



**City of Spokane Municipal Community Court:
Process and Outcome Evaluation**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current technical report describes the results of an evaluation of the Spokane Municipal Community Court (SMCC). This report was funded as part of a contract, to assess the current internal operations and outcomes of the City of Spokane Community Court. The core focus of this research is a three-part evaluation - a process evaluation, an outcome evaluation, and a gap analysis. The process evaluation was aimed at assessing if Community Court policies and procedures are being followed as intended. The outcome evaluation sought to determine if community court participants have stronger outcomes than a matched comparison group. The gap analysis examined the reach of the service providers and their offerings. The report provided a literature review of current community court findings and trends, a process evaluation of the SCC procedures and adherence to national standards, a detailed outcome evaluation examining current community court participants to a comparison group sample, and an examination of current services being offered.

Overall, findings indicated some positive impacts of the court, with notable challenges. Specifically, process evaluation findings indicated that the SCC is generally adhering to the national standards of community courts. However, several recommendations for further improvements were also indicated, including:

- 1) making ongoing efforts in ensuring that education and training is being maintained;
- 2) the continual involvement of the downtown Spokane community with SMCC;
- 3) making stronger efforts in ensuring a presence of law enforcement;
- 4) continue utilizing the needs assessment to offer individually tailored community-based services to participants;
- 5) consistently applying graduated sanctions and provocative incentives to clients;

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- 6) build up resources in order to use “real time” data to inform on program management and to guide decision-making and program operations.

The outcome evaluation did find positive evidence of the court’s effectiveness in reducing recidivism when examining a six-month and twelve-month follow-up period. The evaluation compared community court participants to both a historical group as well as a contemporary group, in order to examining the impact of the courts’ effect on recidivism within a six-month and twelve-month follow-up period. Overall, findings reveal that the court does reduce participants’ propensity for reoffending, as compared to the comparison groups. Specifically, outcome findings indicated:

- 1) The SMCC group had reduced rates of recidivism, in general;
- 2) The SMCC group also displayed reduced rates of convictions, in general;
- 3) When intermediate outcomes and walk-in participants were examined, the community court demonstrated a meaningful impact, providing opportunities to the population that were not available without the implementation of the community court.

The gap analysis also found promising results for the SMCC service provider offerings. With only one substantial gap, the analysis shows that the community court and its associated programming and interventions are meeting the majority of the needs of their participants. This links directly back to the court’s goal of improving participants’ lives by addressing the underlying problems that may lead them to commit crimes.

The intent of this report was to assess the implementation and adherence of the SMCC to the outline community court principles as well as examine the impact of the SMCC on recidivism. As discussed in greater detail in the full report, the evaluation provided evidence that the SMCC is following national standards for model adherence and can be an

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effective alternative to incarceration for certain participants. The short duration of the court's existence and the evaluation period made it difficult to fully assess the court's impact with regard to recidivism and other outcomes. Further study and additional court recommendations are also provided. Due to noted study limitations, we recommend the study be extended in the future, allowing a larger subject pool to be gathered and, in turn, providing more stable findings.

INTRODUCTION

This report is being submitted by researchers from the Washington State Institute for Criminal Justice (WSICJ) in response to a request for work completed for the process and outcome evaluation of the City of Spokane Municipal Community Court (SMCC). The report is segmented into five primary sections: 1) an overview of community courts and brief history of SMCC; 2) a process evaluation of SMCC; 3) an outcome evaluation of SMCC; 4) a gap analysis of SMCC service providers; 5) a discussion of current findings, limitations, and recommendations to the SMCC.

The first section reviews the general history and efficacy of community courts across the nation, provides an overview of the SMCC and its specific programming and implementation. The second section examines the process by which the SMCC followed their outlined policies and procedures. The third section examines three groups with regard to recidivistic outcomes and internal SMCC performance indicators. The fourth section examines any gaps present between the needs of the participants and the services being provided. The discussion section presents a general overview of findings, implications observed in procedure and outcomes, limitations of the current research, and recommendations for the SMCC to improve its effectiveness and adherence to the stated procedures. Finally, a conclusion section relates study results with potential future research.

COMMUNITY COURT OVERVIEW

First created in the early 1990s, community courts in the United States originated as a response to the rise in neighborhood crimes (Lang, 2011). The first community court was established in 1993 in Midtown Manhattan. The theory behind community courts stems from community policing (Berman, Feinblatt, & Glazer, 2005). Having noticed

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improvements in the community-police relationships with various community policing policies, community courts began as a way to improve neighborhood safety, criminal justice relations, and community involvement. According to the broken windows theory, visible conditions of disorder in a neighborhood serve as an indication that the community is in disarray, does not enforce social norms, therefore more crimes are being committed. (Kelling and Wilson, 1982). Building from this idea, community courts typically focus on quality of life crimes in order to improve the neighborhood and community outlooks on the justice system (Lee, Cheesman, Rottman, Swaner, Lambson, Rempel, & Curtis, 2013).

Like other therapeutic courts, community courts benefited greatly with the association of community agencies. By involving community-based programs, problem-solving courts are able to address community concerns and foster community involvement and partnerships in the local criminal justice process (NADCP, 1997). Rather than emphasizing punishment, problem-solving courts focus on participant accountability through graduated sanctions and incentives in order to encourage positive changes (Miller & Johnson, 2009). In addition, community courts take this one step further in working towards positive changes in the community as well as the individual's life. This goal is achievable because community courts are located in designated geographic areas, often representing specific neighborhoods, with a focus on addressing negative quality-of-life crimes. Using innovative community-based efforts, these courts attempt to address the underlying needs of participants, in order to reduce criminal behavior and improve community life and outlook (Lang 2011; Lee, 2000).

Unlike traditional courts, community courts are a voluntary commitment. Upon arrest, eligible offenders – often non-violent quality of life crimes– are screened for eligibility (specific criteria defined by the jurisdiction) and offered an opportunity to opt in to community court rather than proceeding through traditional court. By opting in to

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community court, the participant agrees to the court plan, agrees to conditions that could include giving back to the community, or targeting the issues that may underlie their criminal behavior (Lee et. al, 2013).

Since the opening of New York City's Midtown Community Court in 1993, many courts have built upon their model. Based on the research and previous implementation of community courts, new courts should attempt to address the following set of questions (Lang, 2011):

1. Can courts assume a problem-solving role in the life of a community, bringing people together and helping to construct solutions to problems that communities face?
2. How can courts' sentencing strategies address the effect that chronic offending has on a community?
3. Can local voices play a role in the administration of justice?
4. How can courts best link offenders to the services they need to avoid re-offending?
5. Is it possible to craft meaningful alternatives to incarceration and ensure that there are swift consequences for non-compliance?

In addition to being able to answer these questions, research has shown that effective community courts adhere to a common set of principles (Lang, 2011):

1. Enhanced Information
2. Community Engagement
3. Collaboration
4. Individualized Justice
5. Accountability
6. Outcomes

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These principles, established in the Midtown Community Court, tend to be effective and valid in creating successful community court programs, and are beneficial, not only for the implementation of a community court, but also the sustainment of one. Incorporating these principles into policies and procedures, as well as adhering to these tools in practice, can greatly improve the success of a court.

Overview of the City of Spokane Municipal Community Court

The SMCC was established in 2013 in response to the many challenges that the downtown Spokane community faces with quality of life crimes, poverty, and healthcare. The mission of SMCC is to build stronger and safer neighborhoods, reduce recidivism and improve participants' lives by addressing the underlying problems that may lead them to commit crimes (City of Spokane, 2017). By working towards this goal, the SMCC aims to increase the public's trust and confidence in the criminal justice system. In order to achieve their mission, the SMCC utilizes a problem-solving approach with an emphasis on building partnerships with government agencies, social services providers, and community groups.

The SMCC partners with many community agencies and organizations to establish and maintain collaborative working relationships. These relationships focus on providing community court participants accountability, opportunity, and time to address criminal behaviors. These relationships also help address the social service needs of participants, helping them overcome underlying issues associated with criminal behaviors. Operating out of the Downtown Public Library, court practitioners and social services providers make themselves available to the population.

Risk Assessment Tool. The SMCC also partners with the Center for Court Innovation (CCI) in order to conduct a risk assessment prior to entering community court.

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The current risk assessment tool used by the City of Spokane was created by the CCI in November, 2013. The Criminal Court Assessment Tool (CCAT) is a risk-needs assessment tool that predicts an individual's risk of re-offending, while also screening for important needs that should be targeted to reduce risk, including education, employment, housing, substance use, criminal thinking, mental illness, and trauma.

The CCAT is rooted in the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) theory, using a combination of static and dynamic risk factors. The CCAT is designed to both predict risk of recidivism, as well as provide targeted treatment and intervention guidance. It was anticipated that the use of a risk assessment is important in the community court process because it offers decision-making guidance to practitioners through various stages. For community court purposes, a risk assessment can evaluate the criminogenic needs of the person that should be targeted in order to reduce future recidivism (City of Spokane, 2017). Such an instrument can also inform decision makers regarding possible behavioral health services, medical care, education, or any other type of services that a client might need access to in order to successfully complete legal requirements.

The CCAT was developed in 2013, drawing from the Risk-Need-Responsivity model. The comprehensive tool covers many risk and need domains through a 30-item assessment. The tool is separated into four sections: Administrative; Criminal Records Review; Defendant Interview; and Scoring Risk and Need. The objective of the CCAT is to support evidence-based decision-making in high-volume criminal justice contexts, such as community courts. A copy of the tool is located in Appendix A.

SMCC Process. The process of the SMCC involvement can start at pre-arrest, with officers referring eligible offenders to no-cost services provided at community court. This can be provided as a warning prior to an arrest being made. After an arrest is made, the

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participant must be identified as eligible for community court. This is limited to individuals who are charged with non-violent quality of life (gross and simple) misdemeanors within the geographical area designated; have no prior criminal sex related crimes; submit to-and-complete the CCAT; and agree to give back to the community through community service. No person is able to enter a court agreement without submitting to the CCAT. After fully assessing an individual's profile, including strengths and needs, the SMCC explores diversion through a stipulated order of continuance or plea alternatives. The participants must opt-in to community court, and continuously agree to be a part of this process as they move through the program. SMCC holds court in the Downtown Public Library, with a providers' room next to the courtroom. The providers' room contains Department of Social Health and Services (DSHS) staff in which the participants can access. The service providers are available every week during court time. Once a participant has undergone the CCAT, they are directed towards the providers' room. The court staff works in conjunction with the service providers to best serve each participant. In order to graduate, a participant must provide proof of contact and engagement with the service providers, based on their needs assessment.

While most of the SMCC participants begin with a criminal justice referral, there is still an option for a person to access the services provided by the court. Walk-in's are also accepted at SMCC, for those who have heard about the provider room and want to engage in services. These participants go through the same process as any other community court participant, without the initial pre-arrest contact and referral.

Eligible Offenses. While each community will defer in terms of the eligible offenses, the SMCC has created a list of offenses that are eligible to forgo traditional court process and proceed through community court. These offenses were selected due to their

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nature as being either a gross and simple misdemeanor, dealing with quality of life issues, and occurring within the boundaries of the geographical area of Downtown Spokane. Eligible offenses are added or removed as new laws are created, new area limits are formed, and new services become available. As mentioned, aside from having an eligible offense, a participant must also have been charged, cited, or arrested within the geographical area designated; have no prior criminal sex related crimes; submit to-and-complete the CCAT; and agree to give back to the community through community service.

Geographical Boundaries. The SMCC encompasses the Downtown core and the adjacent neighborhoods of Browne's Addition, Peaceful Valley, and Cliff Cannon. The neighborhoods bordering downtown were added to the downtown boundary map in April 2017, after the Spokane Community Court core team, Spokane Police Department, and residents of the Browne's Addition, Cliff Cannon, and Peaceful Valley neighborhoods concluded that the individuals committing quality of life crimes in those areas are typically the same as those in the downtown core.

PROCESS EVALUATION

This section examines how well the SMCC follows their outlined policies and procedures, as well as the community court model principles. Qualitative data for the process evaluation was gathered through document review, on-site observations, interviews, and focus groups. The methods for each of these processes will be expanded upon below. These findings will be combined to produce a general understanding of how well the team is following and implementing the intended program.

The intended qualitative plan was as follows: observe multiple community court staffing sessions through on-site visits, observe multiple days of community court

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proceedings, thoroughly review all documentation used within the community court program, conduct interviews with all pertinent staff members, and hold a focus group for participants, both graduates and current participants. A review of the limited in-program statistics also took place in order to provide a general description of program functions as well as a glance at the community court participant breakdown.

The interviews with the staff of the community court lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to one hour in length and consisted of 20 outlined questions as well as an open discussion. The questions were grouped based around the principles of community court. Additionally, questions addressing basic demographic information, community-specific situations and policies procedure were also asked.

A focus group with participants was also conducted. 10 participants, 4 current and 6 past, 5 females and 5 males, were included in the focus group. The session lasted about 45 minutes in length and covered approximately 15 questions addressing the programs' strengths and areas for improvement, as well as adherence with the community court principles. There was also a chance for open discussion.

The findings from the process evaluation will be detailed below. This includes conclusions from the staffing and court observations, interviews, and focus groups as it relates to, not only the SMCC's adherence to the community court principles, but also their ability to follow their own policies and procedures. Each principle will be listed, along with a brief review of "what works" for each principle. One important note is that research on community courts is limited and best practice standards specific for community courts have not been formulated. However, previous community court evaluation research has found some correlation between successful community courts and implemented practices. This

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information is then compared to strengths of the team in executing the principle, as well as recommended areas for improvement.

Spokane Municipal Community Court Team

The SMCC team is comprised of the judge, the prosecution team (two members), public defense team (three members), the community court coordinator, the court clerk, a probation officer, and a police officer, treatment providers and community volunteers. The roles and responsibilities of each SMCC team member are as follows, as outlined in the policies and procedures manual (City of Spokane, 2017) as well as observed through this evaluation.

Spokane Community Court Judge. The judge is provided through municipal court, chosen to serve as the Community Court Presiding Judge (CCPJ). The CCPJ's goal is to maintain the integrity of the court through application of appropriate mandates, sanctions, and incentives. The CCPJ is responsible for adhering to the community court rules, policies, procedures, as well as providing consideration to future improvements to the court. Trained in the 10 key components of a drug court, the CCPJ aims to deliver a service that is rooted in trauma informed care, therapeutic jurisprudence, and collaboration.

Unlike a traditional court judge, the CCPJ is expected to foster relationships with participants, showing genuine interest in participants' success and overall well-being, while maintaining a level of neutrality. The CCPJ should aim to interact with the participants in a way that allows them to feel seen and heard, as well as educated in the proceedings and functioning of the court. The judge will follow through with the participant as the move through the process, providing a ratio of 4:1 praises and sanctions in order to support the outlined goals and efforts. Motivational interviewing will also be utilized when necessary.

Community Court Coordinator. The community court coordinator is responsible for guaranteeing the court is fully functioning and operating well. The coordinator is responsible for gathering statistical data, overseeing volunteer programs, and securing community support. The coordinator will assist with recruiting service providers and community volunteers as needed. Community awareness through various forms of outreach is also required of the coordinator. This could take place through attending community meetings, doing press releases, sending out new letters, or preparing presentations about the court. In addition to being a representative to the community, the coordinator will also serve as an agency liaison with the City of Spokane, Spokane Public Library, service providers, and the Center for Court Innovation. The coordinator will also research, apply for, and manage active grants that are relevant to Community Court.

As the community court is a collaborative environment, it is crucial for the coordinator to manage the multiagency representatives involved in the Community Court team with the goal of reducing conflicts, fostering collaboration and encouraging partnerships. This includes overseeing the staffings, working with the services providers, attorneys, and the judge. The coordinator is responsible for arranging trainings when necessary as well as updating the policies and procedures of the community court.

Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys. One or more prosecutors are to be assigned to community court as the community court prosecutor (CCP). The CCP will be responsible for reviewing cases charged to the community court, determine the participants eligibility for community court, participate in staffings, collaborating with the judge, public defenders, and probation officers to address disposition, revocation, and application of sanctions and incentives. The CCP will also rely on the risk and needs assessment to assist in connecting

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the participant to services while working to limit future involvement in the criminal justice system.

The CCP will be responsible for offering resolutions in the form of a ‘Stipulated Order of Continuance’, depending on the participants’ risk and needs. The CCP will also work with participants to release them on their own recognizance, pre and post adjudication is feasible. As an alternative to jail, the CCP may enforce monitoring either at home or at a local shelter. Throughout this process the CCP will work closely with the Spokane Police Department to identify problems occurring in the Downtown core that can be addressed by the Community Court. Specifically, the CCP shall attend any community meeting that is relevant to Community Court participants and resources, and present to various business and professional associations.

Assistant Public Defenders. As the majority of community court participants fall under the indigent population, the assistance of public counsel is a necessary part of the community court team. Even though community court functions differently than traditional court, all the traditional constitutional rights are upheld, including the right to trial and the right to counsel. The community court public defender (CCPD) fulfills this role of constitutional guardian by acting as a buffer between the accused and both the Court and the Prosecutor.

The CCPD will be trained to be familiar with the options and avenues available through community court, with the ability to advise on resolutions on cases that do not go to trial. This may include diversion, community service, treatment, or employment programs. The goal of the CCPD is to identify a solution that addresses the participants’ challenges, while helping them meet their goals set during intake. These goals often surround substance

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abuse issues, mental health issues, housing issues, and unemployment. The CCPD will work collaboratively with the community court team to address the needs of their clients.

Probation Officers. As a member of the community court team, the probation officer will conduct an intake risk and needs assessment of each participant, be available for weekly staffings, and assist in making treatment recommendations to the court. The probation officer will also be responsible for facilitating drug testing when necessary. Once a participant has a case plan, the probation officer will be responsible for implementing supervision, referring to appropriate agencies, and monitoring the participants trajectory through the program. Supervision may include referring participants to a supervised community service work crew or placing participants on Electronic Home Monitoring.

Spokane Police Department. The Spokane Police Department (SPD) serves as the primary law enforcement agency for the City of Spokane that responds to calls for service, investigates and arrests individuals suspected of committing criminal offenses in the City. As a member of the Community Court team, the assigned SPD officer will act as a liaison between the program and the Spokane Police Department. The assigned officer will be responsible for dissemination of information about community court participants to officers who might come in contact with them during their shift work, to ensure reasonable and appropriate measures are used when checking the participants for compliance. In addition, the SPD representative will be responsible for assisting with background investigations of potential participants, provide added security during court sessions, transportation to jail and treatment facilities, follow-up on warrants issued through community court, and monitor sanctions and compliance of participants.

The SPD officer assigned to the community court should become familiar with participants due to them being the first order of contact. The officers have discretion to refer

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individuals for services, issue a citation, or transport to jail if necessary. Officers are trained to exercise the option that has the least harmful impact on the individual, balanced with public safety and the likelihood that the individual will comply with the law. The current emphasis by the Downtown Precinct to divert more people to enable them to seek services from providers at Community Court rather than issue criminal tickets has greatly enhanced the efficiency of the court system. In order to properly serve the community court population, the assigned officers are trained in community policing, de-escalation, and crisis intervention training.

Court Clerk. While the court clerk is not involved with participants case's, they are involved with ensuring that court runs smoothly, dockets are distributed to team members, and maintaining all the necessary paperwork for the court.

Community Court Volunteers. The SMCC enlists volunteers to work during court hours in order to assist participants in their process of adjusting to community court. The main purpose of the volunteers is to ease participants' anxiety and uncertainty about the process, and assist participants in connecting with local service providers. This goal can be accomplished through working as a host for new participants in Community Court on Mondays who will benefit from guidance in connecting with the appropriate service providers, performing follow-up activities with participants who need it, and working with participants who are either in jail or in residential substance use disorder treatment and would benefit from assistance with discharge planning, including transportation, temporary housing, and connecting with various service providers that can help them move toward overall stability.

Interviews – Team Roles. During the interviews, it was clear that the community court team takes these responsibilities very seriously. The interviews with the staff members

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were fairly consistent in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of the court. Each person highlights similar achievements, strong points, and highlights of the court. These included the fact that the court met at the downtown public library, rather than the courthouse, the service provider room being next door to the court, the multifold collaboration between the different agencies of the courtroom workgroup, police, probation, treatment, and social services, and the court's approach of openness and willing to try new things. Similarly, the difficulties, drawbacks, and limitations of the court were overlapping as well.

The most resounding struggle indicated was the lack of resources; not enough staff, no steady funding, the inability to move forward with new research and changes. It was also stressed that the very nature of community court is enormous collaboration and follows through with that notion each week. Each participant requires a deep involvement from the key players, in order to gain an understanding on where the participant is on the spectrum, what their case plan should focus on, what accountability they need, and how to be there as an enforcer but also a cheerleader. The mentality of necessary like-mindedness was reiterated with each of the community court team members – working together is the essential step to making this program work. Without collaboration and team work, community court would not exist.

Focus Groups – Team Roles. In terms of recurring themes throughout the interviews, many similar matters were discussed in the focus group. The participants discussed the relationships with the judges and attorneys as very different from ones they have experienced in the past. Most commonly, it was mentioned that the difference between the community courtroom workgroup and the traditional courtroom workgroup is that they feel welcomed, feel that the team genuinely cares about their progress, and that they feel more taken care of.

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One thing that the judge does that was echoed as a positive throughout the interviews and focus groups is the quote of the week; this is a quote or phrase that the judge writes up on the blackboard every Monday. The quotes observed were concise, current with the times, motivational and funny. Multiple participants brought up these quotes as something they look forward to each week at court.

Another positive that resonated throughout the focus group was the fact that the court met at the library rather than the courthouse. The notion of the library being a more central, neutral meeting spot while also allowing the participants to access every service they may need without having to ‘jump all over town’ was repeated numerous times. The fact of the library as the meeting location, coupled with the decision of the court to have a service provider room next door, makes the participants feel welcomed and heard, rather than just another offender cycling through the system.

There was also a discussion about the participants’ understanding of the court process, due to the diligence of the judge and attorneys explaining each and every step to the fullest, without feeling pressured.

Adherence to the Community Court Principles

In order to evaluate the community court, a process evaluation was conducted through on-site observations and document reviews. Findings from the staffing and court observations, staff interviews, and participant focus groups as they relate to the SMCC’s adherence to the community court principles, as well as the ability to follow their own policies and procedures are detailed below. A brief review of each principle is described in the next section. This information is then compared to strengths of the SMCC in executing the component, as well as recommended targeted areas for improvement.

Community Court Principle #1: Enhanced Information

This first principle highlights the importance of creating an information-based atmosphere, focused on training and decision-making. It is crucial that community courts establish a collective, cooperative, and knowledgeable team. Generally, community court team members include a judge, defense attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, and court coordinators/managers. Secondary team members are often represented by community providers, police officers, probation officers, court clerks, educators, and social workers. Unlike a traditional court model, the team members of the community court are expected to adopt a cohesive therapeutic philosophy; an adversarial approach is not the focus of this team. Within this philosophy, community court teams must develop policies and processes that guide judicial decision-making, combined with enhanced staff training, and better client information.

Findings: The current members of the SMCC include the judge, prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers, a police officer, the court clerk and a court coordinator. The SMCC has all of its team members attend the staffing meetings, when feasible. At the meetings we observed, the judge, prosecutors, public defenders, a police officer and the court coordinator were present. These same team members also attend court hearings. The SMCC also invites community partners to staffings. Many community providers were present, including Hope House, Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT), Pathway House, Pioneer Center East (PCE), Stars, New Horizon, Skillsin, Fire Cares, and Hotspotters, among others.

Observations of the SMCC staffing indicated that almost all present team members were involved and engaged with each participant. Discussions were

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respectful and each team member was given the opportunity to speak on each participant. Detailed discussions were conducted for each client on the docket, with the majority of the team members knowing the progress of the participant. This is made possible with the inclusion of the community providers during staffings. If there was a report update from the case manager or service provider, that person was usually the first one to provide a status on each participant. This was then commonly followed-up with a report on the community service hours each participant has completed to date. Finally, the judge facilitated conversation with the team on positives and negatives regarding each client, conferring with attorneys and where they stood with each participant, highlighting anything needs to be addressed with the participant during court.

Strengths: The SMCC displayed high levels of knowledge, interest, and commitment towards each of the participants on that day's docket. Both attorneys were familiar with the client and progress up until that point. The judge seemed to provide strong leadership throughout the meetings, involving everyone in the process. Each team member played an active role in providing as much information about the client as possible, allowing better measures to use to ensure client success. The team has also attended multiple community court trainings, as well as a community court conference in order to enhance staff.

Targeted Areas of Improvement: Sustained education and training will always improve processes and outcomes. Continuing staff training about community court processes, such as the CCI trainings and community court conferences, will continue to improve upon the already beneficial exchange of enhanced information. Alongside

community court processes training, it is also crucial to train staff regarding the issues that participants face, such as drug addiction or mental health issues.

Community Court Principle #2: Community Engagement

The second principle highlights community partnerships and involvements within community court. Community courts were designed as collaborative programs, bringing diverse agencies, as well as the public, together to achieve a common goal. The collaboration between these agencies, the criminal justice system, and the local citizens functions best when those involved, not only support the mission of community court, but also work towards creating shared services and partnerships that will assist the courts in reaching their objectives. In collaboration with community agencies, the court must engage citizens' help in identifying, prioritizing and solving local problems.

Findings: Community engagement is strong in the SMCC. The court was created based on a model of community court – community needs assessment, in order for the court to address issues in the community while involving the community in the process. Along with the collaborative relationship with the service providers, the court also has a strong presence in the community, being located in the Downtown Library. Based on my observations, it seems as if the court is not having to solicit for community involvement, as the court is beneficial to all involved – the justice system, social services, community residents, and the city itself.

Strengths: The presence of the SMCC throughout the community is clear. The hearings are conducted at the Downtown Public Library, rather than the courthouse. This is an impactful difference as it allows clients to tend to all their requirements in one neutral place. There is also a notable use of community volunteers involved in

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the SMCC, relied upon to help participants move through the process. The SMCC also utilizes community service opportunities around downtown Spokane. This includes physical, service, and self-improvement types of community services. All lunches provided during court time are donated by the Gathering House. Goody bags given as graduation incentives are put together by local churches. These are just a few examples of ways in which the court engages with the local community to benefit all involved.

Targeted Areas of Improvement: The continual involvement of the downtown Spokane community with SMCC is encouraged. Keeping the current community members involved as well as establishing new community relations is recommended. At this time, all the component requirements are satisfied and thus, no areas of improvement are suggested.

Community Court Principle #3: Collaboration

This principle focuses on the collaboration between the parties of the community court. Unlike traditional court, community courts involve not only the justice system in the decision-making, but also the participants as well as the providers. Establishing a collaborative and productive relationship with those involved allows more dynamic resolutions to neighborhood issues. Bringing together justice players (such as judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, police officers and court managers) and potential stakeholders beyond the courthouse (such as social service providers, residents, victims' groups, schools) will improve inter-agency communication, garner trust between citizens and government, and foster new responses to problems.

Findings: The SMCC established a service provider room when they began, which houses all services providers that they have partnered with, in one room, on court

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day. As service providers continue to transition in and out of the community court setting, they are agreeing to be present at court, to assist the SMCC participants.

Also, as mentioned above, the SMCC has now been including services providers in staffing meetings this past year.

Strengths: The service provider room is an enormously effective step as it allows participants to attend court, as well as see all their necessary services providers, in one day, and in one room. The team has access to a plethora of services to refer the participants. Another strength is the inclusion of services providers in staffings, as it allows the improvement of communication between providers and SMCC team members, garners trust between the participants and the services providers, and allows the court to best respond to the various needs of the participants. During the staffing, oftentimes the services providers were the first go-to on each client, giving an overview of client status and next steps in their process.

Targeted Areas of Improvement: The collaboration currently present between the SMCC team and the service providers is prosperous. This collaborative nature between the two entities of justice system and community system provides variety of needed services for SMCC participants. While the collaboration seems to be functioning well in the current structure, it might be beneficial to include more presence from law enforcement. At the meetings we observed, there was not a large police presence; either a police officer was not present during collaborative discussion or no input was provided on their behalf. It may or may not be necessary, but it is something to consider based on previous research (Feinblatt & Berman, 1997). As police officers are the first encounter prior to a client entering community court, where a greater

incorporation of these team members can prove valuable to the overall configuration of community court.

Community Court Principle #4: Individualized Justice

In the traditional court system, treatment and the use of social services are not the central matter of a case and participants are often required to seek treatment services separate from the legal proceedings. The community court model highlights the importance of accessing and utilizing these types of resources, especially in terms of longevity of proceeding through the criminal justice system. To have this concept as a focal point in community court, however, requires a wide range of services and treatment providers as well as a central focus on individualized justice.

Community court teams should utilize evidence-based risk and needs assessment instruments to link offenders to individually tailored community-based services where appropriate. Some examples of this include drug treatment, job training, counseling, housing, or safety, among others.

Findings: The SMCC utilizes the Criminal Court Assessment Tool (CCAT) created by the Center for Court Innovation. The SMCC has the probation department staff administer the CCAT for new court participants, prior to entry into the community court. This tool is designed both to predict risk of re-offense and to offer preliminary guidance on how to reduce that risk through targeted treatment and intervention. These needs include education, employment, housing, substance use, criminal thinking, mental illness, and trauma. According to prior research, it is critical to quickly identify and place substance-abusing individuals into treatment while they are in a phase of acceptance and willingness to change (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1998).

Strengths: The CCAT is a needs assessment that is based on the Risk-Need-Responsivity theory and utilizes a combination of static criminal history and dynamic needs factors. The use of risk assessment tools allows the process of using empirically predicative indicators of behaviors in order to deduce risk level (Falzer, 2013). The CCAT is designed to both predict risk of recidivism, as well as provide targeted treatment and intervention guidance, while also screening for important needs that should be targeted to reduce risk, including education, employment, housing, substance use, criminal thinking, mental illness, and trauma (CCI, 2013).

Targeted Areas of Improvement: Continue utilizing the needs assessment to offer individually tailored community-based services to participants.

Community Court Principle #5: Accountability

The next principle focuses on the accountability and compliance of community court participants. Without accountability on the participant's end, community court could not be a successful enterprise. Employing community restitution mandates regular compliance monitoring, crucial to holding participants accountable to their case plans.

In order to successfully improve the accountability of participants, community courts must have clear consequences (sanctions) for non-compliance. It is also beneficial for participants' morale to include rewards or motivation (incentives) for compliance. The use of incentives and sanctions should be associated with the completion of various aspects of the court plan. The community court team should be fully versed in each client, understanding the various goals the clients are working towards, in order to help them reach those goals.

Findings: Compliance is the key to any type of treatment program. Incentives and sanctions can help community court clients, not only comply with their court plan,

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but also stay engaged in the behavior changing process. The SMCC has some general sanctions and incentives, but they are not a focal point of the court process. Anyone involved in the court process can suggest a sanction or an incentive, as the SMCC aims to provide a safe and honest space for new participants to begin their treatment and court plan.

Strengths: The SMCC has a developed system of incentives, such as the ‘tree of success’. The tree of success acknowledges a job well done among the participants. This ‘tree’ consists of a paper tree that they hang up every court session, and participants names are added to the tree as an incentive. Other incentives include donated goody bags, gift cards, or time off court. Some of the established sanctions include day reporting, community service, or letter writing.

Targeted Areas of Improvement: While the SMCC has some established incentives and sanctions, there is still room for more development. As noted above, proper use of sanctions and incentives is crucial for compliance (Huddleston & Marlowe, 2012). Having more detailed information regarding sanctions and incentives available to participants is crucial to ensuring compliance. The SMCC staff acknowledges the use and involvement of these compliance measures, and many of the staff members discussed the different options available for both sanctions and incentives. However, the participants were less aware of the potential rewards or repercussions involved with community court, citing that they did not know the options available or the potential incentives they could receive.

Community Court Principle #6: Outcomes

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The final community court principle highlights the operational and continuing evaluation of outcomes. In order for a community court to continue to function successfully, data collection and analysis needs to be an active and on-going process. This includes measuring outcomes, processes, costs, and benefits, which allows the court to, not only evaluate the effectiveness of operations, but also encourage continuous improvement for the court and court staff.

Using data to inform programming measures and funding allocations is becoming a requirement of many criminal justice entities. The utilization of data and evaluation is crucial for problem-solving courts as there are numerous resources investing in this process.

Findings: The SMCC has an electronic case management system that allows the court team to maintain collected data. Currently, the data collected includes, but is not limited to, demographics, instant offense, criminal history, participant history, level and types of treatment, compliance, relapses, sanctions imposed and incentives conferred, and graduation or termination

Strengths: The collection of this data is crucial, not only for the community court to track its own participants as they progress through the program, but also for evaluation resources.

Targeted Areas of Improvement: It is necessary to build upon this type of data collection in order to improve community court outcomes. The utilization of data and evaluation can ensure that a cost-effective and evidence-based program is utilized. It also allows the team to focus on achieving the goals and missions of the SMCC. Investing resources in building up the data collection and entry capabilities, and establishing a regular analysis of the data, will allow the SMCC to use ‘real time’ data

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to inform on program management and to guide decision-making and program operations.

Summary

The findings from the process evaluation indicate an adherence to the community court model. The SMCC displays program fidelity, implementing a court that not only follows the six community court principles, but also considers the necessary matters for maintaining a problem-solving court. The court shows strengths in many areas, including the use of the effective collaboration practices between the criminal justice system actors and the social services providers, the use of CCAT risk assessment tool, the use of incentives such as the tree of success or sanctions such as day reporting, the knowledge of each client and their entire case, and the aim to collect organized and informed data. The court shows challenges in some areas, including improving more consistent use of sanctions and incentives, ensuring that participants understand the program structure, a greater involvement of law enforcement personnel in the staffing process, continuing to expand the use of community resources, and expanding the detail of records and data collection related to SMCC goals. Further recommendations will be discussed below.

OUTCOME EVALUATION

To complete the outcome evaluation a set of analytic methods were proposed. In the next section we describe the data, sample, research questions, and analytic plan. A description of the matching process is illustrated and descriptive statistics are provided. Finally, outcome results are provided and, where available, comparisons to non-participants are indicated. It should be noted that, beyond recidivism, many of the notable outcomes of

the community court do not have a comparison and therefore, descriptive statistics of community court participants (both justice involved and walk-ins) are provided.

METHODS

Data and Sampling

The WSU research team obtained a total of 425 cases from the Downtown Spokane Community Court, representing clients who participated in the SMCC from 12/08/2013 to 7/31/2017. The assembled dataset included community court-related measures such as: demographics, needs assessment score, and progress in community court. These measures were collected by the SMCC staff. Criminal history information was obtained from the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). This included prior charges conviction and recidivism date. However, to obtain criminal history data, a unique identifier, in this instance case file numbers, must be matched to the collected community court data. Unfortunately, the AOC was only able to match criminal history files for 376 subjects. A de-identified file was returned to WSU to be processed for analysis.

We then operationalized the outcome measures. We examined multiple durations (6, 12, and 24 months, as well as charges versus convictions. To retain as many cases as feasibly possible, a liberal definition of recidivism was utilized – any new charge occurring within six-months and twelve-months following a participants' initial assessment. This definition for recidivism was vetted by the SMCC and the WSU research team. We further broke down 'any' recidivism into non-mutually exclusive categories that included, violent, property, drug, and felony charges. These categorizations were operationalized by the Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) crime severity tables (WSIPP, 2012). Out of the 376 cases, only 106 participants had a full six-month follow-up, reducing the sample size further.

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In an attempt to triangulate the effect of community court on recidivism, we created two comparison groups. The first represented a historical comparison group of individuals that were arrested and convicted prior to the implementation of the community court. The historical comparison group included cases from 1/1/2007 to 12/07/2007, where this group of subjects would have been eligible for community court but were it not for their conviction occurred prior to the establishment of SMCC. All historical group subjects met the entrance criteria of the community court, which included eligible offenses. A list of the eligible offenses can be found in the SMCC policies and procedures manual (City of Spokane, 2017). The second comparison group was a contemporary group, which identified individuals that had the same eligibility criteria as the community court, were convicted during the same sample frame time period as the community court group, however for one reason or another, were not participants in the community court. An additional eligibility criterion, downtown geographic region, was used as part of the eligibility criteria for the court. In order to provide the services that will meet the needs of the participants and the community, the reach of The Spokane Community Court is restricted to certain boundaries within the downtown Spokane area.

Measures

Analyses for this research involves quantitative measures associated with community court practices and outcomes. The measures collected through the SMCC as well as the Administration of the Courts (AOC). The first set of measures collected is unique identifiers and demographic measures for the SMCC subject group. These measures were used by the AOC to match participants and identify comparison groups. These measures include gender time (measured in months) since last charge, time (measured in months) since last conviction, age (in years), current violent charge, current property charge, current drug

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charge, current sex charge, current felony charge, prior charge, prior violent charge, prior property charge, prior drug charge, prior sex charge, prior felony charge, prior conviction, prior violent conviction, prior property conviction, prior drug conviction, prior sex conviction, and prior felony conviction. The next set of measures collected were the outcome measures. These included any recidivism charge, any conviction charge, violent recidivism charge, property recidivism charge, drug recidivism charge, and felony recidivism charge. Due to data limitations, information regarding charge data was not plentiful for the comparison groups. Therefore, we could not build out varying different offense categories for recidivism. Instead, the measures of any recidivism charge within six months and twelve months, and any conviction within six months and twelve months were used. The next set of measures collected were the immediate outcome measures. These measures include deferral, self-improvement event, housing referral, graduation. The final set of measures collected were for walk-in participants. Walk-in participants differ from the general SMCC participants as they are not referred through the justice system. These measures cover the usage of provider services, including DSHS, State Health Care, SSI, employment, VA Services, housing, legal, Lions Club.

Research Questions

There were several research questions to be answered through the findings of the proposed outcome analyses. First, we examined recidivism outcomes. Specifically, we sought answers to the research question “do SMCC participants incur greater rates of recidivism or convictions as compared to similar subjects, who did not participate in the program?” To answer this question, we compared SMCC subjects to the historical and contemporary comparison groups on four outcomes – any recidivism charge within six months and twelve months, and any conviction within six months and twelve months. Next, we sought to

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examine if there are any particular intermediate outcomes that are a benefit of the program. We outlined this research question, as “Which intermediate outcomes provide a positive benefit to recipients, as compared to non-subgroup counterparts?” Finally, we examined non-offense related outcomes. In particular, we were interested in examining “what is the rate of justice and non-justice referred participants’ use of services?” In the next section, we describe how these evaluations were completed.

Analysis Plan

To answer the first research question we gathered eligible subjects for our three justice involved groups. In an attempt to make groups equivalent, or matched, we completed a statistical process known as Mahalanobis Distance Matching (MDM). This statistical process takes predictor measures of the SMCC group and attempts to match, or weight, subjects in the comparison group so that they ‘look like’ SMCC subject. This process is necessary to reduce/eliminate potential sources of selection bias that may create observed differences between SMCC and comparison group subjects. Since we were completing a retrospective research design, random assignment to SMCC and control groups was no longer feasible. The goal of the matching process was to simulate random assignment and, in effect, reduce/eliminate bias between groups. It should be noted, however, that this simulation process is only as good as the predictors that are used to create the match and the assurance that comparison group subjects meet all eligibility criteria.

Once the match is completed, descriptive statistics are provided on all the predictors (i.e. items used as part of the match) describing differences between groups both pre and post-MDM. Standardized Difference Tests (STD) were then computed to establish if substantial reduction in predictor differences have been minimized. Based on industry

standards, a STD greater than 20 indicated substantial variation. A sufficient match is indicated, if less than five percent of the STD tests indicate a value greater than 20.

Once the matched/weighted data samples are established, outcome analyses are performed. Here we utilize cross-tabulations, examining the proportion recidivism identified for each group. To identify significant differences, chi-square tests are performed, where a probability of less than five percent is identified to be a significant group difference.

Finally, based on data provided by the court, we examined intermediate outcomes and justice and non-justice referred participants' use of services within the court. While there is no comparison group to consider for these last set of analyses, we providing descriptive findings as an indication of services received, that would likely not otherwise been provided had the court not existed.

RESULTS

For this specific study, a retrospective research design was being utilized, where random assignment to SMCC treatment and comparison groups is not a feasible option. The goal of the matching process was to simulate random assignment and, in effect, reduce/eliminate selection bias between groups. It should be noted, however, that this simulation process is only as good as the predictors that are used to create the match and the assurance that comparison group subjects meet all eligibility criteria. In order to assurance that the simulation process was sound, each match was assessed both pre- and post-match, to ensure proper balance. This is then followed by bivariate outcome tests to determine the overall effect of community court involvement. The outcome tests consisted of a chi-square test to identify significant associations between community court and recidivism after simulating a quasi-experimental design using the proposed matching technique.

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The matching process of this study consisted of an MDM algorithm that was computed to identify subjects within the historical and contemporary comparison groups that possessed similar characteristics to that of the community court group. The MDM process was conducted twice, once for each of the two comparisons: SMCC participants versus the contemporary comparison group and SMCC participants versus the historical comparison group. There were 293 SMCC group subjects initially, identical between the two datasets. The historical comparison group consisted of 5,214 possible matching candidates, whereas the contemporary comparison members were composed of a candidate pool of 3,521 possible subjects to match total. However, because the possible matching pools for both comparison groups were not sufficiently large relative to the size of the SMCC group, traditional matching was not an optimal technique.

Instead, propensity score weighting was conducted to weight offenders in the comparison pools such that similar SMCC subjects are given more weight in the outcome analysis than dissimilar subjects. When weighting is used, all subjects from the comparison pool become a part of the final sample, although not all offenders have an equal impact on the final statistical calculations. Comparison subjects with greater similarity to the SMCC group are assigned a higher weight, allowing them to have a larger impact on the analyses than dissimilar subjects.

Twenty-one predictor variables were used to weight SMCC participants with each respective comparison group. Prior to weighting, 57 percent of the items were substantially different between the SMCC and historical groups, whereas one-third of the items were substantially different between the SMCC and contemporary groups. Weights were then generated using boosted logistic regression with 21 items to predict SMCC group member status. The weighting approach was an average treatment for the treated (ATT) technique,

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meaning only comparison group members were weighted, and the demographics and other characteristics of the SMCC group subjects would remain the same. Post-weighting, coefficients substantially different on ($|STD| > 20$) on only 4.8 percent of the items, which is within the industry standard criterion for a sufficient match (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1985).

Table 1. Pre and Post Match Descriptive Statistics – Historical

Measure	Community Court Pre-Match %/M (SD) (n= 293)	Historical Group Pre-Match %/M (SD) (n= 5214)	Pre-STD	Community Court Post-Match %/M (SD) (n= 293)	Historical Group Post-Match %/M (SD) (n= 5214)	Post-STD
Male	73.0	73.2	0.3	73.0	73.6	1.2
Time Since Last Charge	77 (172.7)	132.1 (244.4)	26.0*	77.01 (172.7)	98.1 (258)	9.6
Time Since Last Conviction	943.5 (1121.1)	248.6 (528.1)	67.7*	1089.7 (1674.6)	841.2 (1168.4)	17.2
Age	36.9 (12.2)	32.8 (11.1)	34.6*	36.9 (12.2)	36.7 (11.34)	1.4
Current Violent Charge	0.1 (0.4)	0.5 (1.0)	38.0*	0.1 (0.4)	0.2 (0.7)	15.8
Current Property Charge	0.7 (1)	1.3 (1.8)	41.4*	0.7 (1.0)	0.8 (1.5)	7.9
Current Drug Charge	0.1 (0.3)	0.3 (0.7)	40.0*	0.1 (0.3)	0.2 (0.5)	19.4
Current Sex Charge	0.0 (0.1)	0.0 (0.2)	1.5	0.0 (0.1)	0.0 (0.2)	1.7
Current Felony Charge	0.1 (0.4)	0.5 (1.6)	32.9*	0.1 (0.4)	0.3 (1.1)	14.1
Prior Charge	31.4 (29.3)	20.4 (19.1)	44.5*	31.4 (29.3)	28.4 (25.4)	11.0
Prior Violent Charge	6.1 (8.1)	3.5 (5.4)	38.4*	6.1 (8.1)	5.2 (6.9)	12.5
Prior Property Charge	10.5 (12.2)	5.7 (7.8)	47.4*	10.5 (12.2)	8.5 (10.7)	17.8
Prior Drug Charge	2.3 (3.4)	2.2 (3.3)	2.6	2.3 (3.4)	2.6 (3.5)	8.8
Prior Sex Charge	0.3 (0.7)	0.2 (0.7)	15.0	0.3 (0.7)	0.2 (0.9)	5.9
Prior Felony Charge	6.2 (8.2)	4.8 (7.5)	17.1	6.2 (8.2)	6.9 (9.3)	8.3
Prior Conviction	11.3 (12.5)	10.1 (9.9)	10.7	11.4 (12.6)	13.4 (12.6)	16.1
Prior Violent Conviction	2.5 (3.6)	1.4 (2.3)	35.2*	2.5 (3.6)	2.1 (3)	12.3
Prior Property Conviction	4.4 (6.1)	3.1 (4.4)	24.2*	4.4 (6.1)	4.3 (5.6)	0.2

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Prior Drug Conviction	1.0 (1.6)	1.0 (1.7)	3.3	1.0 (1.6)	1.2 (1.9)	10.7
Prior Sex Conviction	0.1 (0.4)	0.1 (0.4)	9.5	0.1 (0.4)	0.1 (0.5)	2.9
Prior Felony Conviction	2.2 (3.2)	2.1 (3.3)	4.3	2.2 (3.2)	3.0 (4.2)	20.0*

*indicate substantial differences based on the STD

Table 2. Pre and Post Match Descriptive Statistics – Contemporary

Measure	Community Court	Contemporary Group	Pre-STD	Community Court	Contemporary Group	Post-STD
	Pre-Match %/M (SD) (n= 293)	Post-Match %/M (SD) (n= 3521)		Pre-Match %/M (SD) (n= 293)	Post-Match %/M (SD) (n= 3521)	
Male	73.04	70.86	4.84	73.04	72.75	0.65
Time Since Last Charge	77.01 (172.71)	175.23 (339.6)	36.46*	77.01 (172.71)	91.68 (224.6)	7.32
Time Since Last Conviction	943.45 (1121.11)	393.78 (635.59)	60.32*	943.45 (1121.11)	784.73 (914.47)	15.51
Age	36.85 (12.24)	34.98 (11.1)	15.96	36.85 (12.24)	37.21 (11.58)	3.04
Current Violent Charge	0.1 (0.36)	0.33 (0.89)	34.4*	0.1 (0.36)	0.14 (0.52)	9.97
Current Property Charge	0.66 (1)	1.46 (1.87)	53.91*	0.66 (1)	0.73 (1.27)	6.81
Current Drug Charge	0.1 (0.34)	0.14 (0.5)	9.76	0.1 (0.34)	0.09 (0.36)	3.07
Current Sex Charge	0.01 (0.12)	0.01 (0.08)	7.02	0.01 (0.12)	0.01 (0.11)	1.75
Current Felony Charge	0.13 (0.41)	0.53 (1.71)	32.1*	0.13 (0.41)	0.17 (0.8)	6.79
Prior Charge	31.41 (29.26)	25.96 (22.8)	20.77*	31.41 (29.26)	29.76 (27.06)	5.86
Prior Violent Charge	6.14 (8.13)	4.67 (6.59)	19.87	6.14 (8.13)	5.56 (7.61)	7.34
Prior Property Charge	10.53 (12.16)	8.55 (9.95)	17.79	10.53 (12.16)	8.46 (11.9)	17.2
Prior Drug Charge	2.29 (3.35)	2.58 (3.94)	7.93	2.29 (3.35)	2.67 (4.09)	10.3
Prior Sex Charge	0.26 (0.69)	0.16 (0.75)	12.76	0.26 (0.69)	0.33 (0.94)	8.77
Prior Felony Charge	6.19 (8.24)	7.05 (9.35)	9.7	6.19 (8.24)	5.84 (10.29)	3.72
Prior Conviction	11.33 (12.48)	12.61 (11.6)	10.61	11.33 (12.48)	14.15 (13.43)	21.75*
Prior Violent Conviction	2.51 (3.64)	2.09 (3.03)	12.31	2.51 (3.64)	2.47 (3.37)	0.97
Prior Property Conviction	4.35 (6.08)	4.49 (5.47)	2.39	4.35 (6.08)	4.42 (6.17)	1.1

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Prior Drug Conviction	0.96 (1.57)	1.18 (1.88)	12.51	0.96 (1.57)	1.13 (1.86)	9.58
Prior Sex Conviction	0.1 (0.41)	0.07 (0.38)	7.08	0.1 (0.41)	0.16 (0.55)	12.94
Prior Felony Conviction	2.2 (3.16)	3.06 (4.24)	22.93*	2.2 (3.16)	2.38 (4.23)	4.67

*indicate substantial differences based on the STD

Based on these findings, the matching procedure was identified to be sufficient between the community court group and the two comparison groups. This allows us to compare community court recidivism outcomes to the comparison group. In the next section we describe the results of the recidivism outcome comparisons.

Outcomes

Following the weighting procedure, descriptive statistics of study outcome measures were examined. The recidivism comparisons (post-weighting) are displayed in Table 3. Overall, the results show considerably lower recidivism rates for the community court participants, as compared to the historical and contemporary groups. When examining Any Recidivism Charge within 6 months, roughly 20% of SMCC participants had some sort of recidivism charge, as compared to the 32% of subjects for each the historical and contemporary group. When examining Any Recidivism Charge within 12 months, roughly 30% of SMCC participants had some sort of recidivism charge, as compared to the 46% of subjects for each the historical and comparison groups. SMCC participants also possessed lower conviction rates, with about 2% within 6 months, as compared to 23% for the historical group and 21% for the contemporary group. For Any Conviction Charge within 12 months, 3.5% of the community court participants had some sort of conviction, as compared to the 37% of the historical comparison group and 30% of the contemporary group. Based on these findings, results indicate that the SMCC group has greater performance, with regard to recidivism, in contrast to the comparison groups.

Table 3. Outcome Descriptive Statistics – Historical

Measure	Community Court Outcomes %	Historical Group Outcomes %	Contemporary Group Outcomes %
Any Recidivism Charge – 6 months	19.8	31.9*	32*
Any Conviction Charge – 6 months	1.7	23*	21.4*
Any Recidivism Charge – 12 months	30	46.1*	45.6*
Any Conviction Charge – 12 months	3.5	34.6*	30.4*

p<.05 *, p< .01 **, p<.001***

It is important to note that conviction rates for the community court participants are unusually low, based upon previous research (Eckberg, 2001; Sviridoff, Rottman, Weidner, Cheesman, Curtis, Hansen, & Ostrom, 2001; Katz, 2009; Nugent-Borakove, 2009; Lee et al, 2013; Grommon, Hipple, & Ray, 2016). The source of the data of convictions for the comparison and treatment group were different, which may provide a possible explanation. All necessary measures were taken to properly code and analyze the data provided to us.

Intermediate Outcomes

The community court model is designed to impact recidivism and several intermediate outcomes. Generally, ‘intermediate outcomes’ are those that provide a positive benefit to recipients and thought to be related to recidivism and future involvement with the criminal justice system. While comparisons subjects could not be included in these analyses, due to a lack of similar data collection, one can assume that the intermediate outcomes achieved would not be possible without the programmatic assistance provided by SMCC.

Intermediate outcome descriptives are provided in Table 5. Findings reveal that over 70% were positively engaged in the intermediate outcomes associated with the SMCC. Nearly 75% of participants had their conviction deferred. Over 90% engaged in a self-improvement event, such as utilizing programming and services and roughly the same

proportion received housing referral. Finally, over 70% of the participants graduated the program, which is a high proportion based on prior findings (Goldkamp et al, 2001; Cheesman et al, 2010; Lee et al, 2013; Grommon et al, 2016).

Table 5. Intermediate Outcomes

Intermediate Outcome	%
Deferral/SOC	74.9
Self-Improvement Event	91.3
Housing Referral	90.3
Graduation	71.1

Walk-in Participants

As mentioned above, the SMCC does accept participants *not* referred by the criminal justice system through pre-arrest. Oftentimes these individuals have heard about services provided by the SMCC and are looking for ways to access programming and referrals. Table 6 provides the descriptive statistics regarding services accessed by walk-in participants.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics – Walk-ins

Measure	%
DSHS	41.4
State Health Care	50.0
SSI	44.4
Employment	50.9
Housing	32.2
Legal	39.4
Lions Club	45.1

As the results show, there is a substantial walk-in population accessing the community court services. Of the 1,166 participants tracked, 41 percent accessed DSHS, 50

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percent accessed State Health Care, 44 percent accessed supplemental security income services, 50 percent accessed employment services, 32 percent accessed housing services, 39 percent accessed legal services and 45 percent access Lions Club services. As mentioned, similar to the intermediate outcome's analysis, we lack a direct comparison group for this population. However, the considerable usage of these services demonstrates the extended impact the SMCC has on the downtown Spokane community.

GAP ANALYSIS

The intent of a gap analysis is to identify where program resources exist in excess and where they are insufficient. The goal of this analysis is to categorize where the gap lies between what needs the population requires and what needs the current programs are fulfilling. By recognizing and addressing these gaps, criminal justice agencies are able to ensure that the evidence-based and therapeutic practices implemented are meeting all the needs within the jurisdiction. This is an especially important analysis for a program such as a community court, where a bevy of services are being offered to the population.

Analysis Plan

Developed by Taxman and the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence, the RNR Simulation Tool is designed to assist agencies in determining what type of programming will be most beneficial for their population. With the goals of reducing recidivism and improving offender outcomes, the RNR Simulation Tool allows agencies to identify gaps within their current program offerings. When used as a gap analysis, the RNR tool identifies:

1. Needs being met by current program offerings
2. Needs that are not being met by current program offerings

3. Needs that are being addressed but not in full

The goal of the gap analysis function is to identify where the gap lies between what needs the jurisdiction requires and what needs the current programs are fulfilling. The overall objective is to close the gap, ensuring that implemented programs are meeting all the needs within the jurisdiction. This tool is widely available for public use, and is a great resource for criminal justice agencies. As it was developed to target correctional intervention, the tool will be used as the base of building this particular gap analysis targeted towards the SMCC provider interventions. Rather than examining the program offerings, this study will be examining the service provider offerings available through community court. This includes the service provider room that is open every Monday during court, as well as any referral services made by the court. The analysis of the available providers, coupled with the known needs of the community court participants, should produce an estimate of the reach that the community court has on the specific offender population.

Domains. The RNR Simulation Tool focuses on five main domains of services, based on targeted behaviors. These domains include a (A) dependence on hard drugs, (B) criminal thinking/cognitive restructuring, (C) self-improvement and management, (D) interpersonal skills, (E) life skills, and (F) punishment only.

Group A interventions target severe drug use disorders on drugs such as opiates, opioids, amphetamines, methamphetamine, crack/cocaine, heroin, PCP, benzodiazepines, and barbiturates. This group does not include use of marijuana and alcohol. Interventions in this category use specific modalities designed to address severe addiction, offer a range of dosage levels across a continuum of care, and adhere to an evidence-based treatment manual. Group B interventions focus on criminal thinking using cognitive restructuring

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techniques, but also include interpersonal and social skills interventions. These interventions predominantly target high and moderate-risk offenders. Interventions in this group should include components that can address the primary treatment target as well as other potential treatment targets (e.g., self-improvement and management, social skills, and life skills).

Group C interventions focus on developing self-improvement and management skills including some cognitive restructuring work for those with mild to moderate substance use disorders and/or mental health issues. These programs predominantly target moderate-risk offenders. Group D interventions focus on building social skills and interpersonal skills, targeting multiple destabilizing issues. These interventions address communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills, geared towards targeting moderate and low-risk offenders. Group E interventions primarily target life skills and are intended for lower risk individuals. These programs include employment services, education classes, vocational training, management of finances, and assistance with obtaining support or entitlement services. Group F includes interventions with little restrictions on behavior, focusing instead on punishment or supervision only, with programming/services as needed. This group targets lower risk individuals with no primary criminogenic needs (e.g., severe substance use disorder or criminal thinking) and few destabilizers (e.g., no mental health concerns, antisocial peers, or substance use issues). Interventions at this level are more focused on controls than treatment (ACE, 2013).

While the RNR Simulation Tool would normally measure the programs implemented in a correctional setting, by comparing the number of offenders needing the program to the number of offenders the program can accommodate, this study is utilizing the tool as a starting point to track the impact of the service provider offerings within community court. Participants in community court have the option to access as many of the service providers

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as they need, based on their intake risk and needs assessment. Services providers involved with the community court also have the ability to work with participants in a way they would not normally, as they are located at the court and can see their clients every week if necessary.

SMCC Providers

The SMCC classifies their providers into seventeen different groups. These groups cover various needs and services including, but not limited to: housing, education, employment, job training, behavioral health counseling, medical benefits, health/dental care, childcare, and parenting. Table 8 outlines each group and the specific providers that fall under that group.

Table 8. SMCC Providers

Grouping	Organization Name
Education	Adult Education Center Community Colleges of Spokane Next Generation Zone (ages 16-24) VOA Crosswalk Excelsior (up to age 21) Fulcrum Institute (RISE)
Employment	WorkSource Career Path Services Fulcrum Institute (RISE) Goodwill Industries Next Generation Zone (ages 16-24) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Housing	SNAP Goodwill (HEN program) Volunteers of America (VOA) Center for Justice Catholic Charities Salvation Army Pioneer Human Services – Pathway House
Identification	Department of Licensing for ID

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	Social Security DSHS
Medical	Providence Center for Justice (ACA Navigator) VOA (Hotspotters program) United Healthcare Molina Amerigroup DSHS
Mental Health	Frontier Behavioral Health - Access to Care (initial assessment) Frontier Behavioral Health - ARS/AOP/IOP/Elder Services Frontier Behavioral Health - PACT/TYPACT Family Service Spokane Lutheran Community Services Veteran's Outreach Center Catholic Charities National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Substance Use Disorder Treatment	SPARC Pioneer Human Services STARS Teen/Adult Challenge
Co-Occurring Services	SPARC YFA STARS
Legal Assistance (Disability, Civil)	WEAR Law Office Disability Assistance Project Evan Marken (disability attorney) Center for Justice (civil) Skils'kin (protective payee) NW Justice Project
Veteran's Assistance	Goodwill (SSVF) Veteran's Affairs (Spokane VA) Veteran's Outreach Center
Women's Services	Women's Hearth VOA HOPE house YWCA
Victim Services	Lutheran Community Services YWCA
Specialty Health Services (Vision/Dental/Elder)	Lion's Club (reading glasses, vision appointments) CHAS (dental)

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	Home and Community Services DSHS
Basic Needs (Clothing, Food, Essentials)	Goodwill Catholic Charities VOA DSHS 2-1-1
Family/Parenting	Division of Child Support Family Service Spokane Frontier Behavioral Health NAMI
Library Services	Library Cards WorkSource Computer Lab
Case Management	VOA Hotspotters Catholic Charities (Bridges)

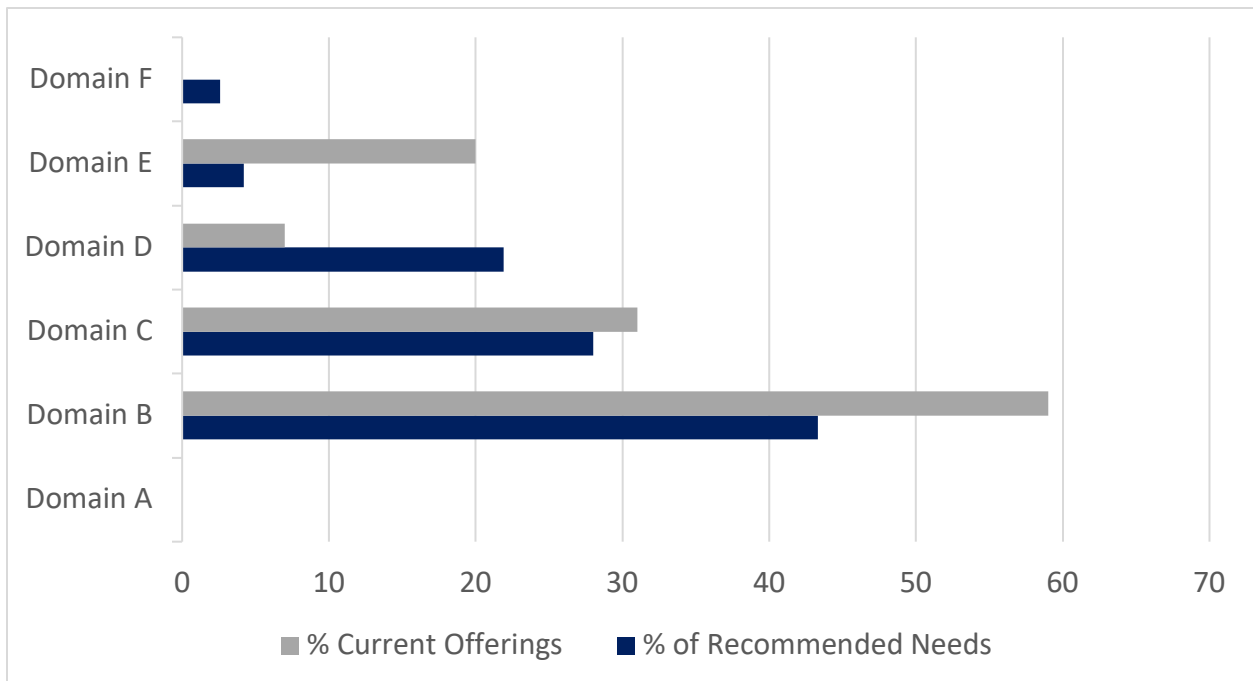
The assignment of community court participants into these various providers takes place during the Community Court Needs Assessment Findings & Referrals. This process is part of every intake that the community court preforms. The SMCC currently has verbal agreements with local service providers that attend Community Court each Monday. During the intake and through the court process, the SMCC team aims to meet participants needs through their service provider rooms. Referrals to other treatment providers can be made when the service providers in court do not have appropriate services to meet the needs of a participant. In the case of an outside referral, case managers are tasked with assisting participants in securing anything that may be needed in order for a participant to enter and or remain in treatment. In addition to the delivery of promised services, the providers also assistant the participants complete necessary tasks in order to meet their needs and work towards graduation. Some examples of this include case managers are responsible for helping participants obtain the necessary Medicaid that they may need. Affordable Care Act navigators are available on Mondays to help in the medical insurance enrollment process. The Washington State Department of Licensing sends representatives to court once per

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month to help facilitate the opportunity for participants to access proof of identification (City of Spokane, 2017).

While the community court does not rely on the group of domains that the RNR Simulation Tool utilizes, for the purposes of this analysis the 64 services providers have been divided into their related domains. Figure 1 displays the gap analysis results. This bar graph indicates the proportion of participants needing the intervention (blue), alongside the proportion of participants accessing the intervention (gray). For each group, the difference between the proportion needing and the proportion receiving the intervention is the “programming gap”.¹

Figure 1. SMCC Gap Analysis



¹ It should be noted that one caveat of the RNR Simulation Tool is that only the primary target behavior is identified. If an intervention addresses more than one behavior, it is not reflected in the gap analysis.

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Overall, findings suggest that there is only one major programming gap within the SMCC provider offerings. For domain A, there is no programming gap present as severe substance abuse with hard drugs is not relevant to community court. Domain B, criminal thinking, intervention shows a 15.7% difference in terms of excess resources to population needs. For domain C, self-improvement and management, the difference is small, with only 3% between offerings and need. Domain D, interventions focus on building social skills and interpersonal skills, is where the largest gap lies. The results show the gap between need and current participation is 14.9%. Domain E, life skills, shows an excess in intervention of 15.8%. Finally, domain F has very little different, with a 2.6% gap. As only one targeted behavior can be identified for each intervention for the purposes of the gap analysis, it is important to take that into account when considering the results. Many of the services provider programs offered through the community court target multiple behaviors, delivering multiple interventions.

The results are promising for the SMCC and the service providers. With only one substantial gap, the analysis shows that the community court and its associated programming and interventions are meeting the majority of the needs of their participants. This links directly back to the court's goal of improving participants' lives by addressing the underlying problems that may lead them to commit crimes.

DISCUSSION

The current study provided a process and outcome evaluation report of the Spokane Municipal Community Court (SMCC). The report first reviewed the history of community courts from a national perspective, followed by a brief history the SMCC. Then the report covered the process evaluation portion. The process evaluation described the SMCC's

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adherence to the community court principles as established by the Midtown Community Court in 1993. In-session observations of the court and staffing, interviews, and participant focus groups informed the evaluation.

As shown in previous research, the key to a successfully implemented community court program lies in the adherence to the community court principles (Lang, 2011; Wolf, 2007). The results of this study displayed that the SMCC team members express a high level of perceived adherence to the six community court principles. The findings of the process evaluation suggest that the community court teams have been well exposed and trained to the proper implementation methods of a successful community court and have applied this to their program.

The process evaluation findings uncovered many strengths of the SMCC process. First, a high level of knowledge, interest, and engagement with clients and their progress through the court. This is especially important, given the unique interaction that the community court team has with the community court participants (Lang, 2011). Second, there is a well-established presence in the community, a notable use of volunteers, and the relationships established with local business in order for community service to be accomplished. This includes the relocation of court to the Downtown Library rather than the courthouse, the use of volunteers to be present at court day to help new participants navigate the system, and the established relationships with the local community that have resulted in a bagged lunch being provided for every participant during court day, among other things. The courts involvement in the community can have a longstanding impact on the participant, as it begins to instill the values of quality of life within a community (Wolf, 2007; Lee et. al, 2013). Third, an effective collaboration between the criminal justice system actors and the social services providers through the inclusion of providers at staffings and

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the creation of the service provider room that is open during court days. As previous research has shown, the incorporation and collaboration with social service actors is extremely important to the success of a problem-solving court (NADCP, 1997; OJJDP/NCJFCJ, 2003; Lutze & van Wormer, 2007, 2014; Wenzel, Longshore, Turner, & Ridgely, 2001; Wenzel, Turner, & Ridgely, 2004). Fourth, the use of the CCAT as needs assessment that is based on the Risk-Need-Responsivity theory and employs a combination of static criminal history and dynamic needs factors. The integration of a risk assessment tool into criminal justice processes has grown in the recent years, however, the use of such a tool allows for curated, individualized justice to be delivered in a way that cannot be achieved through the traditional court system (Falzer, 2013). Fifth, the SMCC has a developed system of incentives and sanctions, including the tree of success, goody bags, gift cards, and time off court as incentives and day reporting, community service, or letter writing as sanctions. As previous research has shown throughout the history of problem-solving courts, compliance can be achieved through encouraging positive change by implementing a system of graduated sanctions and incentive (Miller & Johnson, 2009). And finally, the SMCC has an aim to collect organized data including demographics, instant offense, criminal history, participant history, level and types of treatment, compliance, relapses, sanctions imposed and incentives conferred, and graduation or termination. Without the collection of such data, outcomes, successes, and advancements could not be measured (Lang, 2011). Overall, the SMCC has implemented a model that demonstrates fidelity to an effective community court model. This is reflected through the findings of this study, many of which have confirmed what has been found in previous research as necessary for community court model adherence.

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Based on the process evaluation findings, the following recommendations are provided for further SMCC improvement. First, making ongoing efforts in ensuring that education regarding community court processes and training of criminal justice actors regarding the issues that participants face. The population proceeding through community court is ever-changing and the need to maintain staff education and training is necessary for the longevity of a community court program (Wolf, 2007). Second, the continual involvement of the downtown Spokane community with SMCC. The current involvement level is proving to be successful, however, these relationships must be continually fostered in order to maintain levels of collaboration and presence within the community (Lutze & van Wormer, 2007, 2014). Third, making stronger efforts to ensure the presence of law enforcement. Previous research has shown that the inclusion of law enforcement can prove valuable to the overall configuration of community court (Feinblatt & Berman, 1997). Fourth, continue utilizing needs assessments to offer individually tailored community-based services to participants. The CCAT tool, developed by the CCI, is a beneficial instrument in the SMCC process. The continual use of this tool will allow the ongoing delivery of individualized justice to participants. Fifth, consistently applying graduated sanctions and incentives to clients. As seen from the observations, not all the community court participants who joined in the focus group understood the possible sanctions and incentives they could receive through the court. Compliance is a key component of community court and previous research shows that established graduated sanctions and incentives are necessary to ensuring participant compliance (Miller & Johnson, 2009). Having all team members involved in each step of the process also creates the opportunity for greater trust building and problem solving (Lutze & van Wormer, 2007). Finally, build up resources in order to use ‘real time’ data that can inform program management, guide decision-making, and program operations

is necessary. The SMCC is just scratching the surface with their current data collection policies. Solid data collection is necessary to ensuring that the program is indeed achieving what it set out to achieve, while also measuring other outcomes or impacts it may have on the participants (Lang, 2011). Previous research evaluations have shown that adequate data collection is needed in order to continually move a community court program forward (Eckberg, 2001; Sviridoff, Rottman, Weidner, Cheesman, Curtis, Hansen, & Ostrom, 2001; Katz, 2009; Nugent-Borakove, 2009; Lee et al, 2013; Grommon, Hipple, & Ray, 2016). The recommendations made here are based off of the observations and findings of this study, coupled with the findings of what works for community courts through previous research.

The outcome evaluation also provided positive findings regarding the impact of community court on its participants. Briefly, the outcome evaluation compared three subject groups – SMCC participants, a historical group, and a contemporary comparison group. The SMCC group consisted of justice-referred individuals that participated in the SMCC from 12/08/2013 to 7/31/2017 and possessed a six-month follow-up. The historical comparison group contained individuals that were convicted of eligible offenses prior to the implementation of the community court, ranging from 1/1/2007 to 12/07/2007. The contemporary comparison group identified individuals that possessed the same eligibility criteria as the community court, were convicted during the same time period as the SMCC group, however, were not participants in the community court. In general, the SMCC participants consistently possessed lower odds of recidivism than the historical and contemporary comparison groups. These findings are encouraging and provide strong evidence of the court’s effectiveness and continued use as an alternative to incarceration.

Next, intermediate outcomes were explored for SMCC participants. In particular, we examined data from intermediate outcomes that are regularly collected by the SMCC. In

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particular, participants whose conviction was deferred, participants engaged in a self-improvement event, such as utilizing programming and services, participants who received a housing referral, and participants that graduated the program. Based on the results, the SMCC group experiences intermediate outcome success that the comparison group were not able to experience.

Finally, walk-in participants were examined. Walk-in participants are not referred through the criminal justice system, but are individuals are seeking the assistance that the SMCC and service providers offer. The most common services utilized by walk-ins are the department of social health and services, state health care, Supplemental Security Income, employment services, housing services, legal services, and Lion's Club. Similar to the intermediate outcome's analysis, while we lack a direct comparison group for this population, the substantial usage of these services demonstrates the positive impact that the SMCC has on the downtown Spokane community.

The gap analysis provided a glance at where program resources exist in excess and where they are insufficient. A gap analysis measures needs being met by current program offerings, needs that are not being met by current program offerings, and needs that are being addressed but not in full (ACE, 2013). While traditionally used in the correctional setting, a gap analysis was used for this study to study the various provider offerings available to participants through the SMCC. Based on the results, the SMCC displays a satisfactory or abundant amount of interventions meeting participant needs in the interventions surrounding self-improvement and management, criminal thinking, life skills, and punishment. In terms of the intervention of social and interpersonal development interventions, there is a 14.9% gap with regard to needs the current programming is not meeting. With only one programming gap, the SMCC is achieving intervention for the

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participants and providing services that are meeting the needs of their community. These results also link directly back to the theory behind the SMCC, of therapeutic jurisprudence, community justice and legitimacy. Therapeutic jurisprudence is being achieved through the collaboration of balancing treatment interventions offered by service providers (Clark, 2000; Hora et al, 1999; Stolle, Wexler, & Winick, 2002; Lutze and van Wormer, 2007). Community justice is being achieved by utilizing community resources, the services providers, in working towards offender rehabilitation (Clear & Karp, 1998). Finally, legitimacy is being achieved through building and strengthening partnerships with the service providers to address the community court participants' needs (Tyler, 2006). Overall, these results demonstrate a beneficial effect of the service provider offerings aligning with the participants' needs.

Limitations

For the outcome evaluation, there some limitations. First, the records examined were limited to data collected by SMCC, the AOC, and the CCI – all of which are likely consisted measures of offenders and behaviors but may overlook unknown quantities of participants' intervention needs and risks.

Second, despite having access to the community court participant data as well as the ability to have created multiple comparison groups, there is still an issue of sample size present. Small sample sizes limit the amount of variance to be examined with current statistical procedures. This, in turn, may have affected the validity of the results. Alongside the issue of sample size is the lack of information regarding different charge categories. The ability to analyze different categories of both recidivism and conviction charges will give a better understanding of the impact of the community court as compared to traditional court. While the findings presented are sound presented, methodologically speaking, they may not be capturing an overarching picture of what is taking place within the community court. It is

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crucial, going forward, to increase the number of cases examined and supplement the data collected in order to draw results on a much larger, detailed scale.

Another limitation is the limited follow-up duration and its direct impact on the sample size. Steps were taken to extend the reach of this follow-up period, to include both a 6-month and a 12-month follow-up period, based on the available data. However, this is an uncharacteristically short follow-up period for an outcome evaluation, rather than a more reliable measure such as 24-36 months. An extension of the recidivism follow-up would allow findings to be more in line with previous community court evaluations (Goldkamp, Weiland, & Irons-Guynn, 2001; Nugent-Borakove, 2009; Chessman, Rottman, Gibson, Maggard, Sohoni, & Rubio, 2010; Lee et al, 2013; Grommon, Hipple, & Ray, 2017). Furthermore, the conviction rates of the treatment group were uncharacteristically low. This could be due to different definitions used during the data collection phase, or the different sources of data used. Future research should study this further, in order to ensure the proper identification and labeling of conviction charges.

CONCLUSION

The intention of the study was to assess the implementation and adherence of the SMCC to the outlined community court principles as well as examine the impact of the SMCC on recidivism. This evaluation provided evidence that the SMCC is following the community court principles provided by Lang (2011) as well as their own outlined policies and procedures. Through observations, interviews and focus groups, the roles of the community court team, the adherence to the community court principles, and the day to day operations of the community court were investigated. Many positives were discovered, including the creation of a service provider room, the utilization of a validated risk and needs

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assessment tool, and the collaboration present between the community court team and the social service and treatment providers. Some challenges were noted, including a need for improved data collection procedures, and an improvement in ensuring that participants understand the program structure and continue to follow-up with case plan.

This evaluation provided evidence that the SMCC is demonstrating model adherence, following the community court principles provided by Lang (2011), and has been an effective alternative to incarceration reducing participants' propensity for recidivism. While there are noted study limitations and recommendations for improvement, our findings confirm that involvement in the SMCC decreases participants' recidivism and associated outcomes.

The gap analysis provided findings that show the community court is experiencing an alignment of participants needs and services provided, based on the current provider offerings. With only one intervention category containing a gap, interventions focus on building social skills and interpersonal skills, the results demonstrated an appropriate, and even copious amount of programming needs and target behaviors being addressed within the community court population. The current community court provider offerings are targeted, utilized and contributing to meeting the needs of the population.

Overall, this study provided some promising results regarding the impact that the SMCC has on its participants. Considering the identified study limitations and recommendations based off of the evaluation, these findings have shown that, compared to the traditional court structure, community court does have a positive impact on the participants.

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