



Promising Findings from a DWI Court

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Abstract

Tarrant County's Felony Alcohol Intervention Project (FAIP), a DWI court for repeat adult offenders, was established in November 2006 in response to increasing community safety concerns about drunk driving. **Aim:** This report summarizes preliminary process and outcome findings for 57 DWI defendants who were admitted into the program during the first 23 months of the court's operation to assess the relative impact FAIP is having on public safety. **Methods:** Data were obtained from criminal history searches conducted through the Texas Department of Public Safety crime records service and from client information supplied by the FAIP project. FAIP Participants (n = 57) and a Comparison Group (n = 65) of FAIP-eligible offenders who did not participate in FAIP were matched on gender, age, race, prior arrest total, and DWI history. Chi-square tests confirmed that the two groups were not significantly different ($p > 0.05$) with respect to these five characteristics. Analyses of re-arrest data and calculation of effect size estimate were conducted to determine the relative impact of these two groups on re-arrest rates. **Results:** Based on new arrest data, 2% of FAIP Participants were re-arrested during an 8-month follow-up window compared to 9% of the Comparison Group who did not participate in FAIP. Effect size for the comparison between FAIP Participants and the Comparison Groups was $d = 0.3$. **Conclusion:** Preliminary outcomes point to the fact that the project is up and running as intended and is having a positive impact (i.e., a reduction in new arrests). Ultimately, it will be important to conduct a longer term evaluation to assess the sustained impact of FAIP on its participants, particularly once they have completed FAIP and are no longer under court supervision.

Introduction

National Highway Administration (NHTSA) 2008 report: Traffic Safety

- An estimated 12,998 people were killed in accidents involving alcohol and thousands more sustained injuries across the United States.
- Texas had the highest number of alcohol-related fatalities (1,292) at the state level.
- Individuals with prior convictions for driving while intoxicated (DWI) are overrepresented in fatal accidents and have a greater risk of fatal crash involvement.

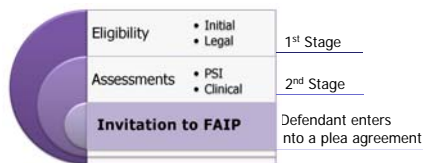
In response to increasing community safety concerns about drunk driving, Tarrant County launched the Felony Alcohol Intervention Project (FAIP) in November 2006.

FAIP Description

- DWI post-adjudicated drug court model**
 - FAIP team**
 - Judge, defense attorney, district attorney, case managers, community supervision officers, and treatment providers
 - FAIP goals**
 - Increasing public safety
 - Increase successful treatment outcomes for high-risk DWI offenders
 - Reduce the costs of repeated crime
 - Address DWI as a substance abuse problem
 - FAIP objectives focus on two areas**
 - Intervention program
 - Individual
 - Program concepts***
 - Non-adversarial process
 - Ongoing judicial supervision
 - Intensive community supervision
 - Intensive treatment
 - Community involvement
- *adapted from key drug court components suggested by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP, 2008)

FAIP Process

Offenders with a minimum of 3 DWI arrests are referred to Tarrant County assistant district attorneys



Eligibility

Initial - confirms residency in Tarrant County and U.S. citizenship
Legal - confirms no prior history of serious convictions (i.e., murder, indecency with a child, aggravated sexual assault, aggravated robbery, aggravated kidnapping, and other felonies where deadly weapon was used)

Assessments

PSI (pre-sentence investigation) - demographic information, current offense, custodial specifics, and victim information, substance abuse (TCU Drug Screen II; Knight et al., 2002) history, mental health status, and supervision plan
Clinical - substance abuse assessment with Addiction Severity Index (ASI, McLellan et al., 1980)

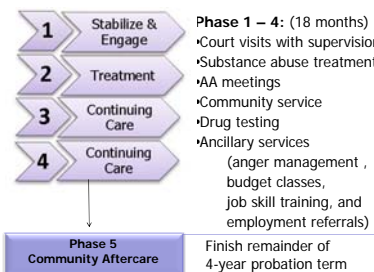
Program Requirements

All FAIP defendants are referred to and must participate in community substance abuse treatment.

Other prominent FAIP requirements include:

- Employment (unless medically disabled or retired);
- Transportation arrangement (family or peer support);
- Abstinence from using all mood-altering substances;
- 1 year (minimum) continuous sobriety (Phases 1 - 4);
- Attendance at 4 AA meetings (minimum) weekly (including 90 meetings in 90 days at start-up);
- Participation in Repeat Offender Victim Impact Panels;
- Completion of all scheduled visits with probation officer;
- The wearing of a Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitoring (SCRAM) device for the first 90 days;
- Driver's license suspension for one year; and
- Attendance at FAIP Court as scheduled in each phase.

Program Phases



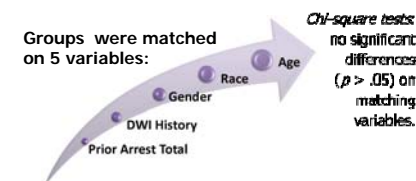
FAIP Participant Characteristics

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Gender | Males | 50 (88%) |
| | Females | 7 (12%) |
| Race | White | 54 (95%) |
| | Non-white | 2 (4%) |
| | Unreported | 1 (<1%) |
| Prior Arrest History* | 3 - 5 arrests | 35 (61%) |
| | 6 - 9 arrests | 16 (28%) |
| | 10 - 20 arrests | 6 (11%) |
| | Age Range: 24 - 65 | M = 41.74 (44 adults or 72% over 30) |
| DWI Arrest Average: M = 3.81 | | |
| *(including current DWI) | | N = 57 |

Analyses

Did FAIP have a positive impact on "public safety?"

To address this question, re-arrest rates were compared for FAIP Participants (n = 57) and a Comparison Group (n = 65) that was identified from a list of eligible defendants (based on initial and legal criteria) who received a DWI during "closed" months and, therefore, were not extended an invitation for the program. [Note: program was closed to new participants when caseloads were at their limit.]



Re-arrest information was obtained for an 8-month period from the date of each probator's DWI case filing (i.e., the start of the screening process for the FAIP program).

Results

| Group | N | Re-arrests | % | Arrest Type |
|------------|----|------------|----|---------------------|
| FAIP | 57 | 1 | 2% | Non-DWI felony |
| Comparison | 65 | 6 | 9% | Half for felony DWI |

Effect size (ES) estimate for the comparison between FAIP Participants and the Comparison Group was $d = 0.3$.

ES estimate was calculated based on $d = (M_1 - M_2) / S_p$, where d is the estimated ES, M_1 and M_2 are the means of the groups being compared, and S_p is the pooled within-group standard deviation (Cohen, 1988).

Conclusion

Results from the Tarrant County FAIP indicate that it is having a positive impact (i.e., a reduction in new arrests); these findings are encouraging because this evaluation examined FAIP during the time that the project was in a formative stage. Ultimately, it will be important to conduct a longer term evaluation to assess the sustained impact of FAIP on its participants, particularly once they have completed FAIP and are no longer under court supervision.