

**2018-2019
EVALUATION REPORT**



**TULARE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
RESIDENTIAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE
TREATMENT PROGRAM**

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INTRODUCTION



“It [the parenting class] was the light at the end of the tunnel.” - RSAT Participant

This report presents evaluation findings from the Tulare County Sheriff's Office FY 2018-19 Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program, a successful project that has been in place for the past 20 years to address the county's staggering drug problem and return inmates to the community with the necessary tools to remain clean and sober. The federally funded grant program is one of four California RSAT projects funded by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). Barbara Aved Associates (BAA), a Sacramento-based consulting firm, was engaged in 2015 as the external evaluation contractor. This report represents the first annual evaluation report of the current three-year (2018-2021) RSAT grant cycle.

Substance abuse—defined as a dependency on mind and behavior altering substances—is associated with family disruptions, financial problems, lost productivity, failure in school, domestic violence, child abuse and crime.¹ The 2017 Tulare County Community Health report identified substance abuse as one of the top factors that most impacts the overall health of the community. Among youth, for example, the relative accessibility of alcohol and drugs and the low perception of harm accounts for rates of use by 9th graders higher than the state average at 12 of the county's 17 school districts.²

The magnitude of the drug problem in Tulare County is considerable. Based on 2012 state prevalence estimates (the latest year for which these estimates are available), and assumptions used in their methodology, 9.7% of the Tulare County adult population age 18 and older (and 13.1% for males alone) is estimated to be in need of services related to an alcohol or drug diagnosis. Income level makes a measurable difference, however: the estimated need rises to 10.7% for those living in households below 200% of poverty, and for males below the poverty level it increases to 14.5%.³

Drug overdose deaths, an important indicator of the size of prescription and illicit drug use, are a leading contributor to premature death and are largely preventable. In 2018, there were 122 drug overdose deaths reported in Tulare County (representing a mortality rate of 9 per 100,000 population).⁴ While the opioid crisis has been a national focus for years, state data show amphetamines have eclipsed opioids in the San Joaquin Valley.⁵ (Interstate 5 and State Route 99 which intersect Tulare County are two of the most common corridors used to distribute the drug to the rest of the country.)⁶ Of the 354 driving deaths in Tulare County in 2018, 28% or 99 were due to alcohol-impaired driving.⁶

Nearly one in five (18.4%)—or 1,159—of Tulare County Sheriff's Department 6,300 felony arrests in 2017 were related to drug offenses.⁷ The RSAT program, supported by the criminal justice community, was designed to deliver a continuum of services during incarceration—substance abuse treatment and

¹ Healthy People 2020 Topics. <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/leading-health-indicators/2020-lhi-topics/Substance-Abuse>

² 2017 Community Health Needs Assessment.

[https://tchhsa.org/eng/assets/File/Public%20Health/Tulare%20County%20CHA%20\(2017_03_28\)%20FINAL.pdf](https://tchhsa.org/eng/assets/File/Public%20Health/Tulare%20County%20CHA%20(2017_03_28)%20FINAL.pdf).

³ California Mental Health and Substance Use Needs Assessment: California Behavioral Health Prevalence Estimates by County. Technical Assistance Collaborative and Human Services Research Institute. January 2012.

⁴ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/rankings/data/CA>

⁵ California Department of Public Health Vital Statistics Multiple Cause of Death and California Comprehensive Death Files.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crime-statistics/arrests>

recovery services; social, cognitive and behavioral counseling; life skills training; health-related education; and relapse prevention—and to facilitate successful re-entry into community living. Substance abuse treatment, particularly when integrated with health interventions, cognitive behavioral therapy, social skills training, case management, and the use of medications to treat both mental and substance use disorders, has become a critical part of correctional programs as Tulare’s RSAT program demonstrates. Drug treatment studies for inmate populations have found that when programs are well designed, carefully implemented, and utilize effective practices they can reduce relapse; reduce inmate misconduct; increase the level of the offender’s stake in societal norms; improve relationships; and improve health and mental health symptoms and conditions.^{8,9}

Reoffending is a key criterion in evaluating correctional substance abuse treatment programs though the challenge of measuring it is well recognized. Many factors influence an inmate’s likelihood to recidivate, such as education, race, age and crime risk.¹⁰ Substance-addicted inmates are at a high risk of recidivism following their release from incarceration. Studies indicate the return-to-prison rate is much lower for inmates who participate in inmate substance abuse treatment programs than for those who do not. Residential Drug Abuse Program (RDAP) is the Federal Bureau of Prisons’ most intensive treatment program. Its research findings have demonstrated that RDAP participants are significantly less likely to recidivate and less likely to relapse to drug use than non-participants¹¹ though post-release treatment in the community is an important variable. As discussed later in this report, unemployment following reentry continues to be one of the key issues for RSAT graduates.

RSAT Program Overview

Tulare County Sheriff’s Office RSAT program is located within a medium level custody facility for sentenced male offenders with a maximum capacity of 64 beds. In FY 2018-19, 1119 inmates enrolled in the program; 80 of the graduates entered the Aftercare portion. There are four full-time counselor positions who work in the unit, with a staff-to-inmate ratio of 1:15, on average.

The program utilizes evidence-based practices in using Residential Drug Abuse Program (RDAP), Errors in Criminal Thinking, Thinking for Change, and Transition Curriculum as the primary treatment curricula. Champions, a non-profit treatment agency based in Hanford, provides treatment services for the program under a contract with the Sheriff’s Department. Although a 6-12 month treatment span is generally believed to be optimal, the RSAT treatment program considers enrollment in the program for a minimum of 4 months as a good marker, and thus is a requirement for graduation. Staff is careful when inmates are placed in the program to ensure their release is scheduled during this timeframe. However, to continue to test whether slightly less time in the program is as effective as the 4-month minimum, inmates with fewer than 4 months participation but at least 3 months left on their sentence who wanted to enroll in RSAT were allowed to do so; this group of inmates, whom we were also asked to evaluate, is referred to the data analysis as “participants” as compared to “graduates.”

Inmates are assessed for enrollment in RSAT using the Correctional Assessment and Intervention System™ (CAIS) system¹² to determine appropriate placement into the program. The program has established a minimum of 70% assessed as moderate-to-high risk of offending.

About three-quarters of the inmates have formal Probation commits that allows the capability for follow-up upon release. RSAT staff attempt to track aftercare for 1 full year following program graduation—to the extent that participants are reachable.

⁸ https://www.bop.gov/inmates/custody_and_care/docs/annual_report_fy_2012.pdf

⁹ Inciardi JA, Martin SS, Butzin CA. Five-year outcomes of therapeutic community treatment of drug-involved offenders after release from prison *Crime & Delinquency*. January 2004;50: 88-107.

¹⁰ <https://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2018-113.pdf>

¹¹ The Federal Bureau of Prisons. https://www.bop.gov/inmates/custody_and_care/substance_abuse_treatment.jsp

¹² <https://www.nccdglobal.org/assessment/correctional-assessment-and-intervention-system-cais>

Other programs are also offered to inmates that complement and strengthen the RSAT skills. For example, some of the men participate in the Sheriff's Department Gang Awareness Parenting Project. This First 5 grant-funded program works with both inmates and their family members (outmates) to increase knowledge of the effects of violence on their children and reduce stress related to parenting and family life.

Acknowledgements

The external evaluation team consisted of Barbara M. Aved, PhD, MBA, principal investigator, and Jared Funakoshi who provided research and data entry assistance. Larry S. Meyers, PhD, an Associate with BAA, provided topic area expertise. The internal team from the Tulare County Sheriff's Department included Susanna Reyes and Nicole Salinas, Inmate Programs Manager and Inmate Program Specialist, respectively, along with Julie Mooney, Senior Counselor from Champions, the non-profit contractor for substance abuse treatment services. We are very appreciative of all of these staff's experience and cooperation in supporting the evaluation.

METHODS



*“I need this program to stop using drugs.”
- RSAT Graduate*

The project Evaluation Plan was reviewed at the beginning of Year 1 to determine where changes might need to be made to capture additional or different data; only minor revisions were necessary. The Evaluation Plan frames 8 main study questions that the evaluation can reasonably be expected to answer at the end of the grant period. It also identifies outcome measures, success indicators, evaluation instruments and the data collection and analysis plan for each question.

Data Source	Description of Tool	Data Collection Method
Outcome Assessment and Reporting System (OAARS)	1-4 scale pre/post assessment tool measures changes in 10 domains	Counselors observe and score at time of entry (pre) and again at discharge (post)
Six Pillars Personal Inventory	36-item pre/post rating of 6 core values, English/ Spanish	Inmate self-rating at time of entry (pre) and time of discharge (post).
Positive Characteristics Inventory	20-item scaled pre/post assessment of behaviors associated with positive characteristics	Counselors observe and record assessment scores at 1 month after entry (pre) and at the time of discharge (post)
TCU-CTS Criminal Thinking Scale	36-item pre/post self-rating instrument developed to assess cognitive functioning expected to be related to criminal conduct; ratings of statements in 6 areas	Inmate self-administered at the time of program entry (pre) and again at time of discharge (post)
Mother-Father Read Program	1-6 scale post-participation of being video-taped reading to a child to assess impact on parenting confidence and connectedness	Inmate self-administered after recording is completed and flash drive and book is mailed to inmate’s home
Graduation Criteria and Rating	A rubric or scoring guide with 8 domains to assess inmate performance against a set of criteria developed to determine graduation readiness	Two counselors rate the inmate to reduce potential for bias; the final score represents an average (44 points possible)
RSAT Exit Survey	1-time opinion rating, English/ Spanish	Inmate self-administered at time of discharge
Inmate Re-entry Follow-Up Form	Rating form for tracking and documenting progress on individual participant goals	Staff contacts inmates within first week of release and monthly thereafter. Data points for evaluation are at 3 months, 6 months and 12 post discharge

Staff sent us participant scores from some of the tools which we further analyzed and prepared for inclusion in this report. For the remainder of the tools, we received raw data forms, cleaned, coded and entered the data into excel spreadsheets using appropriate data security measures, analyzed the data and applied statistical testing, and prepared the evaluation report.

FINDINGS



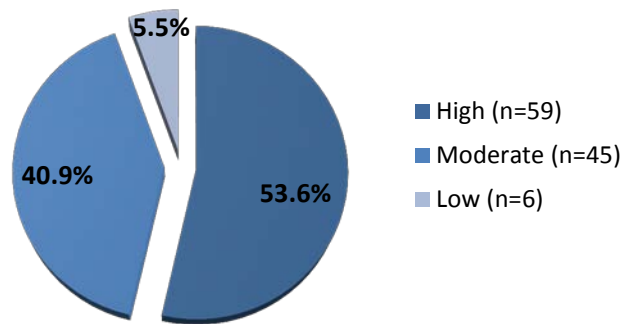
*“The parenting classes opened my eyes on how much I was missing my kids.”
- RSAT Graduate*

The Evaluation Sample

Full evaluation data were captured on most of the new RSAT participants. However, not all tools were able to be completed for all inmates. This was primarily due to earlier release on a sentence, and less often because inmates or counselors/staff turned in incomplete forms.

In FY 2018-19, 119 inmates enrolled in the RSAT program, 110 (92%) of whom were assessed with CAIS;¹³ another 80 individuals were enrolled in the aftercare portion of the program. Based on the CAIS risk assessment criteria, 94.5% of RSAT’s inmates were determined to be “moderate” to “high” risk of re-arrest for a drug or alcohol related offense (Figure 1), meeting the CAIS criteria for a large majority of participants to be classified at this level. The 5.5% of participants assessed as “low” were enrolled in the RSAT program as well because they were court referred or insisted they wanted to participate in the program.

Figure 1. FY 2018-19 RSAT Group, by CAIS Risk Assessment Status (n=110)



Demographic characteristics and substance abuse treatment experience, shown in Table 1 on the next page, was available from 106 inmates assessed with the OAARS tool, providing a context for the outcome findings in this report. The average RSAT participant was slightly older this year than last year, 37 years old. Most (91.6%) had not gone beyond high school, 38.7% not graduating. Almost half (49.5%) of the inmates had never been married, while 21.8% were married or considered themselves as married with a partner. Just over a third (36.8%) of the men had been working full-time and 14.2% part-time at the time of arrest, but a higher proportion this year, 40.6%, compared to last year, 35.6%, were unemployed when arrested. The current group of inmates also differed from last year in that a

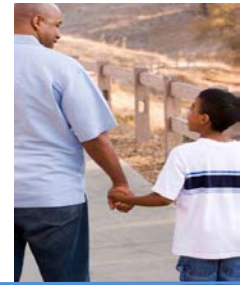
¹³ The Correctional Assessment and Intervention System™ (CAIS) system.
Barbara Aved Associates/Tulare County RSAT 2018-19 Evaluation Report

higher proportion—60%—had had prior treatment admissions. Of the 64 men with prior treatment experience, 35.9% reported finding it a challenge to stay sober/clean for more than a year following their last treatment.

Table 1. Characteristics of FY 2018-19 RSAT Group (n=106)

Item	Number	Percent
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC		
Age		
18-24 years	9	8.5%
25-39 years	56	52.8%
40-64 years	38	35.8%
65+ years	3	2.8%
Ethnic Group		
Hispanic/Latino – white	10	9.4%
Hispanic/Latino – non-white	37	34.9%
African American	2	1.9%
Native American/Alaska Native	1	0.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Asian	1	0.9%
Caucasian/White	46	43.4%
Multiracial/Biracial/Other	9	8.5%
Highest Education Level		
No HS diploma or GED	41	38.7%
HS diploma or GED	54	50.9%
Vocational/technical	2	1.9%
Associate degree	8	7.5%
Bachelor's degree	1	0.9%
Master's degree or higher	0	0.0%
Marital Status at Program Entry		
Never married	52	49.5%
Divorced	20	19.0%
Separated	9	8.6%
Widowed	1	0.9%
Living as married	9	8.6%
Married	14	13.2%
Employment Status at Program Entry		
Working F-T for pay	39	36.8%
Working P-T for pay	15	14.2%
Unemployed	43	40.6%
Not working for pay by choice	5	4.7%
Disabled	4	3.8%
Retired	0	0.0%
TREATMENT EXPERIENCE		
Number of Prior Treatment Admissions		
None	42	39.6%
One	28	26.4%
Two or more	36	34.0%
Longest Period of Abstinence Following Last Treatment (n=64)		
Under 90 days	21	32.8%
3-12 months	20	31.3%
Over 1 year	23	35.9%

Source: OAARS data.



Self-Perceptions about Character Change

Evaluation Question Did inmates perceive their character changed after participating in the program?

Outcome Measure Increased awareness of the values associated with good character.

The Character Counts program, which is integrated throughout the RSAT curriculum, includes both inmate and counselor pre/post assessments. The Six Pillars Personal Inventory is the form that inmates use to self-rate perceptions of their personal core characteristics. All of the percentage changes from pre- to post-ratings for the inmates who graduated were statistically significant; the participants did not perform as well; only their change in perception about the characteristic of Citizenship was significant (Table 2).

Table 2. Self-Perceived Changes in Personal Core Characteristics Using Six Pillars Inventory

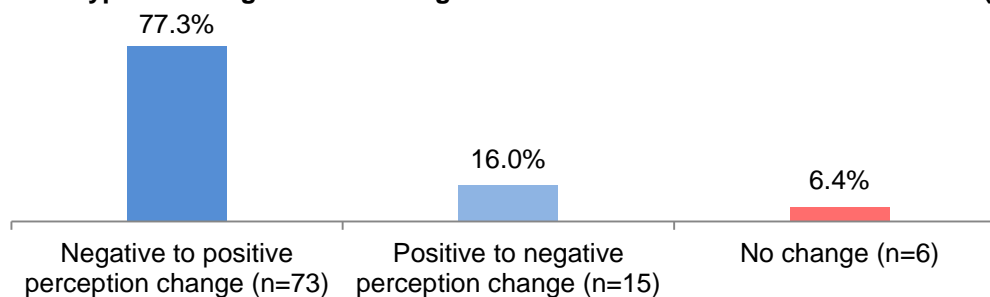
Domain	Total Sample (n=94)			Graduates (n=83)			Participants (n=11)		
	Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change
Trustworthiness	14.7	15.9	8.2% *	14.8	16.0	8.1% *	14.4	14.8	2.8%
Respect	19.8	21.5	8.6% *	20.0	21.7	8.5% *	18.5	20.0	8.1%
Responsibility	18.1	20.3	12.2% *	18.1	20.4	12.7% *	18.3	19.9	8.7%
Fairness	17.9	20.4	14.0% *	18.0	20.7	15.0% *	17.5	18.9	8.0%
Caring	31.7	36.5	15.1% *	31.7	36.7	15.8% *	31.4	35.4	12.7%
Citizenship	25.0	30.0	20.0% *	25.1	29.8	18.7% *	24.4	29.0	18.9% *
Overall Mean	21.3	24.2	13.7% *	21.3	24.2	13.8% *	20.7	23.0	10.9% *

Source: Six Pillars Personal Inventory data.

*p<.05

Most (77.3%) of the inmates believed they demonstrated the core qualities to a greater extent at the end of the program than at the beginning (changing their self-perceptions from negative to positive). Some (16.0%) of the inmates, however, initially rated themselves higher in many of the areas at pre- than at post-assessment, perceiving they came into the program already demonstrating a great deal of those characteristics (Figure 2). These positive-to-negative perception changes suggest these inmates may later have had more awareness of what true character was and a more realistic perception of the extent to which they possessed them than when they entered the program. About six percent of the inmates perceived no change in their personal characteristics over time.

Figure 2. Type of Change in Self-Ratings of Pre- and Post-Character Assessment (n=94)



Changes in Personal and Social Behaviors



Evaluation Question

To what degree did participants exhibit a positive change in personal and social behaviors?

Outcome Measure

Increased level of personal “moral compass;” increased social skills and integration.

The Positive Characteristics Inventory rating by counselors is another tool in the Character Counts program that measures the changes that take place in inmates’ personal qualities. The program strategy specifically focuses on the root of change—mindset and behavior modification—and asks inmates to look at the choices they’ve made and their consequences.

Overall, the counselors rated the inmates more positively on all of the traits measured by this tool at the end of the program. Based on the post assessments, all of the ratings improvements for the graduates (but only about half for the participants) reached statistical significance (Table 3). The behaviors of *Participated in the Community* and *Recognizes Own/ Others’ Feelings* showed the greatest changes.

Table 3. Positive Characteristics Inventory, Counselor Assessments

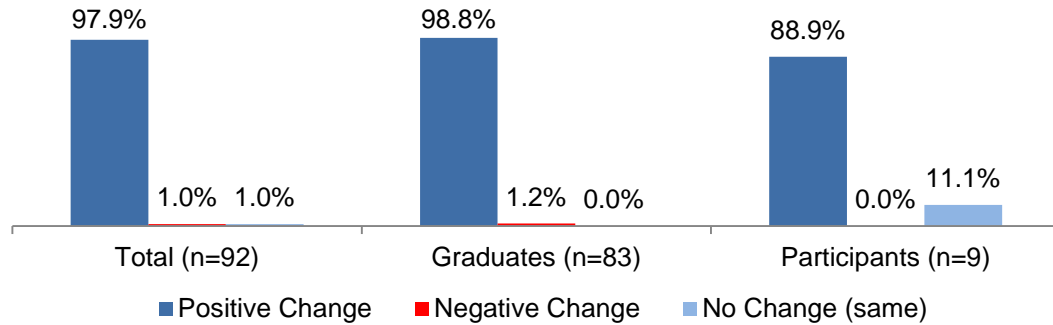
Characteristic	Total Sample (n=92)			Graduates (n=83)			Participants (n=9)		
	Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change
Loyal	1.8	2.1	16.7%*	1.8	2.1	16.7%*	2.0	2.0	0.0%
Honest	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.8	2.0	11.1%*
Reliable	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.8	1.9	5.6%
Uses Good Manners	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.8	2.0	11.1%*
Respectful of Others	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.9	1.9	0.0%
Controls Anger	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.9	2.0	5.3%
Does Not Bully	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.9	2.0	5.3%
Self-Disciplined	1.6	2.0	25.0%*	1.7	2.1	23.5%*	1.3	1.7	30.8%*
Accountable	1.7	2.1	23.5%*	1.7	2.2	29.4%*	1.7	1.7	0.0%
Strives To Do Best	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.7	1.8	5.9%
Open-Minded	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.8	1.9	5.6%
Plays By The Rules	1.9	2.1	10.5%*	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.9	1.9	0.0%
Listens To Others	1.8	2.1	16.7%*	1.8	2.1	16.7%*	1.7	2.0	17.6%*
Shows Gratitude	1.8	2.3	27.8%*	1.8	2.3	27.8%*	1.9	2.1	10.5%*
Recognizes Own/ Others Feelings	1.4	2.1	50.0%*	1.4	2.1	50.0%*	1.3	1.9	46.2%*
Kindness To Others	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	2.0	2.0	0.0%
Helps Others	1.6	2.2	37.5%*	1.6	2.2	37.5%*	1.4	1.8	28.6%*
Respects Authority	2.0	2.2	10.0%*	2.0	2.2	10.0%*	2.0	2.0	0.0%
Obeys The Rules	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	1.9	2.2	15.8%*	2.0	2.0	0.0%
Participated In The Community	1.4	2.2	57.1%*	1.5	2.2	46.7%*	1.1	1.8	63.6%*
Overall Mean	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.8	2.2	22.2%*	1.7	1.9	11.7%*

Note. Mean scores reflect the following rating choices: 1 = Low, 2 = Medium, 3 = High levels of which inmates display the quality. Pre-assessment is 1 month after program entry.

*p < .05.

While for the total sample all of the ratings of the 20 characteristics were more positive at the post than at the pre-assessment, at the *individual inmate level* a slightly higher proportion of the graduates than the participator group had positive changes in scores, 98.8% vs. 88.9% (Figure 3); the difference was not statistically significant, however. Of 60 points possible with this tool, about one-third of the graduates' ratings had changed by 10 or more points at the post-assessment while none of the participators' ratings had changed by that much.

Figure 3. Changes in Ratings from Pre- to Post-Assessment, by Type of RSAT Group, Positive Characteristics Inventory





Improvement in Key Characteristics Associated With Substance Abuse Treatment

Evaluation Question

To what extent did participants demonstrate improvement concerning key characteristics associated with substance abuse treatment?

Outcome Measure

Attitude and behavior change regarding substance abuse and recovery issues.

The RSAT program requires inmates to identify, confront, and alter the attitudes, values, and thinking patterns that lead to criminal and drug-using behavior. Changes on the OAARS (Outcome Assessment and Reporting System) post assessment showed an overall average increase in knowledge/ change in substance abuse and recovery issues for the total sample of -27.3% and for those who graduated -27.9%; these are statistically significant improvements. The overall change for those *not* able to graduate (the participants), though slightly lower, -16.3%, was also statistically significant (Table 4). Participants showed the most change in the domain of emotional volatility, while with graduates the greatest change was in their ability to focus on treatment.

Table 4. Outcome Assessment and Reporting System (OAARS)

Domain/Scale	Total Sample (n=95)			Graduates (n=83)			Participants (n=12)		
	Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change
Emotional volatility (Measure 1)	1.4	0.9	-35.7%*	1.3	0.9	-30.8%	1.8	1.1	-39.8%*
Ability to focus on treatment (Measure 2)	1.4	0.9	-35.7%*	1.3	0.8	-38.5%	1.9	1.5	-21.1%*
Affective and anxiety problems/disorders (Measures 3-4)	2.3	1.6	-30.4%*	2.2	1.5	-31.8%*	2.9	2.3	-20.7%*
Awareness and understanding of the condition (Measures 5-8)	5.5	3.5	-36.4%*	5.3	3.3	-37.7%*	6.4	4.9	-23.4%*
Openness and personal commitment to change (Measures 9-12)	5.5	3.7	-32.7%*	5.5	3.6	-34.5%*	5.7	4.5	-21.1%*
Willingness to involve others in treatment (Measures 13-15)	3.9	2.9	-25.6%*	3.9	2.9	-25.6%*	4.0	3.4	-15.0%*
Indication of ability to follow through on treatment plan (Measure 16)	1.5	1.2	-20.0%*	1.5	1.1	-26.7%*	1.5	1.4	-6.7%
Level of engagement in treatment (Measures 17-19)	3.9	2.9	-25.6%*	3.9	2.8	-28.2%*	4.0	3.7	-7.5%
Social interpersonal support (Measures 20-23)	6.7	5.7	-14.9%*	6.7	5.6	-16.4%*	6.6	6.4	-3.0%
The recovery environment (Measures 24-29)	11.8	8.9	-24.6%*	11.5	8.5	-26.1%*	13.8	11.3	-18.1%*
Overall Mean	4.4	3.2	-27.3%*	4.3	3.1	-27.9%*	4.9	4.1	-16.3%*

Note: Means are based on a scale of 1 – 5. Low scores indicate fewer problems on each measure and negative percentage change indicates inmate improvement.

*p<.05

In-Custody Drug Testing

Despite the impressive knowledge gain and positive changes related to substance use and recovery issues, in-custody drug testing is still necessary. Staff randomly tests 10% of the RSAT enrollment weekly (per the BSCC grant requirements) as well as any new participant to establish a baseline. When there are positives, staff does a follow-up in 1 month; they report it is rare see positive results on the same inmate 2 months in a row.¹⁴

Of the 507 tests conducted between July 1, 2018 and June 15, 2019, only 15 (3.0%) were positive (Figure 4), lower than last year at 4.5%.¹⁵

Figure 4. Results of In-Custody Drug Testing, 2018-19

Number of Tests	Positive	Negative
507	15 (3%)	492 (97%)

¹⁴ Marijuana, which can stay in the system for up to 3 months, is generally what accounts for positives in new enrollments.

¹⁵ There are unavoidably duplicates because sometimes an inmate's name randomly comes up more than once.

Changes in Thinking and Attitudes About Criminal Behavior



Evaluation Question

To what extent did inmates change their thinking and attitudes about criminal behavior?

Outcome Measure

Reduction in criminal thinking; reduction in the risk of recidivism

The TCU-CTS Criminal Thinking Scale—based on the *Positive Thinking for a Change* curriculum (which has no tool)—evaluated the overall effectiveness of the Cognitive Behavioral Treatment of the RSAT program. The curriculum was offered two times a week for 5 hours.

During FY 2018-19, there were 91 inmates with both pre- and post-self-assessment ratings. As Table 5 shows, the only criminal thinking characteristic with a statistically significant improvement—and this was for the graduates only—was in the area of Entitlement. Participants not in the program long enough to graduate and only receiving a participation certificate did not significantly change their thinking in any way. Though not statistically significant, healthy inmate thinking about cold-heartedness worsened slightly among the graduates and to even a greater degree among the participants.

Table 5. Criminal Thinking Scale

Characteristic	Total Sample (n=91)			Graduates (n=80)			Participants (n=11)		
	Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change	Pre	Post	% Change
Entitlement	17.9	16.5	-7.8% *	17.1	15.9	-6.7% *	24.5	21.3	-13.0%
Justification	19.7	18.7	-5.2%	19.1	18.1	-4.9%	24.2	22.5	-6.8%
Power Orientation	22.2	22.8	2.5%	21.6	22.4	3.8%	26.8	25.5	-4.7%
Cold-Heartedness	22.8	23.3	2.3%	23.0	23.2	1.0%	21.3	24.0	12.8%
Criminal Rationalization	25.9	25.9	0.0%	25.7	25.8	0.4%	27.9	27.3	-2.3%
Personal Irresponsibility	20.9	20.1	-4.2%	20.3	19.4	-4.1%	26.0	24.8	-4.5%
Overall Mean	21.6	21.2	-1.9%	21.1	20.8	-1.6%	25.1	24.2	-3.5%

Note: Scores (which were re-grouped by scales and in some cases reversed) are based on an original scale of 1 – 5. Low scores indicate fewer problems on each measure and negative percentage change indicates inmate improvement.

*p<.05

Changes in Parent Confidence and Connectedness



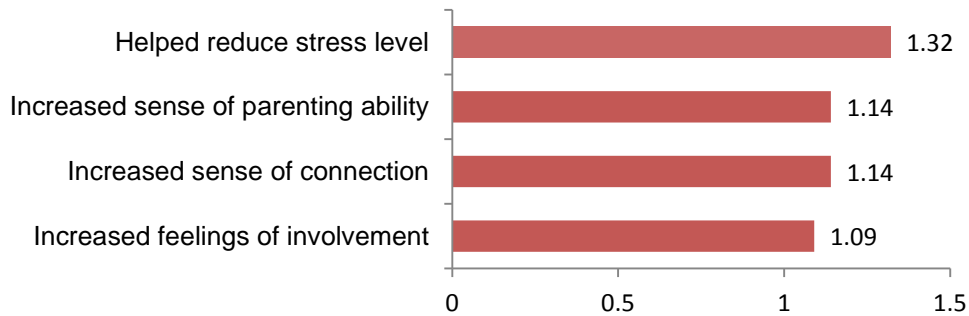
Evaluation Question	How did participating in a video-taped reading program impact parent confidence?
Outcome Measure	Increase in connectedness, parental involvement and ability. Reduced stress level.

The Sheriff Department, according to positive media accounts, has “taken inmate programming in a new direction in implementing Mother/Father Read.” The new RSAT program component represents a collaboration between the Sheriff and Tulare County Public Library. The concept, which was befitting by an earlier Read to Me grant to the Library from First 5 Tulare, is funded by a \$5,000 mini grant from United Way which buys the books for the inmates’ children.

Library staff orients interested inmate fathers with training on topics such as the value of reading to a child to promote learning and parents as their child’s first teacher. After the inmate has practiced reading the book, he is videotaped reading as he would do so to his child (he may record as many age-appropriate books for the number of children he has—and for however many homes his children live in). The flash drive of the recording and actual book(s) are delivered to the child(ren). Families are notified about the upcoming delivery and according to staff are “very excited.” Feedback until recently has been relatively informal (e.g., a family member sends the inmate a letter saying how much the child enjoyed having her father read to her). In FY 2018-19, we developed a more formal survey that is now routinely administered to inmates after the recording.

As Figure 5 clearly shows, the 23 participants¹⁶ strongly agreed that the benefits of sharing stories by reading to a child increased their feelings of involvement, connectedness and parenting skills.

Figure 5. Fathers’ Views about the Benefit of Sharing a Story with a Child (n=23)¹

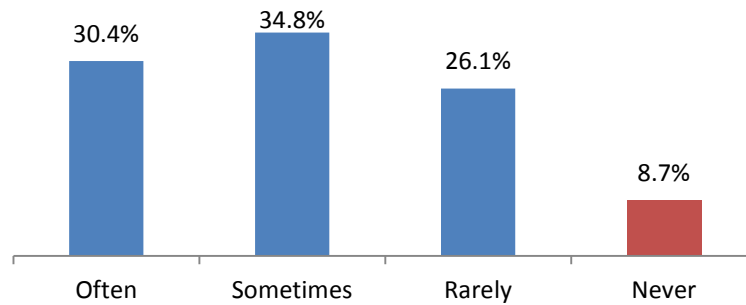


¹Means are based on the following scale: 1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Somewhat agree; 4= Somewhat disagree; 5= Disagree; 6= Strongly disagree

Reading to a child—their own or a niece or nephew—was an activity that 30.4% of the participants said they had “often” done before being incarcerated; another 34.8% reported “sometimes” having done this. However, 34.8% of the men had “rarely” or “never” read to a child (Figure 6 below).

¹⁶ Based on data between January and June 2019 only.

Figure 6. Frequency of Reading to the Child Prior to Incarceration (n=23)



Written-in comments, provided by nearly all of the participants, offer testimony to the value of this much-appreciated program, as evidenced by their statements below.

Table 6. The Best Part of this Program, According to Participants (n=21)

- Being able to connect to my children through reading.
- It just reminds me what a blessing it is to be a father.
- I miss nightly reading to my daughter.
- Being able to practice reading with my friends so I can read to my daughter.
- It lets my children know I'm thinking of them.
- It lets them know I haven't forgotten about them.
- Any time I can interact with my child and let her know she means the world to me leads me to believe I can still change things.
- Being able to connect makes me feel the band of our invisible string strengthened.
- I pray this program continues to expand to other guys; an irreplaceable opportunity.
- Bridged the distance caused by my incarceration.
- Lets them know I haven't stopped being their Dad.

Comments are verbatim and selected as being representative of all comments provided; some were edited for brevity.



Graduation Readiness

Evaluation Question What proportion of RSAT participants successfully completed the program?

Outcome Measure Achievement of goals set at time of discharge. Reduced rate of recidivism.

A graduation readiness scale and scoring rubric was used to ensure the program was not just graduating inmates because of time served, but because they demonstrated expected proficiencies. The graduation achievement affects inmates when they go back to court for a modification (i.e., early release on their sentence). If the program does not graduate them, the courts could determine the inmates have to stay in the program longer or until their final outdate arrives. When an inmate does not achieve a passing score, he is given a participation certificate instead of a graduation certificate. Staff has observed that either type of certificate is important to most of the inmates. Some inmates have validated this explicitly in the exit survey when expressing that the certificate “is the most useful thing about the RSAT program” when re-entering the community.

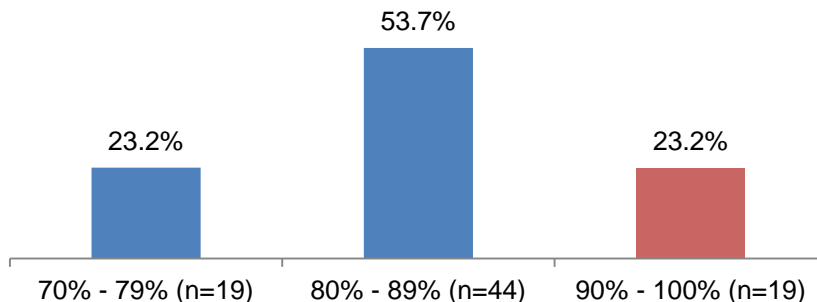
The criteria included scored components in eight skill categories such as accountability, anger management, and parenting, each with its own point value. To reduce potential bias, two counselors rate the inmate and the final score is averaged. Appropriate case management, counselor, and other program staff make this determination. A minimum of score of 34 out of 49 points (70%) is necessary to receive a graduation certificate. The counselors are expected to apprise inmates throughout their program of any danger in not graduating so that not reaching 70% should not be a surprise.

Virtually all (98.8%) of the RSAT participants enrolled for more than 4 months were able to achieve a passing score of at least 70% and receive a graduation certificate. Eight of the 10 inmates (80%) who had not been in the program long enough to be eligible as graduates but could receive a participation certificate received one (Figure 7). The difference in average passing percentages between the two groups was not significant. As Figure 8 shows, close to one-quarter (23.2%) of the graduates’ scores were in the 90%-100% score range and over one-half were in the 80%-90% range.

Figure 7. RSAT Graduation Success (n=93)

	Total Number Assessed	Percent Received Certificate	Average score (of 49)	Average score percent
Graduates	83	98.8%	41.5	84.4%
Participants Only	10	80%	38.2	77.7%

Figure 8. Percent of Graduates Meeting/Exceeding Graduation Completion Criteria (n=83)



Participant Satisfaction Level and Feedback



Evaluation Question How satisfied were participants with the RSAT program?

Outcome Measure Improved participant satisfaction. Program improvement toward greater impact.

An Exit Survey was used to evaluate inmates' perceptions about the RSAT program. The user-perspective is important feedback to be able to assess the need for and make any program changes. While all participants agreed or strongly agreed with the 9 positive program statements evaluated—whether they graduated or just received a participation certificate for the time they spent in the program—the graduates group, as in previous years, expressed a greater degree of positivity across all of the measures (a mean of 3.44 vs. 3.17) as shown in Table 7. The RSAT graduates most strongly agreed with the statement, *If I had a problem, counselors listened and offered guidance*; for the participants the highest agreement was, *I feel as though I can be successful on the outside*. Overall, the inmates who participated long enough to qualify for graduation expressed more satisfaction with the program and the daily structure of the classes than those who were the short-term participants.

Table 7. RSAT Exit Survey Results (n=122)

Statements	Average Score	
	Graduates (n=81)	Participants (n=8)
I feel the program has given me the tools needed for recovery	3.42	3.25
I feel as though I can be successful on the outside	3.58	3.50
I have a plan in place I feel good about for my reentry into the community	3.63	3.50
The counselors were knowledgeable and helpful	3.57	3.13
I would recommend this program to others	3.43	3.13
I liked the daily structure of the classes	3.31	2.88
Custody staff was supportive and understood the program	3.09	2.88
If I had a problem, counselors listened and offered guidance	3.65	3.38
The program was better than I expected	3.31	2.88
Overall Average Score	3.44	3.17

Note: Based on a scale of 1 – 4 where 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly agree.

Most and Least Favorite Classes

The remainder of the Exit Survey offered inmates an opportunity for feedback through open-ended questions. Table 8 on the next page shows what the men described as their most and least favorite classes. Similar to previous years, slightly over half (54.1%) of the inmates identified Thinking for a Change as their *most* favorite class. They offered reasons such as: “taught me how to think before acting out;” “showed us many different ways of learning;” and “gave tools to handle everyday situations.” Re-entry was mentioned second as a favorite, with “being able to share and be open,” and

“helped recognize negative thinking” as common explanations. Parenting was a cited favorite class for reasons such as “helped me look at my thoughts and change them;” “the role plays;” and “because I want to be a better parent.”

Anger Management, Thinking for a Change and Parenting were nearly equally cited (about 20% of the time) as least favorite classes. The negative comments about anger management classes tended mostly to be around denial (“I don’t have anger issues”); “boring,” “repetitive” and “not liking role playing” were the common reasons for disliking Thinking for a Change. While some of the men who said parenting classes were their least favorite for the same reasons as inmates have said in the past (“my kids are all grown now,” “it doesn’t apply to me”), it was thought-provoking that a few of the men identified these classes negatively because “it made me uncomfortable because it brought up a lot of emotions,” and “made me miss my kids.”

Table 8. Most and Least Favorite Classes, by Frequency of Mention

Most Favorite	F (n=85)	Least Favorite	F (n=72)
Thinking for a Change	46	Anger management	16
Re-Entry	15	Thinking for Change	15
Parenting	11	Parenting	14
RDAP	5	RDAP	13
Anger management	3	Caseloads	2
All of the classes	3	Re-Entry	2
Caseloads	2	Relapse prevention	2
		Pharmacology	2
		Other	2

Best Part of the Program

Inmates listed a wide variety of program features they liked best including being able to express feelings and thoughts, gaining new knowledge and understanding, learning new skills they believed would be useful upon discharge, and the opportunity to “living with like-minded people.” It was clear from some of the positive comments made about counselors (particularly Lori) that inmates believed they were listened to and cared about. A number of the inmates identified the house and individual rewards as the best part of the program, along with “some of the friends I’ve made here.”

Areas to Change

“Nothing needs to change” was the most common response (representing about 21% of all comments) when the inmates were asked what they would change about the program if they could. Consistent with previous years, the recommendations for change were all-inclusive but were generally in the order of mention shown in Table 9 on the next page. It was apparent the inmates valued the relationships

Table 9. Areas Wishing to Change

“If I could change one thing about this program it would be....”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Nothing (“everything is fine the way it is”)■ Program structure (Updated videos/books/materials, more consistency, move through the material quicker)■ More relationship counseling■ Move back to MCF (Mens’ Correctional Facility)■ More 1-on-1 time with counselors■ Make all classes shorter/make some classes longer■ More information about jobs■ Other (more yard time; visitations, how they discipline)

Most Surprised By

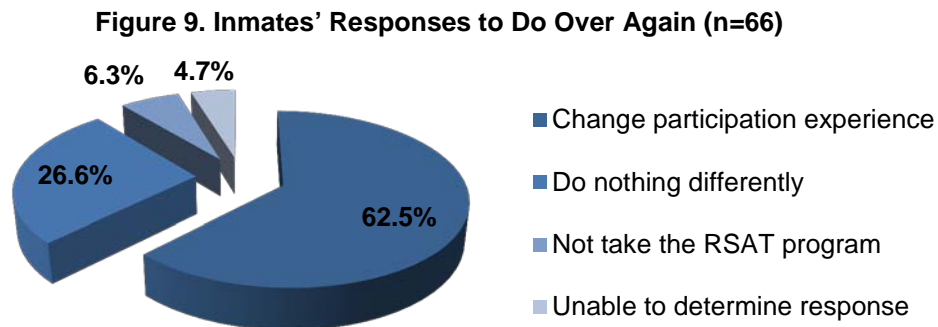
The majority (22%) of the inmate comments related to the caring and helpfulness of the counselors (“how the counselors really love their job and want the best for us,” “you can talk to the counselors like family”) as the most surprising part of being a RSAT participant (Table 10). They specifically mentioned their positive attitude and dedication, along with the amount of respect they received, which seemed unexpected, and helpful advice they gave. The knowledge gained about thinking differently, substance addiction, accepting responsibility, acknowledging mistakes, learning new skills were common responses for what the RSAT participants said were most useful for re-entry into the community. A few of the men found the insight they learned about themselves and the way their thinking had changed to be unexpected (“what meth does to your head,” “mind set has started to change”). Many remarked at being surprised at the supportiveness and comradery from fellow inmates (“friendliness of the other inmates”). Two of the men mentioned being surprised that there was a substance abuse treatment program at the jail (“the classes and how much they offer”).

Table 10. Most Unexpected Results

“I was most surprised by....”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Caring/respect/helpfulness of the counselors■ Personal insight/change in thinking■ Supportiveness and comradery from fellow inmates■ House rewards■ The change in my behavior■ How easy the program was■ The fact that jail had a substance abuse treatment program■ All the job resources they had to help us■ Other (“pizza,” “some of the conversation topics”)■ Negatives (“people complaining about the smallest things”)

Reflections

Sixty-two percent of the men if they had to “do it again here” described wishing they had done at least one thing differently when in the program. About one-quarter (26.6%) said they wouldn’t change a thing about their participation, and 6.% (up from 4.2% last year) said they were unhappy they had signed up for the program and would opt out given the choice.



The inmates’ personal regrets for what they wished they done more (or less) of or a better job of, in somewhat a frequency of mention, were described as:

- “Ask more questions and show appreciation”
- “Share more of myself/communicate more openly”
- “Be of more help to others”
- “Put more effort into it”/“try harder”
- “Participate in more activities” (e.g., watch videos)
- “Would have stepped up more”
- “Try to learn more”

Most Useful for Re-Entry

Similar to last year, the knowledge gained about drug addiction, understanding how to deal with anger, learning to be grateful, parenting tips, thinking differently, accepting responsibility, and acknowledging mistakes, generally in that order, were the most common responses for what the RSAT participants thought would be most useful for re-entry into the community. Several volunteered affirmative statements about their intentions to apply what they learned to their lives; for example:

- “Thinking for change skills”
- “Recognizing my risks”
- “I need to preoccupy myself for my sobriety”
- “Keeping my freedom”/ “Staying out of jail”
- “Take care of others”
- “One step ahead and being confident”
- “To get to my AA meetings”

Life Changes after Reentry into the Community



Evaluation Question

What life changes have occurred following inmates' reentry into the community?

Outcome Measure

Achievement of goals set at time of discharge; reduced rate of recidivism

Community re-entry presents particularly significant challenges for many individuals. Key barriers to successful re-entry include the difficulty of securing stable housing, employment opportunities, discontinuity of medications and other treatment services, and high rates of substance use relapse and recidivism. In addition to a criminal record, limited education, the stigma of incarceration and a lack of employment history contribute to limited job opportunities.^{17,18}

Inmates who graduate from the RSAT program are moved to the Aftercare program and attempts are made to follow them for 12 months post-discharge. Staff tries to contact each inmate within the first week of release and monthly thereafter. Due to very low responses to the contacts, staff implemented a rewards program and made inmates aware they would be eligible for a monthly drawing of a \$50 WalMart gift card if they were able to be reached in Aftercare during the month of contact. Inmates were also told if *they* called in each month, their name would be entered into the monthly drawing 2 times. Staff reports these incentives have resulted in being able to more successfully connect with the Aftercare clients, though it is still challenging as some of the men "want nothing to do with" their jail experience after they leave.

Because a variable and limited amount of follow-up data were consistently available for the 80 individuals in Aftercare for FY 2018-19, we concentrated primarily on data for selected months in months 1 through 6. (For a few of the follow-up items, however, we looked at data in all 6 months.) Table 12 on page 23 displays this information and represents an *unmatched* sample, i.e., not always the same men each time but all men with data in any of those months. Unfortunately, this year too few of the 32 men successfully contacted in Month 1 were successfully contacted across enough months to constitute a *matched* sample. i.e., the same men reported across all 6 months.

Overall, the men who were successfully reached for interviews reported very positive circumstances in nearly all of the areas reported.¹⁹ Housing during Aftercare was reported to be very stable and family and peer support was considered to be adequate. All of the men had health insurance coverage. Nearly all of them described themselves and their well-being as very satisfied with how things were going in their life.

They reported no re-arrests or that they had met all court orders.

Close to half (46.9%) of the men reported being unemployed after the first month; however, over time that proportion decreased but not significantly.

Of those who were pursuing education or a training program and had not already received some sort of completion such as a certificate, about half reported being "in progress" and the remainder "no progress" with this goal during the 6-month period. Only 1 of the 52 cases for this goal was marked as "not applicable."

¹⁷ Van Olphen J et al. Community reentry: perceptions of people with substance use problems returning home from New York City jails. *J Urban Health*. 2006 May;83(3):372–381.

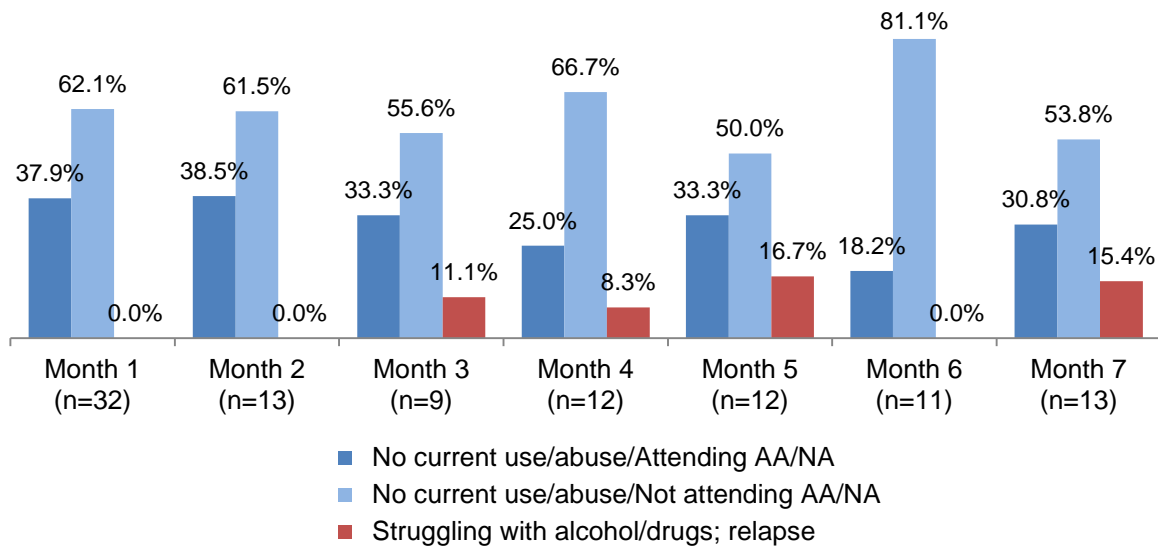
¹⁸ Li Melissa. From prisons to communities: Confronting re-entry challenges and social inequality. March 2018. <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/indicator/2018/03/prisons-to-communities>

¹⁹ This begs the question, of course, as to whether the men *not* able to be reached would have reported their circumstances differently than those who made themselves available to be interviewed.

Unlike in all previous years we evaluated, there were virtually no child custody problems reported; in only 2 (6%) of the 33 follow-up calls child custody was said to not be restored or was some type of an issue.

In the majority of follow-up calls, the men reported no current drug use or alcohol abuse or relapse; only 5 responses (4.9%) to the 102 follow-up calls over the 7-month period shown in Figure 10 were admitted as struggling with drug/alcohol issues or relapse. While most interviewees reported not currently using, one-third or fewer said they were attending AA/NA, outpatient treatment or other similar service.

Figure 10. RSAT Aftercare Follow-Up of Recovery-Related Experience (n=102)¹



¹These are not unique cases, i.e., the same individual could be interviewed in multiple months.

RSAT Aftercare participants described various goals they were working on (Table 12). Building or improving relationships, including with their children, education and employment, and acquiring various needed documents did not seem to change appreciably regardless of the follow-up period. Very few problems with meeting goals were reported; of the 52 phone call results shown in Table 12, only 5.8% were identified as “has not begun.”

Table 12. Types of Goals Described by Former Inmates During RSAT Aftercare¹

Goal	Month 1 (n=32)	Month 3 (n=9)	Month 6 (n=11)
Build/improve relationship	5 (15.6%)	1 (11.1%)	2 (18.2%)
Find employment	6 (18.8%)	2 (22.2%)	1 (9.0%)
Education/training	6 (18.8%)	2 (22.2%)	2 (18.2%)
Housing	4 (12.5%)		
Parenting skills	3 (9.4%)		
Obtain needed documents	5 (15.6%)	1 (11.1%)	4 (36.4%)
Comply with probation	1 (3.1%)	3 (33.3%)	1 (9.0%)
Other	2 (6.3%)		1 (9.0%)

¹These are not unique cases, i.e., the same individual could be interviewed in multiple months.

Table 12. Former Inmate Follow-up Results at Selected 3-Month Intervals (Unmatched Sample)

Measure	Month 1 (n=32)		Month 3 (n=9)		Month 6 (n=11)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Housing						
Stable	31	96.9	9	100.0	10	90.9
Unstable	1	3.1	0	0.0	1	9.1
Employment						
F-T	14	43.8	4	44.4	3	27.3
P-T	3	9.4	2	22.2	4	36.4
Unemployed	15	46.9	3	33.3	4	36.4
Family Support						
Adequate	31	96.9	8	100.0	11	100.0
Inadequate	1	3.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Peer Support						
Adequate	31	96.9	9	100.0	11	100.0
Inadequate	1	3.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Recovery						
No current use/abuse/Attending AA/NA	11	37.9	3	33.3	2	18.2
No current use/abuse/Not attending AA/NA	18	62.1	5	55.6	9	81.1
Struggling with alcohol/drugs; relapse	0	0.0	1	11.1	0	0
Legal						
No re-arrest	14	45.2	3	33.3	7	63.6
Re-arrested	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Meet all court orders	17	54.8	6	66.7	4	36.4
Register as sex offender	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Register as narc offender	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Completed probation	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Completed restitutions	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not applicable	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Health Insurance						
Covered	32	100.0	9	100.0	11	100.0
No coverage	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Education/Training						
In progress	15	46.9	2	22.2	2	18.2
Received certificate	4	12.5	2	22.2	3	27.3
Received degree	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not applicable	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.0
No progress	13	40.6	5	55.6	5	45.5
Child Custody (where applicable)						
Restored/satisfactory	20	91.0	7	100.0	4	100.0
Not restored/ unsatisfactory	2	9.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Self-Satisfaction/Well-Being						
Very Unsatisfied	1	3.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Somewhat unsatisfied	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.0
Somewhat satisfied	10	31.3	5	55.6	3	27.3
Very Satisfied	21	65.6	4	44.4	7	63.6
Goal 1¹						
Has not begun	3	9.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
In progress	24	75.0	6	66.7	6	54.5
Completed	5	15.6	3	33.3	5	45.5

²Not all inmates have the same goals. If there were multiple goals stated, only the first goal was considered.

Post-Discharge Arrests

The Probation Department provided post-discharge arrest and drug testing data as part of the re-entry success indicators and to see how closely the information correlated with the men's self-report during telephone follow-up reviews with RSAT staff.

This program year, 22 inmates met the 1-year anniversary criterion of 12 months post discharge, i.e., the inmate had been re-entered into the community for 1 full year or more after being discharged from jail and the Aftercare program. Most (86.4%) of the men were not re-arrested²⁰ (Figure 11); of the 3 men who were re-arrested, 1 arrest involved charges of "illegal possession of certain or controlled substances" (Figure 12).

Figure 11. One-Year Post-Discharge Arrest History (n=22)

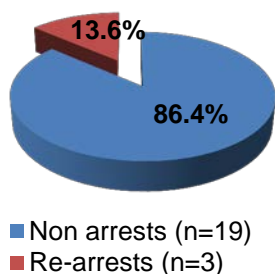
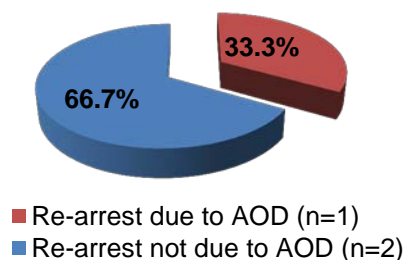


Figure 12. One-Year Post-Discharge Arrests Related and Unrelated to Alcohol/Drugs (n=3)



We also looked at the post-discharge re-arrest data of inmates who were in the current RSAT Aftercare program, i.e., men during the current program year who were between 1 day and 12 months from having been discharged from jail. Of the 80 RSAT graduates who entered into Aftercare, 17 (21.3%) were re-arrested or in some way connected to the penal system (e.g., sent to state prison) (Figure 13); 88.2% (up from 69.6% last year) of the 17 re-arrests within the first year of follow-up were related to substance abuse charges (Figure 14). The AOD arrest charges were described primarily as possession or selling a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia (e.g., for smoking/injecting), and in a couple of cases driving while having a 0.08% or higher blood alcohol/public intoxication.

Figure 13. RSAT In Aftercare Arrest History (n=80)

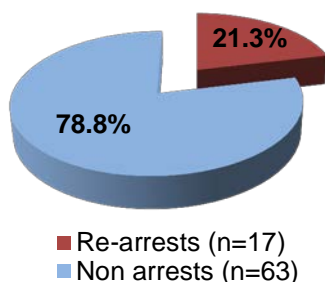
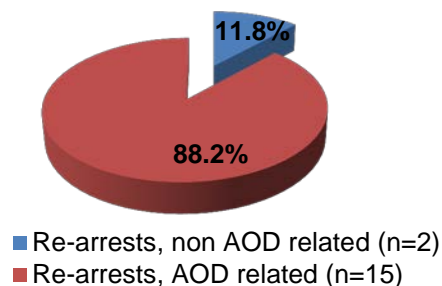


Figure 14. RSAT In Aftercare Arrests Related and Unrelated to Alcohol/Drugs (n=17)

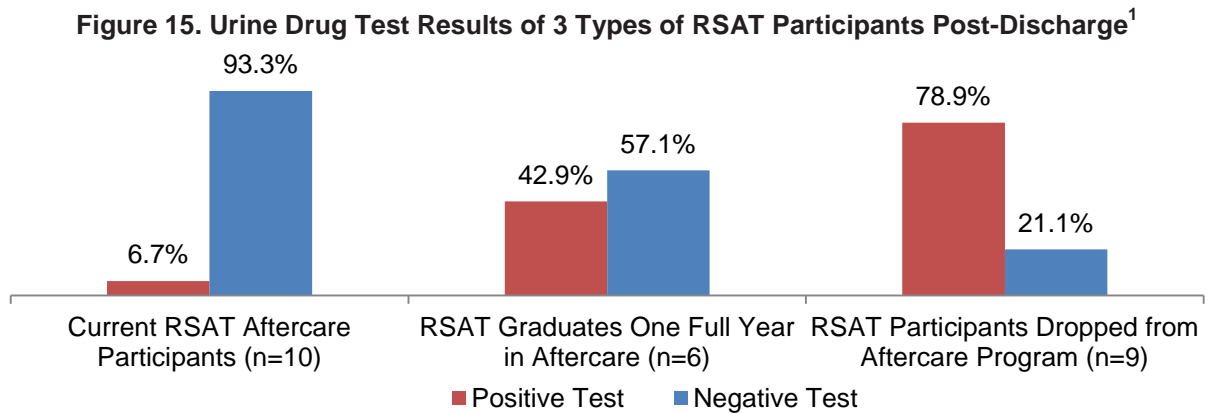


Post-Discharge Drug Tests

Probation also provided urine drug testing results on the RSAT participants after they were discharged from jail; these outcomes are summarized in Figure 15. Among the 10 RSAT graduates being followed

²⁰ Note that an arrest does not necessarily mean a conviction.

during the Aftercare portion of the program tested by Probation,²¹ only 6.7% of the total test results were positive. One full year after completing the Aftercare portion, however, the portion of positive tests among the former RSAT participants rose to 42.9%. Not unexpectedly, the positive tests were even higher, 78.9%, among those participants dropped from the Aftercare program.²²



¹Test results are based on the number of tests, not the number of men. The number of tests, left to right in Figure 15, is 15, 14, and 19 tests. Source: Tulare Probation Department, June 20, 2019.

Probation performed a total of 48 drug tests on 25 individuals in the various phases of the RSAT program. Although these sample sizes are small, it is worth noting the individual results of multiple testing that show the variance in positives among the 3 RSAT groups detailed in Table 13.

Table 13. Number and Percent of Post-Discharge Urine Test Results of 3 Types of RSAT Participants

Current RSAT Aftercare Participants (n=10)			RSAT Graduates One Full Year in the Aftercare Program (n=6)			RSAT Participants Dropped from the Aftercare Program ¹ (n=9)		
# of Tests/ Inmate	Positive	Negative	# of Tests/ Inmate	Positive	Negative	# of Tests/ Inmate	Positive	Negative
2	0	2	4	0	4	1	0	1
1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
2	0	2	1	1	0	2	2	0
2	0	2	2	2	0	3	3	0
2	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	0
1	0	1	4	3	1	3	3	0
1	0	1				1	1	0
2	0	2				5	2	3
1	0	1				1	1	0
1	1	0						
15	1	14	14	6	8	19	15	4
	(6.7%)	(93.3%)		(42.9%)	(57.1%)		(78.9%)	(21.1%)

¹ Inmates who graduate from the Regular RSAT program are moved to the Aftercare Program. They are in this program for one year unless they are dropped due to re-arrest and/or unable to contact. Source: Tulare Probation Department, June 20, 2019.

²¹ Representing 12.5% of Aftercare enrollees.

²² Participants are in the RSAT aftercare program for one year unless they are dropped due to re-arrest and/or unable to be contacted.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION



*“RSAT is a program for people that would like something more than rehab.”
- RSAT Graduate*

This evaluation report covers Year 1 of the current 3-year, 2018-2021 grant cycle. We are pleased to offer the following recommendations for your consideration—in no particular order of importance—and look forward to discussing them with you at your convenience.

1. Because the question was raised previously concerning length of time in the program—Did inmates who spend 4 or more months in RSAT and graduate perform any differently on outcome measures than inmates who participate too briefly to graduate?—we analyzed the data separately again for both groups. The current year’s findings, as well as last year’s, showed the graduates had slightly more favorable results on nearly all of the measures—suggesting that program duration is as important as it was originally thought to be. Because we believe the question has been answered sufficiently, we suggest only RSAT graduates be included in future evaluation data, beginning in FY 2019-20.
2. We’ve discussed in the past the value of having a control group for comparative purposes—and a recent external program audit commented on the lack of one in the program. It was agreed to “revisit the issue in FY 2019-20 to allow enough time to gain Probation’s cooperation and support.” If this is still the plan, let’s discuss this issue soon so that we can begin to draft an appropriate evaluation redesign.
3. We were very pleased to learn of your Mother/Father Read program and be able to add it to our evaluation work. The positive feedback from inmates, family members (including children) and staff confirm the value of this important RSAT module.
4. The following comments relate to certain areas of the Aftercare portion of the program:
 - a. Unlike previous years’ evaluations, nearly all of the feedback was positive from the men able to be contacted in the Aftercare follow-up calls. We aren’t sure whether these were always the true circumstances in their lives—and if so that’s great—or if there may be different staff asking the questions than previously or asking them differently, etc., that could account for this change. What is also important to be thinking about is that we don’t know whether the men *not* reached constitute a very different sample, i.e., if these men would have reported equally positive life circumstances. If there can be even more success in contacts with these graduates and complete and accurate information collected—through higher incentives, etc.—there would be much value to this learning.
 - b. We understand the challenge in trying to get the RSAT graduates to stay connected to the Aftercare program after they are discharged, and we appreciate staff’s attempts to reach them, including making after-hours calls, contacting the family members to try to reach the men, and sending a letter when you haven’t heard from men in 2 months. However, because we believe re-entry information is the most essential element to understanding the long-term impact of the RSAT program—and the results of most interest to the State—we recommend upping the incentive for the men to take your calls or return them when you leave a message, using a survey to solicit ideas among the inmates as we recommended last year. We also

recommend you consider creating a place where the men could come for an in-person interview if they want to choose this option, e.g., at a coffee shop on designated days, etc. These 2 strategies appear to be effective ways to increase the amount of data we will get from these graduates.

- c. Going through the completed Follow-up Forms we noticed a major problem and recently brought it to staff's attention. Staff were either not marking which month the call/reporting was being made, or were checking off multiple (sometimes 6 or 7 on the same form) months which made it impossible for us to tell which month the data were for. While we made assumptions about certain of the data where we could, some information was unavoidably lost. We trust the problem has been fixed.
 - d. Of the 52 cases of Months 1, 3 and 6 reported in Table 11, we found it unusual that only 1 case under the Education/Training area was marked as "not applicable." Yet in the last three evaluation reports we noted that more than two-thirds of the calls had been marked in that way. Can you please review this finding and let us know what you think the difference might be? For example, this year were more of the graduates actually involved in some sort of education and training program for some reason? (although the number of times "education" appears as a goal for them does not suggest this).
 - e. We would like to suggest some modifications to the Follow-up Form, dropping a couple of the items and revising a couple more. Not only will this shorten the interview somewhat, it should add to the clarity of the information that is recorded by the callers. We will provide a draft in the next week or so, so that we can discuss it and hopefully staff can begin using the revised form by August 1.
5. The fact that 88% (up from 70% last year but nearly the same as 90% the prior year) of the RSAT graduates in Aftercare were re-arrested on drug/alcohol charges—whether using, possessing or selling—continues to be troubling. We note that none of the 52 calls reported in the follow-ups reported any re-arrests; if accurate, this suggests the re-arrested men were among those not able to be reached for follow-up—but would have been important to have been. We also note that nearly half of the drug tests Probation performed for graduates after 1 full year in Aftercare were positive (but only 6% of those tests were positive *during* the Aftercare component). We understand the agreement with Probation is to test 10%-12% of Aftercare enrollees. This does not seem like an adequate amount of support from Probation. Would it be possible to negotiate with them for performing testing on a higher proportion of the men?
 6. It is also of concern that only one-fifth to one-third of the men—although they reported no current use/abuse—was not attending AA/NA, outpatient treatment or another similar service. Is there an incentive or some type of assistance available to help with ensuring the Aftercare group participates in this continuum of care after re-entry?
 7. The portion of the curriculum that still seems important to highlight in the evaluation is anger management. The findings, including written-in comments made by some of the inmates make it clear many believe they have no anger issues (which may be true, for some, while some are likely in denial). We again emphasize that participants should be continually reminded that having this understanding and skills will be valuable when they rejoin their families and communities, and everyone can benefit by learning how to deal with feelings of anger.

On a related note, it seemed that fewer inmates this year complained in the Exit Survey about having to "sit through" classes on parenting or remarked that the parenting portions of the program were "not applicable to me" or unimportant. In fact, there were a greater number of written-in

comments and other indications in the data that made it clear that improving parent-child relationships/parenting skills was an important goal.

8. To enhance the program as well as enrich the evaluation, we hope you can consider incorporating the following additional program components:
 - a. We understand the RSAT program began piloting a new component involving Stages of Change/Responsivity and that there might be a pre/post tool being used that has available data. If you would like us to incorporate this component into our evaluation work we would be happy to know more about it. Please provide us the relevant information when we discuss your feedback to this report.
 - b. Incarceration has a particularly strong detrimental impact on inmates' marital/partner relationships. Studies show when alcohol and drug abuse is involved it places even more stress on the relationship.²³ We shared with your counseling contractor, Champions, an evidence-based program that was designed to prevent marital distress and divorce by teaching inmates and their spouses/partners couples skills and principles they need to maintain a healthy and lasting relationship. *PREP Inside and Out*[®] (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program), when delivered to inmates in correctional facilities, has reported substantial gains in all variables and in overall satisfaction with relationships after completion of the program, regardless of gender and racial/ethnic background.²⁴ We think it could be valuable in Tulare County as well. While we understand that your current curricula materials do address relationships to a certain point, if you are interested in learning more about this specific inmate program and the available training material and evaluation tools, we would be happy to provide you with the appropriate contact information.
 - c. Additionally, we would like to recommend an additional resource to help in your discharge transition plans linking RSAT graduates to community programs and services. *Project Fatherhood* is a program sponsored by Parenting Network, a Family Resource Center (FRC) with sites in Visalia and Porterville. The evidence-based program—which you may already know about—is funded by First 5 Tulare County and gives fathers an opportunity to connect better with their children and play a more meaningful role in their lives. The workshops emphasize the well-being of the child and use group leaders to encourage learning in a supportive non-judgment environment. (As the evaluation contractor for First 5 Tulare, we are very familiar with this program.) We can provide contact information.

²³ Western B, et al. 2004. Incarceration and the bonds among parents in fragile families. In M Patillo, et al. (eds). *Imprisoning America: The social effects of mass incarceration* (pp 21-45). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

²⁴ Einhorn L, et al. 2008. PREP Inside and Out: Marriage education for inmates. *Family Process* 2008;47(3):341-356.