasize the importance of the process evaluation component of the study

- Essential component of the study – better understand
  - What factors are most associated with the outcomes
  - How the proposed system has changed over time
- Use a thorough approach
  - Document analysis
  - Semi-structured interviews with all involved/affected stakeholders
  - Focus groups
  - Direct observation

- Main takeaways from the process evaluation will focus on
  - What are the most effective elements of the program?
  - What are the challenges facing the program?
  - How do participants feel about the program?
  - How has the local community (including the criminal justice system) interacted with the program?
  - How did the program evolve over time?

- Methods
  - Phase 1 of Data Collection – Summer 2021
    - Interviews with Program Implementers
      - 1 Program Director, 3 Case Managers, 2 Program Lawyers
      - 2 Judges, 1 District Attorney, 2 County Staff
      - 3 Service Providers
    - Focus groups with 14 participants (2 graduates, 12 active)
    - Observed Pre-Court planning meeting, Court Session for all active participants, and Life Skills Course
  - Phase 2 of Data Collection planned for Spring 2022

# Process Evaluation – What's Working

## 1. Services that are effective (from perspective of Program Implementers)

- Drug treatment
- Job supports
- Education
- Case – management
- Counseling
- Life Skills

*“The Life Skills Group is helpful because the majority comes in with no skills or they imitate what they have seen growing up which is not helpful. Teach real life skills like credit, how to find an apartment, interviewing, transportation; all the things that we just take for granted but they have not had the opportunity to experience. The team makes our own curriculum and follow a lesson plan. We also ask for their input (“What are you struggling with?”), and try to structure sessions around their interests.”*

## 2. Focus on building relationships with participants:

- From all,
  - Judge,
  - District Attorney,
  - Defense Attorneys,
  - Program Director,
  - Case Managers,
  - Peersthroughout the process

- Examples:

- In court:

- Judge asks questions about their lives
    - Judge, lawyers (on both sides), and whole team cheer and support participant accomplishments
    - Judge encourages peer support

- In other interactions:

- Team acts as additional case managers
    - Participate in program events

## 3. But Still Hold Participants Accountable

*"I try to encourage them, but also make them realize they need to do more if they are not meeting standards. Hate to do it, but inform them that jail is the other option if they do not show change/progress, so they realize the seriousness."*

*"Building a relationship and connection is important, but holding clients accountable is critical for their progress as well."*

## 4. Strong team

- Picked members known for dedication and desire to help
- Communicate well and are able to get along
- Can provide 1-on-1 attention
- Completely invested in the mission that with supports people can change their lives

*“Everyone in the team being so hands-on and close to the participants has enabled this. Not luck, but the right people were selected for a reason. A group of people who are known to go the extra mile and are compassionate about helping people (have similar work ethic and personality).”*

# Process Evaluation – Services Vs. Relationships

*“The program cannot go without either one, and the relationship or services alone is not enough. Building relationships with participants is important because many participants are resistant or reluctant to receive services (e.g., counseling). Many do not trust the program and think they do not need services, and it is only after they have the relationship that they trust and accept help. Although the relationship is what makes participants buy into the program, none of the TJ team are licensed counselors/social workers or experts on mental health, trauma, substance abuse.”*

## 1. Service Gaps:

- Transportation
- Housing
- Consistent Counseling/Mental Healthcare

*“Housing is the service that the program lacks the most. A felony arrest prohibits housing across the board so it's hard to get the participants independent before they graduate the program and their record is expunged. At their age, participants sometimes have conflict with their parents and if they do not live at home they live with friends who are sometimes a bad influence on the participants.”*

2. Getting the “match” between services and need just right:
  - Avoid over-programming and over-courting
  - Increasing peer support
  - Connecting them to “right” services
  - Ensuring participants do not become too reliant on program

*“For adults, getting participants connected to services could take weeks which affects the effectiveness of the program, so getting them services they need quickly is needed.”*

## 3. Small number of participants:

*"Currently, there is a lot of time and resources for small number of people. Having vast resources and not being able to serve more people is frustrating. It is worth it, but wish that there were more participants involved."*

*"The small participant numbers are another issue. When deciding whether to keep the program, the state/county commissioners will have to consider the program's cost-effectiveness, which needs more participants to show (how many participants did it serve, how much did it cost.) I think that although numbers are small now, we are making differences and progress, and this program can potentially benefit almost everyone."*

## 1. Supportive Team is Key

*"My mother would always tell me not to mess up because parole officers want to see us fail (when brother was on parole). Have heard and felt that parole officers are rude to us, which was not the case with people in this program. I feel like the team really wants us to succeed, and they try to remind and give us the confidence that we are able to do so. Not only with drug use and sobriety, but in life in general."*

*"I called my case manager at 2 in the morning once and he responded, I know I can count on [them] and it helps especially because I don't have much support outside of the program. When first beginning the program, did not think much of it, but now I am very grateful that I have a support group I can talk to."*

*"The team is like another family, and it is a blessing."*

## 2. Struggle to Accommodate Requirements

- Balancing Work Schedules and Program Requirements
- Mixed reactions to counseling (especially online counseling)
- Feel some sessions/drug tests are excessive

*“That the counseling is required/mandatory is annoying. We do not have anything to talk about because we already talk so much about how we are doing with our case managers.”*

*“Having to check in every day for the first week and then again on a weekly basis was annoying.”*

## 3. Shifting Perspectives

*"At first, I was annoyed and overwhelmed with the frequent check-ins, but now I realize that the check-ins enabled us to talk more with case managers and that it will help me."*

*"I was required to go to take tests, get a full-time job, attend Life Works and so on. I did not want to do it and I did not realize why they made me do everything until I did/completed the tasks."*

*"At first, I did not want to do counseling, [intensive outpatient program], and so on because it was inconvenient and I did not see the need, but in the end it is all for the better."*

# Process Evaluation – Individual Impact

*“If it wasn’t for the program, I would probably be dead.”*

*“I am a totally different person from who I was at the beginning of this program, so I am grateful and have a new perspective towards life. I can now reflect on my past and do not want to go back.”*

*“This program, because it gives us a chance in life and having a future. If it was not for this program, we would all have a bleak future. With a felony record or pending felony, we cannot even sign a lease for an apartment or we have to pay a lot more.”*

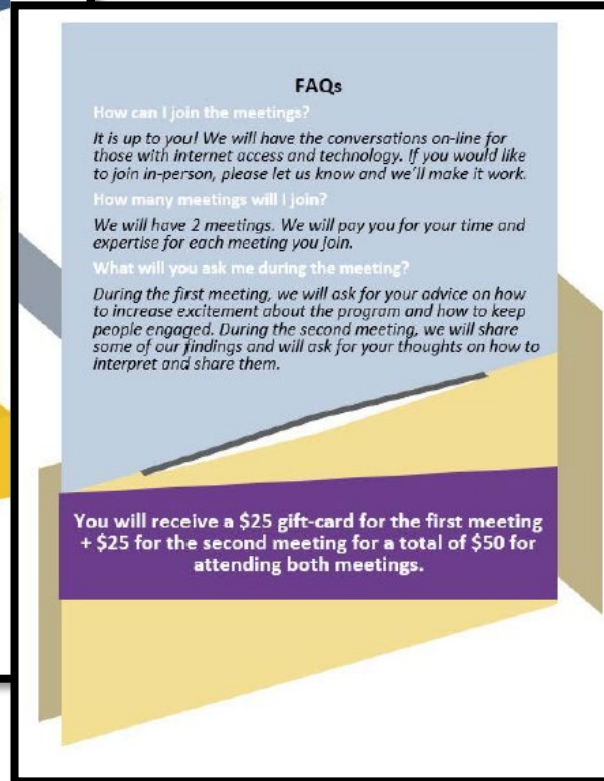
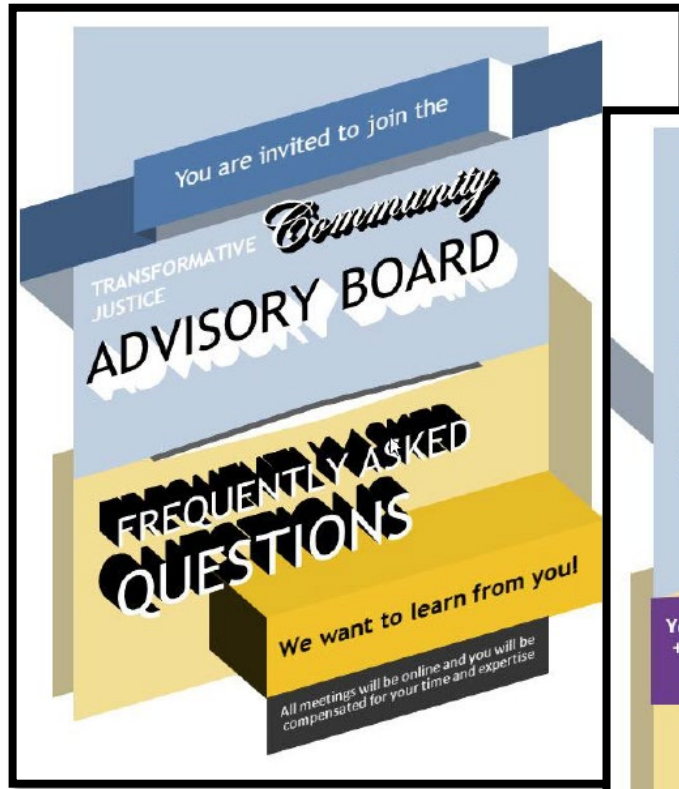
# Process Evaluation – Community Impact

*“Even conservative, tough on crime Williamson county community is receptive to the program and general public is ready for change. [Previously I] tried to do this, but it takes more than a single person or part of the system to make a change. This program is unique in that it is pulling together people from all parts of the system, putting in a lot of resources, time and attention at the most critical time, the beginning of the case. Not only helpful for the participants, but also helping the public view the criminal justice system as compassionate and supportive for the good of society, as well as giving the system more credibility when incarceration is needed.”*

- Shifting the way the community thinks about criminal justice
- Other services/ organizations want to contribute after learning about program
- Program participants are giving back to community and getting more involved in community

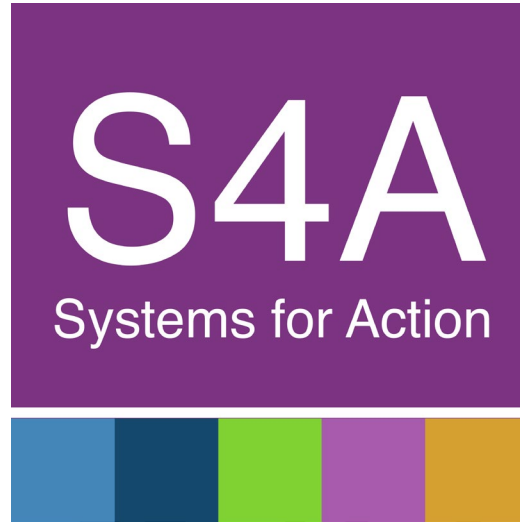
- Next steps
  - Dig into some of these findings further
  - Formalize findings in report
  - Generate recommendations for both the program and others interested in implementing program
  - Gather details on service utilization/case management
  - Repeat interviews in the spring to see what has changed

# Community Advisory Board



- Actively recruiting individuals with lived experience as a young adult in the justice system
- Feedback on study design (e.g., recruitment, retention) and interpretation/ dissemination of findings

# Questions?



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