MULTNOMAH COUNTY

COURT APPEARANCE NOTIFICATION SYSTEM: PROCESS AND OUTCOME EVALUATION

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COURT APPEARANCE NOTIFICATION SYSTEM: PROCESS AND OUTCOME EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Failure to appear (FTA) to court hearings is a significant drain on criminal justice system resources by all involved agencies. The *Court Appearance Notification System (CANS)* was established in Multnomah County in May 2005, as a pilot program to determine if the failure to appear rate could effectively be reduced. Like a doctor's office, the program worked by telephoning defendants prior to their court hearing to remind them of their hearing. A limited quasi-experimental research design examined both the process and outcomes of the program. The process evaluation results found that only a fraction of all possible calls occurred due to a lack of available phone numbers and lack of full program implementation. This limited the full potential of the program. However, even with limited implementation the CANS participants *overall FTA rate was reduced by approximately 37%.* Those defendants who successfully received notification calls exhibited a 43% to 45% *reduction* in their failure to appear rate over two comparison groups. This resulted in a net cost-avoidance to the criminal justice system of as much as $264,000 in just a half-year of operation. As important, the results also indicated that the notification calls substantially reduced minority over-representation in failure to appear rates. These results were consistent with results from a similar program in King County, Washington. The results and subsequent recommendations suggest that far greater savings can be achieved within existing resources.

BACKGROUND

Failure to appear (FTA) in court is a significant drain on the criminal justice system's resources for every agency. Some accounts suggest that approximately 27% of all criminal cases have at least one FTA.[1] It is not uncommon for some cases to have multiple FTA. FTA is more common among lower-risk offenders because high-risk offenders (i.e., those with serious person crimes such as assault or robbery) are less likely to ever be released from jail.[2] FTA often results in the production of warrants which are issued by judges, processed by the Sheriff's Office, served by various law enforcement agencies, and can require low-risk arrestees to be jailed until their hearing. Further, FTA can result in additional charges added to the original offense. Because of these related events, FTA's ultimately back-up the criminal justice system.

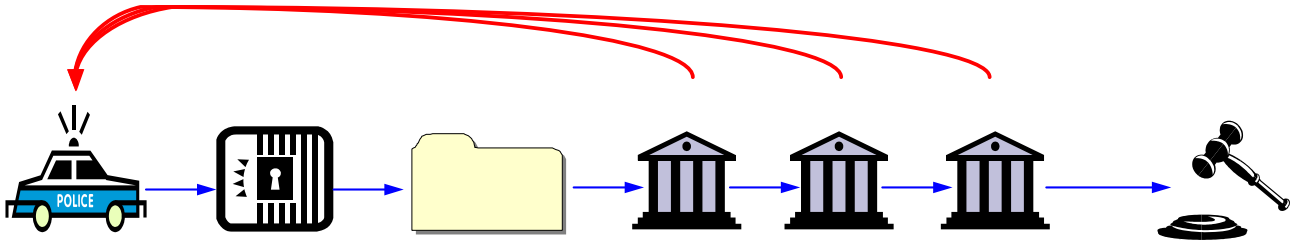

Exhibit 1. Simplified Criminal Justice Process with a Failure to Appear

The *Court Appearance Notification Systems (CANS)* was established in Multnomah County in May 2005, as a pilot program to determine if the failure to appear rate could be effectively

[1] Nice, M. (2004). *FTA Working Paper V2* (unreleased draft). Budget Office Evaluation.
[2] Preliminary analysis of jail data identified approximately 40% of those FTA having a primary drug or alcohol charge.

reduced.[3] The program was based on the proven results of a similar King County, Washington program. Not unlike a doctor's office, the program worked by telephoning defendants prior to their court hearing to remind them of hearing's date, time, and location.

The notification system is based on the State Court's Oregon Judicial Information Network (*OJIN*) event (hearings) data. To maximize cost-efficiency, ensure consistency and avoid possible legal issues associated with people placing the calls, the notification calls were made via a contracted vendor's automated computer system. The program made its first call May 31, 2005. The following process and outcome evaluation examines six months of data, from May 31, 2005 to November 30, 2005.

THE CANS PROCESS

Between May 31, 2005 and November 30, 2005 there were 2,391 case-events (hearings) where the vendor placed notification calls.[4] This represented approximately 21% of all eligible case-events.[5] A case-event was defined as a scheduled court event that required a notification call for a specific date. Each individual case often had more than one case-event (i.e., a case-event was generated for each hearing date) and each case-event could have more than one phone call. For example, if the first call was not successful several subsequent calls would automatically be made. During this time period more than 4,440 total calls were placed. The exhibit below shows the case-event process.

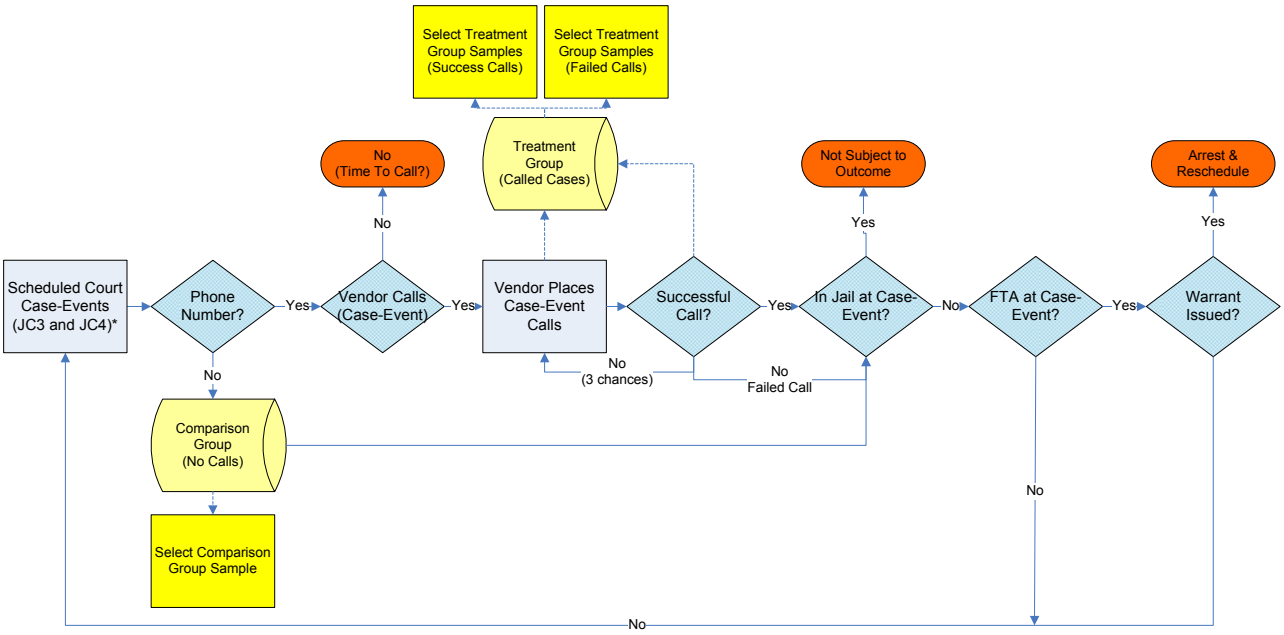

Exhibit 2. The CANS Process

[3] The program has also been know as the FTA Reduction program and the Call-to-Court program.
[4] This was only for hearings scheduled in the JC3 or JC4 court rooms downtown. Gresham court cases were not included in the evaluation dataset.
[5] This is due to several factors, the greatest is that there was no available phone number at the time the calls were placed (64%). Additionally, about 19% of all call-events appear not to be made by the vendor, likely due to the lack of time between received call data and the event time (i.e., the hearing occurs sooner than the call can be made). The addition of Gresham cases will increase this number as well.

Of the 2,391 case-events, 75.3% were defined as '*successful',* that is to say calls where either an individual answered or an answering machine received a significant proportion of the call.[6] According to vendor provided results, the percent of successful calls has increased steadily since the program began. However, the number of case-events peaked in September, and have since declined.

Table 1. Total Case-Events by Outcome

	Failure	Success	Total	Successful (%)
May 2005	7	25	32	78%
June 2005	143	261	404	65%
July 2005	103	294	397	74%
August 2005	109	310	419	74%
September 2005	105	371	476	78%
October 2005	70	320	390	82%
November 2005	54	219	273	80%
Total	591	1800	2391	75%

RESULTS OF INDIVIDUAL CALLS

Each case-event consisted of at least one phone call. The vendor placed calls within 12 hours of receiving the data from the courts. The average call had a lead time of 3.6 days prior to the scheduled court date (SD=2.6). However, 30% of calls occurred with less than 3 days advance notice (these were typically new for arraignments or changes in court hearing date). Up to a total of three calls attempts per case-event occurred. Most calls occurred at 8:00 AM weekdays, with any subsequent calls occurring every two hours after the previous failed call (10:00AM and 12:00PM).

Calls where either an individual answered or an answering machine takes a significant proportion of the call were identified as successful calls, while all others were coded as failures by the vendor. Successful case-events had an average of 1.5 calls before the case-event was coded successful. For purposes of the outcome evaluation this group is referred to as the *treatment call success* group (**Called**).

Failed calls were repeated three times before the case-event was coded failed. A third of failures were for "*no ring back*", signifying that the number never properly rang, possibly due to blocked calls. An additional 20% of calls were for an '*operator intercept*', which indicated the number was not valid. The remaining failures were for a variety of reasons (e.g., no answer, partial answering machine, busy, etc.). For purposes of the outcome evaluation this group is referred to as the *treatment call missed* group (**Missed**).

There was no significant difference between the amount of lead time between the notification call and the scheduled court date between the Called and Missed groups.

[6] The notification message repeats twice. If the answering machine cuts off before the completion of the first full section, the call is coded a failure.

OUTCOMES

An outcome evaluation was conducted to determine if differences in FTA rates occurred for those who received CANS notification.[7] Because cases were not randomly selected into call or no-call groups, a quasi-experimental evaluation design was used. Issues related to the availability of reliable automated data meant that a manual review of each case-events was required. Because of the large number of case-events, statistically relevant random samples from each group were selected for analysis.

The outcome evaluation initially consisted of three statistically relevant randomly selected sample groups: *treatment call success* group (**Called**: n=243) selected from all successful case-events; *treatment call missed* group (**Missed**: n=191) selected from all failed case-events; and a *non-treatment comparison* group (**Comparison**: n=272). The non-treatment comparison group consisted of a statistically reliable randomly selected sample from the available court data for case-events where a call would have been placed but the defendant had no phone number on file. The sampling confidence level was set at 95% with a margin of error of +/-5%.[8]

Each sample group was compared statistically to their respective population to determine if there were any significant differences in gender, race, age, scheduled event date, or severity of crime (felony versus non-felony). In no case were the randomly selected sample groups different from their populations on these measures, making them fit for subsequent analyses. Table 2 displays the demographic characteristics of the various groups.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics by Treatment Group

Group	Sample Size (n)	Males	White[9]	Age	Felony
Called	243	79%	62%	34.2	36%
Missed	191	82%	58%	35.5	34%
Comparison	272	82%	60%	34.8	37%
Total	706				

Next, each group was compared to the other to determine if there were any significant differences between groups. The only significant difference was identified in the scheduled event date (month-year).[10] The frequency of Missed was lower than expected for the month of November 2005 when compared to the other groups. This was due to the fact that the number of cases has declined some what over time, while simultaneously the percentage of successful cases increased, thus reducing the number of Missed cases which occurred (see Table 1). This difference should not effect the results of any subsequent analyses.

Each case-event was individually examined in OJIN to determine whether the defendant failed to appear on the scheduled case-event date and if a new warrant was generated. In cases where the

[7] The outcome evaluation was based on six months of program data.

[8] Confidence level (α) was set at 95% with a margin of error of +/-5% and a response distribution of 24% (based on court estimated data) for all groups.

[9] Approximately 5% of cases had missing race/ethnicity data. After significance testing was completed, missing data were manually reviewed in DSSJ. Racial/ethnic determination was based on the preponderance of the reported races.

[10] χ^2 (12) = 24.448, p = .018. Note, 3 cells had expected counts less than 5 (May 2005 data).

defendant did not appear they were coded '*FTA'*. Table 3 examines the occurrences of FTA by group. The Called group showed a lower FTA rate than other groups, but this was not found to be significant.[11]

Table 3. FTA at Case-Event Date by Treatment Group

Group	Appeared	FTA	Total	FTA (%)
Called	209	34	243	14%
Missed	154	37	191	19%
Comparison	220	52	272	19%

During data collection, notations in OJIN event data suggested that many defendants may have actually been in local custody at the time of their case-event. The CANS program was designed to call those defendant who were not in custody. If a defendant was already in custody at the time of the case-event, then the likelihood of a FTA is zero. This would significantly impact the results reported in Table 3 above.

To control for this issue, Multnomah County Sheriff's Warrant Inmate System (*eSWIS)* custody data were gathered to identify whether the defendants in each group were already in local custody at the time of their case-event (prior to the hearing).[12] Table 4 shows that a proportion of each group was actually in custody at the time of their case-events.

Table 4. In Custody at Case-Event Date by Treatment Group

Group	Free	In Custody	Total	In Custody (%)
Called	204	39	243	16%
Missed	158	33	191	17%
Comparison	184	88	272	32%
Total	546	160	706	

Results found that all treatment groups has notable and varying proportions already in custody at the time of their case-event. The Comparison group (i.e., those without phone numbers) had a significantly greater frequency of being in custody at the case-event date than did the other groups.[13] As it turns out, OJIN is not currently able to reliably identify whether or not a defendant was in custody at the case-event period.[14] Thus, calls were going to all defendants, regardless of whether they were free to take the calls or not. It is likely that the success rate is reported in Table 1 is actually higher than 75% given some defendants were not technically eligible for the program. Given these changes over the original program design parameters, cases where the defendant was in custody at the time of their case-event were controlled for and the data were reexamined.

[11] χ^2 (2) = 3.036, p = .219.
[12] Note. It was possible that defendants could be in custody in other jurisdictions (e.g., Clackamas or Washington Counties). Gathering this data was beyond the scope of this evaluation.
[13] χ^2 (2) = 23.797, p < .001.
[14] Jim Croft of the State Courts.

Table 5 displays the FTA results for each group for defendants who were not in custody at the time of their case-event. CANS participants (Called and Missed) had an overall FTA rate of 18%, a decrease of 36% over Comparison group. Results found that those who received a successful call had a significantly lower likelihood of FTA than other groups (43% lower than the Comparison group).[15]

Using a logistic regression model to examine the likelihood of a FTA event found that, controlling for those in custody at the time of their case-event and all else being equal, those who successfully received a case-event call were nearly two-times more likely to appear than those who did not.[16]

Table 5. FTA at Case-Event Date by Treatment Group (not in custody at case-event date)

Group	Appeared	FTA	Total	FTA (%)	New Warrants Issued	Warrants from FTA (%)
Called	171	33	204	16%	17	52%
Missed	121	37	158	23%	24	65%
Comparison	132	52	184	28%	26	50%

In case-events where a failure to appear does occur, there is a high likelihood that a new warrant will be issued. The correlation between FTA and new warrants being issued was significant at .697.[17] Examining the results of new warrants issued for cases where the defendant was not in custody at the time of their case-event, found that the there was not a significant difference between groups.[18] This shows that once the FTA event occurs the likelihood of a subsequent warrant being issued is roughly the same (average of 56%). This finding suggests that to effectively reduce the number of warrants you must first reduce the occurrence of FTA.

PRE-TREATMENT COMPARISON

The results above show that CANS participants, especially those receiving successful calls, were significantly less likely to fail to appear. However, it is difficult to ascertain what, if any, role the CANS program had on these results. One may argue that people with phone numbers inherently have greater stability in their lives, and are therefore less likely to fail to appear. Thus, a reminder call would not offset their likelihood to appear in court. To test this assumption and attempt to isolate the effects of the CANS intervention, a sample of case-events which occurred prior to the implementation of the CANS program was gathered and compared.

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[15] χ^2 (2) = 8.290, p = .016.

[16] Initial constant log likelihood = 653.073. Block 1 model log likelihood = 592.249, χ^2 (1) = 60.824, p < .001; Block 2 model log likelihood = 584.831, χ^2 (2) = 7.418, p = .024; In-jail B = -3.938 (Wald (1) = 15.249, p < .001), Exp(B)=.019; *Called* Group, B = -.666 (Wald (2) = 7.152, p = .007), Exp(B)=.514. Likelihood of event (1/.514) = 1.94. The classification table showed no improvement over constant-only model (82.6% correct). Gender was also a significant predictor in likelihood of FTA, but the exclusion of that predictor had no bearing upon the likelihood of the event.

[17] Point bi-serial correlation (Spearman's rho) r = .697, p < .001. Note, several cases in OJIN event data suggested that new warrants were not issued because outstanding warrants already existed.

[18] χ^2 (2) = 4.780, p = .092.

Again, using data from the OJIN court system the total population of unique case-events between May 2004 and April 2005 (prior to the CANS program) was gathered. The criteria were exactly the same as current call criteria, except that these cases occurred before program implementation. A total unique population of 13,837 case-events were identified.

To test the assumption that phone number alone was responsible for significantly lowering FTA rate, only case-events with phone numbers were identified for the analysis (7,099). A statistically relevant comparison sample of 270 case-events was randomly selected from the population (coded **Pre-Program)**.[19] The sample did not significantly differ from its population on race, age, gender, and scheduled event date demographics.[20]

Table 6. Demographic Characteristics by Group

Group	Sample Size (n)	Males[21]	White[22]	Age
Pre-Program	270	75%	62%	35.1
Called	243	79%	62%	34.2
Missed	191	82%	58%	35.5
Comparison	272	82%	60%	34.8

The Pre-Program group was individually reviewed in OJIN and eSWIS following the same review and coding methodology as the treatment groups. Data identifying failure to appear, whether a new warrant was subsequently issued, and whether the person was in custody at the time of the case-event were captured. As with the treatment groups, a proportion of the Pre-Program group's case-events occurred while the person was in custody (n=84). Controlling for those case-events with the defendant already in custody left 186 cases-events (Table 7).

Table 7. FTA at Case-Event Date by Group (not in custody at case-event date)

Group	Appeared	FTA	Total	FTA (%)	New Warrants Issued	Warrants from FTAs (%)
Pre-Program	132	54	186	29%	34	63%
Called	171	33	204	16%	17	52%
Missed	121	37	158	23%	24	65%
Comparison	132	52	184	28%	26	50%

[19] Confidence level (α) was set at 95% with a margin of error of +/-5% and a response distribution of 24% based on court estimated data.

[20] Various χ^2 results were found not significant (α = 95%). Primary charge and severity data were not included in the OJIN data and therefore were not compared.

[21] There was a lower proportion of males in the previous year group, however the sample did not significantly differ from the population.

[22] As with previous samples, missing race/ethnicity data was determined using the preponderance of DSSJ criminal records. This correction was made *after* the successful test against the population data.

Results of the Pre-Program comparison group found that 29% of their case-events resulted in a failure to appear. The FTA results were comparable to the CANS treatment comparison group (Comparison) for which no phone call was ever made (see Figure 1).

CANS participants (Called and Missed) had an overall FTA rate of 18%, or a decrease of 38% over the Pre-Program comparison group (29%). Sixty-three percent (63%) of the Pre-Program group's FTAs led to new warrants being issued, consistent with the other treatment groups (50% - 65%). This supports the previous finding that to effectively reduce the number of warrants you must first reduce the occurrence of FTA.

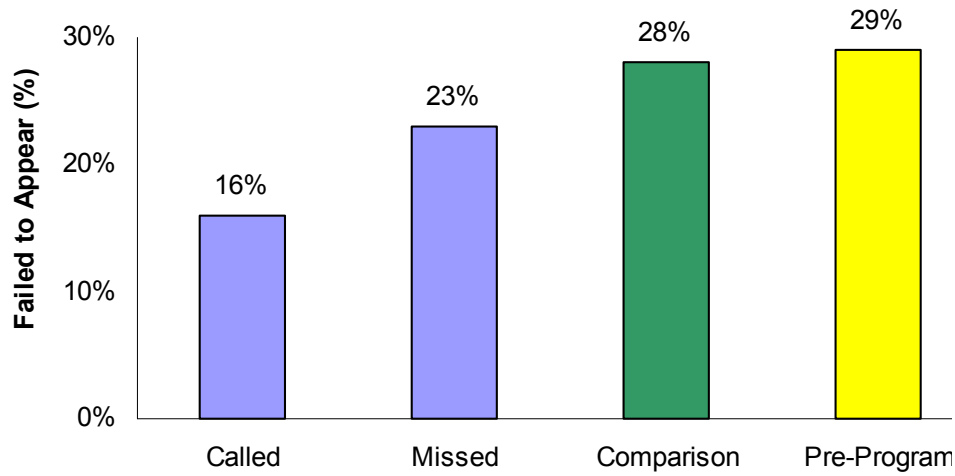

Figure 1. FTA Results by Treatment and Comparison Groups

Those who successfully received a CANS notification call (Called) had a failure rate 45% lower than the Pre-Program comparison group. Additionally, those who had calls placed, but were not successful (Missed) had a 21% reduction in their FTA rate over the Pre-Program group. This suggests that partial benefits from the CANS notification calls extend to those cases where a notification call was missed.

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES

Racial Over-Representation. One unintended consequence in any new criminal justice program is the possibility of increasing racial disparities also known as over-representation. A December 2002 Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) report identified issues relating to increasing the rate of appearances at court as a way to reduce racial over-representation in the criminal justice system.[23] In developing CANS, the LPSCC wanted to know if the effects would be race neutral, or perhaps reduce the current disparity in FTA by race previously identified.

Due to the limited sample size, race by treatment group was examined using a dichotomized race coded '*Persons of Color*' or '*White'*. Table 8 displays each treatment group's racial proportion of FTA for those not in custody. Results found that the those persons of color who successfully

[23] Multnomah County Public Safety Coordinating Council. (2002). *Racial Over-Representation in the Criminal Justice System*. Task Force Report 2001-2002.

received a reminder call had a lower incidence of FTA (14%) than persons of color who did not receive calls (23% to 40%). In fact, the FTA rate for this group was lower than that of whites (18%). This suggests that the reduced FTA rates from the program extend to both persons of color and whites, but appear more strongly for persons of color. There was some indication of similar findings in the King County draft study.[24]

Table 8. FTA (not in custody at case-event date) by Race and by Group

Group	Race	Appeared	FTA	Total	FTA (%)
Called	Person Of Color	68	11	79	14%
	White	103	22	125	18%
	Total	171	33	204	16%
Missed	Person Of Color	47	20	67	30%
	White	74	17	91	19%
	Total	121	37	158	23%
Comparison	Person Of Color	58	17	75	23%
	White	74	35	109	32%
	Total	132	52	184	28%
Pre-Program	Person Of Color	40	27	67	40%
	White	92	27	116	23%
	Total	132	54	186	29%

Calculating Cost Avoidance. As noted before, there is a cost to the criminal justice system each time an FTA occurs. At a minimum costs are incurred when judges, prosecutors and defense (includes judge, judicial assistance, prosecution, defense, bailiff, and additional support) have to re-process a hearing. At a maximum, costs for issuing/clearing warrants, police apprehension, booking, holding, and courts occur when an FTA leads to a new warrant. To estimate the costs avoided as a result of reducing FTAs and subsequent warrants issued, transactional calculations estimates applied in recent Multnomah County court research were used.[25] These estimates should not be considered the final, fully-loaded actual costs, but instead as a reasonable and conservative estimate of the impacts.

Table 9 list the estimated cost for each of the system components affected by an FTA and the costs associated if a new warrant is issued. As you can see most costs are associated with court hearings which include the judge, judicial assistance, prosecution, defense, bailiff, and additional support processes. The cost assumptions for a new warrant only include one day of jail, which may or may not be accurate. Some people may clear their warrant early or be matrix released early and spend little time in jail. On the other end, this estimate does not include costs for the

[24] Murray, C. (2000). *The Effects of Automated Reminder Calls on Failure to Appear in King County District Court—Draft*. Christopher Murray and Associates.
[25] Carey, S. & Finigan, M. (2003). *Multnomah County Drug Court Cost Analysis*. NPC Research. Portland, Oregon. p.41 Table 6. Note that these figures were adjusted for inflation.

occurrence of a greater likelihood of being incarcerated and being incarcerated for a significantly longer period of time as identified in the King County research.[26]

Table 9. Cost Estimates per FTA

Function/ Component	Cost of an FTA Only	Cost if a New Warrant's Issued
Issuing/clearing warrants[27]		$ 26.42
Police apprehension		$ 197.58
Booking		$ 291.23
Jail Holding (1 day)		$ 109.61
Court Hearing (loaded)	$ 694.94	$ 694.94
Total	$ 694.94	$1319.78

Based on the findings from the outcome evaluation, approximately 28.5% of case-events would have failed to appear without intervention. Participants in CANS had an overall FTA rate of 18%; 16% of successful calls resulting in an FTA and 23% of failed calls resulting in an FTA. Table 10 shows that based on the total 2,391 case-events, the program was able to reduce the number of FTAs by 251 and new warrants by 177. At an estimated cost of $1,320 per FTA, a total cost-avoidance of $232,836 was calculated, with a system net benefit of as much as $212,836 in the first six months of operation.

Table 10. Costs Avoidance Estimates for New Warrants Only

	FTA Rate	Case-Events	FTAs	Warrant Issued	New Warrants	System Cost [28]
No *CANS* [29]	28.5%	2391	681	62.9%	429	565,688
With *CANS*	18.0%	2391	430	58.6%	252	332,852
Costs Avoided			251		177	232,836
CANS Costs [30]						20,000
Net Benefit to System (@ 6 mos.)						212,836

As shown above, not every FTA leads to a new warrant. But there is a cost of the FTA alone. This cost reflects delays in the court system and cases backing up for the judge, prosecutor, and defense, bailiff and support staff. Each hearing is estimated to cost the system $694.94. CANS

[26] Research in King County found that those defendants failing to appear were twice as likely to be jailed as those who did not fail. Additionally, they were also found to serve twice as much jail time when they were jailed compared to those who did not fail. Murray, C. (1998). *The Misdemeanant Study. Misdemeanors and Misdemeanor Defendants in King County, Washington*. Christopher Murray and Associates. These calculation do not include any additional probation time which may also result from FTA.

[27] This data was based on the MCSO Enforcement Records program offer #60012 for FY07 and conversations with the manager Kathleen Walliker. Approximately 68% of the budget is for restraining orders, warrants/extraditions, and enforcement records/LEDS. Of this, 65% of resources were dedicated to warrants/ extraditions services.

[28] Additional system costs occur for FTA, even if a subsequent warrant is not issued.

[29] An average rate based on Comparison and Pre-Program comparison groups.

[30] The CANS program was budgeted at $40,000 for FY06. Estimates were based on only a half year of data.

participants have fewer FTAs—in this case, there were 74 fewer FTAs for a savings of $51,426. Therefore, the net estimated costs-avoided were as much as $264,000 at six months.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this process evaluation found that the program was not implemented as initially planned. The program was designed to call only those cases where the defendant was not in custody at the time of their scheduled event. The results showed that calls did go to people who were also in custody. However, this may have been a benefit given the rate at which some defendants are released. It appears more conservative to call everyone, regardless of their custody situation, given the possibility of their release which could occur at any time.

More total hearings could receive calls. The largest reason appears to be an available phone number. The King County staff reported that their program also had to address this issue when their program first began. Additionally, the program was initially suppose to call Gresham case-events with phone numbers. However, due to an early glitch in the program set-up, those cases were not called. This issue was to be remedied after the system was stable and functioning, but this has yet to occur.

Regardless of the issues above, the percentage of successful calls has been increasing since inception. Disturbingly however, there has been a decrease in the number of calls made. This is likely due to the lack of continued efforts needed in gathering phone numbers at each officer and court opportunity. The initial inception of the program showed increases in case-events, however, this pattern appears to have declined since October 2005.

The results of the outcome evaluation found that the CANS program led to overall decrease of approximately 37% in FTAs. These results were consistent with King County's 38% decline after reminder calls were initiated.[31] This decline was even greater at 45% for those who successfully received notification of their court hearings over the prior year comparison group. Models found that controlling for other factors, successfully receiving a call was associated with a nearly two-times greater likelihood to appear in court than their counterparts. Additionally, evidence found that partial benefits extended to those who were called but did not successfully receive the message (21% decline in FTA). This lead to a lower percentage of new FTA warrants being issued for those successfully receiving calls.

Data related to racial over-representation found that benefits were seen in both persons of color and whites. Most promising was the fact that persons of color appeared to have a lower FTA rate than their white counterparts after receiving calls. Call expansion and long-term effects could modestly reduce over-representation in the criminal justice.

Cost avoidance data suggests that for each FTA warrant reduced, there is an avoidance of $1,320. The pilot program results calculated for a half-year identified a total cost-avoidance of as much as $232,836 by reducing new warrants by 177. Additionally, there was $51,426 saved by

[31] Murray, C. (2001). *The Effects of Automated Reminder Calls on Failure to Appear in King County District Court*. Christopher Murray and Associates.

reducing FTAs. Based on these estimates the limited pilot program may avoid more than one-half a million dollars annually.

After taking into account the $20,000 program costs analysis shows that for each dollar invested in the CANS program, the criminal justice system nets $14.21 in savings. These savings do not account for costs due to over-representation or costs associated with increased likelihood of incarceration and greater amounts of time once incarcerated that may be occurring.[32] Finally, these savings do not include the potential cost-savings that would occur if all possible hearings had notification calls.

Overall, the process appears to be working well and consistently with reports from other jurisdictions. However, there are many more eligible case-events that could receive calls but currently do not. Since a clear majority of cases and each hearing are not yet receiving calls, it has likely had only a modest overall reduction in the number of warrants that are issued to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the evaluation, this program is effective at reducing the failure to appear. Even so, there are several recommendations that should be implemented if the program is to achieve its full potential.

1. Increasing the number of available phone numbers is paramount. Continuing roll-call announcements at all enforcement agencies (e.g., Gresham, Troutdale, Fairview, etc.), each police precinct, and training police to obtain phone numbers at the time of citation needs to occur. If no phone number is available at the defendant's initial hearing, one should be requested by court staff. In cases where the defendant has no phone number, a family or friend's contact number should be sought. Additionally, the phone numbers should be verified and updated at all subsequent court hearings. If feasible, DCJ Recog and PSP staff should provide and verify phone numbers for this system.

2. Add Gresham court cases to the call system as soon as possible. After which, all other types of hearing should be incrementally added to the system as appropriate (e.g., drug-call, pre-trial, sentencing, etc.).

3. In about 12% of the case-events were for defendants who were identified as Hispanic. The initial program design was to include components to address language issues, beginning with Spanish. This needs to occur especially given the increased number of calls that are expected.

4. The call times occurred at 8:00 AM and continued every two hours thereafter. Given that most calls occurred in the morning at 8:00, 10:00, and 12:00, suggests that changes to the call system might improve successful call completion. Calls should be made somewhat earlier in the morning (e.g., 7:30 AM) before people typically leave for work. Calls should also occur at lunch time (e.g., 12:30 PM) when people may be more likely

[32] Murray, C. (1998). *The Misdemeanant Study. Misdemeanors and Misdemeanor Defendants in King County, Washington*. Christopher Murray and Associates.

available to take the call. And, calls should occur after dinner time (e.g., 7:30 PM) when people are most likely to be home. The program should also consider four calls instead of the three that are currently being made, with the fourth possibly occurring the next day.

5. Calls should be placed on weekends and tested. The King County research found that calls placed on weekends were up to 35% more effective than placing the calls during the weekday. [33] The CANS program did not place weekend calls.

6. To maximize the number of calls possible several components could be added.
    a. In cases where the defendant actually failed to appear, the system could place a reminder call to appear and a call to clear any outstanding warrants that may have occurred given their failure. This could reduce costs associated with arrest, booking, and jail stay.
    b. This system is commonly used in other jurisdictions to notify police officers and witnesses that they are needed to appear in court for testimony. Utilizing the system to make these calls could reduce the number of hours officers spend in court and increase their time on the street.

7. Renegotiate the vendor contract. Currently, the call volume lower is than anticipated and calls only occur in English. The vendor contract was to provide for languages other than English. The contract was also based on call volume level higher than are currently being used. These issues should be addressed.

8. Further determination is needed as to why some calls that had numbers were not made. It is likely due to the fact that the court events were scheduled for the next day, not allowing for enough time for calls to occur. However, this needs to be verified.

9. Finally, there was no project manager for this pilot project, but instead several staff from various agencies offered time where they could. Because there was no 'point-person' a number of program implementation steps did not occur as planned. Also, regular reporting of calls, call outcomes, and case-event results to various stakeholders did not occur in a timely fashion. Additionally, reminders to continue getting phone numbers did not likely occur at all levels. Given the number of improvements listed above there needs to be a project manager for this program. A part-time temporary position would be adequate until the program is fully implemented and automated. Greater cost-savings could be realized after the program is fully implemented.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations that must be addressed so that the results of this evaluation can be understood in their context. First, this was not an experimental design, with cases randomly selected into call or no call categories, but instead a quasi-experimental design. While the various groups did not differ on basic demographic data this was far from an exhaustive historical examination. It is possible that there are underlying difference that could not be detected in the

[33] Murray, C. (2001). *The Effects of Automated Reminder Calls on Failure to Appear in King County District Court*. Christopher Murray and Associates.

analysis. Also, results were based on a sample of all eligible cases and not the total population. Results should be considered within their margin of error of +/-5% with a confidence interval of 95%. Next the program data were based on the first 6 months of operation. Typically new programs enter a phase of maturity as issues become resolved. It is possible that results may change with time. Finally, the cost-avoidance figures are only estimates and should not be considered conclusive. They should be considered a conservative short-term estimate and used to give the reader an understanding as to the systems costs of FTA. Because of these limitations all results should be considered with caution.

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EVALUATION

Program evaluation is an accountable component of good government. Appropriate evaluation of program implementation, measurement of results, and determination of cost-benefits are critical to maximizing public resources and making data-driven policy decisions. Research has shown that the risks of not evaluating programs span from ineffective use of tax-dollars to actually causing detrimental outcomes in groups the programs are trying to assist. The evaluation was performed in accordance with the American Evaluation Association's *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*.[34]

This limited evaluation process and outcome was provided in-kind for the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council, and was not intended to be fully comprehensive. It took Budget Office Evaluation staff approximately 140 hours to complete this research. Based on the Budget Office FY06 program offer (#70004A), the fully loaded cost-per-hour averaged $59.69.[35] This process and outcome evaluation costs Multnomah County approximately $8,357.

[34] *Guiding Principles for Evaluators.(2004).* American Evaluation Association. http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesPrinatable.asp
[35] These costs include all applicable administration and support costs.