

Descriptive Evaluation of the  
South King County  
PRETRIAL ASSESSMENT AND LINKAGES SERVICES (PALS)  
Pilot Program

**FINAL REPORT**

King County Department of Adult & Juvenile Detention/Consultant Agreement #6152784

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements..... 4

Executive Summary..... 5

Introduction and Background..... 6

Method..... 9

Results..... 12

Key Findings..... 25

Summary and Conclusions..... 26

References..... 28

Appendices..... 31

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## Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a descriptive evaluation of the Pretrial Assessment and Linkages Services (PALS) Pilot Program implemented by the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (KCD AJD).

The descriptive evaluation of the PALS Pilot Program was implemented by the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention September 2020 through December 2021. The PALS Pilot Program offers a jail alternative for eligible and appropriate felony pretrial defendants in South King County, Washington. The program was launched to serve selected felony pretrial defendants in South King County, Washington to fill a gap in services for pretrial defendants in the South King County geographical region, one of the most racially and economically diverse regions in the state. KCD AJD is committed to addressing disproportionality and recognizes their role in aiding King County Superior Court to reduce the impacts to individuals, particularly Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) who have become involved in the criminal legal system and who reside or have community ties in South King County. The PALS Pilot Program addresses service gaps of pretrial defendants entering the criminal legal system in South King County, Washington. The PALS Pilot Program employs a human services approach by providing responsive services and support as an alternative to incarceration. PALS services include substance use disorder treatment, opiate disorder treatment (Buprenorphine/ Suboxone), counseling, mental health, and behavioral health services, cognitive-behavioral intervention, acupuncture services, and GED preparation and testing. The primary goal of the PALS Pilot Program is to improve opportunities for reentry success through the acceptance of court-referred individuals into a welcoming, therapeutic environment that is culturally responsive and adequately staffed and resourced to meet client needs; linking clients to off-site services; and referring clients to ongoing behavioral health and other services, as appropriate, upon discharge.

The goal of this descriptive evaluation of the PALS Pilot Program is to tell the story of the pilot program implementation and process; describe the program; provide a profile of PALS program clients with attention to the services utilized, program dosage (defined as number of days in the PALS Pilot Program), and recidivism (defined as violations (citations and/or arrests) post PALS Pilot Program intake); and to identify program strengths, weaknesses, and satisfaction from the perspective of clients, staff, and city administrators. Outcome data was obtained from the Administration of Courts and publicly available court data. Qualitative data was collected through structured interviews with clients, program staff, ancillary staff, attorneys, judges, Kent City Officials to understand the experiences and perspectives of PALS participants, the staff charged with delivering the program, and city officials in the city in which the program is located.

The results of the descriptive evaluation of the PALS Pilot Program show that:

- King County Superior Court was the largest source of client referrals.
- Of the clients referred to PALS Pilot Program, 65.9% were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
- PALS clients were most often referred for substance abuse treatment services.
- The most common non-compliance reason for PALS clients was a “No Show” before or after initial assessment.
- Results examining the relationship between key programmatic elements and recidivism show that priors, program dosage (number of days in PALS Pilot Program), referral origin (county/city), and program completion significantly predict recidivism defined as violations (citations and arrests). Priors significantly

predicted recidivism when measured dichotomously and as number of violations. Program dosage predicted recidivism when measured as # of violations. Referral court and program completion predicted recidivism when measured as number of days to first violation.

- There were no onsite incidents during the evaluation period involving PALS participants.

The qualitative analyses revealed that clients, staff, and officials expressed positive views of the PALS Pilot Program as a jail alternative noting that the program offered clients opportunities to succeed and provided access to much needed services including substance abuse and mental health treatment. Staff and officials suggested that the PALS program should be expanded across jurisdictions and services to include housing, employment, transportation, and additional wrap-around services. Clients indicated that they were unclear on the goals of the program and suggested that the program process could be improved with clarity regarding the goals of the program at intake. City officials raised concerns about changes in the design and implementation of the program that differed from the original proposed model. The officials indicated that lack of accountability and public safety were their primary concerns about the PALS Pilot Program noting that the expectation was that the crimes committed by program clients would be non-violent while many of the clients in the Pilot included individuals whose charges and convictions included violent crime. Recommendations and lessons learned include:

- Enhanced onboarding of PALS clients to improve understanding of program objectives to increase client commitment to program goals (Several PALS clients indicated that they were not clear what the program was rather, they viewed the program as just a jail alternative).
- Designing additional methods for accountability (several interviewees expressed beliefs that clients were not being held accountable).
- Additional flexibility in times or days of the week that treatment was offered would be helpful for clients (Some indicated they had to choose between going to their job or going to treatment).

The results suggest that the PALS Pilot Program is a starting point as a South King County jail alternative for continued and expanded services for individuals, most of whom are BIPOC, who may not otherwise have access to services in the diverse South King County geographical region. There were several limitations that impeded the research design and data collection. The initial plan for the PALS evaluation was to employ a multi-year quasi-experimental design with a comparison group. The evaluation was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and budget cuts and the changes to the research design resulted in a loss of data and low sample size. A quasi-experimental program evaluation that includes a comparison group is an important next step to provide data on the effectiveness of the PALS Pilot Program.

## Introduction and Background

The Pretrial Assessment and Linkages Services (PALS) Pilot Program was implemented by the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention September 2020 through December 2022. The PALS Pilot Program was developed to fill a gap as a jail alternative for eligible and appropriate felony pretrial defendants in South King County, Washington. The PALS Pilot Program is one of many initiatives designed to reduce the use of incarceration and assist in

resource referral and services to address the needs of individuals who cycle in and out of the jail population who are reentering the community after arrest or a period of incarceration in jail. The PALS Pilot Program reflects a commitment by King County aligned with a growing commitment in states and counties to develop programs to assist offenders at all stages of criminal processing in the criminal justice system.

Researchers have examined the needs and challenges of formerly incarcerated individuals as they reenter their communities after a period of incarceration locally (e.g., Gunnison, 2017; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2007, 2011, 2013; Gunnison, Helfgott, & Wilhelm, 2015; Helfgott, 1997, Helfgott & Gunnison, 2008; Helfgott & Gunnison, 2020; Lutze, Rosky, & Hamilton, 2014) and across the United States and around the world (Maruna, 2001, Petersilia, 2003). However, much of the existing reentry research has centered on examining the experiences of individuals who have completed a period of incarceration in jail or prison. Yet, there are many forms of reentry at the various stages of the criminal legal system processing including individuals reentering society after an arrest, but prior to their case disposition, or trial. While attention to the needs and challenges in reentry is not a recent phenomenon, what is new is the commitment, over the last decade, to develop programs to assist offenders at all stages of criminal processing in the criminal justice system at the state, county, and local levels. The Pretrial Assessment and Linkages Services (PALS) Pilot Program was implemented to meet a specific geographical need in South King County to provide services to individuals at the pretrial stage of the criminal justice process in lieu of serving jail time to enhance reentry success for this distinct population.

## **Background**

In September of 2020 the PALS Pilot Program was launched to serve selected felony pretrial defendants in South King County, Washington. The PALS Pilot Program was designed to serve pretrial defendants who enter the criminal legal system in South King County, Washington to provide services using a human services approach by providing responsive services and support as an alternative to incarceration. PALS Pilot Program services include substance use disorder treatment, opiate disorder treatment (Buprenorphine/Suboxone), counseling services, mental health and behavioral health services, cognitive-behavioral intervention, acupuncture services, and GED preparation and testing services. The overarching PALS Pilot Program goal is to improve opportunities to foster reentry success through the acceptance of court-referred individuals into a welcoming, therapeutic environment that is culturally responsive and adequately staffed and resourced to meet client needs; link clients to off-site services; and refer clients to ongoing behavioral health and other services, as appropriate, upon discharge from the pretrial services pilot program.

## **Literature Review**

With over 600,000 formerly incarcerated individuals attempting to re-enter communities after serving jail or prison sentences in the United States every year, researchers have primarily focused of examining offender reentry after those offenders have completed a jail or prison sentence (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Petersilia, 2003). In addition to those reentering communities after a period of incarceration, there are 500,000 Americans held in local jails detained pretrial who are considered a flight or safety risk and who cannot afford bail, or a bail bond and these individuals are disproportionately Black and poor (Rabinowitz, 2022). People go to jail 10.6 million times each year, most of them not convicted of a crime. Jail populations include individuals dealing with a wide range of needs including substance use disorders,

mental illness, and poverty, mental illness. These needs and challenges are exacerbated by entry into the criminal legal system and at least 1 in 4 individuals who go to jail are arrested again within the same year (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). With the high numbers of individuals held in pretrial detention and the complex needs and challenges they face, attention is needed to examine the reentry experience for individuals reentering communities after a period of pretrial detention in jail, after an arrest but prior to their case disposition, or trial.

Diverting individuals from pretrial detention is critical. The detrimental impact of a jail sentence, no matter how short, cannot be overstated (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013; Rabinowitz, 2022). Entry into the criminal justice system impacts employment opportunities, housing acquisition, disrupts mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, and family conditions, and can contribute to the development of further mental health problems (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011, 2013, Helfgott, 1997; Helfgott & Gunnison, 2020). For Black Americans, women, and persons of color, the difficulties in reentering society after a jail or incarceration sentence pose additional challenges. Research has revealed that the causes, consequences of mass incarceration have a disparate and pronounced effect on Black Americans producing "a novel kind of embedded social inequality" (Travis & Western 2019, p. 313) and that incarceration can have a particularly harmful impact on the mental health of Black men (Assari et al., 2018). Research on pretrial detention has found that the use of this practice has been increasing despite the Supreme Court ruling that it should be used limitedly and has yielded that those held in jails prior to trial are significantly more likely to be convicted and commit future crimes (Digard, 2019; Dobbie, Goldin, & Yang, 2018; Leslie & Pope, 2017). Additionally, BIPOC are more likely to be detained pretrial due, in part, to the fact that they cannot post bail and persons of color detained pretrial are more likely to be convicted and serve longer prison sentences than their Caucasian counterparts (Donnelly & MacDonald, 2019).

Black Americans are overrepresented in the King County Jail population (31.0% of unique persons in 2018) relative to their percentage in the general population (6.9% of all persons in 2018) (DADJ, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). King county is committed to addressing systemic problems. Many programs and initiatives have been implemented locally to reduce discrimination and disparity in the pretrial stages of the criminal justice process to divert disenfranchised persons from the criminal justice system, and assist offenders in successfully reentering their communities following release from prison (e.g., Assari et al., 2018; Barak, Flavin, & Leighton, 2001; Clifasefi, Lonczak, & Collins, 2017; Collins, Lonczak, & Clifasewfi, 2017; Collins et al., 2016; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2016; Helfgott et al., 2017; Helfgott, Hickman, & Labossiere, 2016; Helfgott, Parkin, & Fisher, 2019).

King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention's South King County Pretrial Services PALS Pilot Program builds on local initiatives with potential to reduce discrimination and disparity at the pretrial stage of the criminal justice process by offering a jail alternative for eligible and appropriate felony pretrial defendants. The SKC PALS Pilot Program fills a critical need to provide pretrial services in South King County to provide services to eligible individuals to eliminate the hardship of traveling to Seattle for Community Center for Alternative Programs (CCAP) which to date has been the only pretrial services available. This lack of programming for pretrial defendants in South King County, the most racially diverse county in the state, has long been a barrier to success for South King County defendants. The pilot program located in the City of Kent, Washington invests in community partnerships in the South King County to intervene and assist pretrial defendants by providing responsive services and support at the local community level. The County is committed to addressing disproportionality and recognizing that KCDAJD has the potential to aid the county, municipal, and district courts to reduce the



impacts to individuals, particularly BIPOC, who have become involved in the criminal legal system and reside or have community ties in South King County.

The purpose of this descriptive evaluation of the PALS Pilot Program is to tell the story of the pilot program implementation and process; describe the program; provide a profile of PALS Pilot Program clients with attention to the services utilized, program dosage (defined as number of days in the PALS Pilot Program), and recidivism (defined as violations (citations and/or arrests) post PALS Pilot Program intake); and to identify program strengths, weaknesses, and satisfaction from the perspective of clients, staff, and city administrators.

## Method

### Participants

The participants were 132 pretrial defendants referred to the South King County PALS Pilot Program. Table 1 shows the participant demographics and Figure 1 shows the prior violation history of the 132 PALS clients. The age of the PALS clients ranged from 20-63 years with a mean age of 33. Prior King County Jail bookings ranged from 0-89 a mean of 8. The racial composition of the sample included 34.1% White, 39.4% Black, 12.9% LatinX, 8.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5.2% Other. The majority of PALS clients were male (80%), and the most common primary charge was a public order crime (e.g., harassment, malicious mischief, DUI, driving with a suspended license, trespassing, violation of the uniform controlled substances act, and violation of no contact orders or anti-harassment orders) (54%) followed by violent crime (e.g., sexual abuse of a minor, assault, kidnapping, attempted kidnapping, and robbery) (24.7%), and property crime (e.g., burglary, and theft, such as auto, retail, and general) (20.4%). The most common referral courts were the King County Superior Court (54.9%) and the Federal Way Municipal Court (40%). It should be noted that Federal Way Municipal Court referrals were not part of the initial program design and were later permitted on a pilot basis.

Table 1. Participant Demographics (N=132)

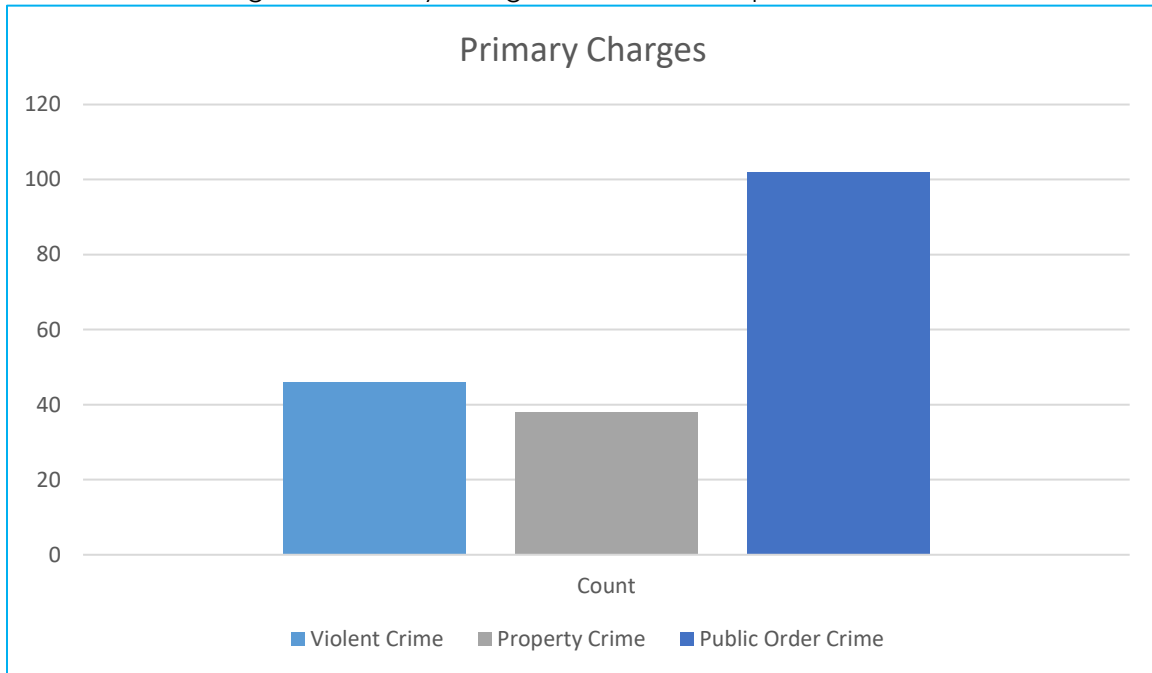
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min-Max</i>
<b>AGE</b>	33.95	33	8.746	20-63
<b>PRIOR KCJ BOOKINGS</b>	8.77	3	12.828	0-89
			<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>RACE</b>	White		45	(34.1%)
	Black		52	(39.4%)
	LatinX		17	(12.9%)
	Asian/Pacific Islander		11	(8.4%)
	Other*		7	(5.2%)
<b>GENDER</b>	Male		106	(80.3%)
	Female		26	(19.7%)
<b>PRIMARY CHARGES</b>	Violent Crime		46	(24.7%)
	Property Crime		38	(20.4%)
	Public Order Crime		102	(54.9%)
<b>ARRESTING AGENCY</b>	Federal Way Police Department		70	(53%)
	Kent Police Department		7	(5.3%)
	Auburn Police Department		13	(9.8%)
	King County Sheriff's Office		14	(10.6%)
	Other**		28	(21.3%)

REFERRAL COURT	King County Superior Court	73	(55.3%)
	Federal Way Municipal Court	54	(40.9%)
	King County District Court	5	(3.8%)

\*Categories collapsed to protect client privacy.

\*\*Other agencies included SeaTac, Renton, Port of Seattle, Tukwila, WSP, Des Moines, SPD, Juvenile Rehab Administration.

Figure 1. Primary charges of PALS Clients prior to intake.



## Instruments

A series of 17 questions were utilized when interviewing the PALS program clients. Three questions asked about their motivations and hopes for the PALS program. Eight questions asked about the program personnel (e.g., relationship), program procedure (e.g., general experiences in PALS, fairly treated, adequate support), and program (e.g., most useful and least useful aspects of PALS). The remaining six questions queried clients about their perceived strengths and weaknesses of the PALS program and concerns and recommendations for the program. Demographic information was also solicited (See Appendix A).

A series of 9 questions were utilized when interviewing the program staff, ancillary staff, judges, attorneys, and city officials. Four questions inquired about background (i.e., education, training). The remaining five questions asked the participants about their opinions about the PALS program including: Thoughts about the benefits/costs of the PALS program; factors that inhibited the success of client participants; factors that enhanced the success of client participants; recommendations for improvement of PALS program; and any remaining thoughts, concerns, or recommendations regarding the PALS program. Demographic information was also solicited. (See Appendix B).

## Procedure

The data for this study was gathered from: PALS official placement list detailing demographics and applicable updates to participation status; PALS official monthly progress/termination reports; police reports, citations, individual criminal history (ICH); King County Superior Court and Municipal Court of Federal Way documents – motion, certification, and order for bench warrant; conditions of release; conditions of conduct. All documents/data were provided encrypted with a password protection by the PALS program manager, directly to the primary investigator via email. Demographic variables were verified in interviews to ensure original data provided was correct. Client demographic data was collected as well as other descriptors including Incarceration/EHD status of the participant; evaluation type (mental health, substance use, etc. for each participant); whether the client participated in CCAP Basic; and the participants' release bond requirements. Additionally, data on program elements and outcomes were collected including compliance level of participants (full, partial, no show, discharge); subsequent bench warrants; monthly PALS progress reports (attendance, compliance with the outpatient treatment plan); and program termination (result of positive urinalysis, refusal to submit urinalysis, unexcused absences, failure to comply with individual treatment plan, and behavior that created barriers). Finally, data on charges prior to PALS and charges post entering the PALS program was collected. For criminal histories and rearrests following PALS, data was provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and utilized to determine nature and number of past bookings as well as nature and number of bookings post PALS. The data that was provided by the AOC was provided encrypted with a password protection and stored in a secure Business Dropbox account. Data on KCJ bookings specifically post PALS was obtained from the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention Jail Inmate Lookup Service by individually searching each participant. No data was obtainable on bookings outside of the King County Jail.

Interviews (N=17) were conducted and recorded with program staff (n=4), ancillary staff (n=2), judges (n=1), attorneys (n=3), Kent City Officials (n=2), and clients (n=5) via Zoom video interviews (except for one interview that occurred via phone and was not recorded) to collect qualitative data on perceptions of the pilot program and program satisfaction. To ensure the highest response rate, the time of day (e.g., morning, afternoon, late afternoon) in which the contact took place would vary from week to week. Initial contact with potential interviewees began July 2021 through December 2021; and was initiated via email or phone/text. Program staff, judges, attorneys, and clients were contacted up to three times a month until the end of December 2021. The number of contact attempts was dependent on the response rates. No compensation was provided to program staff, judges, or attorneys. Initially, compensation was offered to clients in the form of an electronic \$20 gift certificate for clients in the PALS program. To increase the number of participants, the compensation for client participation in the study was increased to four electronic gift cards in the final two months of the project, valuing \$80 total. The length of the interviews ranged from 15-30 minutes, with most lasting approximately 15 minutes.

The analyses proceeded in two stages. First, a descriptive analysis was conducted to provide description of the program, a profile of SKC PALS participants, and program process and outcomes. Second, analysis of the qualitative interviews of program staff, judges, attorneys, Kent City officials, and clients was conducted. A line-by-line analysis of the transcribed interview was conducted whereby content of the interviews were coded, counted, and organized into themes.

## Results

In the first stage of the analyses, how PALS participants were referred to the pilot program between September of 2020 to December of 2021 was examined (see Table 2). Most court referrals were provided by the King County Superior Court. The Federal Way Municipal Court was the second most prevalent court to refer participants to the PALS program. The King County District Court referred only 2 participants throughout the span of the evaluation period. As previously mentioned, the Federal Way Municipal Court referrals were added on a pilot basis.

Table 2. Quarterly Referral Data

		<b>n</b>	<b>% per quarter</b>
<b>SEPT. – DEC 2020</b>	King County Superior Court Referrals	18	(75%)
	Federal Way Municipal Court Referrals	0	(0%)
	King County District Court Referrals	0	(0%)
	No Show	6	(25%)
<b>1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER 2021</b>	King County Superior Court Referrals	12	(48%)
	Federal Way Municipal Court Referrals	9	(36%)
	King County District Court Referrals	0	(0%)
	No Show	4	(16%)
<b>2<sup>ND</sup> QUARTER</b>	King County Superior Court Referrals	17	(41%)
	Federal Way Municipal Court Referrals	18	(43%)
	King County District Court Referrals	1	(2%)
	No Show	6	(14%)
<b>3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER 2021</b>	King County Superior Court Referrals	15	(41%)
	Federal Way Municipal Court Referrals	16	(43%)
	King County District Court Referrals	0	(0%)
	No Show	6	(16%)
<b>4<sup>TH</sup> QUARTER 2021</b>	King County Superior Court Referrals	9	(57%)
	Federal Way Municipal Court Referrals	16	(35%)
	King County District Court Referrals	1	(2%)
	No Show	3	(6%)

Next, participant service recommendations were examined. Overwhelmingly, participants were referred to substance abuse treatment (37%). Additional referrals included: mental health evaluations (17%), CCAP Basic (12%), adult basic education (2%), and cognitive-behavioral treatment (1.5%). It should be noted that in the original PALS program design mental health services were included, but due to budget cuts, mental health evaluations and services were cut. Thus, many mental health services had to be referred out to other programs.

Table 3. Participant Service Recommendations (N=132)\*

		<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>SERVICE TYPE</b>	PALS only	119	(90%)
	PALS and CCAP	13	(10%)
	Substance abuse evaluation	49	(37%)
	Mental Health evaluation	22	(16%)
	Cognitive Behavioral	2	(1.5%)

	Adult Basic Education	3	(2%)
*Clients were recommended for more than one service.			

A third component of the PALS program that was examined was participant compliance (See Table 4). Full compliance refers to clients who completed all requirements and who were not yet discharged prior to the completion of the study period. Partial compliance refers to clients who had explanatory reasons for incomplete participations such as missing sessions because of illness, having a positive urinalysis (UA), unexcused absences as well as failing to comply with the Tx plan by attending drug or mental health counseling and who were not yet discharged prior to the study period. Full, partial compliance, no show, and discharge are distinct categories. A client is either "fully compliant," "partially compliant," a "no show" or a "discharge." The discharge category refers to clients who were discharged from PALS. Discharged clients could be fully or partially compliant, or neither. No show refers to clients who did not show for intake and/or following intake.

Regarding compliance, 10% were fully compliant, 5% were partially compliant, 19% were no show, and 55% were discharged. Predominately, the most non-compliance reason was no show for or after assessment at 24%. Other non-compliance reasons included: Failure to comply with the treatment plan (15%), no communication with client (10%), unexcused absences (9%), in-custody/EHD (7%), and case dismissed by court (6%).

Table 4. Participant Compliance (N=132)

		n	%
<b>ACTIVE</b>	Yes	21	(16%)
	No	100	(75.8%)
	In-custody	7	(5.3%)
	Unknown	4	(3%)
<b>COMPLIANCE</b>	Fully	14	(10.6%)
	Partially	7	(5.3%)
	No Show	25	(19%)
	Discharged	73	(55.3%)
	Unknown	13	(9.8%)
<b>NON-COMPLIANCE REASON*</b>	In-custody/EHD	10	(7.6%)
	No show for/after assessment	32	(24.3%)
	No communication with client	14	(10.6%)
	Failure to comply with Tx plan	20	(15.2%)
	Unexcused absences	12	(9.1%)
	Case dismissed by court	9	(6.8%)
	Other/Unknown	8	(6.1%)
*Totals in this category do not add up to 100% as each participant does not hold a partial- or non-compliance status.			

In the next stage of analyses, Pre- PALS prior arrests/violations were examined from 1984 to present year. Violations included any contact with the King County, District, or Municipal Courts including citations and arrests. Of the 132 PALS clients, 65.5% (n= 92) had prior violations. The most common violations clients incurred prior to PALS intake was public order crime- traffic (36%) or public order crime non-traffic (35%) and most had a charge code of guilty (38%). The Mean # of violations Pre-PALS for the total sample was 15.82 (SD=11) with a minimum of 0 and maximum of 107. The Mean # of violations Pre-PALS for the 92 who had prior violations was 22.78 (SD=17.40) with a minimum of 1 and maximum of 107 (See Table 5).

Table 5. Pre-PALS Violations\*

		<i>n</i>	%
<b>VIOLATION TYPE</b>	Violent Crime	161	(8%)
	Property Crime	383	(19%)
	Public Order Crime – Traffic	729	(36%)
	Public Order Crime – Non-traffic	702	(35%)
	Other	33	(2%)
<b>CHARGE CODE</b>	Guilty	766	(38%)
	Not guilty	3	(0.2%)
	Committed	327	(16.3%)
	Dismissed	423	(21%)
	Amended	97	(5%)
	Other	51	(2.5%)
	No information	341	(17%)

\*The Mean # of violations Pre-PALS was 15.82 (*SD*=11) with a minimum of 0 and maximum of 107.

In the final stages of analyses, recidivism was examined. Recidivism was measured in three ways: 1) Whether the client violated or not after entering the PALS Program (No/Yes); 2) the number of violations after entering the PALS program; and 3) the # of days from intake to recidivism. Of the 132 PALS clients, 25% (*n*=33) received one or more new violations after intake. Figure 2 shows the total number of clients who received violations post-PALS intake and Table 8 shows the mean number of violations and days to recidivism for all PALS clients and for the clients who recidivated. Post-PALS program intake, 33 clients recidivated. The most common violation was a public order crime non-traffic (49%) followed by property crimes (23%), and the most common charge code was dismissed (18.5%) (See Table 6).

Table 6. Post PALS Violations (Clients who recidivated - *N*= 33)\*

		<i>n</i>	%
<b>VIOLATION TYPE</b>	Violent Crime	7	(7%)
	Property Crime	21	(22.8%)
	Public Order Crime – Traffic	16	(17.4%)
	Public Order Crime – Non-traffic	45	(49%)
	Other	3	(3.2%)
<b>CHARGE CODE</b>	Guilty	22	(23.9%)
	Not guilty	0	(0%)
	Committed	2	(2.2%)
	Dismissed	17	(18.5%)
	Amended	2	(2.2%)
	Other	2	(2.2%)
	No information	47	(51%)

\* There was a total of 92 violations post-PALS involving 33 (25%) of the PALS clients.

Upon examination of Post PALS King County bookings, participants spent an average of 60 days in custody (See Table 7). Specially, PALS participants were equally likely to be booked for a violent crime (33%) or a public order crime (33%), and they also were likely to be booked

for a property crime (27%) (See Table 7). Of the 132 PALS clients, 75.8% did not have a new violation and 24.2% did (See Figure 2).

Table 7. Post PALS King County Bookings (N=73)

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min-Max</i>
<b>DAYS IN CUSTODY</b>	60.38	34.5	57.96	1-82
<b>DAYS IN PROGRAM</b>	51.87	34	58.344	0-281
			<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>BOOKINGS</b>	Violent Crime		24	(33%)
	Property Crime		20	(27%)
	Public Order Crime		24	(33%)
	Other		5	(7%)

\*Data was only obtainable from King County jail system so not all bookings may be accounted for.

Figure 2. Recidivism of PALS Clients (Number of clients who received a violation - No/Yes)

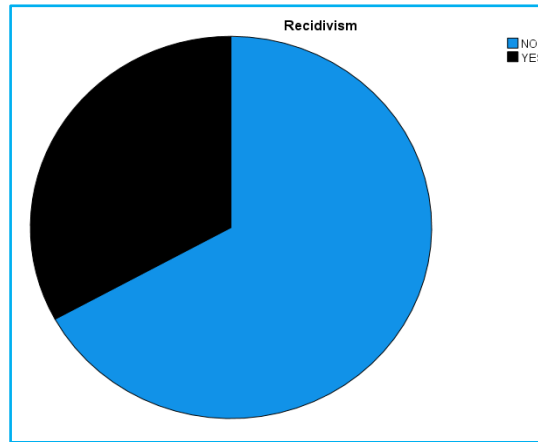


Table 8 shows the mean number of violations and the number of days to the first violation after intake for the total sample and for the 33 clients who recidivated. The Mean number of violations for the total sample was 1.1 violations ( $SD=2.39$ ) and 164.05 days to first violation ( $SD=129.00$ ). The Mean number of violations for the 33 PALS clients who recidivated was 4.34 ( $SD=4$ ) with a minimum of 1 and maximum of 10 violations and 108.45 days ( $SD=100.03$ ) to recidivism (See Table 8).

Table 8. Recidivism – Mean Number of Violations and Days from Intake to First Violation

<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PALS CLIENTS</b>		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	
		132	100	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min-Max</i>
<b>RECIDIVISM COUNT</b>	1.11	0	2.39	0-10
<b>DAYS TO RECIDIVISM</b>	164.05	129.00	121.38	5-466
<b>NUMBER OF PALS CLIENTS WHO RECIDIVATED</b>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	
		33	25	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min-Max</i>
<b>RECIDIVISM COUNT</b>	4.34	4	2.90	1-10
<b>DAYS TO RECIDIVISM</b>	108.45	71	100.03	7-423

Bivariate analysis was conducted to examine the referral court by recidivism (NO/YES) post-PALS participation (See Table 9). Of those who recidivated, 51% were clients referred from the King County Superior Court and 49% were from Municipal or District Courts (See Table 9 and Figure 2).

Table 9. Bivariate Analysis: Referral Court and Recidivism

RECIDIVISM POST PALS x REFERRAL COURT				
		No	Yes	Total
REFERRAL COURT	King County Superior Court	54 (56%)	18 (51%)	72
	FWMC and KCDC	43 (44%)	17 (49%)	60
TOTAL		97	35	132

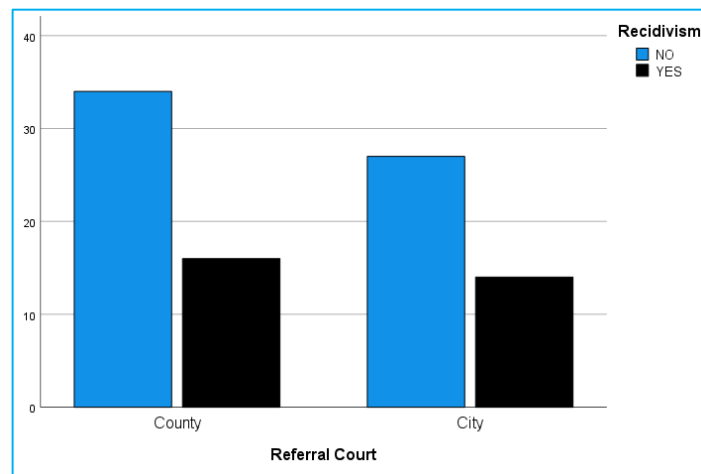
Logistic regression was conducted to examine the relationship between program variables and recidivism (NO/YES). Prior violations significantly predicted recidivism at the .05 level when measured dichotomously  $B=.030$ ,  $SE=.014$ ,  $Wald=4.52$ ,  $p=.03$ . It should be noted that the descriptive recidivism analyses included all 132 PALS referrals regardless of program dosage (number of days in PALS Pilot Program) or completion (Successful completion of PALS Pilot Program). To examine the relationship between level of program participation, dosage and program completion were examined in the bivariate analyses in addition to demographic variables and referral court (County versus City) (See Table 10 and Figure 3).

Table 10. Logistic Regression: Predictors of Recidivism (No/Yes)

Variables	B	S. E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Number of Priors	.030	.014	4.524	1	.033*	1.030
Age	.017	.032	.284	1	.594	1.017
Gender	.003	.699	.000	1	.996	1.003
Race	-.143	.510	.078	1	.779	.867
Referral Court	-.383	.511	.560	1	.454	.682
Dosage	-.007	.005	1.941	1	.164	.993
Program Completion	-20.385	27959.205	.000	1	.999	.000
Constant	-1.472	1.120	1.728	1	.189	.229

\* $p < .05$

Figure 3. Referral Court x Recidivism (NO/YES)





Linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between program variables and the extent of recidivism and number of days from intake to recidivism. When recidivism was measured as extent (# of violations), prior violations was a significant predictor at the .05 level ( $B=.055$ ,  $t(6)=3.75$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and dosage was a significant predictor at the .10 level ( $B=-.008$ ,  $t(6)=-1.87$ ,  $p=.064$ ). Program Completion predicted recidivism at the .05 level ( $B=303.48$ ,  $t(6)=3.4$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and County and City referral predicted recidivism at the .10 level ( $B=-.48.28$ ,  $t(6)=-1.88$ ,  $p=.063$ ) with the 193.49 Mean number of days to recidivate for county referrals ( $SD=134.06$ ) and 130.12 Mean number of days to recidivate for City referrals ( $SD=95.19$ ) (See Tables 11-12 and Figures 4-5).

Table 11. Linear Regression: Predictors of the Extent of Recidivism (# of Violations)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.615	1.208		.509	.612
Number of Priors	.055	.015	.388	3.751	<.001*
Age	.014	.034	.043	.410	.682
Gender	.224	.709	.032	.317	.752
Race	-.283	.549	-.053	-.516	.607
Referral Court	-.374	.550	-.069	-.680	.498
Dosage	-.008	.004	-.184	-1.877	.064**
Program Completion	-1.090	1.949	-.058	-.559	.577

\* $p < .05$   
 \*\* $p < .10$

Figure 4. Extent of Recidivism x Number of Priors, Program Dosage

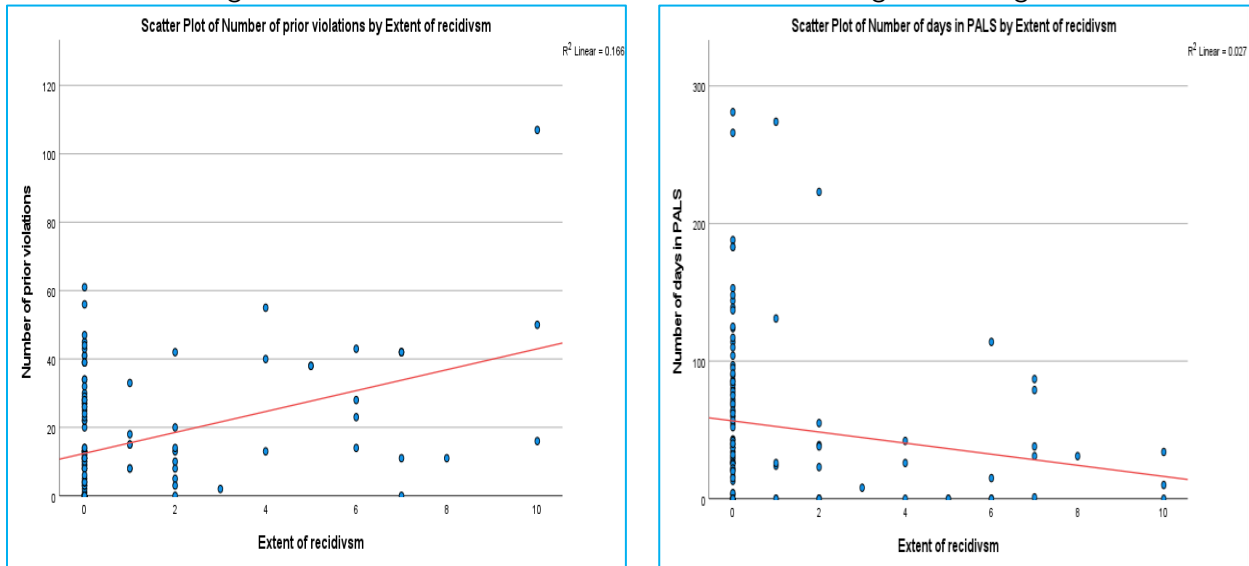
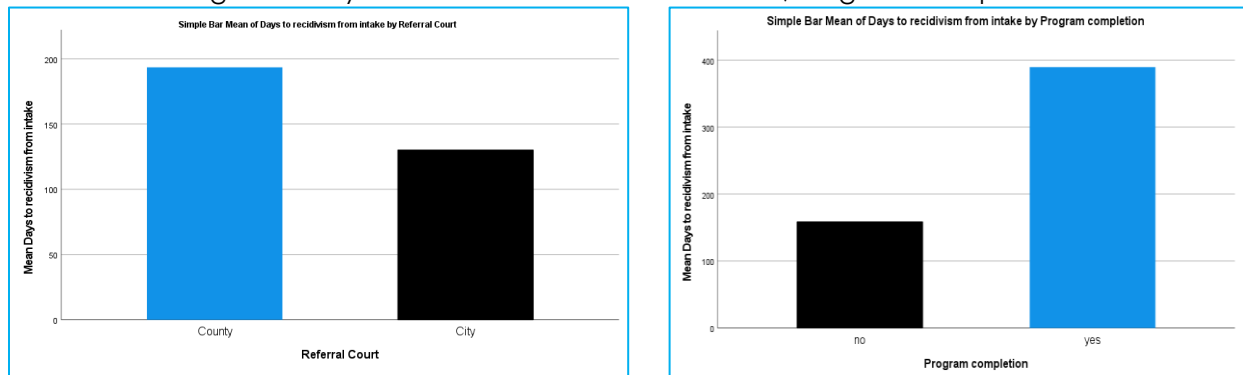


Table 12. Linear Regression: Predictors of Days to Recidivism (#Days to First Violation)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	259.132	56.406		4.594	<.001
Number of Priors	.990	.681	.150	1.453	.150
Age	-2.274	1.559	-.153	-1.459	.148
Gender	-27.142	33.168	-.083	-.818	.415
Race	-35.895	25.555	-.144	-1.405	.164
Referral Court	-48.281	25.598	-.194	-1.886	.063**
Dosage	.222	.207	.106	1.073	.286
Program Completion	303.481	88.989	.357	3.410	<.001*

\*p<.05  
\*\*p<.10

Figure 5. Days to First Violation x Referral Court, Program Completion



### Qualitative Interview Themes

The final stage of analyses included examining the content of the interviews by the clients (n=5), program and ancillary staff, attorneys, judges (n=10), and Kent City Officials (n=2). For clients, several themes emerged including the staff, the structure of the PALS program, the informativeness of the PALS program, and positive aspects of the program. The clients also offered additional content and suggestions. Select quotes are provided below.

### Clients

- (1) Great **staff** – PALS participants noted that staff were genuine, treated clients fairly and with respect, and provided clarity during interactions.

*I really think that my counselor made it so awesome. She took me under her wing right away. She did my intake and everything and we just clicked right away; she just made me strive to do that much better. She's a very thoughtful person and I love working with her.*

*PALS overall is upbeat, and they are on time as far as when I need to get ahold of someone or to go in and talk; they make the time, and they are prompt.*

Name redacted was awesome; she made a lot of stuff very plain and clear to me. The person that I report to is laid back but direct about the requirements. They are all very easy to talk to.

Counselor is great, very personable, openness to work with you; treated fairly. I really think that my counselor made it so awesome. She took me under her wing right away. She did my intake and everything and we just clicked right away; she just made me strive to do that much better. She's a very thoughtful person and I love working with her.

- (2) **Structure** – PALS provides focus for the clients with one way being through required check-ins.

*[PALS program] Provides focus.*

*Having to check-in helps.*

*Nice to have alternatives. Group therapy is really helpful too and you are around people who are going through the same thing as you, so it helps you to feel not so alone.*

*This is the only treatment I have received outside of prison or an incarcerated setting. I think it is more, feels better because it is my choice. Every other time I didn't have a choice and I only got one chance not to make a mistake. Here I have a choice and they, if you mess up, they don't make you think it's like the end of the world. Relapse is a part of recovery, and they recognize that. I trust them.*

*I believe that the PALS program is able to provide more of a focus on the goals instead of me just doing it on my own. Distractions can occur and the support from PALS can help keep the focus. I would recommend it thus far. It has been pretty helpful as far as I know.*

- (3) **Informative** – PALS participants found the program educational with practical learning/useful material, content was made interesting, and helpful.

*I really like the classes I go to. I am really fascinated by them, learning about the brain and chemicals and stuff like that. It helps me to kind of understand what I have done in the past and why I have done it. The classes helped it make sense now.*

- (4) **Positive overall**

*PALS overall is upbeat, and they are on time as far as when I need to get a hold of someone or to go in and talk; they make the time and they are prompt.*

*Pretty good. I haven't experienced any problems at all or seen anything that could be done differently as far as I have made it. It's a pretty cool program.*

*It is nice to have alternatives to get out and then help you not return instead of just sitting in jail waiting for the next court date. PALS allows people to get help and address the things that got them locked up in the first place. It gives you a little bit more hope that something will work out for you sooner than later.*

*Satisfaction levels are pretty high, they are doing pretty good so far.*

*Yes, I feel more confident and it's a good feeling. Especially for someone who has been incarcerated so many times, it's a miracle, I still have hope, I am not angry like I used to be when I was a kid. I am definitely not a kid anymore so it's time to grow up.*

*I am so thankful for it; it gave me a chance. The court system just assumed I would keep messing up, there is no hope for this guy. The program gave me a chance to prove otherwise. It helped me get out of the incarceration situation I was in and better myself.*

- (5) **Clarity of Program Process:** Clients did not seem to have a clear – if any – idea about what they will be doing at PALS or what they can expect; all that was clear was that they were no longer in custody due to participation in PALS.

*Not informed enough. I have only been to the office once.*

*Not quite sure, PALS is just court-appointed regulation.*

*I am still wondering the same thing myself. I know what the program is for, but I don't necessarily know or have heard the results that I would be looking forward to, such as, these are the options and benefits of the program specifically.*

*I don't know what it is at this point; I am unsure what I should be looking forward to since I am still so new in the program, so I do not know yet what else they could be doing. They said to me that the program is to help whatever it is you are being sentenced for; reduce or dismiss charges, basically the program can only help you. I am still out of jail so it is helping; but it's not just that, they help with other stuff too.*

*It would be more effective if they were able to reach a more definite and accurate answer for people who want to know what the incentive would be to participate in the program. It is unclear to the participants what PALS can bring to the table and what specifically they can offer clients.*

- (6) **Concerns and recommendations:**

*They are understaffed. For example, the other day I was late and she was in a meeting, so there was no one to open the doors. I even waited until after class was over and it just sucks. I am always late for everything. And when you are late, there is no one to let you in.*

For staff, several themes emerged including that the PALS Program offered an alternative, provided services, had a proactive structure, and was collaborative. The staff also offered raised concerns and offered suggestions. Select quotes are provided below.

### **Staff**

- (1) PALS offers an **alternative** – The PALS program helps individuals to become self-sufficient and overcome barriers as mental health and substance use are not addressed in jail or prison.

*The idea is to help those with the barriers to help them overcome and turn them into a person who can manage their own lives in a sustaining way.*

*I would say about 80% of my clients are dealing with substance use disorders, mental health disorders, homelessness; things that are not addressed by incarceration, especially pretrial.*

*People who are struggling with an addiction really do need support and finding ways to achieve sobriety or people dealing with mental health challenges can really benefit from alternative programs that support those needs instead of all the legal consequences and ramifications of being involved in the justice system.*

*Being in jail, I think, is quite inhumane and pretty much entirely unnecessary for vast majority of people who are in jail. Most of my clients are in jail because they cannot afford a really low bail or because they violated some kind of pretrial condition or something else that could be solved with some more resources. I think that providing alternative to incarceration is something that more funding goes into and more focus is put on.*

*A lot of the times I am referring my clients (it is always pretrial release obviously) because bail is not an appropriate way to judge whether or not someone should be released. A lot of the times my clients just need support, whether that is mental health or substance use.*

*I definitely feel that it gives clients a lot more room for grace. What I have seen in other agencies (and even other parts of our department), clients who are involved in both substance use programs and the CJ system, it seems to feel a lot more punitive. What I like about the PALS program is that it does feel therapeutic and it does give a lot more room for clients to figure things out a little bit more. Maybe they will make a mistake but realize that there aren't going to be severe consequences for those mistakes, as long as they remain engaged and are actively trying to participate.*

- (2) PALS provides access to needed **services** – The PALS program provides access to mental health and substance use treatments with funding that can be provided to the client, and new options available to help address critical needs.

*We've never had a program like this, it is amazing, I want to share with all my colleagues from other courts. It is nice that they are getting services right away during the pretrial phase, know ahead of time what we need to deal with, what treatment is recommended, what particular concerns there are, rights track sooner than later.*

*It is about opportunity; some won't take advantage, but without the opportunity there, we fail.*

*It is definitely unique because of its geographic component; there was not anything that served people outside of downtown Seattle. Another unique thing is that they provide in custody evaluations and coordinates in patient bed dates.*

*One of my clients pled guilty and he's on a deferred sentence and he's still engaging with PALS about 6 months later and he is still sober, so I think that is a good outcome. I can only provide my own anecdotal evidence and I can't provide any specifics, but I do think PALS is the kind of thing that would help reduce recidivism.*

*It's good when someone is ready, and the idea that we can get them an assessment in a very short amount of time, without them having to wait, and the fact that it has that mid*

*money that pays for things until their Medicaid kicks in is a dream come true. Getting someone engaged and getting them wrap around services; giving them that opportunity is absolutely essential. It is about opportunity; some won't take advantage, but without the opportunity there, we fail.*

- (3) PALS offers a **proactive** approach – The PALS program provided assistance during the pretrial phase and allowed clients to work on issues that could lead to future recidivism.

*One of my goals is to get the system to start looking at people the very first time they come to court. We dismiss the early crimes, and only notice during recidivism. Better to nip it in the bud and stop it from expanding. There are a lot of people that want to do things to clean up convictions after the fact, but it's better to avoid these convictions in the first place.*

*Providing a safe therapeutic space to be able to explore things such as triggers, trauma, mental health, emotional hang-ups – all important ways of reducing recidivism.*

- (4) **Collaboration** – The PALS program offers collaborative opportunities between judges, attorneys, counselors, program managers and facilities.

*A lot of different parts/backgrounds are working together for a common goal: a positive client outcome.*

*PALS pulls everything together, to one point of entry, so people can meet their needs. It is essential that people understand the importance of an organized and unified approach towards people.*

*The fact that PALS is in Kent, not Federal Way was difficult; but we overcame that by setting up a Zoom suite here at the court so people can have their assessments on video and don't have to travel to ACRS Kent. A lot of people aren't legal to drive, some don't have a car, but routes between Kent and Federal Way are horrendously horrible. The idea that someone can go into this private room and connect with ACRS is fantastic.*

- (5) **Concerns and recommendations**

*One thing that comes to mind is the communication between PALS and other players in the system. For example, it is pretty common to have someone released to EHD and PALS. For EHD they issue passes, and you need 48 hours to get someone a pass, but someone is required to go to PALS within 24 hours of release.*

*From my communications, if they are referred to in-patient treatment but are still in custody on their pretrial case. It can slow down the process for getting them treatment. Or perhaps we let them out with an ankle bracelet, and they cut it off and run.*

*Going back to barriers; people who are trying to hold down a job are not able to attend treatment during the day, it's just not something that seems doable so if there could be more of an alternative schedule or weekend-based classes. This is something my clients in general have struggled with then I ask them; they have to decide between going to meetings twice a week or going to their job.*

Perhaps the navigators identify someone who is there being charged for a crime that does not normally receive a PALS referral, they can connect the client and be referred without having the court order it.

I don't know if this is something that PALS can fix, but there has been a real problem with clients (several of mine) who have been released late from the jail, so they miss their bed dates. I will successfully get them into PALS, they'll get evaluated, get them a bed date, and they'll be super excited, and then the jail – even though they are ordered to release them at a specific time – is releasing them like 3 hours later and that is causing them to lose their bed as the treatment agency will not hold their bed open. I don't think that it is anything that can be fixed from the PALS perspective but has been really frustrating me with the jail.

I feel like an education piece would be beneficial. It would be great generally to find more materials to provide to the court and clients about what PALS is. It is hard to find detailed information to provide to the court from the King County website.

A lot of clients come to us, and they aren't even really aware what the PALS program is or why they are here.

For Kent City Officials, several themes emerged including that the PALS Program offered an alternative and provided for accountability. The officials also offered raised concerns and offered recommendations. Select quotes are provided below.

### **Officials**

- (1) PALS as a jail **alternative** – room for alternatives to incarceration, restorative justice, and other needed services

*I think there is a lot of room and positive work that can be accomplished through the alternatives, so I am very much in support of positive programs/alternatives to incarceration.*

- (2) **Accountability** – ensuring public safety, understanding who these programs can work for

*There has to be a balance between providing services but ensuring that there is that safeguard of accountability if it doesn't work. To put somebody through all this to provide services but not hold them accountable doesn't serve the community well, nor does it serve the client well.*

- (3) **Concerns and recommendations**

*I think it was intended to be different; it was never implemented how it was originally intended. A lot of factors such as budget, COVID, etc. interfered. I don't think it's being carried out how it was envisioned to be.*

*I don't think we really got to see how effective it could be because it got implemented different than we thought. We wanted to see significant data from the Seattle program, and to my knowledge I don't think that we saw any convincing data that showed that it was reducing recidivism. That is still an unanswered question.*

However, because we had a program that was supposed to provide services across SKC it had the potential to bring impacts to the Kent community from members outside of that community; one of our major concerns looking at the Seattle model. But again, it's hard to tell, but some of our concerns revolve around negative impacts of bringing felony level criminals to Kent.

In the limited time that the program has been running, because the program design was changed significantly, we did not see a lot of accountability for the benchmarks to participate in the program, benchmarks needed to continue to get services. We were beginning to see a lot of clients who were not meeting their end of the agreements and following through with services and it doesn't appear that anything was happening to account for that.

It has been operating through a pandemic, so I don't think we have seen the full impacts, positive and negative, on participants or the community.

I am very concerned about the fact that the participants in the program are not what we and the community were told; we were told there would be no violent offenders, no crimes against persons. There is a significantly high rate of people that have committed those types of crimes and that is concerning to me.

Table 13 presents an overview of all the themes gleaned from the qualitative interviews. Interestingly, the clients expressed that the PALS program provided them with accountability for their behaviors. On the other hand, officials were concerned as to whether the PALS program participants would be held accountable for their behavior.

Table 13. Overall Summary of Qualitative Themes

<b>CLIENTS</b> (n=5)	<b>STAFF</b> (n=10)	<b>OFFICIALS</b> (n=2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great staff</li> <li>• Structure</li> <li>• Informative</li> <li>• Satisfaction and Hope</li> <li>• Clarity of Process</li> <li>• Concerns/Recommendations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Staffing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternatives</li> <li>• Services</li> <li>• Proactive</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Concerns/Recommendations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Communication</li> <li>✓ Additional barrier considerations</li> <li>✓ More information about PALS for clients and courts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternatives</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Concerns/Recommendations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Implementation during a pandemic and budget constraints</li> <li>✓ Issues with data collection and ability to evaluate impact of program on recidivism</li> <li>✓ Concerns about bringing clients who have been charged with felonies to Kent.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## Key Findings

There are several main takeaways from this research investigation. The descriptive analyses revealed that most of the clients served by the South King County PALS Pilot Program were BIPOC pretrial defendants, that the King County Superior Court was the largest source of client referrals to the PALS program, and that clients most often needed substance abuse treatment services. Predominately, the most common non-compliance reason for PALS participants was a no show for or after assessment prior to the PALS program.

Results examining the relationship between key programmatic elements and recidivism show that priors, program dosage (number of days in PALS Pilot Program), referral origin (county/city), and program completion significantly predict recidivism. Priors significantly predicted recidivism when measured dichotomously and as number of violations. Program dosage predicted recidivism when measured as # of violations. Referral court and program completion predicted recidivism when measured as number of days to first violation.

Results from the qualitative analyses revealed that clients, staff, and officials expressed positive views of the use of the PALS Pilot Program as a jail alternative and saw the services provided as filling a service gap in South King County. Staff and officials recommended that the PALS Pilot Program be expanded to include housing, employment, transportation, and other wrap-around services. Clients indicated that they would like more clarity at intake from program staff regarding the goals of the program and what it had to offer them. Officials indicated that changes to the implementation and roll out of the program which were different than what was proposed in the original program design was problematic and expressed concerns regarding lack of accountability and public safety, in particular regarding including clients with violent criminal histories. The qualitative results suggest that the PALS Pilot Program meets a regional need for services to South King County.

Finally, one of the primary concerns of the local officials and the community members in Kent, WA where the PALS Pilot Program was physically located, was that the program would bring crime and/or disorder to the community. Reports from the program manager and staff indicate that there were no incidents at the location of the PALS Program during the study period.

Key findings are summarized below:

- King County Superior Court was the largest source of client referrals.
- Of the clients referred to PALS Pilot Program, 65.9% were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
- PALS clients were most often referred for substance abuse treatment services.
- The most common non-compliance reason for PALS clients was a “No Show” before or after initial assessment.
- Results examining the relationship between key programmatic elements and recidivism show that priors, program dosage (number of days in PALS Pilot Program), referral origin (county/city), and program completion significantly predict recidivism. Priors significantly predicted recidivism when measured dichotomously and as number of violations. Program dosage predicted recidivism when measured as # of violations. Referral court and program completion predicted recidivism when measured as number of days to first violation.
- There were no onsite incidents during the evaluation period involving PALS participants.

## Summary and Conclusions

### Lessons Learned and Recommendations

There is a demand for jail alternatives to pretrial detention, and the PALS program offers the courts such an alternative. The most common treatment referral that the PALS program offered was substance abuse treatment. According to one interviewee, being able to offer this at the pretrial stage fills a huge service need as these services have historically not been available in South King County, the most economically and racially diverse area in the county. Thus, gaps, such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, can be addressed for clients before their court date. Additionally, many were grateful to the opportunity to refer participants to the PALS program in South King County as opposed to the City of Seattle. Also, due to a contractual agreement between the PALS Program Director and ACRS, ACRS must report any incidents at the facility to the PALS Director. There were no onsite incidents during the evaluation period involving PALS participants.

One recommendation is enhanced onboarding of PALS participants as several clients in the program were not clear what the program was rather, they viewed the program as just a jail alternative. If clients have a stronger understanding of the objectives of the PALS program, they are more likely to be committed to it. Another recommendation for the PALS program is designing additional methods for accountability as several interviewees expressed beliefs that clients were not being held accountable. Finally, additional flexibility in times or days of the week that treatment was offered would be helpful for clients as some had to choose between going to their job or going to treatment.

### Limitations of Current Study

Initially, the study was designed to provide a robust evaluation utilizing a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group examining participants before and after their participation in the program with special attention to client recidivism rates. Unfortunately, the evaluation of the PALS Pilot Program was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and budget cuts which impacted the evaluation and resulted in data limitations. The program as originally designed was called the South King County Pretrial Services Center which was intended to be a one-stop shop of services for pretrial defendants to meet the geographical need of the diverse pretrial defendants in South King County. When the pandemic emerged, the program was immediately halted, received budget cuts soon after, and was changed in name and structure. The name of the program was changed from the South King County Pretrial Services Center to the South King County Pretrial Assessment and Linkages Services (PALS). Structurally, the program was changed from the South King County Pretrial Services Center one-stop-services center to the South King County Pretrial Assessment and Linkages Services (PALS) which operated as a hub (rather than a one-stop services center). With this change, rather than operating as a one-stop service center, the PALS Pilot Program utilized the entire King County Integrated Care Network (KCICN) to provide assessment, linkages, and services which includes all the providers that contract with the county to serve pretrial defendants. With the budget cuts, all mental health evaluations were completed in the community rather than in-custody. This resulted in fewer clients being referred to the program from King County Superior Court. In addition, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health professionals were not allowed to enter the jail which also impacted the ability to do in-custody mental health assessments. In-custody substance use disorder (SUD) assessments were completed via video to link defendants to in-

patient treatment which was necessary to determine whether the defendants required in-patient rather than outpatient services. Thus, these changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and budget cuts reduced the number of PALS referrals. The original program was exclusively designed to serve King County Superior Court referrals. However, the changes to the program resulted in a reduced number of King County Superior Court referrals and the PALS Pilot Program was then opened to Federal Way Municipal Court and King County District Court. Thus, the changes to the program resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and budget cuts impacted the program structure, research design, the number of court referrals, and the courts from which the clients were referred to the program.

In addition to budget cuts to the program, funding for the evaluation of the program was pulled as well. By June of 2021, limited funding was restored to the evaluation research project, but, at this time, the PALS program was already operating with clients which barred the possibility of completing pre-interviews with clients as intended in the original research design. The research design was changed from the original plan for a multi-year quasi-experimental investigation to a one-year descriptive evaluation and the late evaluation start resulted in a loss of data. Additionally, the clients that were subsequently admitted to PALS and were contacted throughout the remainder of the project were new and, thus, had minimal information to provide. Moreover, the study was plagued by a low sample size both in terms of PALS clients and the number of clients who agreed to participate in the qualitative interviews. Finally, due to the late start of some clients into the PALS program, it was not possible to complete pre/post interviews with these individuals given the time parameter of the study.

From the PALS Program Director standpoint, there were several challenges that the program faced. For instance, changing clients eligible for the PALS program, such as violent offenders which was not the original intent, thus, a wide net was cast outside of original program design. Additionally, mid-way through the evaluation period the King County Prosecutor's Office raised concerns about accountability and wanted to know about non-compliance issues in a timely manner. To accommodate this request, PALS participants were also simultaneously enrolled in CCAP or electronic home monitoring (EHM) as a caseworker was assigned to CCAP and EHM participants. The PALS program lost a caseworker position due to funding which is why participants were assigned to the dual programs. Because of this, a true comparison between PALS participants and CCAP clients could not take place. However, in March of 2022, a caseworker will be assigned so the issue of dual enrollment and lack of a mental health evaluation will no longer be an issue.

## **Implications and Future Research**

The findings from the current descriptive study offer descriptive information to better understand the pretrial reentry process for those in South King County. There is scant data available specifically examining jail alternatives that enhance pretrial reentry success. The descriptive findings presented here are based on a small sample of PALS Pilot Program clients. As a result of changes to the originally planned research design and data limitations, it was not possible to make quantitative pre/post program comparisons or to include a comparison group as originally planned. The qualitative interviews conducted yield rich information about the PALS Pilot Program such as the importance of it filling a regional service gap, the specific support the program provided for clients, and the ways in which the program made a difference to clients. While officials wanted greater accountability of PALS participants, the overall findings suggest that the PALS program is a regional asset in helping South King County PALS clients in the reentry process. In addition, the shift from the South King County Pretrial Services Center one-stop

services to the Pretrial Assessment and Linkages Services (PALS) Pilot Program offered a silver lining in that clients could be served closer to where they reside, and the bulk of the services were provided virtually via telehealth.

Future research is needed to determine if the South King County PALS Pilot Program has a significant impact as a jail alternative specifically for BIPOC clients. The findings that the majority of the PALS clients were BIPOC suggests that the PALS program does indeed fill a critical service gap for South King County that improves services for BIPOC pretrial defendants. Future research should explore if and how the PALS program addresses the unique needs of Black pretrial defendants in assisting in their successful transition in the community. Further, whether the PALS program is indeed fostering lower client recidivism rates is in need of further exploration utilizing a quasi-experimental research design that includes a comparison group. Finally, the quantitative results showing a relationship between program dosage and program completion and recidivism need to be further examined using a larger sample. A longitudinal study that quantitatively and qualitatively examines program outcome through recidivism as well as other markers of reentry success beyond recidivism (e.g., client personal change, program satisfaction, rapport between clients and staff) would provide empirical data to better understand the impact of this pretrial jail alternative in South King County in terms of the experience and impact for clients and the community. Understanding the lived experience of pretrial defendants is a critical piece in understanding the impact of programs for pretrial defendants in addition to and beyond recidivism.

This study is one of the few to attempt to capture both qualitative interview data for pretrial clients. Future research should further examine the impact of the PALS program through interviews soliciting client narratives and perspectives of staff and officials longitudinally. Understanding the lived experiences of PALS clients navigating pretrial reentry through qualitative rather than quantitative data offers meaningful data to shed light on measures of success beyond recidivism such as personal change, hope for the future, and positive relationships between clients and staff, all of which has the potential to lead to crime desistance over time but may not be immediately measured through recidivism as an outcome variable, especially given the limitations of available recidivism data. In addition, given the concerns expressed by local officials regarding the implementation of the PALS Pilot, a community survey measuring the perceptions of the community regarding the PALS Program would yield important data to better understand the views of community members with respect to openness to offering reentry services in the community, concerns about the public safety impact, and general perceptions of how communities and community members can play a part in the reentry process for individuals at the pretrial stage of the criminal legal process.

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## Appendix A

### South King County PALS Program: Program Participants Viewpoints

<b>1) MOTIVATION</b>
1) What are/were your motivations for being part of the PALS program?
2) What do/did you hope to get out of the PALS program? Did PALS deliver with respect to your expectations?
3) Do you think you can/would have met your goals without being part of the PALS program? Why or why not?
<b>2) PROGRAM PERSONNEL</b>
4) What do you hope your relationship with PALS program staff will be/was? What staff will be/were particularly helpful to you?
5) What if anything could PALS program staff do/have done to improve/enhance your opportunities for success?
<b>3) PROGRAM PROCEDURE</b>
6) What do you expect/was your general experience in the PALS program?
7) Did you feel you will be/were treated fairly PALS program staff during your time in the program? Why or why not?
8) Did you feel you will be/were offered adequate support and incentive to participate in the program to ensure your success? Explain.
9) How many days do you expect to/did you participate in the program?
<b>4) TREATMENTS/PROGRAMS</b>
10) What/Were there program components and/or treatment do you think/that you found most useful (e.g., group therapy, individual therapy, 12-step meetings, etc.)? Please explain.
11) What program components and/or treatments do you expect to/did you find least useful? Please explain.
<b>5) STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES</b>
12) How satisfied do you expect to be/were you with your experience with the PALS Program? Please explain.
13) What would you see/did you see as strengths of the program?
14) What would you see/did you see as weaknesses of the program?
15) What do you think will/could have improve(d) the effectiveness of the PALS program to achieve program objectives to provide participants with alternative services to reduce recidivism? Do you think program participation will help you be successful in not returning to King County court system? Please explain.
16) What components of the PALS program do you think will be/were particularly helpful to you in ensuring your success in completing the program and in not returning to the King County court system?
17) Is there anything that you would like to add?

## Appendix B

### South King County PALS: Staff/Judge/Attorney Viewpoints

<b>1) BACKGROUND</b>
1) What is your background (education and training)? How long have you worked in this position? What drew you to apply for this position? What jurisdictions have you worked in? What other jobs or positions have you held in the criminal justice system in your career? What is your role as PALS staff?
2) How familiar are you with the day reporting center referred to as CCAP at the King County Juvenile and Adult detention specifically? How is the South King County PALS Program unique?
3) What are your thoughts in regard to alternatives to incarceration?
4) (If judge or defense attorney) Why did you refer the defendant/client to PALS?
<b>2) OPINIONS</b>
5) What are your thoughts about the benefits/costs of the PALS program in terms of the stated objectives to provide alternative services to reduce recidivism? What other benefits/costs are associated with the SKC PALS Pilot? Why? How could this program be strengthened?
6) What factors do you think inhibited the success of participants in the PALS Program?
7) What factors and/or program elements do you think enhanced the success of participants in the PALS Program?
8) What would you recommend to improve participant success in the reentry process after successful completion of PALS Program?
9) Do you have any other thoughts/experiences/comments/suggestions about the PALS Program you would like to offer?