

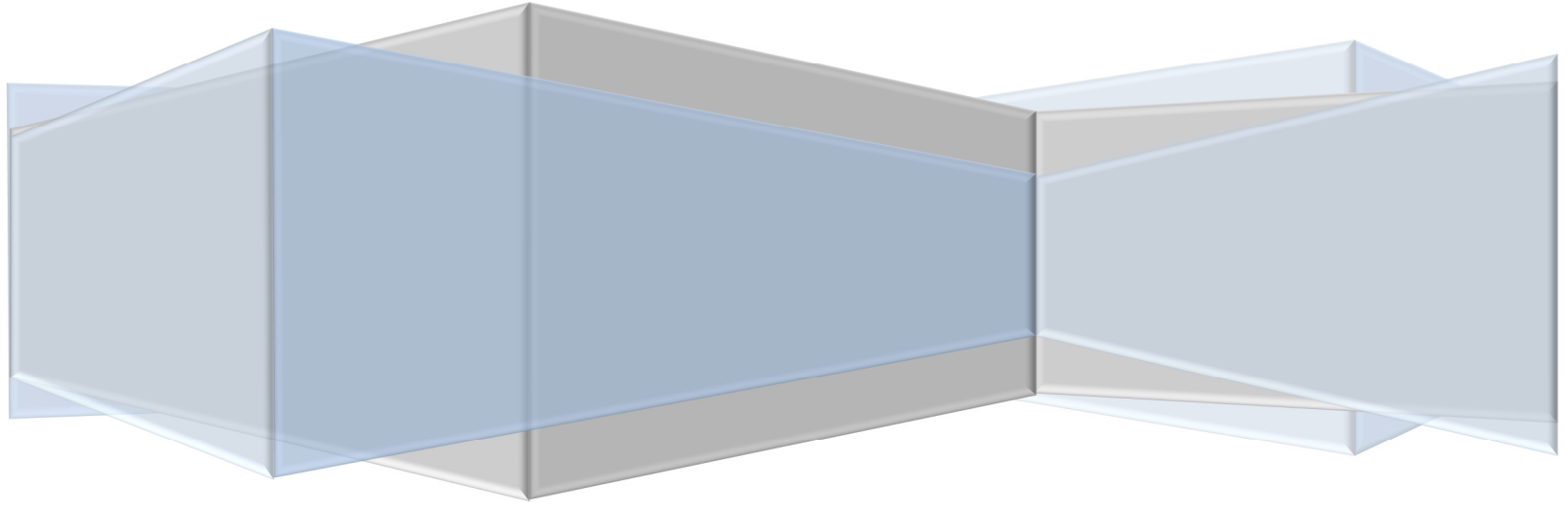
Warrant Prevention Program

Preliminary Program Evaluation

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Executive Summary

Background

King County Juvenile Court issues nearly 3,000 warrants annually to youth who fail to appear in court for their pre-adjudication hearings. The first two hearings of the case – arraignment and case setting – experience the highest rates of failure to appear. Over 15% of youth held in secure detention in 2011 were admitted on a FTA warrant and youth of color accounted for 70% of those admitted on a warrant. Earlier analysis of court data found that warrant rates vary not only by race, but also by geographic area. Overlaying those two factors showed that African American youth in some South King County areas had warrant rates as high as 62%. By prioritizing services based on risk factors for failure to appear such as race, geographic area, and warrant history the Warrant Prevention Program seeks to maximize positive outcomes and reduce disproportionality in the juvenile justice system.

The Warrant Prevention program in King County Juvenile Court (Seattle, WA), was designed to reduce the number of warrants ordered for arrest due to failing to appear at scheduled arraignment and case setting hearings. The program contracts with community outreach workers to contact youth and families and remind them about hearing dates and offer support as needed. The University of Washington, Division of Public Behavioral Health & Justice Policy was contracted to conduct an evaluation of the program using administrative data gathered from the court and from the outreach worker contact database.

Project Description

King County Superior Court, Juvenile Court Services contracted with the YMCA's Alive & Free Program to provide services for the Warrant Prevention Program (WPP) beginning in September 2012. By leveraging the existing network of Alive & Free outreach workers and expanding the capacity of the community provider, the WPP reaches a larger number of youth and provides more culturally relevant outreach to improve warrant reduction outcomes. The outreach workers are located in South King County and assigned by geographic area to cover Kent, Renton, Auburn, SeaTac, Tukwila and surrounding communities. These areas generate a disproportionate number of warrants, particularly for youth of color.

Juvenile Court generates a weekly list of youth with newly filed cases. The referral list is generated from the juvenile justice data system (JIMS) and prioritizes youth based on risk factors for failure to appear (race, geography, warrant history). The list includes contact and hearing information. The referral list is sent to the community provider's Warrant Prevention Program Coordinator.

The WPP Coordinator assigns referrals to an outreach worker. The outreach workers use their knowledge and connections to locate youth when the contact information provided by the court is outdated or inaccurate. The outreach workers maintain on-going contact with the youth/family through the case setting hearing to provide education about the court process, identify supports and barriers to court attendance, strategize ways to overcome obstacles, provide assistance with transportation if needed, and connect the youth and family to other services as appropriate. Some youth identified through the Warrant Prevention Program may also meet the criteria for additional services through the provider's youth violence and gang intervention services.

Each week, the court also researches the next hearing date and hearing outcome for all active participants and provides that information to the WPP Coordinator.

Methodology

Youth were referred to the study after an arraignment hearing was scheduled on the court calendar if they were not in custody (detention or an alternative to detention placement), on active warrant status, lived in the study geographical areas (zip codes in the areas of Auburn, Kent, Renton, Tukwila, and did not have a sex offense or class A felony charge. Youth were then randomized to receive outreach (treatment) or no intervention (control). The treatment group is comprised of all youth referred to the program and includes “active” youth who were contacted and participated in the program, and “inactive” youth who either could not be contacted or did not participate. If youth in the treatment group were already involved in street outreach services they were excluded from the study; involvement in outreach was unknown for the control group. Some youth had multiple court referrals for different matters during the study period. For these youth, only the first matter was included in the analyses so that the analyses did not violate assumptions of independent observations.

The final sample of 395 youth included 117 youth in the control group and 278 youth in the treatment group. The sample is comprised of referrals to the program between August 28th, 2012 and October 11th, 2013. To avoid selection bias, the treatment group contains both “active” youth who were contacted and engaged in the program and “inactive” youth who were referred but were not located or engaged (no contact). In the treatment group, 142 (51%) active youth received outreach services and 136 (49%) inactive youth did not.

The control and treatment groups were balanced (no significant differences) in race, geographic location, priority level as assigned by the court, and age. No significant differences were found for gender, but because the trend included more females in the treatment group and gender was related to warrants (females had a higher rate of warrants at case setting), gender was included as a covariate in the analyses. The treatment group was also more likely to contain youth with recent warrant history.

Preliminary Findings

Demographics (All Youth: Treatment and Control Groups)

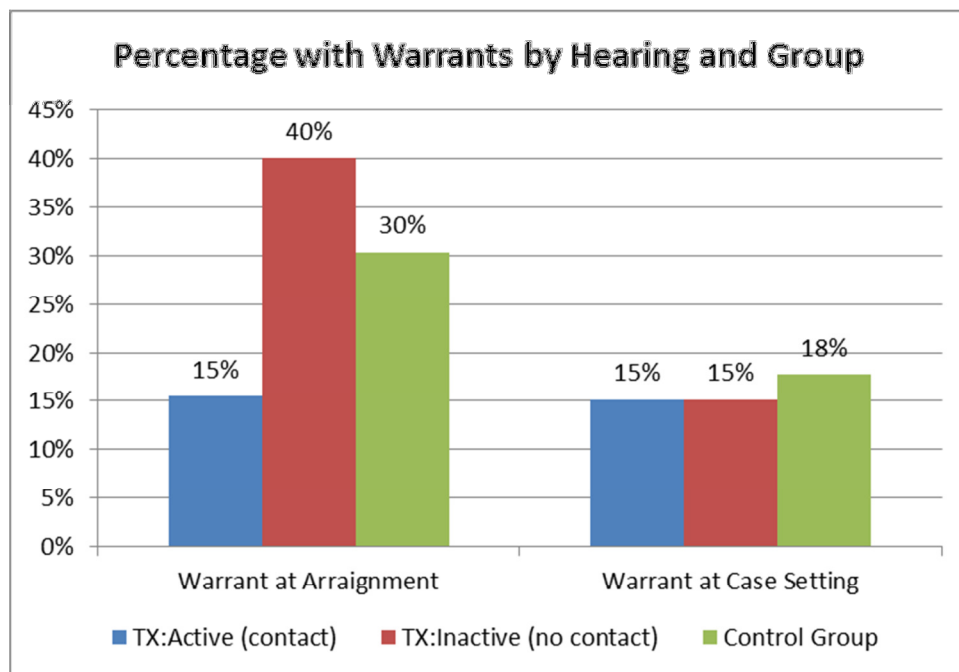
Gender	Race	Geographic Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 110 (28%) female• 285 (72%) male	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12 (3%) American Indian• 32 (8%) Asian/Pacific Islander• 186 (47%) Black/African American• 69 (17%) Hispanic/Latino• 91 (23%) White• 5 (1%) Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 136 (34%) Auburn• 67 (17%) Kent• 106 (27%) Renton• 86 (22%) Tukwila

Warrant Analysis (All Youth: Treatment and Control Groups)

- Youth are more likely to receive a warrant at an arraignment hearing than a case setting hearing.
- Youth living in Auburn and those with a recent warrant (within the last 18 months) are more likely to receive a warrant at arraignment.
- Being female, younger, and having more previous warrants (not necessarily recent) are associated with higher warrants at case setting.
- American Indians had the highest proportion of warrants at arraignment and Black youth had the highest proportion of warrants at case setting (apart from the small, “unknown” race category). Over half (58%) of the American Indian youth in the study received a warrant at arraignment, 21% of Black youth received a warrant at case setting.

Warrant Analysis - Program Outcomes (Treatment Group vs. Control Group)

- No statistically significant differences in the number of warrants issued at arraignment or case setting between treatment and control groups were observed when all youth assigned to treatment (including the “inactive” youth that did not receive outreach services) were included in the treatment group (intent to treat).
- Statistically significant differences were observed between inactive (no contact) and active (contact) groups within the treatment group. Active youth who received outreach services had fewer warrants at arraignment; however this effect was not seen for case setting. The groups did not differ in race, gender, location, recent warrants and age. A higher number of previous warrants in the no contact group was not shown to be statistically linked to warrants at arraignment. This strongly suggests that warrant outreach reduces the number of warrants at arraignment but not at case setting (see Graph 1 below).
- No significant differences were observed for the interaction of race, gender or treatment on outcomes. In other words, differences in warrant outcomes for the treatment group vs. control (including both active and inactive cases) broken out by race/ethnicity and gender groups did not reach statistical significance. However, a number of trends were observed for race/ethnicity categories that merit further attention including a trend for a stronger reduction in warrants at arraignment for African American youth.



GRAPH 1

Limitations of the Data

Several factors contribute to the characterization of these findings as “preliminary”. Evaluating a program in its infancy is inherently problematic. As expected, the Warrant Prevention Program was evolving even as the data for the evaluation was being collected. In fact, many process improvements were put in place after the data set for this evaluation was finalized.

Data entry on client contact was entered into a database by multiple outreach workers. At the time of the data extraction, there were no written guidelines on how the data was to be entered nor how it was to be collected

by workers. Since that time, Alive and Free has codified their data entry procedures and held training to standardized methods of client contact.

The relatively small size of the data set, especially once the groups are broken down by race and gender, also contributes to limitations. It can be extremely difficult to show a statistically significant change with a small data set (n).

In addition, the timing of data entry updating the next hearing date and providing Alive & Free notification of new hearing dates, especially for case settings was very problematic. Hearing updates were researched and provided weekly, however the next hearing may have been set for the same or next day which gave outreach workers little time to contact and support youth. Since case settings that are continued multiple times often result in a warrant for failure to appear, the court is exploring options to improve case processing and reduce warrants at case setting.

Conclusion

While the results of this study are preliminary given the quality improvement measures Alive & Free has instituted since the analysis, they suggest that warrant prevention outreach is likely most effective at reducing warrants at arraignment. While no significant race/ethnicity or gender differences in treatment effectiveness were observed, we noted some interesting trends which suggest African American youth, Native American youth and girls benefitted from warrant prevention over other groups. In addition, youth who were successfully contacted by outreach demonstrated a statistically significant reduction in warrants at arraignment; however, when all youth assigned to warrant prevention (regardless of contact success) were compared to control no significant differences were observed. This indicates that warrant prevention outreach appears to be successful in reducing warrants at arraignment, but outreach workers need to successfully contact more youth in order for the court to observe a noticeable drop in warrants overall. These results indicate the program is achieving promising results, particularly for African American youth.

Moving Forward

Many process improvements have been implemented that were not captured in this initial evaluation. For example, as noted above the 51% contact rate needed to improve before the program would be able to show statistically significant outcomes. Additional efforts to locate youth were implemented resulting in a 71% contact rate (March-May 2014). Juvenile Court and the YMCA's Alive & Free Program are committed to working together to improve outcomes, especially for African American youth who are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system and receive a disproportionate number of warrants.

Additional changes will result from this evaluation including efforts to better understand why youth fail to appear, increase culturally relevant and gender specific outreach to improve outcomes for Latino youth and females, emphasize and expand strategies to locate youth, increase follow-up and support for case setting hearings which had less successful outcomes than arraignment hearings, continue to improve data collection and monitor outcomes making additional course corrections as needed, and seek funding for a follow-up evaluation to measure the effect of the process improvements.

Sample Analysis

Sample Description (Both Treatment and Control Groups)

All youth with upcoming arraignment hearings were assigned to the study if they met basic eligibility requirements based on their geographical location, custody and warrant status, and charge type (sex offense and class A felonies were excluded). Following this, youth were randomly assigned into the treatment or control groups by the project manager at the court. In the event that youth received court summons for multiple matters during the study period, only the first matter (case number) was included in the study even if the youth had been assigned to the comparison condition for the first matter.

From an initial sample of 551 duplicated youth, 395 individual cases were retained for analyses. In some cases, the analyzed sample size is less than 395 because youth who were in detention at the time of their hearing were not counted. Basic comparisons between the treatment and control conditions on demographics (race, gender, location, prior warrant history, age) found that the groups were mostly well-balanced with a greater proportion of males falling into the control group, and a higher frequency of youth with recent warrant history (a warrant within the past 18 months) in the treatment group. Consequently, both warrant history and gender are included in all warrant outcome analyses.

Relationship between youth characteristics and warrant outcome

Youth's geographic location was significantly related to receiving a warrant at arraignment with Auburn having the highest number of warrants, $m = 0.39$ $sd = .53$, followed by Tukwila. Renton had the lowest number of warrants per youth, see Table 1.

Having a recent warrant (a warrant within the last 18 months) was also significantly related to receiving a warrant at arraignment in the current study, $r = .13$. Gender, race and age were not found to be significantly related to receiving a warrant at arraignment. However, both gender and race were significantly associated with obtaining a warrant at case setting with females receiving a higher mean number of warrants than boys, $m = 0.31$, $sd = 0.64$, and younger age associated with more warrants, $r = -0.12$. More previous warrants was also significantly related to receiving warrants at case setting, $r = .21$.

Table 1: Youth Characteristics and Warrant Frequency

	Arraignment Warrants				Case Setting Warrants			
	total n	warrant n	%	chisq, r	n	warrant n	%	chisq, r
Gender				1.86(1)				2.25(1)
Female	109	37	34%		82	18	22%	
Male	271	73	27%		224	33	15%	
Location				8.17(3)*				2.86(3)
Auburn	132	48	36%		104	14	14%	
Kent	65	18	28%		53	7	13%	
Renton	103	20	19%		86	16	19%	
Tukwila	80	24	30%		63	14	22%	
Race				5.71(5)				8.81(5)
American Indian	12	7	58%		8	1	13%	
Asian/Pac Isl	30	8	27%		27	2	7%	
Black	177	50	28%		141	29	21%	
Latino	65	17	26%		56	10	18%	
White	91	26	29%		70	7	10%	
Unknown	5	2	40%		4	2	50%	
Recent Warrant				0.81(2)				
None	288	83	29%		230	36	16%	
Not Recent	19	4	21%		18	3	17%	
Recent	73	23	32%		58	12	21%	
Age				0.06				*.0.12
Previous warrants				0.003				.21**

Warrant Status

Warrants data was collected from the court database (JIMS) and summed for arraignments and case settings. If a youth was in detention at the time of the hearing, this hearing was treated as missing. Accordingly, each hearing was coded as 0= no warrant, 1 = warrant, or “missing” = detained at time of hearing. A warrant-to-hearing ratio was calculated by dividing the number of warrants for each type of hearing (arraignment and case setting) by the total number of hearings within those categories (excluding when youth were detained). For example, if a youth had three arraignment hearings for a case and had a warrant for one of the hearings, the arraignment warrant total for that youth would be $1/3 = 0.33$. The total number of warrants and hearings are reported in Table 2 below. It was more common to have multiple case setting hearings than arraignments; however, it was more common to receive a warrant on an arraignment hearing than on a case setting.

Table 2: Warrant by Hearing and Total Number of Hearings

number	n	%
Arrestment Warrants		
0	270	68%
1	106	27%
2	4	1%
Case Setting Warrants		
0	255	65%
1	39	10%
2	11	3%
3	1	0.30%
# of Non-Detained Arrestment Hearings per youth		
0	15	4%
1	321	81%
2	50	13%
3	6	2%
4	2	0.50%
5	1	0.30%
# of Non-Detained Case Setting Hearings per youth		
0	89	23%
1	97	25%
2	90	23%
3	58	15%
4	33	8%
5	12	3%
6	10	3%
7	3	0.80%
8	2	0.50%
10	1	0.30%

Program Outcome Analysis

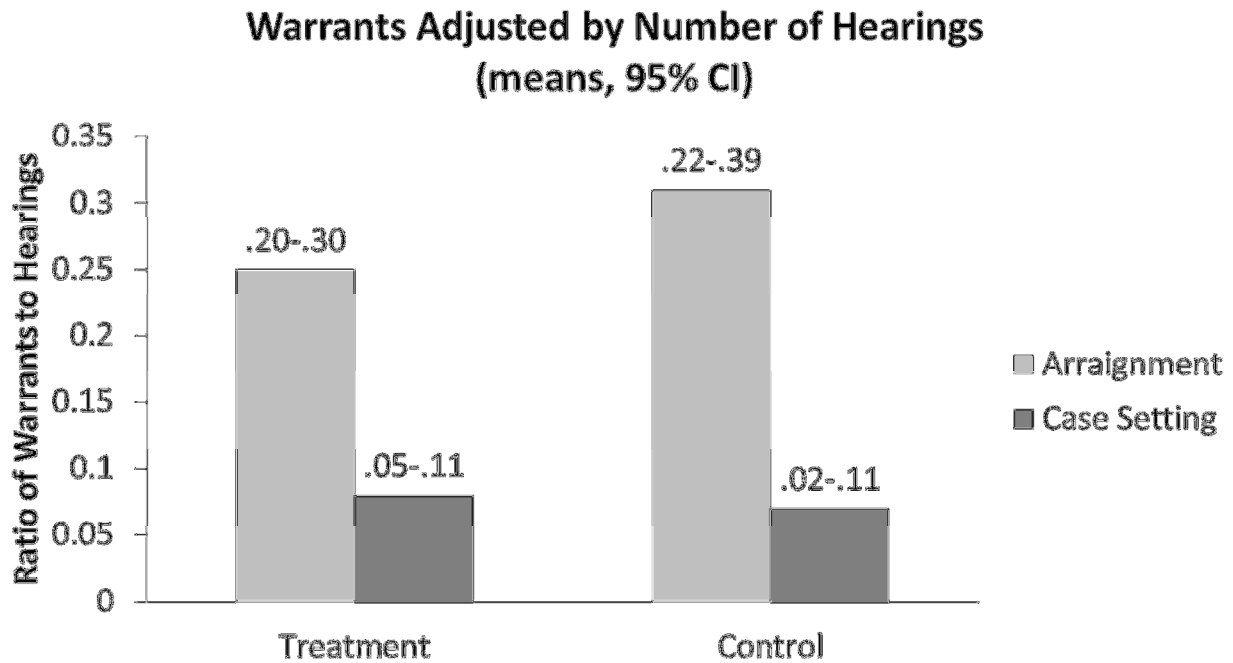
Analytic Approach for Program Outcome Analysis

Group comparisons between the treatment (including both Active and Inactive youth) and control groups were run as Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) models which adjusted the estimated mean number of warrants by gender and recent warrant history. As stated in the Sample Description, Gender and Warrant History needed to be included as covariate in the model because the treatment group had a smaller proportion of boys than the control group and there was a great proportion of youth with recent warrant history in the treatment group. By adding these variables as covariates, any effects these variables had independently on the outcomes were controlled by the model. For interactions with race and gender, these variables (Gender and Warrant History) were added to the models as fixed factors and main effects for treatment, race, gender and the interaction of treatment*race or treatment*gender were estimated. Because of the low number of American Indians and Asian/Pacific Islanders in the sample, these groups were removed from the analyses.

Warrants by Treatment Group (Number of Warrants/Number of Hearings)

Group comparisons between Treatment and Control groups found no significant difference in the number of warrants received at arraignment or case setting. The mean number of warrants at arraignment was slightly higher in the control group than the treatment group; however, this did not reach statistical significance meaning that the trend was likely due to chance rather than the effect of treatment. The number of warrants

for case setting was essentially the same between the groups, with a very small trend in the direction of higher warrants in the treatment group. Again, this did not reach statistical significance and is very likely due to unique characteristics of the study population and not due to the treatment itself.



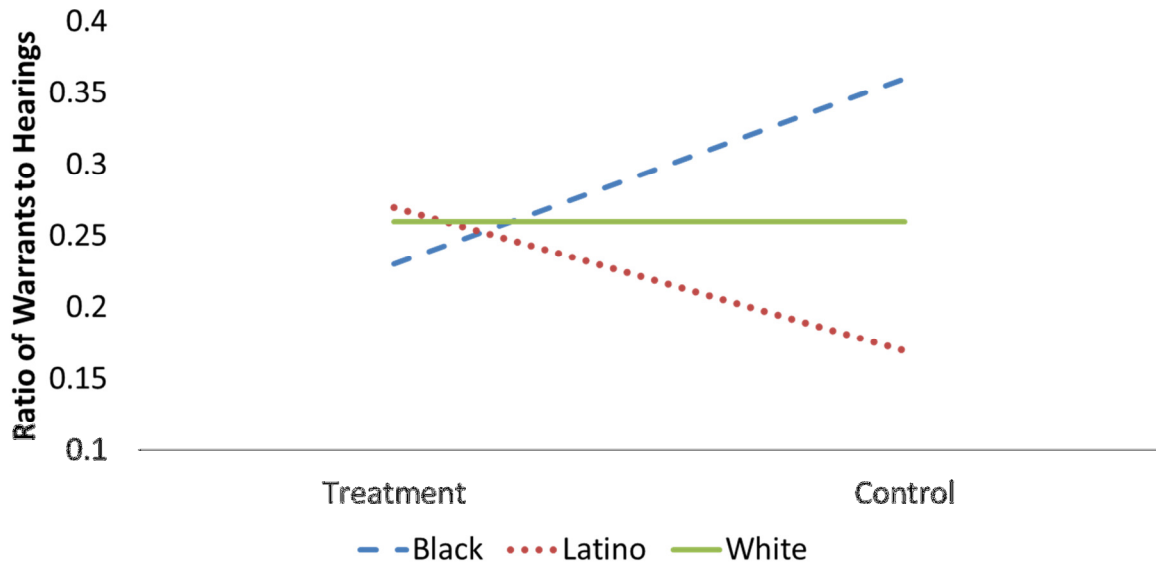
GRAPH 2

Note: The number ranges in the figure represent the confidence interval ranges of the adjusted means for each group. The confidence interval range indicates the reliability of an estimate: the larger the confidence interval, the less reliable the estimated mean of an analysis and, often, large confidence intervals make finding statistically significant results less likely because the range of means within a group is large. The means are the number of warrants divided by the number of hearings.

Warrants by Treatment Group and Race/Ethnicity

Group comparisons found no statistically significant differences among race/ethnicity in the treatment group or control groups, despite trends that suggest Black youth had lower warrants at arraignment in the treatment group. White youth had no differences between treatment and control and, unexpectedly, Latino youth displayed a trend to higher warrants in the treatment group than control. Because these trends did not reach statistical significance, the most cautious interpretation is that there were no meaningful differences among groups. Note, the treatment group includes both Active and Inactive youth.

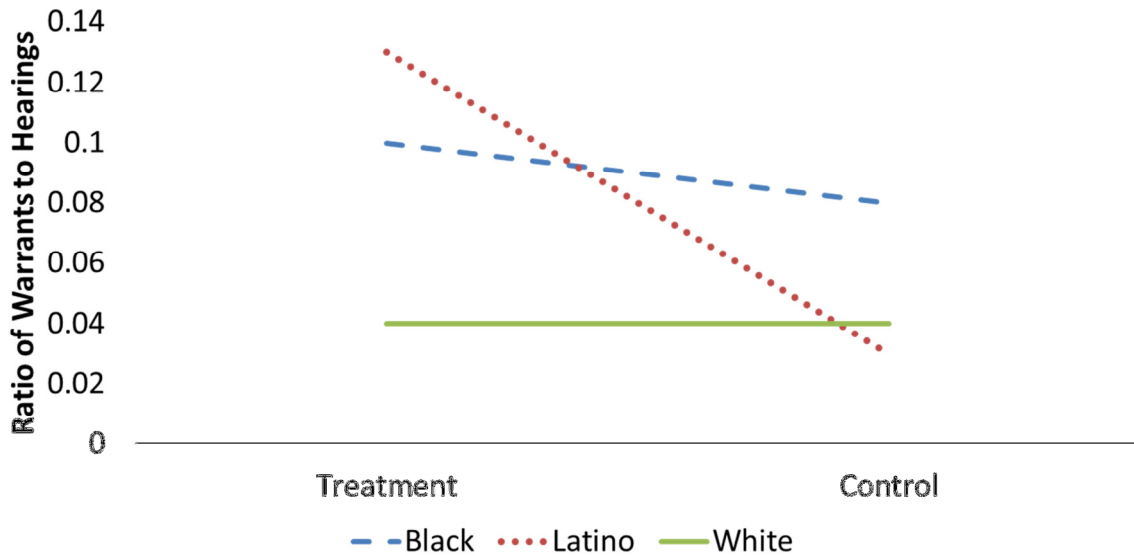
Arrestment Warrants Adjusted by Number of Hearings



GRAPH 3

Group comparisons on warrants issued at case setting hearings were also non-significant between race/ethnicity groups. The overall trend, as indicated in the first table, was a slight increase in the number of case setting warrants in the treatment group as compared to control. Latino youth, again, were more likely to have a higher number of warrants in the treatment as compared to control group. However, the lack of statistical significance indicates that this finding is not reliable and is likely a result of unique characteristics in this sample pool.

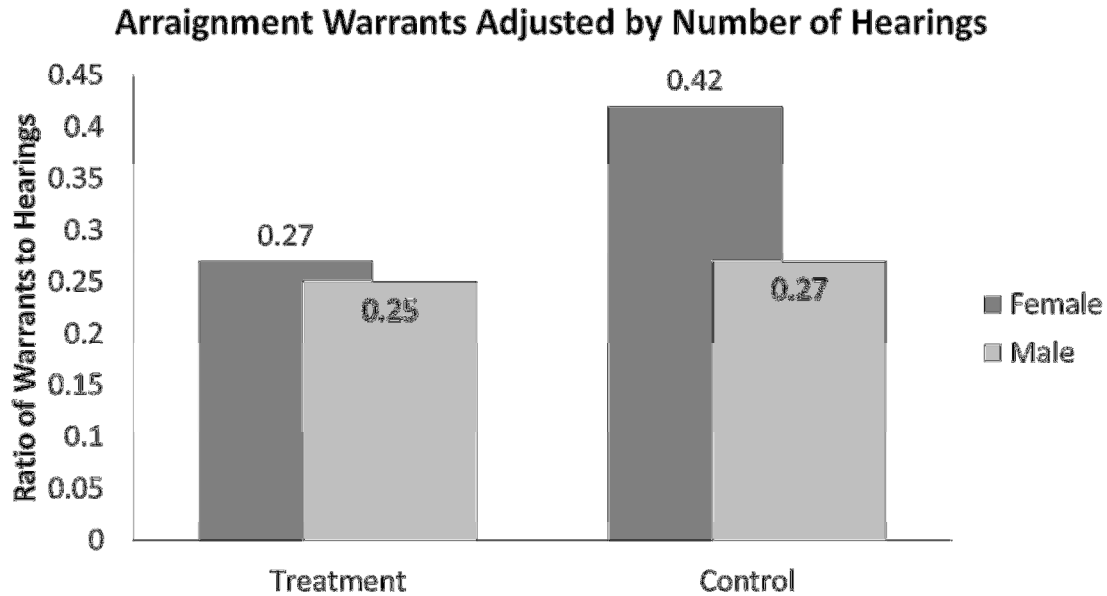
Case Setting Warrants Adjusted by Number of Hearings



GRAPH 4

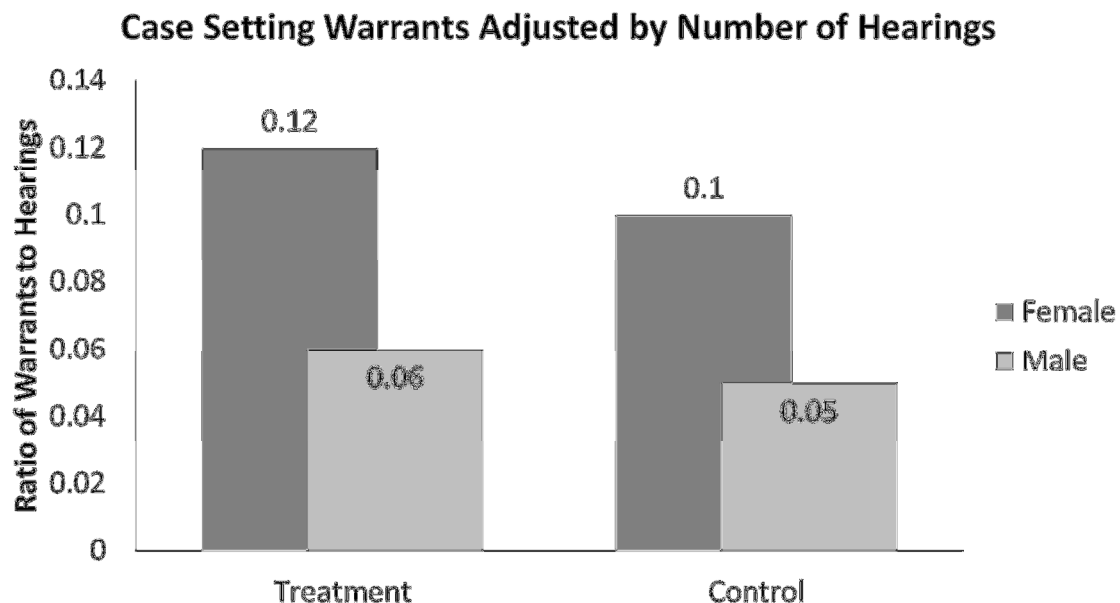
Warrants by Treatment Group and Gender (Number of Warrants/Number of Hearings)

No statistically significant differences were found in the rate of arraignment warrants for gender and treatment group (see Graph 5, below). While females demonstrated a drop in arraignment warrants in the treatment group as compared to the control group, the change was not large enough to be considered significant (e.g., that the finding would be replicated with another sample of youth receiving outreach services).



GRAPH 5

Similarly, no significant differences were observed in the number of warrants to number of case setting hearings ratio when looking at the interaction between treatment and gender. The trend for this analysis was in the direction of higher warrants for girls in the treatment group; but this was not statistically meaningful and was likely due to random factors. However, a main effect for gender was observed with females having a higher number of case setting warrants regardless of group (treatment or control) membership (see Graph 6, below).



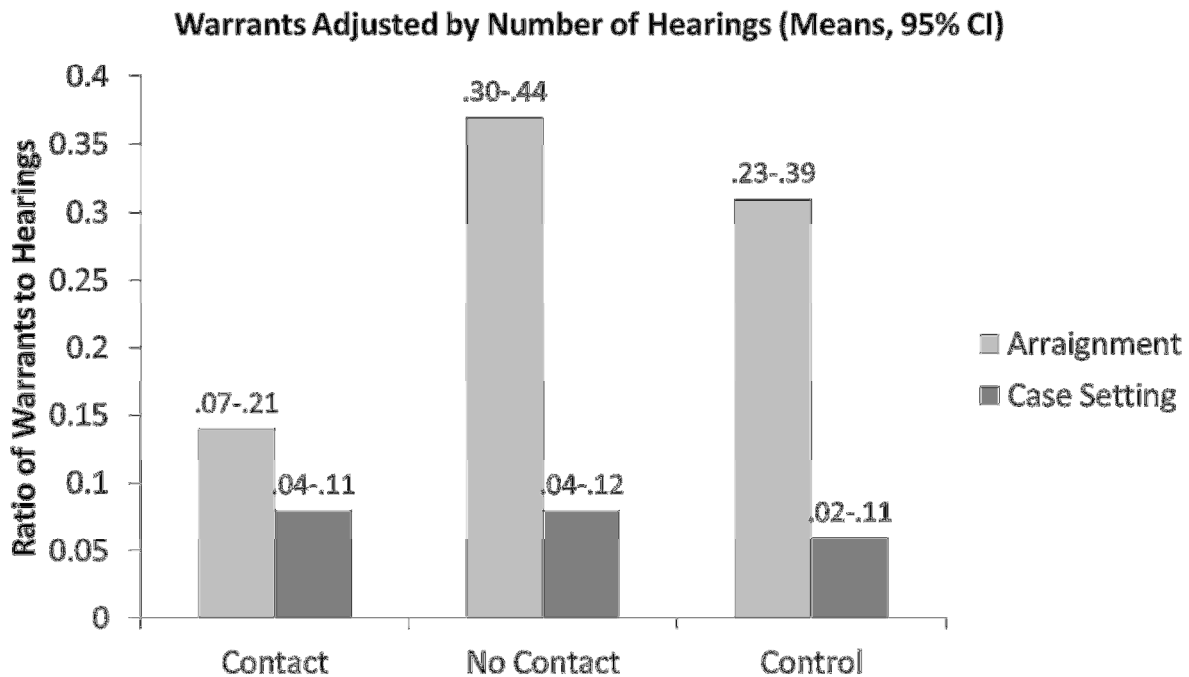
GRAPH 6

Note. Gender main effect, $F(306) = 3.76, p = .05$

Process Analyses

Group comparisons were conducted to examine differences in warrants among youth who were assigned to the treatment group but were inactive (no contact), youth who were active (contact) and youth assigned to the control group (control). Warrants at arraignment were statistically significantly higher for youth in the no contact condition as compared to the contact condition. No significant differences were observed among groups for warrants received at case setting (see graph 7 and table 3 below).

To examine whether the difference in the number of warrants issued at arraignment between no contact and contact groups could be due to a higher risk of warrant in the no contact group, we analyzed the characteristics of youth in these two groups. The no contact group had a higher number of previous warrants but the groups did not differ in race, gender, location, recent warrants and age. Because number of previous warrants was not significantly related to warrant status at arraignment, it is unlikely that the drop in warrants between the contact and no contact group would be due to this difference. Rather, it appears that contact with youth through the warrant prevention outreach contributes to a reduction in the number of warrants at arraignment, but not case setting.



GRAPH 7

Table 3: Breakout of Treatment Group by Contact (Active) vs. No Contact (Inactive)

	Contact		No Contact		
	n	%	n	%	
Race					
American Indian	4	3%	4	3%	
Asian/Pac Isl	11	8%	10	7%	
Black	62	44%	66	49%	
Latino	31	22%	18	13%	
White	30	21%	38	28%	
Unknown	4	3%	0	0%	
Gender					
Female	43	30%	42	31%	
Male	99	70%	94	69%	
Location					
Auburn	48	34%	46	34%	
Kent	28	20%	23	17%	
Renton	35	25%	36	27%	
Tukwila	31	22%	31	23%	
Recent Warrants					
None	108	76%	93	68%	
No Recent	7	5%	10	7%	
Recent	27	19%	33	24%	
	m	stdv	m	stdv	
Age	16.2	1.36	16.24	1.37	
Previous warrants	0.33	0.81	0.69	1.45	6.31(276)*

Quash

For youth who had warrants, $n = 158$, differences in the rate of warrants that were quashed were examined for the different study groups (contact, no contact, control). There was a modest difference in the proportion of quashed warrants with contact having the lowest rate, followed by control and then no contact. The trend did not reach statistical significance at $p < .05$ ($p = .09$).

The rate of quash was also examined for just treatment and control groups, collapsing both successful and unsuccessful contact within treatment. No effect was found for treatment on the proportion of quashed warrants, chi square = $.71(1)$, ns.

Course Corrections

Ongoing monitoring and a preview of evaluation outcomes led to several process improvements implemented during the course of the WPP. It is important to note that any improvements in program outcomes resulting from most of these changes are unlikely to be captured in the evaluation since the study groups were comprised of those filed on between August 28, 2012 and October 13, 2013.

Changes Implemented:

- In April 2013, the Alive & Free South King County Supervisor began providing Outreach Workers with monthly reports showing the percentage of youth engaged and the percentage of youth who successfully completed the project. The Supervisor set a goal for Outreach Workers to engage 70% of the referred youth and have 90% of engaged youth successfully complete.
- After the 1st quarter review of project data on April 30th 2013, an inconsistency in home visits was observed. In May 2013, the Supervisor created a system of scheduling home visits for Outreach Workers.

- In July 2013, an internal review of the data indicated that not all steps to locate youth were being taken by Outreach Workers; phone calls were the primary attempt to locate youth. Alive & Free initiated a re-training of staff with an emphasis on strategies to locate youth.
- In September 2013, a review of the data indicated documentation inconsistencies, where notes would indicate a higher level of contact than was indicated in drop-down menus. In order to more closely assure documentation accuracy, the Supervisor increased supervision of Outreach Workers during office hours and began providing reports to Outreach Workers that showed the steps that each Outreach Worker was documenting.
- In November 2013, the Supervisor began monitoring the successful and unsuccessful client contacts as listed in the database by Outreach Worker to determine what variables led to a successful engagement and to scale this learning to the program's overall practices.
- In mid-November 2013, it was noted that Active youth were receiving a high number of FTA warrants at Case Setting. Prior to November, Outreach Workers met with Active youth only at Arraignment hearings. Outreach Workers still provided reminder phone calls to youth prior to Case Setting, but did not schedule a face-to-face meeting at Case Setting. In mid-November, the Alive & Free Supervisor required Outreach Workers to schedule meetings with youth at Case Setting hearings to attempt to address high numbers of FTAs at Case Setting.
- In December 2013, the Supervisor observed that although all youth were asked about their barriers to attending court, Outreach Workers did not consistently check the box "No Barriers" in the database when youth reported that they did not have barriers to attending court. Retraining on this domain was scheduled.

Next Steps

- In order to better understand why Active youth would fail to appear, Alive & Free plans to re-train Outreach Workers to document youth's self-reported reasons for not attending court; many of these reasons were anecdotally provided to the Supervisor but not documented in the database. In the next phase of the program, Alive & Free also plans to better capture post-warrant Outreach services to youth; Outreach Workers continued to engage youth even if they obtained a warrant and helped many youth coordinate opportunities, services, and quash their warrants.
- Increase culturally relevant and gender specific outreach to improve outcomes for Latino youth and females.
- Emphasize and expand strategies to locate youth. Active participants in the treatment group had better outcomes and the initial contact and engagement is critical to improving overall outcomes.
- Increase follow-up and support for case setting hearings which had less successful outcomes than arraignment.
- Continue to improve data collection and monitor outcomes, making course corrections as needed.
- Seek funding for a follow-up evaluation to measure the effect of the process improvements.
- Explore the feasibility of expanding the outreach model to other areas of the court process such as diversion.