Attachment F

King County

Mental Illness Drug Dependency (MIDD) Oversight Committee

Historical Control Group Recommendation

Per ordinance 16262, the Mental Illness Drug Dependency Oversight Committee (MIDD OC) reviewed and studied the concept of establishing a historical control group for evaluative purposes. Representatives from the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention, the Department of Community and Human Services, and council staff assisted the MIDD OC with its analysis. The recommendation from the MIDD OC on establishing a control group to measure recidivism in the King County jail is submitted as part of the April 1, 2009 annual report to council.

A "historical comparison" group could technically be generated. That is – we could generate a group of people who have similar characteristics to the people being served by MIDD programs in order to compare outcomes, such as recidivism, for individuals served by the MIDD with outcomes for those who did not, in the past, receive MIDD services.

However, generating a historical comparison group regarding jail utilization for the MIDD would not be useful for many reasons:

a. The MIDD is not a single intervention – it is a very complex set of interventions serving a wide variety of individuals. As such, creating a single comparison group would be very difficult.
b. Historical comparison groups rely on environmental/contextual conditions to remain constant. State and local laws, rules, and law enforcement and prosecutorial practices have changed so much over the last few years that any historical comparison would be meaningless. For example, the jail population has radically changed, resulting in much fewer low-end offenders.
c. It would be very difficult to determine a group (or groups) of individuals that are truly comparable to those being served by the MIDD. This was attempted for the evaluation of the King County Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division's Criminal Justice Initiative on a much small scale and even then the groups were not comparable enough to draw conclusions about any differences in recidivism.
d. Generating a historical comparison group, and conducting the additional work necessary to analyze all the variables involved in comparing outcomes would be very costly for the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention and Department of Community and Human Services, and it is not at all apparent that there would be any value added by this extra work and cost.

While a historical control or comparison group is not recommended, the MIDD Evaluation Team will continue to look at each strategy as it comes on-line to look for opportunities for concurrent (contemporaneous) "natural" comparison groups and include these results in the evaluation reports.