



EVALUATION OF THE DURHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT'S S.T.A.R.S. NOTIFICATION PROGRAM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes an evaluation of the Durham S.T.A.R.S. Notification Program. Based upon data for 246 offenders that participated in call-in sessions from March 2000 to December 2004, this report examines changes in rate and type of offense as a result of program participation. Based on the findings reviewed here, it appears this program has a positive impact on crime reduction in the City of Durham.

Specifically, analyses indicated the following key findings:

- The **overall rate of offending, as indicated by encounters with the court system, decreased by 36%**.

 - The **rate of weapon offenses per month decreased by 57%** after notification.
 - Before notification, 46% of all offenses involved a weapon compared to 32% of all offenses after notification.

 - The **rate of violent offenses per month decreased by 75%** after notification.
 - Before notification, 28% of all offenses were violent compared to 18% of all offenses after notification.

 - The **rate of drug offenses per month decreased by 33%** after notification.

 - The **rate of crimes against person(s) decreased by 40%** after notification.
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The Notification Program: A Law Enforcement- Community Partnership to Reduce Violent Crime

The S.T.A.R.S. (Strategies To Abate and Reduce Senseless Violence) Notification Program (see Appendix I) is a component of the Durham Police Department's strategic approach to reducing gun violence and violent crime in the community. Through this program, repeat violent offenders are identified and selected for an intervention that features law enforcement officials and community representatives delivering a unified message that violence will no longer be tolerated in the community.

The law enforcement component of this program educates the offenders on what type of behavior is expected from them, as well as the consequences of further violent behavior. This notification, in effect, draws a line in the sand and explains in plain language to chronic offenders the ground rules for expected behavior and the consequences of non-compliance. They are specifically told what behaviors need to be changed: violent activity, the use/possession of firearms/weapons, and participating in group criminal activity such as narcotics distribution.

Representatives from numerous local, state, and federal agencies deliver the message (e. g., Durham Police Department, Greensboro Police Department, United States Attorney, the State Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and Department of Community Corrections). Offenders are notified of potential penalties under state and federal law, and those who re-offend after attending the notification session are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. To add further gravity to the process, offenders are provided with a list of prior attendees who continued criminal behavior and were thus prosecuted accordingly.

Community representatives are present as part of the team, offering support and resources to offenders wishing to make a change in their lifestyle. The community component of the notification process features representatives from local churches and service-providing organizations. These individuals volunteer their time in order to come together and deliver a message of warmth and reception to offenders. This component is designed to support offenders' re-entry into the community by offering linkages to needed resources such as employment, housing, job training, substance abuse treatment, or counseling.

Data Entry

Durham Police Department (DPD) provided the raw data for these analyses. Cynthia McCollough, S.T.A.R.S. Case Manager for DPD, compiled a data set of offender case histories that contained offender demographics, call-in session attended and a list of all warrants sworn for each offender. These offender case histories included only offenses committed within the state of North Carolina. Since "Date Served" was used as an indicator of time for the offenses committed, four individuals were not included in the analyses due to being under the age of 18 years when each was notified. Warrants that had not been served, as indicated by a blank space by "Date Served," were excluded from the analysis. One additional offender was not included in the sample due to a lack of substantial case history both prior and subsequent to notification.

Data were entered into statistical analysis software (SPSS) during the summer of 2005 at the Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships. Encounters with the court system were counted for each offender, as well as raw counts of offenses, each derived from the case histories for each offender. Entries in the current database span the notification sessions that were held between March 13, 2000 and December 4, 2004. No offenses committed after March 7, 2005 were included in the following analyses. Although information was provided by DPD for offenders that attended the notification session on March 3, 2005, these participants were excluded from the evaluation due to their short timeframe (4 days) to assess their post-notification patterns of re-offending.

Demographics of the Sample

Offenders with information provided by DPD = 263

Offenders with complete data in the database = 246

- Offenders in the database ranged from 19 to 56 years old.
- Average age of offender was approximately 27 years old
- Race breakdown of offenders:

African American = 238 (97%)

Caucasian = 7 (3%)

Hispanic = 1 (<1%)

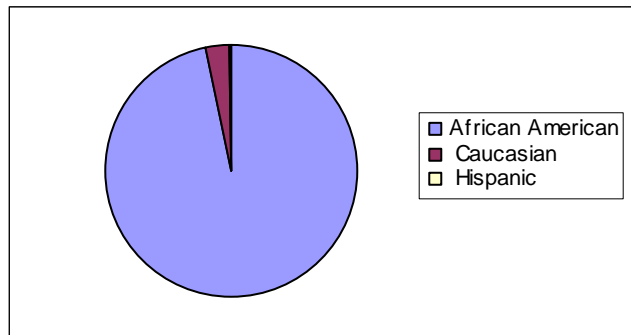


Figure 1.

- Sex breakdown of offenders:

Male = 241 (98%)

Female = 5 (2%)

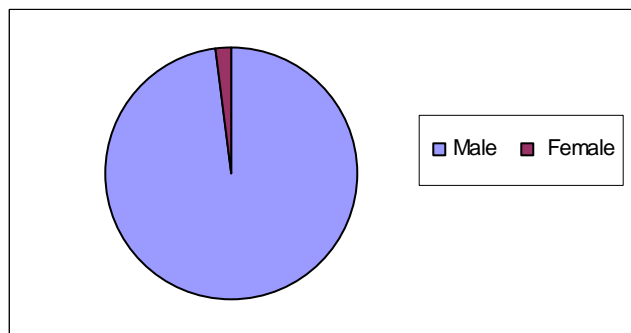


Figure 2.

Descriptive Statistics

The average number of encounters with the court system¹ for each offender was 10.78. However, the number of total case for each offender varied greatly, ranging from several individuals with a single case (n = 6) to an individual with 64 cases. Overall, 25% of offenders had 5 or fewer cases, 50% had 9 or fewer cases, and 75% had 14 or fewer cases.

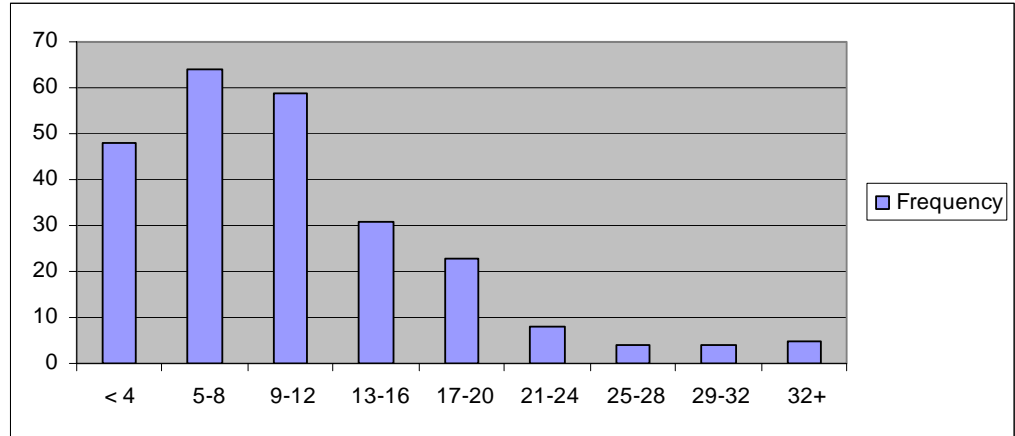


Figure 3.

However, these numbers are misleading if taken at face value. First, each individual case could contain multiple charges so the rate of offending in terms of actual offenses is sure to be substantially higher. In addition to this, the much longer timeframe for offense histories of individuals before versus after notification is also problematic. The following section on Data Preparation explains how this difference was handled in order to place before and after measures on a common scale.

Data Preparation

As noted above, individuals had offense histories that were greatly varied. That is, some offenders had offenses dating back several decades, whereas others had not committed a first offense within the last few years. Therefore, in order to examine changes in offending before and after notification, it was necessary to create a ratio for each offender that took into account the amount of time before and after notification. Accordingly, a ratio was calculated for each subject based on (1) the

¹ Each court case counts as one encounter.

number of encounters the offender had with the court system, and (2) the number of offenses, each of which is then divided by time (in months). For example, if an individual had 6 court cases before notification, with the first case occurring in March of 2001 and was notified in March of 2003, the ratio would be calculated as follows: (6 cases) ÷ (24 months) = .25 cases per month. At that rate, a case is occurring about once every four months. These ratios, calculated for each individual both before and after notification, serve as the basis for analyzing the evaluation questions below.

Evaluation Questions

1. Are there differences in the overall rate of offending, as indicated by encounters with the court system, before notification compared to after notification?

Before Notification: 0.14 encounters per month

After Notification: 0.09 encounters per month

The overall encounter ratio **decreased by 36%**.

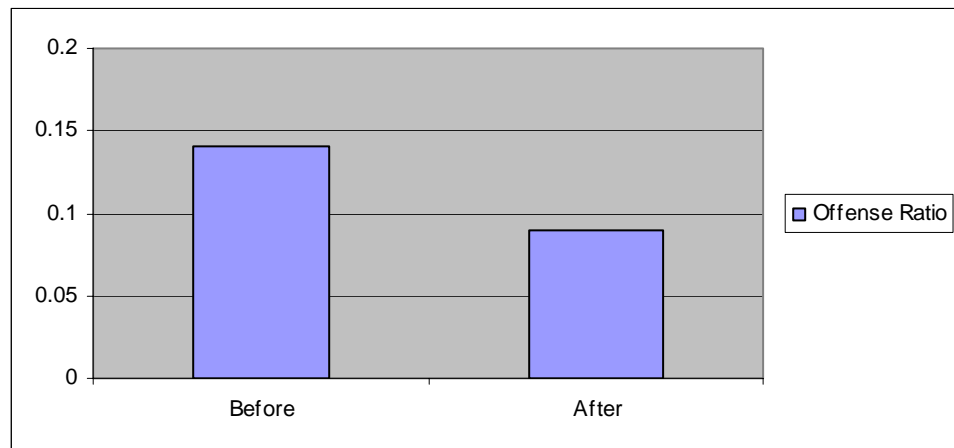


Figure 4.

Another way to interpret this information is by calculating the average time between offenses. Before notification, offenders were served warrants, on average, about one occasion every 7 months. After notification, offenders averaged about one occasion every 12 months.

1a. Are there differences in the before and after encounter ratios for African American versus Caucasian offenders²?

Before Notification (African American): 0.14 encounters per month

After Notification (African American): 0.09 encounters per month

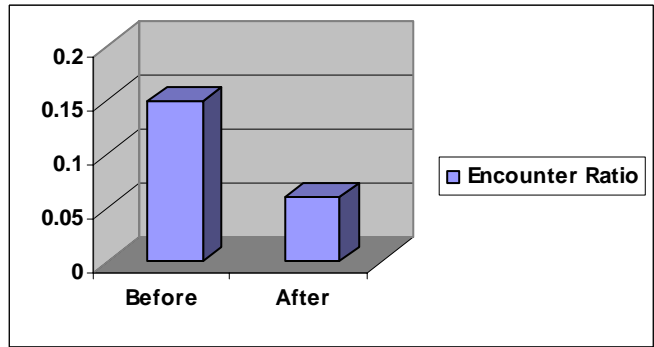
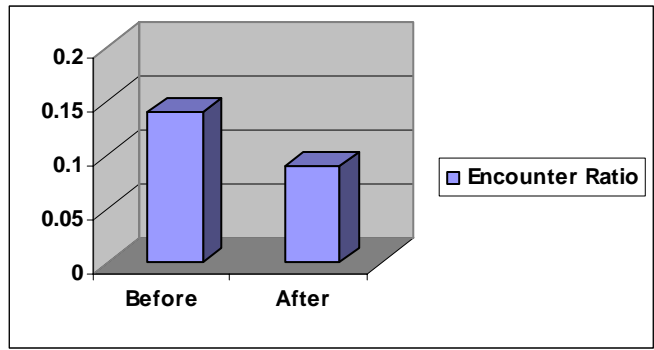
The encounter ratio for African American offenders (n = 238) **decreased by 36%**.

Before Notification (Caucasian): 0.15 offenses per month

After Notification (Caucasian): 0.06 offenses per month

The encounter ratio for Caucasian offenders (n = 7) **decreased by 60%**.

Figures 5 and 6.



² Differences were examined for the African American and Caucasian racial groups only due to the small number of Hispanic offenders in the sample.

2. Evaluation Question: Are there differences in the rate of weapon-related offenses³ before notification compared to after notification?

Before Notification: 0.07 offenses per month involving a weapon

After Notification: 0.03 offenses per month involving a weapon

The weapon offense ratio **decreased by 57%**.

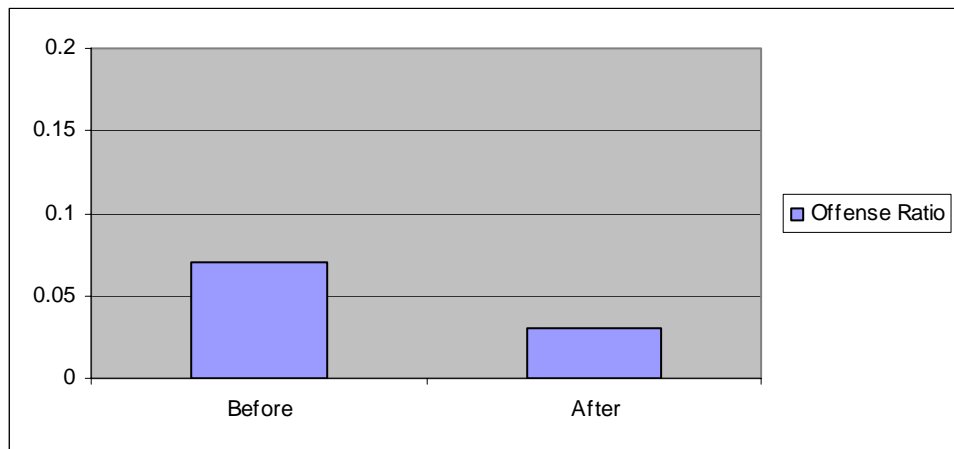


Figure 7.

Another useful way to interpret this data is to examine the percentage of offenses involving a weapon before versus after notification. Those findings are presented below.

Before Notification: 46% of offenses involved a weapon

After Notification: 32% of offenses involved a weapon

³ Weapon-related offense category includes charges such as carrying a concealed weapon, discharging a firearm, weapon on school grounds, shooting into an occupied property, and possession of firearm by felon. Murder, aggravated assault, and armed robbery have also been included in this category.

3. Evaluation Question: Are there differences in the rate of violent offenses⁴ before notification compared to after notification?

Before Notification: 0.04 violent offenses per month

After Notification: 0.01 violent offenses per month

The violent offense ratio **decreased by 75%**.

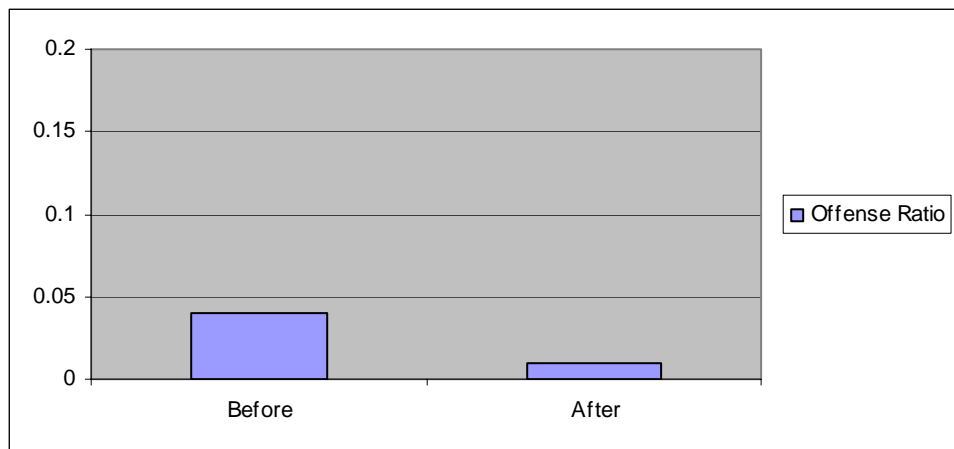


Figure 8.

Another useful way to interpret this data is to examine the percentage of violent offenses before versus after notification. Those findings are presented below.

Before Notification: 28% of offenses were violent

After Notification: 18% of offenses were violent

Prior to notification, offenders committed a violent offense every 25 months, whereas offenders averaged about one violent offense every 100 months after notification.

⁴ As defined by state law. Category includes murder, aggravated assault, armed robbery, and rape charges only.

4. Evaluation Question: Is there a difference in the ratio of drug-related offenses⁵ before notification compared to after notification?

Before Notification: 0.06 drug offenses per month

After Notification: 0.04 drug offenses per month

The number of drug-related offenses per month **decreased by 33%**.

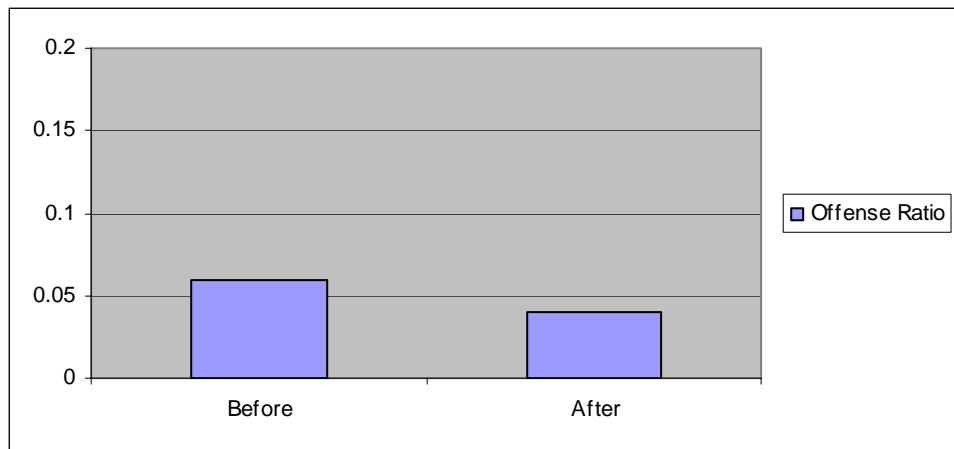


Figure 9.

Another useful way to interpret this information is to examine the percentage of drug offenses before versus after notification. Those findings are presented below.

Before Notification: 43% of offenses were drug related

After Notification: 44% of offenses were drug-related

Although the number of drug offenses per month decreased after notification, the percentage of drug-related offenses increased slightly. In other words, drug offenses accounted for a higher percentage of total offenses after notification.

⁵ Category includes possession, possession with intent to sell/distribute, sale, manufacturing, and trafficking charges.

5. Evaluation Question: Is there a difference in the ratio of crime against person offenses⁶ before notification compared to after notification?

Before Notification: 0.05 person-related offenses per month

After Notification: 0.03 person-related offenses per month

The offense ratio for crime against person(s) **decreased by 40%** after notification.

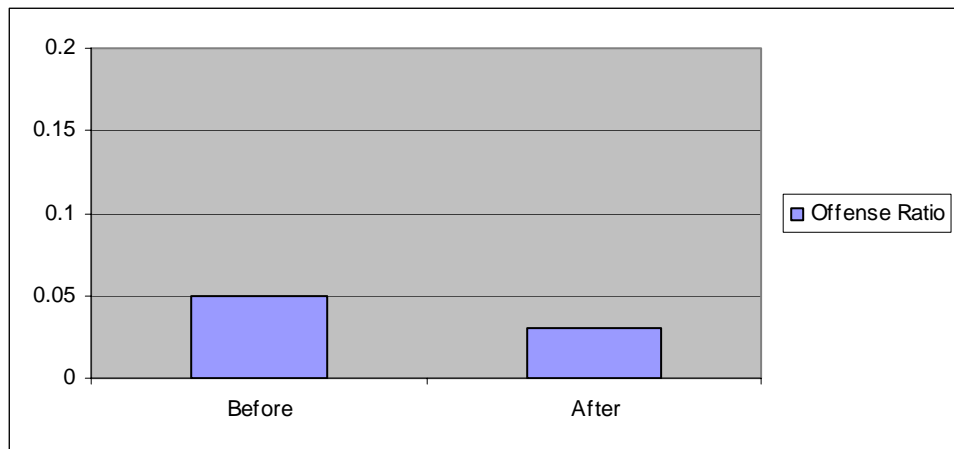


Figure 10.

Person offenses as a percentage of total offenses before notification versus after notification are presented below.

Before Notification: 40% of offenses against persons

After Notification: 40% of offenses against persons

Although the number of crimes against persons per month decreased after notification, the percentage of person-related offenses remained the same. In other words, person-related offenses accounted for the same percentage of total offenses after notification.

⁶ Examples include murder, simple assault, aggravated assault, shooting into an occupied property, child neglect/abuse, domestic offenses, and offenses that are sexual in nature.

Summary

The purpose of this report was to review the most recent criminal history data in order to examine the efficacy of the Durham Police Department's S.T.A.R.S. Notification Program. Based upon the findings reviewed here, it appears that this program continues to be an effective method for reducing violent crime in the City of Durham.

Specifically, in response to the first evaluation question, analyses showed that the number of encounters with the court system decreased after notification by 36%. The second evaluation question examined the difference in weapons-related offense ratios before versus after notification, showing that weapon-related offenses declined 57% after notification. In response to the third evaluation question, violent offense ratios decreased by 75% after notification. Drug-related offenses, examined by the fourth evaluation question, decreased by 33% after notification. The final evaluation question analyzed whether there was a difference in the ratio of offenses against person before versus after notification, indicating a 40% decrease in crimes against person(s) after notification.

These latest findings, taken in concert with previous qualitative⁷ and quantitative analyses^{8,9,10} of other target cities' programs, demonstrate the continued positive impact of this intervention strategy. The notification program—and the law enforcement/community partnership that supports it—remains an effective and vital component of a comprehensive violence reduction strategy.

⁷ Allen, M. C., & Frabutt, J. M. (2002). *Qualitative analysis of the Violent Crime Task Force Notification Program in High Point and Greensboro*. Greensboro, NC: Center for the Study of Social Issues, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

⁸ Frabutt, J. M., Easterling, D. V., & MacKinnon-Lewis, C. (2001). *A preliminary evaluation of the High Point Notification Program*. Greensboro, NC: Center for the Study of Social Issues, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

⁹ Frabutt, J. M., Gathings, M. J., Hunt, E. D., & Loggins, T. J. (2004). *High Point West End Initiative: Project description, log, and preliminary impact analysis*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

¹⁰ Frabutt, J. M., Weissman, K., & Mitra, D. (2002). *Evaluation of the Greensboro Police Department Notification Program: Preliminary findings*. Greensboro, NC: Center for the Study of Social Issues, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Acknowledgment:

- The authors thank the Durham Police Department and Cynthia McCollough, S.T.A.R.S. Case Manager, in particular, for maintaining the notification records, compiling the case histories and providing for our access to those data.

Appendix I

The S.T.A.R.S. Project

Project: STARS Notification and Assistance

Event: STARS Notification and Assistance

Date and Time: June 23, 2005, 9:00 am

Location: Durham Police Station # 1, 2400 Holloway Street

Recording: Only the law enforcement session will be videotaped.

Participants: Please see attachment.

Arrival: The Offenders will arrive between 8:00am and 9:00am. The Community Leaders, from various organizations city wide, should arrive by 9:00am. The Law Enforcement Group, from federal, state, and local agencies, should arrive between 9:30am and 9:45am.

Procedure: The Offenders, who are currently on probation, will arrive at Police Station # 1 by 9:00 am. As they arrive, Team # 1 (Check-In Team) will meet the offenders in the lobby where they will be checked-in. This will include a check for weapons, and a nametag will be issued. Team # 2 (Escort Team) will then escort the offenders to the Conference Room. Team # 3 (Information Team) will then issue the offenders an Offender Information Form, which will be read aloud to them and will be signed, and each Offender will be photographed.

Times:

9:15am – 10:00am	The Community Leaders will address the offenders in the Conference Room.
10:00am – 11:00am	Law Enforcement will address the offenders in the Conference Room.
11:00am – 11:30am	Community Leaders and Counselors from the Criminal Justice Resource Center will address each offender's needs.
11:30am	Event ends.