



Snohomish County Mental Health Court Evaluation of Program to Date: October 2012 through April 2016

*"I will be forever grateful for the
chance I was given"
~Mental health Court graduate*

What Is Mental Health Court?

Snohomish County established its first Mental Health Court as a pilot project designed to promote public safety and reduce recidivism among mentally ill offenders through an intensive program of evaluation, treatment and frequent monitoring of compliance. Its goal is to bring long-term stability, sobriety and safety to mentally ill offenders while ensuring the security and well-being of the community. The Mental Health Court is funded by the One Tenth of One Percent Sales Tax which covers a .5 FTE court clerk, 1.0 FTE Mental Health Court Liaison and 1.0 FTE deputy prosecuting attorney.

The Mental Health Court operates in accordance with written policies and procedures originally developed in October 2012 and revised in September 2014. Rather than the typical criminal case processing, defendants are diverted into judicially supervised, community based treatment. They are invited to participate following a specialized screening assessment for eligibility and their participation is voluntary. For those who agree to the terms and conditions of the program, the court team and mental health professionals work together to develop individualized treatment plans and to supervise the participants. Through frequent monitoring of compliance, the participant is given the opportunity to address his/her mental illness.

Presently, the Mental Health Court Team consists of the assigned Judge, a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, a Public Defender and the Court Liaison. The Court Liaison is a licensed mental health professional who plays a key function in the screening and assessing of the mental health and chemical dependency needs of the participants, linking the participants with appropriate treatment, monitoring their progress, and assisting them in accessing employment and housing resources.

How Does Mental Health Court Work?

The Snohomish County Mental Health Court accepts individuals who have been charged with misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor crimes and who have an Axis I diagnosis using DSM-IV criteria. (The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th edition—the DSM-IV—is published by the American Psychiatric Association and includes all currently recognized mental health disorders. The American Psychiatric Association has recently published a fifth edition of this manual.) Generally, these diagnoses include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety disorders. Participants remain in the program for 12 to 24 months. Upon graduation from the program, the criminal charge is dismissed.

Participants are required to present before the judge and discuss their progress and challenges. At each court hearing, the judge may impose consequences contingent upon the participant's adherence to his/her treatment plan. These consequences may be in the form of rewards/incentives or sanctions. Because of the nature of mental illness, judicial responses are generally more encouraging and supportive as the court process seeks to move mentally ill participants into treatment and supportive services.

When a participant has moved through all phases of the Mental Health Court program and is ready to graduate, s/he is required to complete an exit interview with the Mental Health Court Liaison to develop a wellness and transition plan that describes what the participant must do every day to stay well, identify triggers to poor coping behaviors and describe the action plan to stabilize unhealthy situations. The plan also describes the participant's goals for the future as well as plans to achieve those goals.

*"I have learned how to avoid negative
situations and getting into arguments
with law enforcement."*

~Mental Health Court Graduate

How Will the Mental Health Court Be Evaluated?

During the initial Mental Health Court planning and development period in 2011, the planning team recognized the importance of a comprehensive evaluation plan that could show the impacts of this new problem-solving court. The evaluation of the Mental Health Court is directly tied to the overarching goals of the program which are as follows:

- Improve public safety
- Reduce recidivism
- Increase access to and engagement in mental health treatment
- Enhance collaboration between the mental health and criminal justice systems in the County

An evaluation design was developed by the Research Manager for Snohomish County Human Services Department and required that the Mental Health Court track numerous data elements. To document these data, the court uses a case management and tracking system that is a vendor-modified version of the Snohomish County Superior Court Drug Court Program.

To evaluate the implementation of the Mental Health Court program, the following data points were considered:

- Number of individuals referred to Mental Health Court
- Number of individuals eligible for Mental Health Court
- Number of individuals ineligible for Mental Health Court and the reasons why
- Number of individuals accepted into Mental Health Court
- Number of eligible individuals who decline to participate and the reasons why
- Number of participants who are terminated from Mental Health Court and the reasons why
- Number of participants who voluntarily terminate from Mental Health Court and the reasons why
- Number of participants who successfully graduate from Mental Health Court

While the above-mentioned data elements are useful in making programmatic decisions, they do not capture the impacts being made by participating in Mental Health Court. In order to assess the impact of Mental Health Court on public safety, recidivism and utilization of crisis services, the following outcomes were examined:

- Number of criminal non-traffic charges for which a participant was arrested
- Number of bookings into the Snohomish County Jail
- Number of days spent in the Snohomish County Jail
- Number of documented contacts with Emergency Medical Services
- Number of referrals to the Snohomish County Triage Center
- Number of stays at the homeless mission

In addition to tracking the demographics and criminal charges of those referred to the program, the evaluation also examines the impact of the Mental Health Court on the overall crisis-response system in the County using a pre-post design. Utilization of crisis services, as well as criminal charges, is considered for Mental Health Court graduates for the 12 months prior to their participation in the program, their time within the program and the 12 months post-graduation from the program.

There are inherent difficulties in establishing an appropriate comparison group given the current resources. While it has been suggested that comparing those enrolled in the program with those who chose not to enroll or those that successfully completed with those who were unsuccessful, biases exist in both of these designs that do not allow for apples-to-apples comparisons. An optimal design would include comparing those who are enrolled in the program with a group with identical crime histories, drug use patterns, mental health issues and other characteristics who did not enroll. Given the current resources available, such a comparison group cannot be obtained.

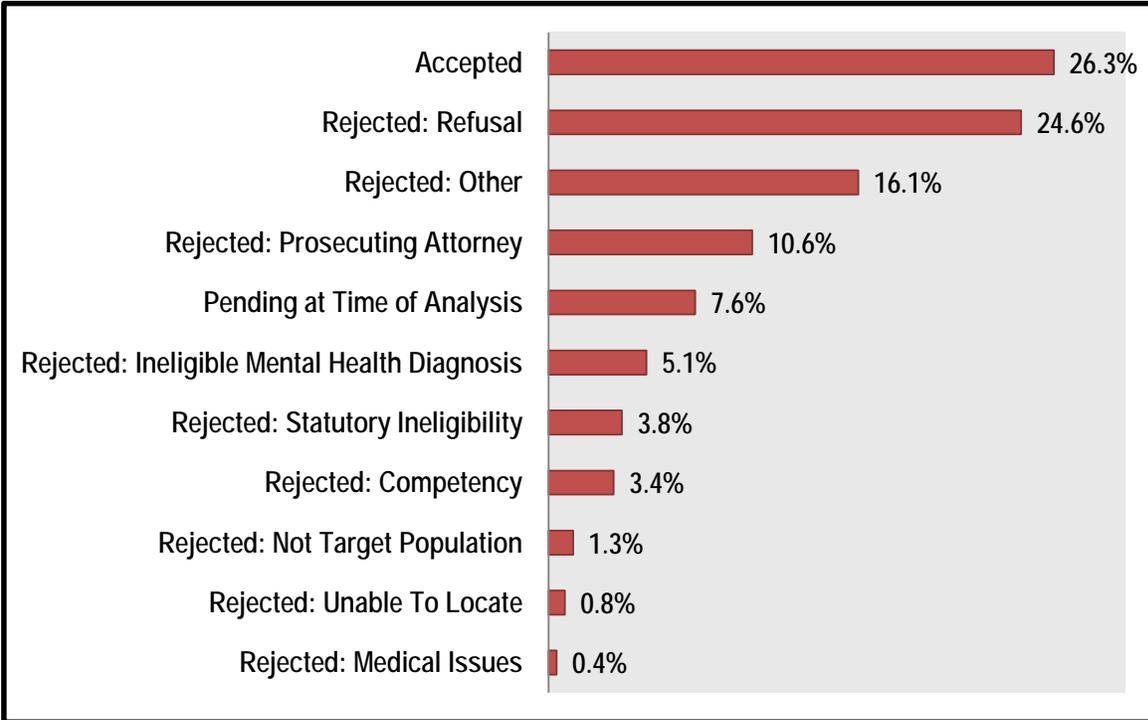
Mental Health Court Individuals October 2012 through April 2016



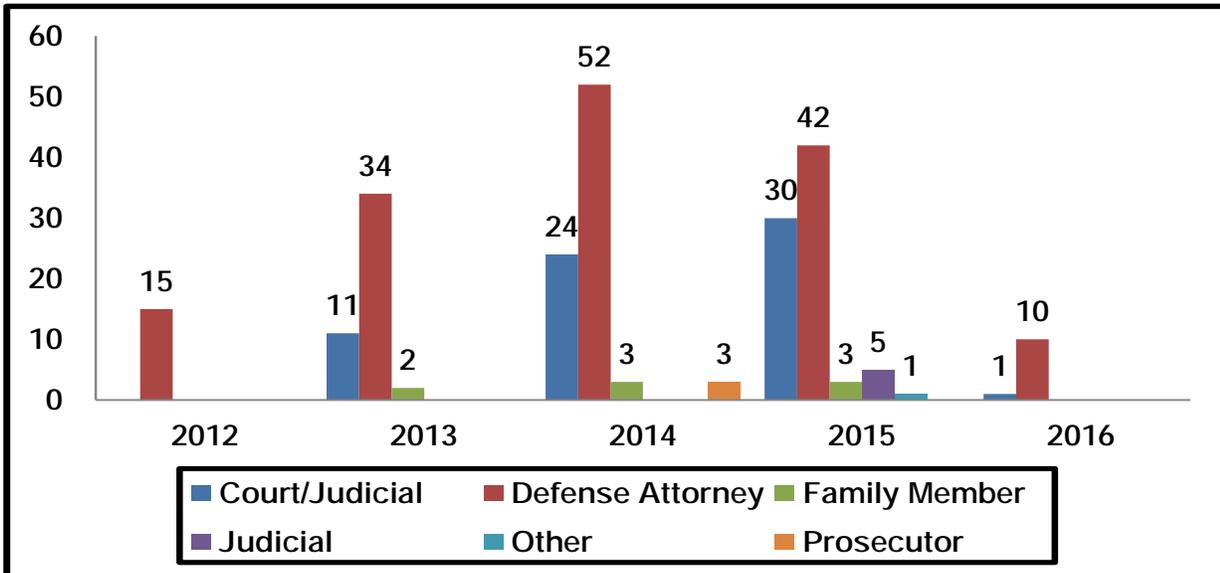
Referrals to Mental Health Court

Between 1 May 2012 and 30 April 2016, 236 individuals had been referred to the Mental Health Court program. Of these, 62 (26.3%) were accepted.

% of Referrals to Mental Health Court by Screening Outcome



Number of Referrals to Mental Health Court by Year and Referral Source



**2016 includes January through April 2016*

Overall, participants referred to Mental Health Court were more likely to have a charge of Assault-4 DV (22.5%) followed by Theft 3 (16.1%). The table below presents the eligible charge and screening outcome for all referrals to the Mental Health Court program.

**Number of Referrals to Mental Health Court by Eligible Charge and Screening Outcome:
May 2012 through April 2016**

	Accepted	Pending	Rejected: Competency	Rejected: Ineligible Mental Health Diagnosis	Rejected: Medical Issues	Rejected: Not Target Population	Rejected: Other	Rejected: Prosecuting Attorney	Rejected: Refusal	Rejected: Statutory Ineligibility	Rejected: Unable To Locate	TOTAL
ANTI HARASSMENT / PROT TEMP ORD VIO				1			1					1
ASSAULT 3RD DEGREE		1					2	6	2			12
ASSAULT 4TH DEGREE	4	1		1			1	3	4	2		16
ASSAULT-2							1	1				2
ASSAULT-2 STRANGULATION							1					1
ASSAULT-3 HEALTH CARE WORKER							2	1				3
ASSAULT-3 LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER							1		1			2
ASSAULT 4--DV	26	2	3	2			4	3	12	1		53
BURGLARY-2			1						1			2
CONT SUB- POSSESS NO PRESCRIPTION		1				1						2
CRIMINAL SOLICITATION	1			2					1			4
CRIMINAL TRESPASS 1ST DEGREE	4						2		5			11
CRIMINAL TRESPASS 2ND DEGREE		1					1		1			3

	Accepted	Pending	Rejected: Competency	Rejected: Ineligible Mental Health Diagnosis	Rejected: Medical Issues	Rejected: Not Target Population	Rejected: Other	Rejected: Prosecuting Attorney	Rejected: Refusal	Rejected: Statutory Ineligibility	Rejected: Unable To Locate	TOTAL
CYBERSTALKING	1											1
DISORDERLY CONDUCT	1								1	1		3
DRIVING WHILE LICENSE SUSPENDED-2							2					2
DRUG PARA- MINOR (G MISD)											1	1
DRUG PARAPHERNALIA-- DEFINITION									1			1
DUI - GROSS MISDEMEANOR									1	1		2
ESCAPE 2ND DEGREE							1					1
FALSE STATEMENT TO PUBLIC SERVNT FORGERY	1		1						1			3
										1		1
HARASSMENT	3		3			1	1		2			10
HARASSMENT - DEFINITION							1	1	1			3
HARASSMENT- DV	1											1
HARASSMENT- PREV CONV/DTH THRT PEN				1				1				2
HARASSMENT- THREATEN BODILY INJURY								1				1
HIT/RUN - ATTENDED VEHICLE				1								1
IDENTITY THEFT-2	1	1										2

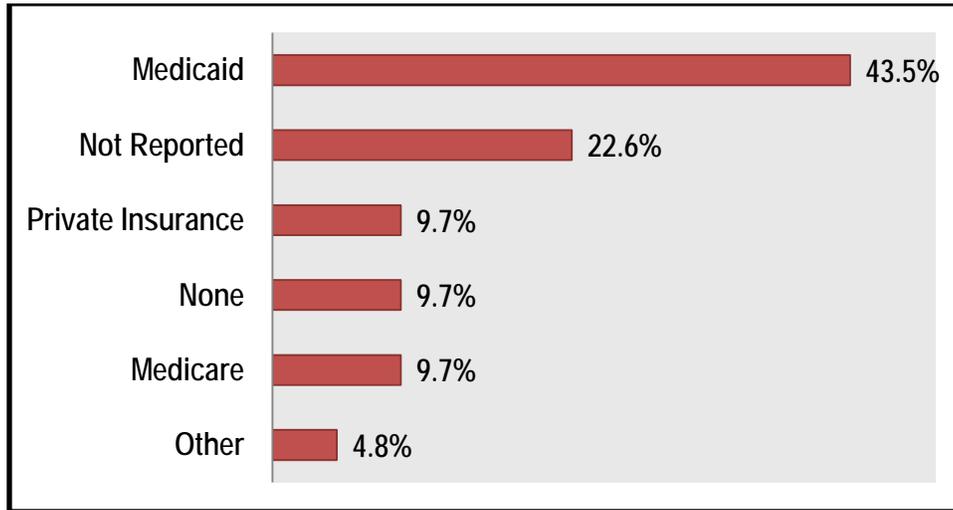
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LEGEND DRUG- SELL/DEL/POS NO PRESC	1											1
MALICIOUS MISCHIEF-1 DAMAGE >\$5K								1				1
MALICIOUS MISCHIEF-2							2					2
MALICIOUS MISCHIEF-3	3	1					2	1	1	2		10
NCO Violation- DV		1										1
NO CONTACT ORDER-CONTENTS									1			1
OBSTRUCT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER	1						1					2
OBSTRUCTION		1										1
OBSTRUCTIONS- DRIVING VIEW/MECHANISM					1							1
ORDER PROHIBIT CONTACT- VIOLATION	1								1			2
POSS STOLEN PROP-2 NOT FIREARM/VEH										1		1
POSSESSION OF STOLEN VEHICLE						1						1
PROTECTION ORDER VIO- CONTEMPT							1		1			2
PROTECTION ORDER VIOLATION (GM)	4			1			1	2	5			13

	Accepted	Pending	Rejected: Competency	Rejected: Ineligible Mental Health Diagnosis	Rejected: Medical Issues	Rejected: Not Target Population	Rejected: Other	Rejected: Prosecuting Attorney	Rejected: Refusal	Rejected: Statutory Ineligibility	Rejected: Unable To Locate	TOTAL
PROTECTION ORDER VIOL- FELONY							1					1
RECKLESS BURNING 1ST DEGREE								1				1
RECKLESS DRIVING		1					1					2
RESISTING ARREST									1			1
STOLEN PROPERTY TRAFFICKING-1								1				1
STOLEN PROPERTY TRAFFICKING-2							1					1
TAKE VEHICLE W/O PERMISSION-2								1	1			2
TELEPHONE HARASSMENT							1					1
THEFT-3	9	7		3			6	1	11		1	38
UNLAWFUL IMPRISONMENT									1			1
UNLAWFUL TRANSIT CONDUCT									1			1
TOTAL	62	18	8	12	1	3	38	25	58	9	2	236

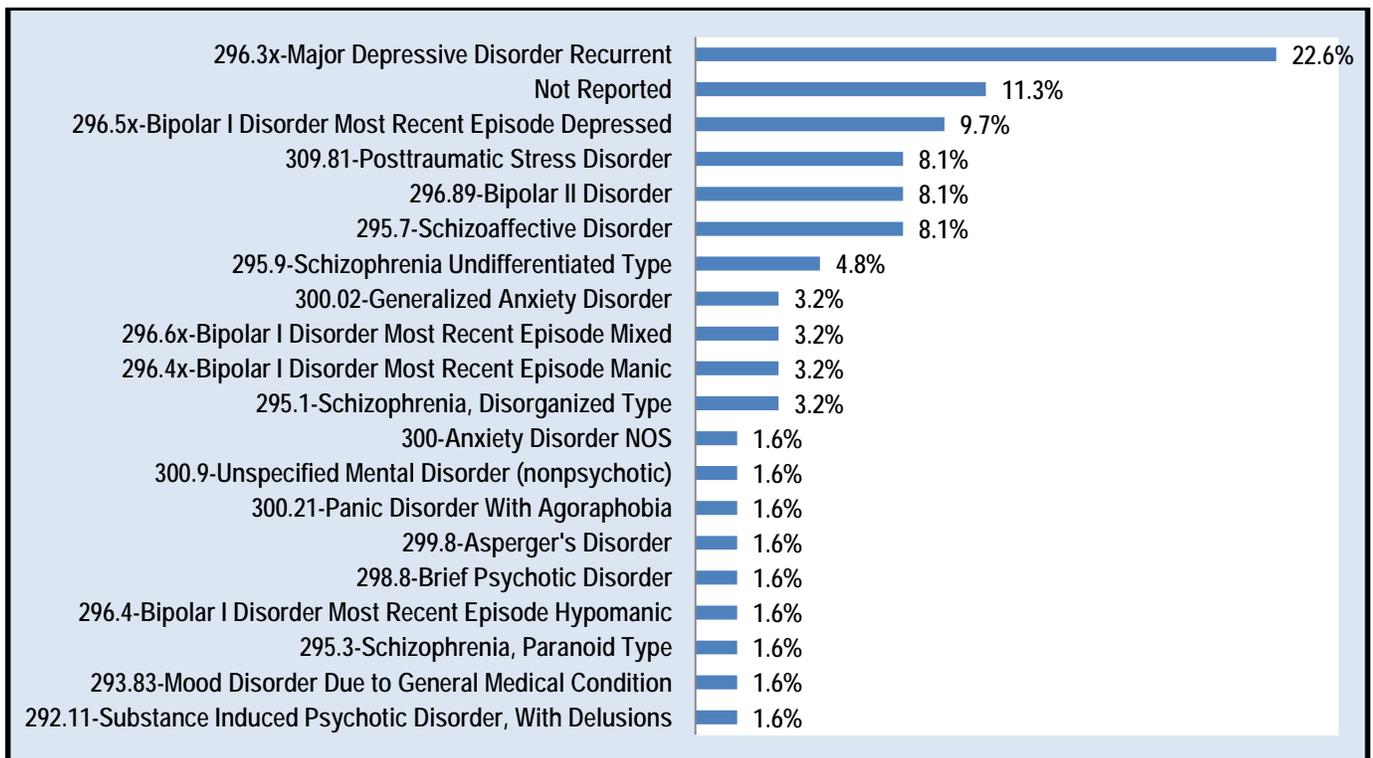
Individuals Accepted into Mental Health Court

Sixty-two individuals were accepted into Mental Health Court between May 2012 and April 2016. The majority of individuals accepted into the program were female (54.8%.) The average age for these participants was 35.7 years.

**Insurance Coverage of Individuals Accepted into Mental Health Court: May 2012 through April 2016
(as reported by the Bridgeways Mental Health Court Liaison)**



**Primary DSM IV Axis I Diagnoses of Individuals Accepted into Mental Health court: May 2012 through April 2016
(as reported by the Bridgeways Mental Health Court Liaison)**



Evaluation of Outcomes of Mental Health Court

Previous Evaluation Conducted in 2014 Analyzing Short-Term Outcomes Based on *Program Entry Date*

Based on an initial request by stakeholders in 2014, a preliminary evaluation of Mental Health Court participants was conducted using their program entry date into the program as the pivot point from which to examine recidivism and utilization of crisis services for the 12 months prior and the 12 months post.

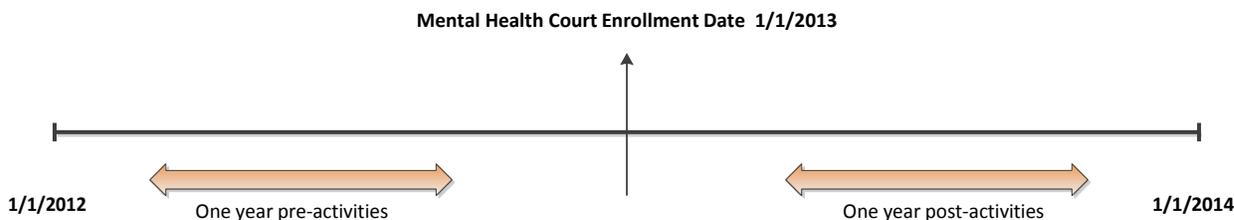
At the time of this analysis, there were 21 participants who had been accepted into the program. Using this evaluation methodology, the following results were demonstrated.

Recidivism and Crisis Service Utilization for 12 Months Pre- and 12 Months Post- Program Entry in the Mental Health Court

# Documented Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Contacts		# of Snohomish County Triage Center Referrals		# of Criminal Charges		# of Bookings into the Snohomish County Jail		# of Days Spent in the Snohomish County Jail	
12 months PRE	12 months POST	12 months PRE	12 months POST	12 months PRE	12 months POST	12 months PRE	12 months POST	12 months PRE	12 months POST
15	3	5	2	18	4	11	3	276	213

While this analysis provided a first-blush look at recidivism and service utilization *while in the program*, it did not provide any insight into the longer-term impacts. Given the duration of the program, there were no participants who successfully graduated the program and had been out of the program for at least one year. The methodology for this evaluation is presented in the diagram below.

Evaluation Using Enrollment Date Method Example
 In this example, the participant enrolled in the Mental Health Court program on 1/1/2013. All criminal charges and utilization of crisis services that occurred within one year before that date are considered as pre-activities. All criminal charges and utilization of crisis services that occurred between 1/1/2013 and 1/1/2014 are considered as post-activities.

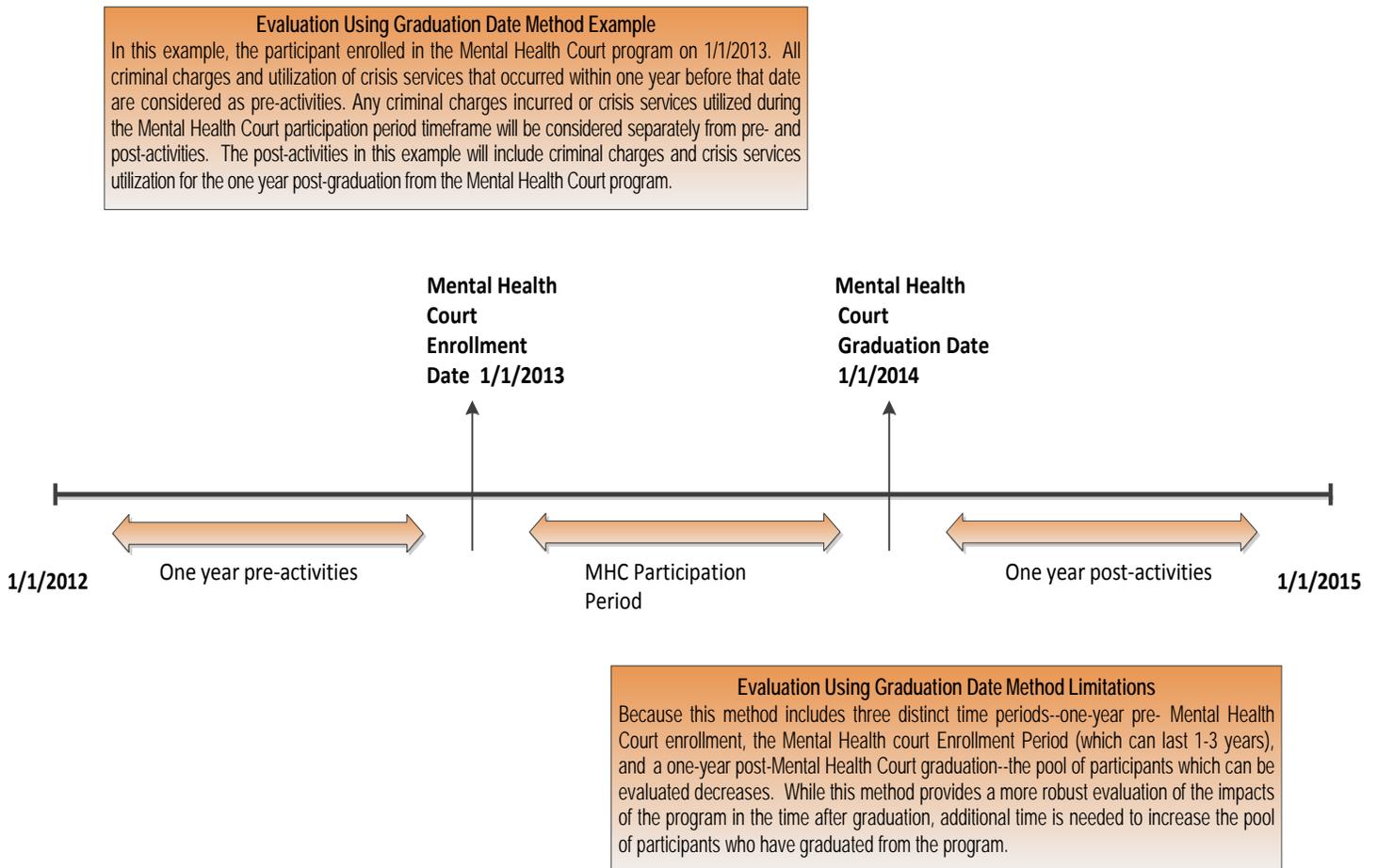


Evaluation Using Enrollment Date Method Limitations
 This method does not examine criminal charges and utilization of crisis services that occur after a participant graduates from Mental Health Court. Given this, this method does not show any impacts that may have been gained as a result of receiving the full benefit of graduating from the program.

Current Evaluation Analyzing Longer-Term Outcomes Based on *Graduation Date*

As of 30 April 2016, there were six Mental Health Court participants who had successfully graduated and been out of the program for at least one year. While this sample size is small, evaluating the longer-term outcomes of recidivism and utilization of crisis services for these six individuals provided information regarding the longer-term effects of the program.

A diagram of this evaluation methodology is provided below.

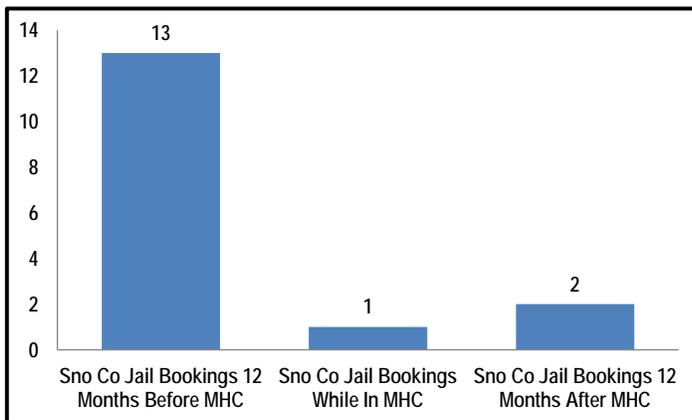


In comparing the participants' utilization of various components of the crisis system during the 12 month period pre-Mental Health Court enrollment to the 12 month period post- Mental Health Court graduation, there was an overall reduction of:

- Bookings into the Snohomish County Jail (reduced by **84.6%**)
- Days in the Snohomish County Jail (reduced by **98.4%**)
- Criminal charges (reduced by **68.2%**)

During this same pre- and post- window, documented contacts with emergency medical services (EMS) across Snohomish County rose from zero in the pre- period to two in the post-period. Additionally, there were no referrals for any of these participants in either the pre- or post-period to the Snohomish County Triage Center.

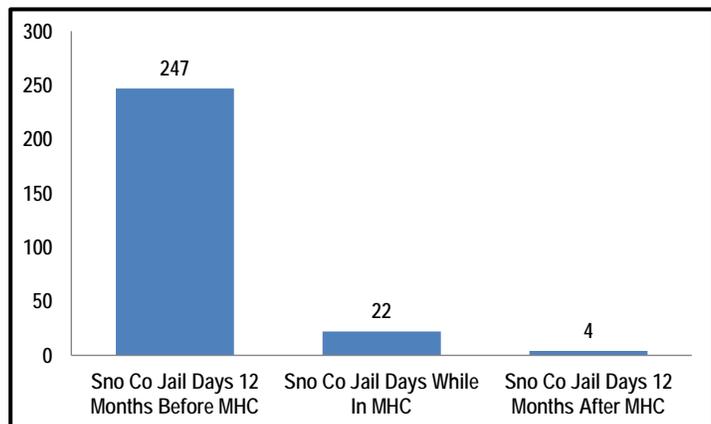
Bookings into the Snohomish County Jail



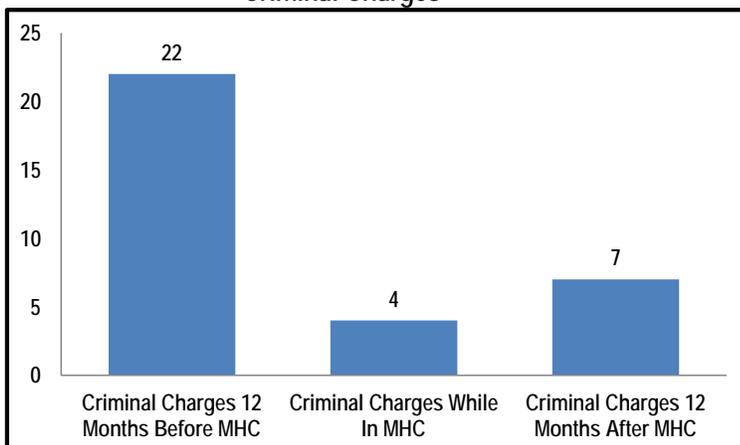
Bookings into the Snohomish County Jail decreased from 13 during the 12 months before entry into Mental Health Court to one while in Mental Health Court and then increased to 2 in the 12 months after Mental Health Court graduation.

Days Spent in the Snohomish County Jail

Days spent in the Snohomish County Jail decreased from 247 during the 12 months before entry into Mental Health Court to 22 while in Mental Health Court to 4 in the 12 months after Mental Health Court graduation.



Criminal Charges



Criminal charges decreased from 22 during the 12 months before entry into Mental Health Court to 4 while in Mental Health Court and then increased to 7 in the 12 months after Mental Health Court graduation.

After graduation from Mental Health Court, clients are no longer seen by the Bridgeways Mental Health Court Liaison. The elimination of this supervision may be a causal factor in the increase in criminal charges.

Technical Notes:

All analysis of data was conducted by the Research Division of the Snohomish County Human Services Department. Data for this report were analyzed in April 2016.

For questions about data and analysis, contact Robin Fenn, Research Manager, Snohomish County Human Services Department at Robin.Fenn@snoco.org.

Use of Emergency Medical Services (EMS): Participant identified data from all fire districts within Snohomish County who utilize the ESO data system. All documented contacts were included. It is possible that EMS providers had contact with Mental Health Court participants that were not documented in the ESO system.

Referrals to the Snohomish County Triage Center: Participant identified data from the Snohomish County Triage Center. All referrals to the Snohomish County Triage Center were included regardless of disposition.

Jail Days and Jail Bookings (Snohomish County Jail): Participant identified data related to jail bookings and number of days spent in jail as pulled from COTS and New World System

Criminal Charges: Non-traffic related charges as provided by the Everett District Court clerk