



*A Report to the Governor and Legislature on the Operation  
and Performance of the Juvenile Justice Commission's  
Stabilization & Reintegration Program*

Submitted by:

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *INTRODUCTION*

This is the initial report on the Juvenile Justice Commission's Stabilization and Reintegration Program (SRP), New Jersey's first "juvenile boot camp" program. The report examines the implementation and operation of this newly established program, assesses the program's performance during its first two years of operation through impact and outcome analyses, and offers recommendations for the SRP's more effective operation.

The SRP was established pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:17B-181 et seq., to further the goals of the legislation. They included both individual and system level goals. The focus on the individual level was rehabilitation and accountability. Goals included a reduction in recidivism and related personal growth (e.g., development of positive attitudes and orientations related to self-control, self-respect and respect of others, and improved work habits) through a rigorous, discipline-oriented regimen of structured activities. System goals included reduced costs of incarceration, alleviation of correctional facility overcrowding, and a more creative use of correctional resources.

New Jersey shares many of these goals with other boot camps across the country. Despite the broad appeal of boot camp programs, research on achieving various goals has been mixed, with limited evidence of effectiveness in reducing recidivism. Research indicates that boot camps can have an impact on overcrowding and significant cost savings can be realized under certain conditions.

Staff of the Office of Policy and Service Development developed and implemented a research design to rigorously examine the program's operation and performance in light of legislative goals. The research utilized various data collection strategies: standardized tests (to measure youth change over time), surveys, interviews and focus groups, interviews and informal discussions with staff, site observation and document review. Outside experts also observed the program.

Findings suggest a program in the process of change; progress has clearly been made since its early months. Results of the program evaluation are encouraging, with

some impact on not only overcrowding and costs but on reduced recidivism (recidivism was defined as any new delinquency filing in family court or adult arrest) and personal growth. However, the findings are, largely, preliminary and tentative. This is how it must be with a still new and changing program. Also, *long-term* impact on youth behavior cannot be assessed until large numbers have completed the entire program and can be “followed up” for a period of time (in this case, a one-year follow up is planned).

### *THE PROGRAM*

The SRP has three components. The one-month Orientation Unit’s task is to prepare recruits for the Wharton Tract experience through an introduction to military-style discipline and regimentation, and basic educational instruction and treatment services. The five-month Wharton Tract program attempts to achieve broad rehabilitative gains within a context of military-like discipline and regimentation. SRP graduates undergo a period of Aftercare which attempts to achieve the goals of public safety, offender accountability and rehabilitation through surveillance and treatment provision/referral.

As of January 1998, 365 juveniles had entered Wharton Tract. A majority were 17 or older; 84% were minority youth. Nearly half were from Passaic (30%) and Camden (15%) counties. For the first 13 platoons, 292 cadets were admitted, with 77% successfully completing the program. Components of the Wharton Tract program include, first, the overarching context of military-like regimentation involving military bearing, drill and ceremony and physical training – run by Drill Instructors who also contribute to the treatment program.

A second component is education. Cadets receive about 3 ½ hours a day of academic classes, earning an average of 22 credits. Cadets receive 2 ½ hours a day of vocational training in class work and work site activity. Projects include restoring historical buildings, home repair for senior citizens, interior renovations, various other building construction and repair activities, and forestry management.

The final component is the social service treatment program. Social work staff provide individual/group counseling and teach the *Keys to Innervisions* cognitive skills curriculum; cadets receive at least one hour of group counseling daily.

Cadet surveys, interviews with cadets and staff, and focus groups revealed largely

positive perceptions regarding the program and indicated improvements over time. Cadets reported positive changes in their attitudes, orientations and sense of themselves and others. Education was singled out by cadets and staff as of particular value. Along with generally favorable responses regarding staff, cadets were critical of the approach and/or level of “caring” of select staff; they noted various areas in need of improvement (many did not like getting up early; others did not like DIs “getting in my face,” felt that physical training was too hard, did not like the “no family visit” policy, the types of sanctions used, or the food). Staff saw need for improvement in terms of more stable administration, expanded use of written guidelines, increased staffing and staff training.

The program uses sanctions (“Learning Experiences”) that are allowed in response to particular rule infractions. They range from minor physical exercises (e.g., push-ups), minor cleaning projects and essay writing to more serious sanctions such as major clean up projects, use of a “quiet room” and removal from the program. The accountability process was revised as a response to consultant observations in late 1996. Changes include greater use of rewards (vs. sanctions) for positive behavior; a greater role for “purposeful sanctions,” and improved guidelines on appropriate use.

Aftercare programs are widely considered to be a key component in the success of a boot camp program. The Commission’s Aftercare provides no distinction in terms of programming between the SRP graduates and other youth under supervision. Analysis was conducted on 96 SRP graduates on Aftercare in February 1998. Nearly six out of ten youth remaining in the community were either currently involved with educational activities or working full time; 39% currently received counseling services. In February, 36% of the 66 youth remaining in the community performed a total of 128 hours of community service. A total of 60% of the parolees had a mentor at some time while on Aftercare; 30% were currently involved with a mentor.

Surveillance while on Aftercare is key to maintaining public safety. Once released from Wharton Tract, all youth are required to have a 7:00 p.m. curfew. In February, 29% had achieved a level of supervision requiring no programmatic curfew constraints. The most common curfew time for the other SRP graduates (36%) was 9:00 p.m. Curfews are monitored by telephone check-in via pagers, electronic monitoring devices, and personal

contacts. During February, there was an average of 2.2 curfew contacts per SRP graduate (in addition to other monitoring contacts); 12 SRP graduates were connected to *Voice Track*, a voice identification system. Urine testing is an integral part of the program's surveillance strategy. During February, an average of 3.2 urine tests were completed per youth; 14% of the youth tested positive.

### **RESULTS OF OUTCOME/IMPACT ANALYSIS**

Various individual-level outcomes were examined to measure potential gains. Recidivism results (new court involvement/adult arrests) were encouraging. Recidivism results of SRP graduates were compared with a *sample* of comparison youth released from other institutions/programs. Recidivism was measured between release and November 1997. The recidivism rate for the SRP youth was 41%; their "time at risk" -- the average time between release and the cut-off date -- was 303 days. The recidivism rate for the comparison group was 53%; with 222 days "time at risk." The difference in recidivism between the two groups was statistically significant. The analysis, to date, has not attempted to control for potentially confounding differences between the two groups. For example, the SRP group received the Commission's aftercare supervision while most of the control group youth received supervision by the Bureau of Parole.

Several measures of personal growth were examined: antisocial attitudes, alienation/distrust, locus of control, and attitudes and awareness regarding substance abuse. SRP youth made small but statistically significant gains regarding antisocial attitudes, locus of control and substance abuse awareness. Similar gains were made by the comparison group. The SRP youth, in addition, achieved substantial gains in educational basic skills while at Wharton Tract -- with an average increase in scores of over one full grade level, over a five to six month period.

Legislators had as system goals for the SRP, reduction of costs by shortening stays of incarceration and alleviation of overcrowding in juvenile facilities. The SRP appears to have made gains in both areas. The SRP is less expensive than the Training School (\$21,060 vs. \$37,500) for comparable youth -- in part due to shorter stays -- and its cost is essentially equivalent to that of the community residential programs for comparable youth (based on a review of youth in the study samples). The SRP also "freed up" beds, both at

the Training School and the community residential programs. It is estimated that the program has the capacity to “free up” between 111 and 139 beds (depending on whether particular offenders were actually Training School or community program “bound”). Finally, there was some indication that the operation of the SRP may have led to a degree of “net widening,” i.e., placement of noncommitted youth, by judges, into community residential programs due to more available beds in those programs. Such “net widening” has an impact on limiting potential cost savings and reduction in overcrowding.

### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

Recommendations are offered as contributions to the ongoing program development and refinement of the Stabilization and Reintegration Program.

- C Visit other juvenile boot camps to learn about promising models. Reevaluate use of an adult model (New York Shock Incarceration program) for juveniles.
- C Explore the potential for expanding parental involvement at Wharton Tract.
- C Increase the use of rewards (vs. sanctions) provided for individual accomplishment or positive behavior.
- C Specify in the Cadet Handbook, acceptable staff behavior and a clearly written policy and procedures regarding cadets’ right to report grievances.
- C Explore the potential for broadening participation in SRP more proportionately across the state, consistent with existing patterns of commitment. Passaic County, for example, currently accounts for 30% of all admissions to the SRP.
- C Evaluate the extent to which existing curricula may be in competition with each other, potentially straining cadets’ capacity to absorb differing approaches.
- C Implement more formalized parenting classes and human sexuality classes at Wharton Tract.
- C Provide greater supervision and/or consultation of Social Work staff through the services of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Licensed Clinical Psychologist.
- C Implement strategies to achieve greater integration and linkages between Wharton Tract and Aftercare, and provide a more identifiable, “specialized,” SRP Aftercare program.
- C Conduct a graduation ceremony for youth completing the Aftercare component, i.e.,

completing the entire SRP program. Periodic graduations could be held at Wharton Tract, benefitting graduates, cadets at Wharton Tract and the program.

- C Explore strategies for achieving more timely implementation of case plans back in the community.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report on the Juvenile Justice Commission's Stabilization & Reintegration Program -- New Jersey's first "juvenile boot camp" program -- is submitted in accordance with legislative requirements (P. L. 1995, c.330 -- N.J.S.A. 52:17B - 181 et seq.). The legislation required the Juvenile Justice Commission to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature 24 months after the implementation of the Stabilization & Reintegration Program (SRP). The mandated purpose of the report is to describe the implementation and operation of the SRP and to assess its performance. The legislation further required that the report include any recommendations for changes to the SRP deemed necessary for its more effective operation.

While the program has been in operation for more than two years now, it is important to note that the program remains a new one and, as such, continues to be in a process of growth and change. Already, as is usually the case with new programs (and certainly new correctional programs), significant changes have been made and as the report suggests, improvements achieved. While certain conclusions can be drawn from this report, a continuing analysis of the significance of such changes for the overall performance of the program is required. In addition, to date, there are only a handful of youth who have completed the entire Stabilization & Reintegration Program. Only after substantial numbers have been free of involvement with the program for some time can the long-term impact on its participants be adequately measured.

The analysis of the SRP reflected in this report is part of a continuing effort by the Juvenile Justice Commission's Office of Policy & Service Development to examine the program with the goal of continued program development and refinement. The Commission will make available periodic updates and enhancements of findings regarding the program.

## ***THE BOOT CAMP EXPERIENCE NATIONALLY***

The national experience with boot camp programs across the country in recent years has been one of tremendous growth and transformation. The number of programs has grown quickly since the first boot camp was created in Georgia, in 1983. The country had been slower to develop boot camp programs for juveniles. However, their number has grown considerably in the 1990s. According to recent estimates, there are currently in excess of 50 juvenile boot camp programs operating at the state or local level across the country.

The popularity of, and substantial public support for boot camps, seems tied to their perceived ability to alleviate prison overcrowding, reduce recidivism, cut correctional costs and, at the same time, provide what is perceived as a “get tough” approach to offenders (MacKenzie & Souryal, 1994). Boot camp programs have been shown to typically share several characteristics -- military-like discipline, drill, regimentation and ceremony, work or hard labor, intensive physical conditioning and training, and long hours in a very structured day (Cronin & Han, 1994; Mackenzie & Hebert, 1996). Most are designed for young adult offenders convicted of nonviolent crimes who do not have a history of imprisonment.

Since 1983, there has been a general move away from the “first generation” of boot camp programs which were criticized for their “in-your-face” confrontational approach (Morash & Rucker, 1990). Currently, adult boot camps frequently incorporate treatment elements (e.g., education, substance abuse treatment and education, group counseling) into their programs (MacKenzie & Hebert, 1996). Even so, programs differ widely in the amount of time scheduled for drill, physical training, etc., as opposed to counseling, drug treatment and other treatment oriented activities (MacKenzie, Brame, McDowal and Souryal, 1995).

Like the adult programs, juvenile boot camp programs vary in their objectives and focus, although they are more likely to include a strong treatment and rehabilitation focus. The joint accountability and rehabilitation approach to running juvenile boot camps -- combined with subsequent efforts to provide meaningful aftercare supervision and services -- was central to the OJJDP model demonstration program to examine the feasibility, appropriateness and potential of utilizing boot camps for juvenile offenders (Office of

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1990). The three juvenile boot camp programs funded by OJJDP through that demonstration program (in Denver, Cleveland and Mobile), implemented the approach with varying degrees of success (Bourque, Cronin, Pearson, Fleker, Han and Hill, 1996; Peters, 1997). A focus on treatment and aftercare has been included in other juvenile boot camp programs as well, including the LEAD program in California, and New York's Sergeant Henry Johnson Youth Leadership Academy (Isorena & Lara, 1995; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1996).

Not only do juvenile programs differ regarding the focus of programming, they also vary with regard to the offender population targeted. While some programs admit committed youth only, others serve predominantly noncommitted youth, i.e., probationers. The juvenile programs also differ with regard to the age of offenders admitted as well as the seriousness of their "current" and prior offending. While one program may serve younger juveniles with limited offense histories, another will serve largely 17 and 18 year olds with serious committing offenses and/or lengthy prior delinquent court careers (MacKenzie & Hebert, 1996; Peters, 1997).

Despite the broad appeal of adult and juvenile boot camp programs, research to date on impact and outcomes related to various goals has been mixed, with limited evidence of effectiveness in reducing recidivism. Some states have become disenchanted with the operation or results of programs and, as a result, boot camp facilities have been closed.

With reference to juvenile boot camp programs, implementation and especially outcome analysis is meager. However, several comprehensive implementation and outcome (although generally preliminary) evaluations are becoming available (Peters, 1996 a,b; Thomas and Peters, 1996; Peters, 1997; California Youth Authority, 1997).

In evaluations of the adult boot camp programs, there is some evidence that specific goals are achieved. Research indicates that operation of boot camps can have an impact on institutional overcrowding. Significant cost savings can be realized under certain conditions, i.e., when they are utilized as true alternatives to incarceration, and when they are of a significant size (General Accounting Office, 1993; MacKenzie, Shaw & Gowdy,

1993; MacKenzie & Souryal, 1994; MacKenzie & Piquero, 1994; New York State Department of Correctional Services, 1994). The cost savings are typically tied to shorter lengths of stay in boot camp programs rather than as a result of their being cheaper to operate or resulting in lower rates of recidivism (General Accounting Office, 1993; Peters, 1997). The greater the dropout and “washout” rates (i.e., failures to complete the program), and the lengthier incarceration periods prior to entry into the boot camp program, the less likely there is to be an impact on crowding and cost (MacKenzie & Piquero, 1994).

The findings with reference to offender recidivism are less promising to date, however, there is some indication that certain types of programs may have better recidivism results than others. In their multi-site evaluation, MacKenzie and Souryal found the overall impact of boot camp programs on offender recidivism to be, at best, negligible (1994). However, gains in prosocial attitudes as well as attitudes toward the program were achieved; similar gains were made in the comparison groups as well.

In five of the eight states studied by MacKenzie and Souryal, there was no positive impact on offender recidivism as a result of the boot camp. Three of the states (Illinois, Louisiana and New York) did have lower rates of recidivism on some measures (see also MacKenzie, Shaw & Gowdy, 1993). The authors concluded: “If success is measured in terms of recidivism alone, there is little evidence that the in-prison phase of boot camp programs have been successful.” (MacKenzie and Souryal, 1994:30). However, they concluded that the programs with the most promising recidivism results differed from the others in their combined focus on therapeutic programming and provision of an intensive community supervision phase.

Findings also have suggested that gains within the boot camp context and under community supervision tend to diminish or disappear over time (General Accounting Office, 1993; MacKenzie & Souryal, 1994). As a result, there have been widespread calls for a strong aftercare component to be closely integrated with the residential boot camp program.

Recent outcome evaluations of juvenile boot camps also fail to indicate gains with regard to recidivism in comparison with control groups (Peters, 1997; California Youth Authority, 1997). They do, however, indicate other gains in personal development that

occur between the beginning of the boot camp program and its completion (e.g., gains in basic academic skills). Poor implementation, especially with regard to the aftercare component of programs, has often hampered the potential for success in juvenile programs (Peters, 1997).

Experts have identified the importance of several strategies facilitating success in juvenile boot camp programs. Among these are the following:

- C Special attention in planning stages to prepare for and facilitate successful implementation of the program;
- C Close coordination between and integration of the residential (boot camp) component and the aftercare component of the program is critical;
- C Avoiding admission of large numbers of youth who are not “institution-bound” (i.e., probationers) will work against the system goals of increasing cost effectiveness and reducing crowding;
- C “Recycling” and other forms of graduated sanctions with regard to participants as a way to maintain gains with regard to achieving cost and overcrowding reduction goals;
- C The need to establish strategies to minimize the potential for high staff turnover;
- C The need to take measures to appropriately screen, select and train staff;
- C The need to develop a comprehensive and dynamic policy and procedures manual.

## **LEGISLATIVE MANDATE FOR NEW JERSEY'S STABILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAM**

New Jersey began operating its first "boot camp program" -- a 60 bed facility -- in February 1996 in response to a legislative mandate that the Juvenile Justice Commission create a Stabilization and Reintegration Program (SRP). At the same time, the legislation required the Department of Corrections to create a similar program for young adults.

The juvenile and young adult programs were to have a strong rehabilitative focus. This is reflected in the name of the program specified by the legislation -- the Stabilization and Reintegration Program -- and the fact that the sponsors of the legislation took great pains to emphasize that this was "not a boot camp program." Rather, they saw it as something more. It was to be a program that would enhance and integrate traditional military-like drill, work and discipline with a treatment orientation, and incorporate an intensive period of aftercare supervision and services.

In its own words, the legislation called for a program of incarceration that would stress "a highly structured routine of discipline, regimentation, exercise and work therapy, together with substance abuse and self-improvement counseling, education and an intensive program of aftercare supervision" (P.L. 1995, c 330).

There were, in addition, select criteria for inclusion in the program. Eligibility for the program was denied offenders with adjudications of delinquency for first degree offenses (e.g., murder, first degree robbery) or for sexual offenses. Eligibility was further limited to youth above the age of 13.

### **Program Goals Mandated by the Legislation**

The legislation included a number of overlapping objectives for the program. At the system level, goals included:

- C to reduce costs by shortening stays of incarceration;
- C to help alleviate overcrowding in juvenile facilities; and
- C to provide more creative use of correctional resources.

At the individual level, goals included:

- C to develop positive attitude and behavior traits that foster the work ethic and maturity through proven techniques of regimentation and structured discipline;

- C to foster self-control, self-respect, teamwork and improved work habits conducive to the return of participants to society as law-abiding citizens;
- C to provide a rehabilitative experience that will achieve a positive influence on behavior and thwart subsequent offending; and
- C to provide meaningful and productive work opportunities and vocational training to enhance marketable skills.

The program was to have two main components: a residential (“boot camp”) component and an Aftercare component. The residential component of SRP was to incorporate highly structured routines of discipline; physical exercise; work; substance abuse counseling; education and vocational training; psychological counseling; and self-improvement and personal growth counseling stressing moral values and cognitive reasoning. The Aftercare component was to be “intensive” and include work opportunities and vocational training. Youth under Aftercare supervision would be on parole status and be subject to reincarceration for parole violations.

## ***THE EVALUATION PROJECT***

Staff of the Office of Policy and Service Development was asked to design and implement a process for examining the implementation and performance of the SRP. A plan was developed to collect information required to rigorously examine the program on an ongoing basis. The data collection began in May 1996 and remains ongoing.

The focus of the evaluation process is two fold: 1) process and implementation; and 2) impact and outcome. The first includes a descriptive assessment of the nature, characteristics and quality of the various components of the program including services and sanctions actually provided. It also includes a descriptive assessment of the extent to which the program is implemented and organized to address legislative and broader policy objectives.

The second focus includes an assessment of the program's individual level outcomes (potential gains for the youth in the program) and broader system impact; some of the individual level outcomes were not analyzed for this report. The individual level outcomes included various measures of behavior such as reducing recidivism, i.e., continued law-breaking, going to school or getting a job and staying away from illegal drugs and alcohol. Other significant individual level outcomes included various indicators of personal growth and development. These include such gains as a decrease in antisocial attitudes, greater "internal locus of control," greater awareness of the problems related to drug and alcohol abuse, an increase in responsibility, self-respect and respect of others, and general cognitive skill development. While focusing on the performance of SRP with regard to achieving gains in these areas, the data collection process was designed to gather information on youth involved with the SRP as well as committed youth placed in other Juvenile Justice Commission programs.

The evaluation process also includes an assessment of broader system impact. The main focus here is on examining the potential for the SRP to relieve overcrowding in the Juvenile Justice Commission institutional and community residential facilities, and its cost relative to placement in Juvenile Justice Commission institutions or community residential programs.

It is important to note that the impact and outcome analysis provided in this report

is preliminary. This is due to the relatively short period of time that the program has been in existence. A true measure of a program's ability to reduce recidivism or have a lasting impact on personal growth and behavior, including its ability to reduce recidivism, requires the passage of time. Youth must first complete the program, in this case the residential and Aftercare components of the program. There must then be a "follow up period," minimally a year and ideally several. The follow up period serves at least two purposes: it allows time during which youth have an opportunity to "succeed" or "fail." The follow up period also allows for an assessment of lasting gains. For example, does an increase in an offender's pro-social attitudes last or does it decay once out the door of the program or shortly after.

Related to the fact that the program has been in operation for a relatively short period of time, it has developed and changed substantially during that time. Because of the changes and adjustments that are typically made by a correctional program in its initial months and even years, an attempt to assess outcomes and impact early on can lead to conclusions about a program that, in a manner of speaking, no longer exists. In several ways, that is the case with the SRP.

The Juvenile Justice Commission plans to continue its examination of SRP in coming years. It will continue the data collection and extend the analysis process to facilitate the examination of the operation and performance of the program, and to determine its long-term impact on youth.

An array of information was collected on program youth to assist in the examination of the nature and quality of program implementation as well as to determine individual-level program outcomes. Youth were tested shortly after intake at the New Jersey Training School for Boys (Training School) prior to selection into the SRP. A youth was selected for testing if he met the broad legislative criteria for entry into the SRP. As a result, committed youth who were not subsequently selected (and/or did not volunteer) for the SRP, were included in the comparison sample. These youth (who were classified to remain at the Training School or who were placed in community residential programs) serve as a comparison group in the present analysis. In future analysis and reporting, the non-SRP study youth will be treated as two separate comparison groups.

The evaluation project gathered information in a number of ways: administration of a battery of standardized tests and surveys; cadet interviews and focus groups; interviews and informal discussions with staff and administrators; review of program documents; and observation of the program at the Wharton Tract site. The testing of SRP youth and other youth in the study was done at several points to allow for examination of potential gains over time. To date, three “waves” of testing have been done: one shortly after entry into the Training School as a committed youth; one shortly before release from custody; and one before completion of Aftercare/Parole. The Commission hopes to conduct a fourth “wave” of testing one year after completion of Aftercare as a way to measure lasting gains (alongside a recidivism analysis at that point in time). The analysis on which this report is based includes an examination of the first two waves of data only, i.e., through the point of release from custody.

In addition to the above efforts to examine the program, two experts in the area of juvenile boot camp programs, Doris MacKenzie of the University of Maryland and Tyrone Vick, First Officer of the Sgt. Henry Johnson Leadership Academy in New York (a juvenile boot camp program) were asked to visit the Wharton Tract site in late 1996. The purpose of the site visit was to provide some early feedback regarding the operation of the SRP to assist program development, and to supplement the ongoing Juvenile Justice Commission research effort.

## ***THE STABILIZATION & REINTEGRATION PROGRAM***

The SRP was implemented as a three phase program: the Orientation Unit (residential); the Wharton Tract (“boot camp”) Facility; and Aftercare.

### ***The Orientation Unit***

The Orientation Unit of the Stabilization and Reintegration Program is located in Allaire State Park, Howell Township, adjacent to the Arthur Brisbane Child Treatment Center. The facility is housed in one building with a capacity for 30 beds. The ground level includes dormitory rooms, nurse’s station, Drill Instructor’s station, bathroom facilities, an all-purpose meeting room/lounge, an administrative office and dining hall and kitchen. The second floor contains two classrooms, a computer center and an office for the teachers. The basement provides storage facilities and heating and physical plant.

The Orientation Unit has the critical task of preparing recruits mentally, emotionally and physically for the Wharton Tract Program they will experience. This orientation is achieved through an introduction to military style discipline and bearing, educational evaluations and rudimentary instruction, and the initiation of group and individual treatment services. Recruits (cadets) spend about one month at the Orientation Unit. Cadets enter Wharton Tract in platoons. Therefore, the platoons must be “built up” over time in the Orientation Unit and the Unit must be prepared to move a platoon shortly after each graduation. As a result, the amount of time spent in the Unit can vary greatly. It is not clear, at this point, what impact the limited opportunity for program orientation might have on cadets.

The Orientation Unit of the SRP initially began at the Training School in Cottage 6 in January 1996. By August 1996 the Unit had been moved to its present location.

Cadets are selected from committed juveniles by the Classification Committee at the Training School. The Superintendent of the Orientation Unit and members of his staff participate in the recruitment process, reaching out to youth in county detention centers and at the Training School. When a youth is identified to Orientation Unit staff as a good possibility for the SRP, the youth is visited and shown a video of the SRP experience. As part of the Classification Committee process, the Superintendent has direct input into the selection of recruits, who are ultimately free to volunteer for participation in the program.

The enabling legislation stipulates eligibility criteria: that the juveniles shall be at least 14 years of age and shall not have been committed on any first degree offense or sex offense. Additional criteria used by the Commission include no prior or current arson or sex offense adjudications, and no prior escapes from confinement in a facility.

The admission criteria are broad enough to include juveniles who have a history of maladjustment to an incarcerative setting or have emotional problems. The Orientation Unit has also accepted juveniles who exhibit aggressive behavior. Juveniles on medication are eligible depending upon the youths' adjustment to their present regimen.

### ***The Wharton Tract Facility***

The Wharton Tract Facility is located in Tabernacle Township within the vast Wharton State Forest preserve. The complex includes a main building that houses a large multi-purpose hall that is referred to as the "drill hall." The dining hall wing referred to as the "mess hall" has an adjacent kitchen with pantry and refrigeration areas. The main building also houses three dormitory areas referred to as "squad bays." Toilet, shower and laundry facilities are also next to the squad bays. A "program desk" serves as the focal point for communications and the SRP's "command center." It is centrally located in the main building. Alongside the program desk are two "quiet rooms" that can be locked as needed. These rooms contain bunk beds.

Directly next to the mess hall are three offices for the administration, the Nurse's Station and the Social Workers. Offices that adjoin the drill hall include a Sergeant's Station, a maintenance office, and another office shared by the school psychologist and the physical education teacher and teacher assistant.

Outside and immediately next to the rear entrance to the drill hall are a storage room and locker rooms for male and female officers. One of the locker rooms may also double as sleeping quarters for officers who must remain on grounds for coverage or emergencies.

The school is located in a large trailer facility with four classrooms as well as small office cubicles for the director of education and teachers. Another trailer houses an administrative board room. Also located on the SRP parcel of land are a low and high ropes course and a repelling tower.

The central focus of the building complex is a blacktopped yard area used for drill and ceremony and referred to as the “grinder.” Cadets have participated in landscaping the building complex that includes a small garden pond. In season, the cadets plant and maintain a vegetable garden. They also constructed a parade reviewing stand and a kennel for the SRP mascot -- a German Shepherd mixed-breed dog called Boots.

#### *The Mission of the Wharton Tract Program*

*To educate young men in both an academic and a military environment so they are fully prepared to meet their responsibilities as citizens in a manner which reflects alertness in mind, soundness in body, consideration of others and a high sense of duty, honor, loyalty and courage.*

*To foster love of God and country, gentlemanly qualities and high moral standards, characteristics which will make them a credit to themselves, their families, their country and their God.*

The above mission statement is conspicuously displayed in the main building at Wharton Tract. The program seeks to implement this mission through the combined efforts of all the disciplines working with cadets. These include the work of Drill Instructors, educational staff and social service staff. The Drill Instructor is responsible for training in military bearing and military style regimentation, drill and ceremony, physical training, and part of the cadet’s treatment program.

Wharton Tract has embraced and been trained in a model that is articulated in the New York State Shock Incarceration boot camps. This model is used with young adults, who in the New York State system are ages 16 and above. New York’s Shock Incarceration boot camps group in the same environment persons from ages 16 to 36.

#### *Characteristics of Youth Admitted to Wharton Tract*

As of January 9, 1998, sixteen platoons of cadets had entered Wharton Tract. This includes a total of 365 youth. In 1997, a total of 167 youth entered Wharton Tract. The size of platoons has varied over time, ranging from a low of 17 (Platoon 4) to a high of 31 (Platoon 14). Initially, the Wharton Tract program stay was four months; it is now five months. The policy change began with Platoon 9 which was admitted to Wharton Tract on January 16, 1997. The purpose of the change was to maximize the potential rehabilitative impact of the overall program.

The following provides a profile of characteristics regarding youth admitted to Wharton Tract. This includes demographic information (i.e., age, race/ethnicity and county) as well as offense related information (see Appendix 1).

#### Demographic Profile

*Age.* The 365 youth entering Wharton Tract varied widely in age. Their ages at admission ranged from 13 (only 2 youth) to 19 (only 4 youth). More than half (55.1%) of the cadets were 17 or older. The most common age at admission was 17 (36.2%), followed by 16 (26.3%).

*Race/Ethnicity.* More than eight out of ten (83.8%) of the cadets were minority youth. Race/ethnicity broke down as follows: Black, 54.0%; Hispanic, 28.2%; White, 16.2%; and Asian, 1.6%. The level of minority participation in the program is somewhat lower than the minority representation in the broader committed population within the Commission, recently estimated at 91%.

*County of Origin.* The program serves juveniles committed from family courts from across the state. Juveniles from all counties with the exception of Morris County were admitted to Wharton Tract through Platoon 16. Counties varied widely regarding their representation among admitted youth. Passaic County alone accounted for 108 admitted youth, 29.5% of the total. The second most represented county was Camden with 55 admitted youth (15.1%). Together, they accounted for 44.7% of all youth entering Wharton Tract.

**Table 1. Profile of Juveniles Entering the Stabilization and Reintegration Program**

| <b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>                           | <b>PERCENT (OR MEAN NUMBER) OF CADETS</b> |
|---|---|
| Age at First Court Filing                       | 14.6                                      |
| Number of Prior Adjudications                   | 3.4                                       |
| Number of Violent Prior Adjudications           | 0.6                                       |
| <b>Most Serious Prior Adjudicated (Type)</b>    |   |
| Violent   | 7.1%                                      |
| Weapon  | 5.2%                                      |
| Property  | 46.1%                                     |
| Drug  | 22.1%                                     |
| Other   | 14.3%                                     |
| VOP   | 5.2%                                      |
| <b>Most Serious Prior Adjudicated (Degree)</b>  |   |
| 1st Degree                                      | 3.2%                                      |
| 2nd Degree                                      | 22.7%                                     |
| 3rd Degree                                      | 47.4%                                     |
| 4th Degree                                      | 10.4%                                     |
| Disorderly Persons                              | 9.1%                                      |
| No Degree                                       | 7.1%                                      |
| Number of Charges Adjud. at Commitment          | 2.6                                       |
| <b>Most Serious Commitment Offense (Type)</b>   |   |
| Violent   | 9.5%                                      |
| Weapon  | 3.4%                                      |
| Property  | 33.0%                                     |
| Drug  | 12.8%                                     |
| Other   | 16.8%                                     |
| VOP   | 24.0%                                     |
| <b>Most Serious Commitment Offense (Degree)</b> |   |
| 1st Degree                                      | 0.0%                                      |
| 2nd Degree                                      | 23.8%                                     |
| 3rd Degree                                      | 37.0%                                     |
| 4th Degree                                      | 3.9%                                      |
| Disorderly Persons                              | 6.6%                                      |
| No Degree                                       | 28.7%                                     |
| Length of Sentence (Months)                     | 23  |

Offense Profile

Table 1 provides a profile of several key offense characteristics regarding youth admitted to Wharton Tract. This includes age at first court filing; number of prior adjudications (and violent adjudications) of delinquency; seriousness of prior adjudications (by type and degree); the number of separate charges adjudicated at commitment; the most serious offense for which a youth was committed (by type and by degree); and the length of sentence. For purposes of this report, an adjudication includes all delinquency charges filed on the same date in family court and for which the juvenile was subsequently adjudicated delinquent.

*Prior Involvement.* The average age of youth admitted to Wharton Tract at the time of their first entry into family court on a delinquency charge was 14.6. On average they had 3.4 adjudications prior to the adjudications that were heard as part of the current commitment. The cadets also averaged 0.5 prior violent adjudications. Note that due to the startup schedule of some counties on the FACTS data system maintained by the Administrative Office of the Courts, historical information on some youth will be incomplete. This will have some effect on the results regarding prior and first involvement, e.g., slightly minimizing aggregate results regarding number of priors.

Nearly half of the cadets had a most serious prior adjudication (46.1%) for a property offense, and an additional one-fifth (22.1%) had a drug offense as the most serious. A total of 7.1% of the cadets had a violent prior as the most serious. Note that the “other” category includes an array of offenses including such things as conspiracy, terroristic threats, eluding/resisting arrest, criminal mischief.

With regard to the degree of the most serious prior adjudication, for nearly half, the degree of the most serious offense was third degree, followed by second degree (22.7%), and fourth degree (10.4%). A total of 3.2% of admitted cadets had a first degree prior adjudication.

*Committing Offense.* Not uncommonly, several cases from potentially distant filing dates are merged, heard and disposed of together in court. Cadets had an average of 2.6 adjudicated charges at the time of commitment.

The most serious commitment offense for cadets was most frequently a property offense (33.0%). This is followed in frequency by violation of probation (24.0%), other

(16.8%), and drug (12.8%). A violent offense was the commitment offense for 9.5% of the cadets.

With regard to degree of the most serious commitment offense, 37.0% of the cadets had a third degree offense, 23.8% a second degree offense and 6.6% a disorderly persons offense. In addition, 28.7% of the charges had no degree; this included violations of probations and “global” drug charges that are recorded in FACTS with no degree (e.g., manufacturing, distributing, dispensing of CDS).

Finally, average length of sentence for cadets was 23 months. The typical sentence was for two years.

#### *Successful Completion of Wharton Tract*

As of January 1998, thirteen platoons had graduated from the Wharton Tract facility to begin the Aftercare phase of the Stabilization & Reintegration Program. A total of 292 (unduplicated) cadets were admitted to Platoons 1 through 13; a relatively small number of cadets accounted for more than one admission as they reentered Wharton Tract after being returned to the Training School or they were “recycled” to a later platoon.

The 292 cadets admitted to the facility in Platoons 1 through 13 accounted for a total of 298 separate “results.” Results included 1) successful completions; and 2) returns to other facilities for disciplinary or other reasons. Seven cadets were initially returned to the Training School and subsequently returned; five of them graduated, two were again returned. Also, two cadets were initially returned to the Orientation Unit, one subsequently graduating, the other returned to the Training School. Additionally, three cadets from Platoon 13 were “recycled” to later platoons and have no result to date.

Of those with a result to date (289), 222 or 76.8% of the cadets successfully completed the program. Put another way, 74.5% of the “results” were successful. Successful completion typically meant graduation from the program. In four cases, however, cadets were considered to have successfully completed the program despite leaving the program just before graduation day, i.e., three “maxed out” (completed their sentences) while one was “recalled” by the sentencing judge.

There was a total of 74 returns to the Training School and two to the SRP Orientation Unit. The reasons for cadet returns to the Training School included the

following: disciplinary, 59 (55 separate cadets); medical, 9; pending charges/investigation, 3; self request, 2; and perceived escape threat, 1. Thus, 19.0% (55 of 289) of the cadets were returned to the Training School for discipline-related reasons, almost exclusively for fighting.

## **The Program at Wharton Tract**

### *The Drill Instructors and Military-like Orientation of Wharton Tract*

*Military bearing and regimentation* permeates the entire attitude in which all activity at the boot camp takes place. It includes military courtesy, how one addresses one's peers and superiors, and how to perform tasks to exacting detail.

*Drill and ceremony* teaches detailed and exacting procedures by which cadets must move from one place to another, as well as detailed marching skills. The cadets begin their experience with drill and ceremony the moment they arrive at the SRP. In an arrival ceremony they are turned over to the SRP staff by the Orientation Unit staff.

Throughout the day at Wharton Tract, as the cadets are brought together in full company formations, drill and ceremony skills are taught and used. Examples include flag raising in the morning (Reveille), flag lowering in the evening (Retreat), and formal counts of the cadets. The actual marching and drill curriculum is a five-week program of instruction that is very extensive and detailed. It is broken down into numerous formation and step exercises and responses to verbal commands. The culmination of drill and ceremony is demonstrated by all the platoons at graduation and in a special drill formation by the graduating cadets.

*Physical training* is led by the Drill Instructor staff for one hour each morning. P.T. includes stretching exercises, rigorous calisthenics and running.

The Drill Instructors also participate in the treatment program for cadets. They play a major role in teaching the *Doing Life* curriculum. *Doing Life* is a program for recovery designed for people addicted to drugs, including alcohol, or any other mood altering substances or behaviors that are controlling their lives, for example; food, sex, money, gambling, abusive behavior, anger and fighting. It consists of a series of thirteen workbook sessions, the first of which is an Overview. Each of the twelve subsequent workbooks focuses on one of the *12 Steps of Recovery* (based on the program of Alcoholics

Anonymous) and *5 Steps to Decisions*. The Doing Life curriculum is taught each day for about one hour per platoon, by a Drill Instructor.

Drill Instructors also facilitate and guide cadets as the cadets learn to run their own group process. These are called *Community Meetings* and are held for about one hour each day for each platoon. The community meeting is designed to provide continuity between a cadet's past, his present training and his transition back into the community. Cadets can identify issues of living as a community and resolve them on a daily basis.

All cadets are required to participate in the drill and ceremony and physical training as well as the Doing Life Curriculum and Community Meetings. Additionally, cadets are invited to attend a typical meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous if they choose to attend. The AA meeting is held on Sunday for about an hour and is led by individuals in recovery who have come into Wharton Tract as volunteers.

#### *Academic and Vocational Education*

The SRP legislation recognized education, both academic and vocational, as a critical component of the overall programming. As a result, extensive efforts have been made to develop (and to upgrade over time) educational experiences at Wharton Tract that are truly useful to cadets. The main goal of the academic programming is to keep the cadet "at least on track" with the grade he was in prior to incarceration. The minimum goal is to not lose time; the hope is to go beyond that and move the youth to a more age appropriate grade level.

Individual Education Plans (for classified students) or Individual Performance Plans are prepared (or revised from existing plans) at the outset of cadets' stay at the Wharton Tract facility, targeting goals and objectives for each cadet. The cadets receive three and one-half hours of academic classroom activities a day (weekdays). Classroom activities for vocational education are in addition to this figure. The classroom activities include all core curriculum subjects as defined by the State of New Jersey: Fundamental English, General Mathematics, Fundamental U.S. History, General Science, Fundamental World History, Physical Education, Health, and Vocational Education. The classroom activity attempts to engage cadets in subjects by tying the curriculum to their daily interests and experience. Youth attend academic classes in platoons. As a result, the flexibility of

separating youth into classes based on ability is limited. However, the platoons are broken into two groups, based on initial determination of basic academic skill level. Cadets, on average, earn 22 credits to take back to their local school upon release (see educational transcript, Appendix 2). Approximately seven of the 22 credits are for vocational, physical and health education. The total number of credits earned by cadets is equal to, or greater than, the credits that would be earned in a public school.

The classroom teaching is supplemented by a computerized education system and “computer lab” which most cadets enjoy and utilize. The computer activities are used to stimulate and test skill development, complete various research projects, prepare resumes, etc. The cadets are required to, and are provided, an opportunity to do homework at least one hour a day in “study hall.” In addition to academic classroom time, teachers spend an additional hour a day providing individualized attention to particular cadets. Also, tutoring is provided on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) by two teachers (one from the Commission’s Juvenile Medium Security Facility); tutoring is also provided evenings.

There have been recent efforts to improve linkages with SRP Aftercare and, consequently, smoothing the transition back to the community school. Wharton Tract education staff have begun meeting with Aftercare staff including Education Specialists and a Transition Specialist to coordinate their efforts to identify needs and facilitate needed delivery of educational services to the cadets back in their communities.

#### *Vocational Education/Training*

The basic goals of the vocational education and training component of the Wharton Tract program are to provide cadets with a clearer picture of their future career goals, develop life planning skills, and teach basic vocational and job readiness skills.

Cadets receive vocational education/training on an average of 2 1/2 hours a day. This includes classroom activity focusing on job readiness skills (e.g., learning how to get and keep a job; do a job search; compose a resume; how to comport oneself) and instructional and hands-on activities (e.g., learning basic concepts and skills related to renovation, construction, repair and finishing; use of tools and tool safety; providing practical applications of math and other concepts learned in the academic classroom). It also includes work details, either on grounds or at work sites not far from the Wharton Tract

facility. New platoons are limited to work details on grounds which consist of clean-up, painting, maintenance, landscaping and various ad hoc activities. The “older” platoons participate in work details at work sites in the community. The work site activities particularly provide opportunities to utilize and develop concepts and skills learned in the classroom.

A number of work site projects have been developed, both short-term one day or so projects, and long lasting multi-task projects. The work sites include various projects requested by local government, local nonprofit organizations, and private citizens. These work details provide an opportunity to “give to the local community” and, at the same time, to provide meaningful hands-on activities imparting a wide range of basic vocational skills. Required activities at various work sites include: rough and finish carpentry; sheet rock and masonry work; restoration and renovation of buildings; maintenance of forestry buildings and other forestry maintenance such as tree pruning and removal; painting; and cleaning buildings. Since the inception of the Wharton Tract facility, the opportunity to go out on “work detail” has been a favored activity of cadets. Over time, the work details have become increasingly oriented toward challenging learning experiences rather than merely “clean-up” activities.

Recent projects have included maintaining a church cemetery, renovating and restoring historical buildings, house repair for senior citizens, and major repair and renovation to a local “Learning Center” and a Christian youth camp. Work at the “Learning Center” required the following activities: building structure repair, roof repair, flooring, landscaping, interior renovations (dry wall), drop ceiling replacement and painting. The Christian youth camp has had a number of projects (some completed, others not yet begun) including: work with forestry management program thinning trees and cutting out/removing dead or undesirable trees; cleaning and landscaping a small pond and stream; inside/outside painting; minor drywall repair; erosion correction work; and lake management work. One limitation of the existing vocational program is lack of a workshop/vocational classroom setting which would enhance learning experiences and impart additional skills.

*Social Services*

Social work staff responsibilities in the treatment process include individual counseling and group counseling of cadets. The Social Work staff additionally has the responsibility for the review, maintenance and updating of each cadet's case record including pertinent psycho-social history and medical information, contact with the cadet's family by phone, contact with the committing jurisdictions to clarify any pending charges and any missing information related to the cadet's incarceration. Contact with Aftercare is also initiated and maintained and pre-release planning is begun as the cadet proceeds through his five month stay at the Wharton Tract program.

In February 1998, there were 70 cadets in the Wharton Tract population. Of this population, staff reports 53 individual sessions (unduplicated) with cadets during the month. Sessions typically last about one hour. Cadets may request a social services contact or they may be referred by any staff member who feels that a contact is needed.

Group counseling is held once a day for a minimum of one hour for each platoon. The curriculum, *Keys to Innervations (KIV)* is used as a framework for group counseling. The philosophy that underpins KIV speaks to changing the beliefs and behaviors that lead to violence, drug abuse/dependency, school and social failure and criminal behavior. For anyone to make lasting and meaningful changes in behavior, there is one critical element; they must want to change – and they must feel capable of changing. Before a person can develop an attitude of wanting to change, five fundamental ingredients are necessary:

- They must believe that change is possible for themselves.
- They must know how to change.
- They must know what to change.
- They must be able to practice changing.
- They must have support from significant people.

The KIV curriculum content includes cognitive restructuring strategies (e.g., re-framing “self-talk,” goal-decision and goal-achievement processes) to assist in skill building (such as decision making and anger management) useful in arming youth against subsequent stresses and difficulties.

The KIV curriculum also includes the training of all staff, with the goal of fostering and reinforcing use of KIV concepts and tools throughout the program. To date, all staff

at the Wharton Tract facility have been trained in the fundamentals of the KIV curriculum.

Cadets also receive on a daily basis, through a contract with Family Services of Burlington County, drug and alcohol education, assessments and discharge planning. A Certified Social Worker who is also a Certified Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor is on staff and runs groups a minimum of once a day for one hour. This Social Worker also sees cadets on an individual basis to complete an assessment and for individual counseling. In February 1998, she saw 7 cadets in individual sessions.

Group sessions by the contracted Social Worker use the curriculum, *Clean Slate* as an outline for treatment. This curriculum includes topics on coping with stress, effective communication, anger management, alcohol awareness, drug awareness, clarification of use, misuse and addiction, decision making, self esteem and self concept, problem solving, refusal skills, relationships that include the family, the society, the community and interpersonal, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases and general physical health, realistic goal setting, self help for drug and alcohol, Aftercare planning and a program review with the completion of an evaluation.

The Family Services Social Worker also includes in her sessions, human sexuality education, including parenting skills.

A number of cadets have girl friends who are pregnant and also children of their own. Social services attempts to maintain the ties between the cadet and his family. For the most part, however, cadets have no contact with their children during their stay.

Visitation by family members is limited to those cadets who may have an overwhelming need to see family as identified by someone in social services or perhaps as a recommendation by a consulting psychologist. An example of an exception was a cadet's immediate family who was moving out of state and would not be able to attend graduation. A family visit was arranged.

In the case of immediate family who are gravely ill and hospitalized or for those family members who die, arrangements are made for an escorted visit to the hospital, wake or funeral services as appropriate.

Since visitation with family is extremely limited and rare, the social services department does not have the opportunity to work directly with families or have family

counseling sessions with the cadet and his immediate family.

Finally social service may refer cadets for psychological evaluation or psychiatric evaluation to a practitioner at the Juvenile Medium Security Facility under contract with Correctional Medical Services.

#### *Balance of Scheduled Activities*

In total, educational and treatment activities at the Wharton Tract facility account for, on average, *seven hours of a cadet's day, five days a week*. This programming provides three and one-half hours a day of in classroom educational instruction. The remaining three and one half hours include treatment programming for platoons in group process that consists of Community Meetings, and the substance abuse and life skills/cognitive skills curricula: Clean Slate, Keys to Innervations and Doing Life. On Sunday an additional two hours and fifteen minutes is spent variously by the three platoons in the Doing Life curriculum, Community Meetings and Clearing Sessions (a group process used for clearing feelings between individuals and groups).

In comparison, the combined drill and ceremony and physical training components are provided for a total of approximately two hours. Physical training takes place every week day for one hour in the morning. Drill and ceremony training is scheduled for a total of forty minutes each day and on Saturday and Sunday for a total of one and one half hours.

In addition, the low ropes and high ropes courses and the repelling tower are scheduled on Saturdays for two hours and fifteen minutes. These courses are also used within the Physical Education curriculum along with traditional sports activities. The challenge courses are used to build character, increase self esteem and a sense of personal achievement, and to build a sense of teamwork between cadets as well as their platoon and squads within each platoon.

#### *Cadet "Exit Surveys" and Interviews*

Key elements of the examination of the Wharton Tract experience included "exit" or opinion surveys of cadets, cadet interviews and staff interviews. Each of these sources of information about the program provides perceptions and beliefs of those involved with the program. The results combine to provide a useful picture of the nature of the Wharton

Tract experience. Significantly, they reflect general agreement that the program has grown and matured over time.

### *Results of Cadet "Exit Surveys"*

An exit survey was administered by research staff to cadets just prior to each platoon's graduation. The survey attempts to gauge cadets' perceptions and opinions regarding the quality of the program and its impact on them. A major focus of the survey was to examine perceptions regarding key concerns of the Stabilization & Reintegration Program, i.e., helping cadets develop the self-discipline, respect for self and others, personal responsibility and skills needed to succeed back in their communities. The survey was administered to a total of 204 graduating cadets from platoons 1 through 12 (all platoons graduating through November 1997).

Survey results for graduating platoons 1 through 12 were, largely, positive (see Appendix 3). Most of the cadets saw their experience in the program as favorable and having a positive impact on their lives as well as their futures. Consistent with objectives of the legislation, their responses to an array of survey items suggested positive changes in their attitudes, orientations, and sense of themselves and others. Responses also suggested gains in their level of interpersonal and other skills. Here are some examples of the most favorable responses:

- C 93.6% of the graduates reported that they are "leaving this program with a more positive attitude about my future";
- C 92.6% of the cadets reported that the "program has helped me to become more self-disciplined";
- C 92.2% reported being "more aware of my responsibility for my own behavior";
- C 92.1% of the cadets reported that the program had taught them to "think about the consequences of my behavior";
- C 91.1% saw themselves as "healthier and more physically fit because of this program";
- C 90.6% of the cadets reported feeling prepared to "deal with life back on the street"; and
- C 89.7% agreed that the program has "made me more interested in continuing my

education.”

Not all responses were as positive, however. The following items received “unfavorable” or somewhat “unfavorable” responses from the graduating cadets:

- C 81.8% reported that “some staff really get carried away with their power over cadets”;
- C 71.9% responded that the program “should focus more on improving job skills”;
- C 71.6% felt that the program should “focus more on dealing one on one with cadets’ individual problems”; and
- C 58.2% of the cadets graduating say that “staff have humiliated me in front of other cadets.”

As noted earlier, the Wharton Tract program has experienced significant changes (in programming and staffing) since its start up. By all indications, the program is a more complete and stronger one now than it was in its early months. The survey results seem to bear this out. A comparison was made regarding the responses of graduating cadets from early platoons (1 through 6) with those of recent platoons (10 through 12). Of a total of 51 exit survey items, 41 were answered more positively by recent graduates, 5 more negatively, 3 were unchanged (and 2 were judged neither positive or negative). Improvements in responses over time ranged from small to substantial. Here are some examples of how responses have improved over time:

- C 94% of the recent graduates reported that they “feel I am a better person because of this program” compared with 79% of the earlier graduates;
- C 94% of the recent graduates reported that “most staff here treat me with respect” compared with 76% of the earlier graduates;
- C 87% of the recent graduates reported that “most staff here cared about me” compared with the 61% of the earlier graduates;
- C 11% of the recent graduates agreed that the program “will probably make no difference in how I live my life after I leave here” compared with 25% of the earlier graduates;
- C 87% of the recent graduates reported that the program “increased my ability to get along with others” compared with 73% of the earlier graduates; and,

C 87% of the recent graduates agreed that the program “taught me how to deal with stressful situations in my life” compared with 75% of the earlier graduates.

### *Cadet Interviews*

This section outlines two areas of qualitative research in the evaluation of the Stabilization and Reintegration Program. Pre-release interviews were conducted on half of the graduating cadets to examine perceptions of the SRP. To get input from youth who did not graduate, i.e., “failures,” focus groups were conducted on a small number of these youth who had been returned to the Training School for disciplinary reasons. Focus groups were also conducted on youth who were returned to the Training School after graduation (while on Aftercare supervision). The focus groups reported on here, and later in this report, included nine former cadets. The focus groups helped uncover some of the reasons why juveniles were returned and also endeavored to uncover ways to avoid disciplinary problems that lead to a juvenile’s return to the Training School.

### *Interview Results*

Interviews were conducted (and continue to be conducted) on a random selection of half of the cadets in each platoon just prior to graduation. A total of 99 interviews were conducted on graduating cadets from Platoons 1 through 12. The length of the interviews ranged from nearly one-half hour to over one hour.

The interview methodology was used to elicit more in-depth and detailed responses to various questions than the Cadet Exit Survey methodology would allow. These qualitative interviews focused on the major goals of the program, reasons for volunteering, identification of positive and negative characteristics of the program and suggested changes to improve the program in the future. Note that the tables indicate number of responses, not number of cases. Thus, an individual cadet may have identified several responses which are all included in the table.

Cadets were asked to explain the main purpose of the SRP program. Table 2 shows the top 13 responses to this question. Almost all of the responses are variations on the theme of rehabilitation. Over half of the group believed that the main purpose of the SRP was to instill discipline. Thirty-four percent believed the main purpose was to provide education and teach life skills; and close to a third stated that the main goal of SRP was

to keep the juvenile from coming back into the juvenile and/or criminal justice system. Other responses relate to making better choices, especially when dealing with problems, changing bad attitudes, and teaching cadets how to cooperate and work together.

**Table 2. What is the main purpose of this program?**

| <b>RESPONSE</b>                                  | <b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE</b> | <b>PERCENT OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN</b> |
|--|--|---|
| Instill discipline                               | 52   | 52%   |
| Provide education and teach life skills          | 34   | 34%   |
| Keep us out of trouble, keep us from coming back | 31   | 31%   |
| Change attitude                                  | 27   | 27%   |
| Teach us how to control our temper               | 17   | 17%   |
| Instill self-respect                             | 17   | 17%   |
| Prepare us for coping with life on the streets.  | 16   | 16%   |
| Increase self-esteem                             | 10   | 10%   |
| Teach us to make better decisions/choices        | 8  | 8%  |
| Help juvenile delinquents                        | 8  | 8%  |
| Teach how to work and cooperate with others      | 8  | 8%  |
| Teach how to deal with problems/stress better    | 8  | 8%  |
| Strengthen youth both mentally and physically    | 8  | 8%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>236</b>   | <b>236%</b>   |

Respondents were asked why they volunteered for the SRP program. Fifty-seven percent chose the SRP in an effort to reduce their time and get home early. Among this category, some cadets originally believed the SRP was the “easy way out.” While many were willing to admit that this was their primary reason for volunteering for the program, most were quick to add that they had since come to believe that this program could really help them.

Another main reason for volunteering for the program was the belief that the program would teach a better way of life or help change the cadet’s attitude in a positive way. Almost half of the cadets identified improving their attitude as one of the main reasons they volunteered. Again, the remaining responses all relate to the expectation of rehabilitation as reasons for volunteering.

**Table 3. Why did you volunteer for this program?**

| <b>RESPONSE</b>  | <b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE</b> | <b>PERCENT OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN</b> |
|--|--|---|
| Shortened time so I can get home early/thought it was the easy way out | 57   | 57%   |
| Thought program would teach me a better way of life/change my attitude | 49   | 49%   |
| Learn discipline   | 15   | 15%   |
| To improve education/learn new skills                                  | 15   | 15%   |
| Make better use of sentence time                                       | 11   | 11%   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>147</b>   | <b>147%</b>   |

Cadets were asked to identify characteristics of the program they liked best. Sixty percent of the cadets were most impressed with the educational programming they received at the SRP. Forty-nine percent identified drill and ceremony as the best part of the SRP. Work detail and physical training followed with 36% and 35% of the responses. From these top four responses and related information gathered otherwise, it appears that the cadets liked the challenge associated with the SRP, and the potential to improve themselves.

**Table 4. What do you like best about the program?**

| <b>RESPONSE</b>       | <b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE</b> | <b>PERCENT OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN</b> |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| School                | 60   | 60%   |
| Drill and Ceremony    | 49   | 49%   |
| Work Detail           | 36   | 36%   |
| Physical Training     | 35   | 35%   |
| Vocational Training   | 18   | 18%   |
| Drill Instructors     | 12   | 12%   |
| Staff                 | 11   | 11%   |
| Obstacle Course/Tower | 10   | 10%   |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>231</b>   | <b>231%</b>   |

When asked about their dislikes of the SRP, 21% indicated that they did not like

getting up so early in the morning. An equal number did not like that the routine stopped just before graduation. Fifteen percent did not like the Drill Instructors “getting in their face.” Twelve percent indicated the physical training was too difficult, although 35 cadets had identified physical training as something they liked about the program (see Table 4). Twelve percent did not like the fact that they were not allowed visits with their family or friends while serving their time in the SRP. An equal number identified food quality and the types of punishment they were made to do as “accountability” as characteristics they disliked.

**Table 5. What do you dislike most about the program?**

| RESPONSE   | NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE | PERCENT OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN |
|--|---|--|
| Waking up too early in the morning                                     | 21  | 21%  |
| Bored just before graduation, daily routine should last until last day | 21  | 21%  |
| Drill Instructors “getting in our faces”                               | 15  | 15%  |
| Physical training too hard   | 13  | 13%  |
| No visits  | 12  | 12%  |
| Types of punishment for accountability                                 | 12  | 12%  |
| Food   | 12  | 12%  |
| <b>Total</b>   | 106   | 106%   |

Cadets were asked about any suggestions for improvement of the SRP. Twenty percent said that more support from staff would make this a better program. Thirteen percent indicated more teachers and school time would be helpful. Twelve percent of the responses indicated that the SRP should be made more military like. An equal share of responses (10%) indicated that more phone calls or that an attitude adjustment on the part of the Drill Instructors would make the program better.

**Table 6. What changes would make this a better program?**

| <b>RESPONSE</b>                          | <b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE</b> | <b>PERCENT OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN</b> |
|--|--|---|
| More support from staff                  | 19   | 20%   |
| More school time & teachers              | 13   | 13%   |
| Make program more military like/stricter | 12   | 12%   |
| Allow more phone calls home              | 10   | 10%   |
| Attitude of Drill Instructors            | 10   | 10%   |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>64</b>  | <b>64%</b>  |

The final question asked cadets to explain how they believe the SRP has helped them as people. Table 7 shows the top eleven responses. Overall, the cadets indicated that they learned much about changing their attitude, planning for the future, and dealing with stress in an appropriate way. Forty-seven percent of the cadets identified learning to control their anger as the most important way in which the SRP helped them.

**Table 7. How has this program helped you as a person?**

| <b>RESPONSE</b>                               | <b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE</b> | <b>PERCENT OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN</b> |
|---|--|---|
| Learned to control anger                      | 45   | 47%   |
| Improved education                            | 25   | 26%   |
| Learned discipline                            | 21   | 22%   |
| Learned self-respect/mutual respect           | 20   | 21%   |
| Helped me to think ahead                      | 17   | 18%   |
| Learned how to work with/talk to other people | 16   | 17%   |
| Improved attitude                             | 15   | 16%   |
| Improved health/physical conditioning         | 12   | 13%   |
| Learned to set an achieve goals/perseverance  | 12   | 13%   |
| Learned new skills                            | 11   | 12%   |
| Learned how to handle stress/problems         | 10   | 10%   |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>204</b>   | <b>215</b>  |

*Focus Groups*

Two focus groups were conducted on July 16, 1997 at the Training School. One focus group centered on the experiences of juveniles returned to the Training School prior to graduation from Wharton Tract. The second group focused on the experiences of juveniles who had successfully graduated the SRP, but had been returned to the Training School while on Aftercare. This section provides a discussion of the responses from the first group. A discussion of the second group's responses can be found infra p. 58-63 under Aftercare. Participants had all been identified by staff as currently residing at the Training School and having been returned for disciplinary reasons (some youth returned prior to graduation are returned for other than disciplinary reasons, such as health reasons).

The first focus group included five juveniles who had been returned to the Training School for disciplinary reasons, prior to graduating from the SRP. Specifically, the focus groups were planned and undertaken to provide research staff with needed information and insights regarding these youths' experiences with, and opinions regarding, SRP (the residential component at Wharton Tract and, where relevant, the Aftercare component) and their thoughts on what they or the program might have done differently to avoid their disciplinary problems and their return to the Training School.

#### Incidents Related to Returns

Focus group leaders sought information regarding the immediate incidents leading to youths' return. Each of the five youth was returned prior to graduation for disciplinary reasons --four for fighting with another cadet, one for possession of "cigarettes, matches and candy." While the early policy at Wharton Tract appeared to be a fairly automatic return for fighting, the responses indicated some variation in response on an individualized basis. Relevant to the major return issue, one youth charged that the DIs were often slow to respond to escalating situations (e.g., other cadets "playing with you" or bumping you) which ultimately results in disciplinary action and removal from the program. Some DIs reportedly added to the stress of the program, perhaps contributing to the ultimate demise for these youth, by either provoking or "cussing at" them, or generally showing them "no respect." Note, however, that the group had significant praise for other DIs and the staff in general.

In response to a question about age differences in the program, there was a general agreement that the younger cadets had a tougher time of it and, as a result, were more likely to be returned. The youth suggested that there was too much stress in the program for a young kid. One said: “Yeah, that why {they’re sent back}...got people all screaming in your face, bad enough they away from their parents. Then you got a 13 year old away from their parents, in boot camp, another person screaming in their face.”

### Demands of the Program

With regard to the military/physical training aspects of SRP at Wharton Tract, all liked it and felt that it was useful, in whole or part. One youth focused on the marching and its usefulness in helping him “think about stuff.” Another mentioned the push-ups and “everything”; one mentioned getting up early as well as the long runs, exercises, marching, and drill & ceremony because “you had to use your mind...” He said: “Well in the beginning, I didn’t like none of it. You had to get up early in the morning, do exercises, run. But towards the middle and end, I even went up to my DI and said I appreciate everything you did for me ’cause I never had a work out like that in god knows when. They really helped me out with that...they used marching, you had to stay with your partner; you had to use your mind. It was hard but it was mind over matter.”

Two youth specifically noted the usefulness of the marching and/or physical training as a way to condition your mind and your body and/or deal with stress. One stated: “It helped me deal with stress a lot...I got a bad temper, I’ll snap on anybody. (Because) of the boot camp, I ain’t got that temper anymore.” Others reported gains tied to the physical training activities including increased fitness and a sense of accomplishment. One reported regarding the long runs: “I figured if I could run with them that long, I could do anything.”

### Disciplinary Practices

For the most part, disciplinary practices were seen as tough but appropriate and fair by the youth. “Sanctions” included such responses to negative behavior as: numerous pushups, walking outside with a log, digging a 6' x 6' hole, running 20 miles (10 miles there/10 miles back), moving heavy cinder blocks from one area to another, and walking around with a 50 lb. sack. The discipline was usually in response to a cadet demonstrating a bad attitude, or disrespecting a DI or other staff.

Youth noted that DIs varied in their response to negative behavior; some were quick to respond with sanctions while others were more likely to discuss it first. One youth stated: “There’s some DIs, when you disrespect them, they let you know. They pull you to the side, you all sit down and talk. They showed you how you disrespected you or you disrespected them. They let you know right there.”

The youth reported that, in general, the discipline had a positive impact on them. It made them more disciplined or helped them to not repeat (or at least to think about) their negative behavior.

*SRP Staff Interviews*

Twenty-five SRP staff were randomly selected from each discipline (support staff, custody staff, education, and social services) and interviewed in October 1997. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain staff perceptions of various aspects of the SRP.

**Table 8. What is the main purpose or goal of the Stabilization and Reintegration Program?**

| RESPONSE  | NO. OF STAFF WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE | % OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Motivate cadets to want to change their lives and attitudes then give them the tools to make these changes and succeed in the community | 10                                   | 40%  |
| Help the cadet to become a responsible man  | 6                                    | 24%  |
| To never see any of these kids incarcerated again   | 5                                    | 20%  |
| Helping cadets see the possibilities and choices they have in their life  | 3                                    | 12%  |
| Let cadets know that there is nothing they cannot do  | 2                                    | 8%   |
| I don't know that we have any main purpose  | 2                                    | 8%   |
| To alleviate overcrowding at Jamesburg  | 2                                    | 8%   |
| Focus on cadets individual needs and try to rehabilitate them   | 1                                    | 4%   |
| <b>Total</b>  | 31                                   | 124%   |

The following summary focuses on three major questions from the interview: perceptions of the main program goal; characteristics of the program that work well and characteristics of the program that were perceived to need improvement.

Staff perceptions of SRP program goals are shown in Table 8 above. The top five responses indicate a rehabilitative theme. These responses focus on developing cadets’

motivation and responsibility with an eye toward recidivism reduction. Two responses indicated a lack of clear understanding about the main goal of the program. Two others indicated that the main goal of the program was to alleviate overcrowding at the Training School.

**Table 9. What particular aspect or aspects of the program at Wharton Tract, if any, do you feel work especially well?**

| RESPONSE   | NO. OF STAFF WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE | % OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| The educational staff are impressive; they are dedicated, flexible, with an incredible amount of patience and work hard to maintain the cadets fragile self esteem and confidence so they will succeed | 12                                   | 48%  |
| The drill and ceremony taught to cadets by Drill Instructors works very well and helps to instill self-discipline  | 10                                   | 40%  |
| Staff work as a team, everyone pitches in  | 3                                    | 12%  |
| The vocational program is good for cadets  | 3                                    | 12%  |
| The sergeants Physical Training Challenge, these cadets really perform and excel   | 3                                    | 12%  |
| The social work department works really well   | 2                                    | 8%   |
| The "Doing Life" curriculum is really great  | 2                                    | 8%   |
| The puppy has been wonderful, the cadets can relate to it and show a side of themselves often not seen   | 1                                    | 4%   |
| The outdoor, wilderness environment  | 1                                    | 4%   |
| Nothing worked especially well, everything has room for improvement  | 1                                    | 4%   |
| <b>Total</b>   | 38                                   | 152%   |

Staff were asked about aspects of the SRP that they thought worked particularly well (Table 9). Almost half of the respondents noted the dedication and impressive work of the education staff at the SRP. The drill and ceremony training was also perceived as a successful characteristic of the program.

Twelve percent of the responses noted the success of staff teamwork, the vocational program and physical training. The "Doing Life" curriculum and the social work

**Table 10. What aspect or aspects of the program at Wharton Tract do you feel are**

***most in need of improvement?***

| <b>RESPONSE</b>  | <b>NO. OF STAFF WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE</b> | <b>% OF CASES IN WHICH THIS RESPONSE WAS CHOSEN</b> |
|--|---|---|
| Stable administration/Better organization/ more written guidelines on running the program  | 6   | 24%   |
| Increase in staff  | 5   | 20%   |
| Improved training (in literacy, child abuse, adolescent psychology & problem solving, Drug/Alcohol education and evaluation, anger management)/ more “state of the art” equipment  | 5   | 20%   |
| Place cadets in classes based on grade level, not platoon  | 4   | 16%   |
| Cadets should develop better goals so that aftercare can focus on them; more communication between social workers and parole officers; make money available to cadets as they leave to help them get started in educational/vocational training and supports | 3   | 12%   |
| Nothing  | 2   | 8%  |
| Expand facility to alleviate crowding  | 2   | 8%  |
| The program should seek to improve itself in all areas as an ongoing process, every aspect of the program can be improved  | 2   | 8%  |
| More/better variety of educational books   | 1   | 4%  |
| Expose cadets to more outdoor nature activities  | 1   | 4%  |
| Increase intervention with staff psychologist (less emphasis on paperwork)   | 1   | 4%  |
| Another vehicle for use by vocational education, another vocational teacher and a shop for vocational instruction  | 1   | 4%  |
| Consistency of discipline and accountability   | 1   | 4%  |
| Communication between staff and shifts regarding cadet movement (or lack of)   | 1   | 4%  |
| The staff attitude of “me” instead of “we”   | 1   | 4%  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>38</b>                                   | <b>152%</b>   |

department were also identified as successful, by 8% of the cases each. One respondent stated that “Boots” the dog has been a wonderful asset to the program because it allows cadets to show an empathetic, caretaking side of themselves. One respondent indicated that nothing works particularly well at the SRP.

The staff were also asked to grade the accomplishments of Wharton Tract (on a typical school grading scale of from “A” to “F”). More than half (56%) would give the

program a grade of “B” or better. When asked to justify their grading, almost two-thirds (60%) suggested that they have a good program that will only get better as time and resources are brought to bear on their current structure and curricula.

Criticism of the SRP fell into several categories: administration/organization, staff resources, staff training; Aftercare and better communication (Table 10). Twenty-four percent of those interviewed stated that the SRP needed better organization and administration, suggesting more guidelines for running the program. The need for a greater number of staff was noted by 20% of those interviewed. Twenty percent also remarked on the need for increased training in a number of areas relevant to being better prepared to work with juveniles at the SRP. Sixteen percent of those interviewed believe that educational placement at the SRP should be based on the juvenile’s grade level, not by platoon. Twelve percent noted that the flow between release from the SRP and Aftercare needs improvement. They suggested developing more specific goals pre-release and increasing the communication between SRP staff and parole officers. One individual stated that “seed money” should be made available to cadets just released from SRP to help cadets get started in their educational training and support in the community. Interestingly, two staff members (8%) thought nothing was problematic at the SRP, while two other staff members stated that the program should seek to improve itself as an ongoing process: everything can be improved. Staff attitude and communication was cited by two individuals (4% each). They stated that staff and shifts should have better communication and that the staff attitude focused on individual motivation not team effort. Finally, one respondent believed there should be more consistency of discipline and accountability in the SRP.

An additional area addressed in the interviews was the extent of change experienced at Wharton Tract. The staff overwhelmingly agreed that the program had changed greatly since its inception -- generally seeing a change for the better. The departure of a substantial portion of custody staff who returned to the Department of Corrections was cited by 44% of the staff, each of them seeing the change as having a positive effect on the morale and functioning of the program. An additional 20% of the staff cited a theme that is echoed in other areas of the research study’s data collection -- the frequent changes in Superintendent and other administrative staff.

## *SOME KEY ISSUES AT WHARTON TRACT*

### *Staff and Staffing Issues*

Substantial changes have occurred at the Wharton Tract facility since its opening in February 1996 -- not the least of which have been staff related. The changes reflect both some increases and enhancement of staff, and staff (and administration) turnover.

The number of "custody" staff has remained fairly stable over time; presently there are the same number (seven) of Sergeants as initially (although one now serves as Acting Assistant Superintendent at the Orientation Unit), and one additional Drill Instructor (currently 21).

When the program opened in February 1996 all of the custody staff had rights to transfer back to the Department of Corrections. This transfer option was closed as of July 1997. By that date 11 of the 28 custody staff had availed themselves of the option. With regard to overall turnover, one Sergeant and one Drill Instructor (DI) transferred to different areas of the Commission, three Drill Instructors were assigned to the Orientation Unit and one resigned.

The teaching staff (academic and vocational) has been "upgraded" over time. For example, while initial staffing included four Teachers and four Teaching Assistants, there are currently seven Teachers and two Teaching Assistants. The social services department also experienced changes and turnover, with limited staffing during various periods of the program. Three social workers are currently on staff; in addition the program currently contracts for the services of a Substance Abuse Counselor from Family Services of Burlington County. In addition to the above, the food services program has added an individual in a Cook position; secretarial/clerical staffing has diminished somewhat over time.

Despite overall enhancement of staff over time, the administration and various supervisors at Wharton Tract identified critical positions *they felt were needed in order to fulfill more completely the mission of the program*. This includes an increase in DIs from 21 to 38 (to provide two DIs per shift for each platoon, facilitate relief of DI staff on their regular days off, with a resulting decrease in overtime and double shift work, and an additional Sergeant. A loss of two positions for Substance Abuse Counselors was also

identified. In addition, a long standing vacancy in education (a Teacher 1 position) was noted, along with a need for three three additional Teaching Assistants, and two Vocational Counselors or Vocational Teachers. Administrators also suggested a needed position for an Institutional Trade Instructor Supervisor who could, in addition, provide a “relief position” for the present food service staff, and an addition of two communications operators/telephone receptionists and an addition to maintenance staff.

### *Staff Training*

Currently Wharton Tract trains the new hires into “custody” staff through a twelve week course at the Correctional Officers Training Academy, two weeks of Shock Incarceration training with staff from the New York State Shock Incarceration boot camp and two weeks of in-service training with the Training Sergeant.

Civilians are also being trained for two weeks by the New York State Shock Incarceration staff, as well as in-service with the Training Sergeant. Training needs for the future, according to the administration, include an increased training period for those officers assuming positions as Sergeants. Presently this training only consists of two or three days.

Staff were asked if they felt that they had received the amounts or kinds of training needed to prepare them adequately to do their job. While one-quarter stated that training was inadequate, an additional two-fifths responded, in effect, that “they could always use more training.” Included among the areas in which they believed training would be particularly useful were: adolescent psychology and development; dealing with troubled youth and developing skills in counseling adolescents with substance abuse problems and those who had been victims of sexual abuse.

### *Learning Experiences/Accountability for Misbehavior*

Wharton Tract has recently re-named its use of accountability or sanctions for misbehavior/infractions of rules. The sanction process is currently referred to as “Learning Experiences.”

In the consultant report completed in December 1996 by Doris MacKenzie and Tyrone Vick, the Wharton Tract program was viewed as having an overemphasis on punishments over rewards. According to the consultants, research suggests that rewards

should be used “ten times more than punishments” in order to bring about lasting behavioral change in juveniles.

The consultants were also critical of what they saw as excessive physical punishments (e.g., the carrying of logs for lengthy periods of time) and inappropriate punishments (e.g., loss by the platoon of phone calls home because of the misbehavior of one person). They also noted the use of inappropriate language by staff that they believed was not worthy of adult role models. Recent interviews with staff suggest that the use of consequences has changed in significant ways.

Policy in this area has been updated; written guides to practices in this area have recently been completed. Phase-in of non-physically oriented consequences began subsequent to the consultants’ report previously cited, such as writing the cadets’ 10 General Orders or essays and book reports.

Early on in the program, misbehavior, non-conformity or infractions were divided into three groups: Class C or minor infractions, Class B or moderate infractions and Class A or major infractions. At present the program has defined the type of infractions in each “Class” as well as those “Learning Experiences” that would be appropriate as consequences.

Minor infractions generally include the loss of military bearing, disruptive behaviors, and negative non-verbal body language. Consequent “Learning Experiences” for such actions might include minor physical exercises, minor cleaning projects, an essay of less than 500 words or writing the 10 General Orders.

Moderate infractions include use of abusive language to peers, refusing squad leader instructions, arguing, stealing from a peer or school supplies, threats and horse play. The consequences may include essays of more than 500 words, major cleaning projects, use of the quiet room, outside landscaping projects, weeding the garden, and the “sea bag drag” (placing personal possessions in a duffle bag and carrying it for a specified period of time around the main courtyard). In addition for youth who are having difficulties with each other, there is use of the “Friendship Block or Love Box.”

Serious infractions involve profanity or abusive language to staff, fighting, refusing orders, stealing program supplies and personal property, attempted escape, threatening

staff, possession of contraband and sexual misconduct. Consequences may include placement in the Quiet Room, the “Motivational Pole” (two cadets carry around a pole outside to reinforce their mutual cooperation and team work), recycling to a “younger” platoon and referral to the Classification Committee at the Training School for removal from the program.

#### *Altercations Between Cadets*

The program seeks to prevent altercations between cadets through various strategies. Should a cadet demonstrate intense anger he is provided direct counseling not only by social services but also the custody and educational staff.

Several techniques are used by the program in addressing arguments or intensely negative feelings between cadets. One approach requires pairing them as buddies during which time they use the double bunked quiet room as a bedroom. This forces the two cadets to sleep in the same space. They are required to make the other one’s bed, get meals for each other and wash the other’s clothing. Another technique uses the “Friendship Block or Love Box”: a four foot by four foot square painted on the floor. If two cadets become embroiled in an argument they may be required to stand in the “Love Box” and stare each other in the eyes for one-half hour. Staff report this technique works “suprisingly” well.

Should an altercation occur (e.g., pushing, shoving or hitting), the participants are immediately separated and placed in separate quiet rooms. These rooms may be locked if custody staff deems it necessary. A review committee is then scheduled to discuss the details of the incident. This committee consists of the Drill Instructors assigned to the cadet’s platoon, the Duty Sergeant, the Lieutenant, a Social Worker, the Superintendent and the Training Sergeant. Previous behaviors and history are reviewed and each incident is handled individually. A judgement is made by this committee as to the consequences to be imposed. Consequences may include a “Learning Experience,” recycling a cadet to a “younger” platoon at the Wharton Tract or the Orientation Unit or removal of the cadet in question to the Training School.

#### *Rewards*

Consistent with consultant recommendations, rewards now play a greater role in

the Wharton Tract experience. Early on platoons were and continue to be given streamers for the platoon flag that represent the entire platoon's accomplishment. These include a streamer for the Physical Training Challenge (P.T. Challenge) run by the Drill Instructors, one for the absence or low number of disciplinary reports against a platoon, excellence during inspections, noteworthy achievements in academics, and excellence in drill and ceremony.

For a short while, the school gave out weekly academic rewards to cadets in various areas of academic achievement but this is no longer done. At present the teachers regularly bring in food treats for their classes and major academic awards are given to cadets at the graduation ceremony.

The custody staff currently provides rewards for platoons such as a Sunday afternoon movie (video) and snack for the platoon demonstrating consistent motivation throughout the previous week. Special recreation time is also given to the entire platoon when the group demonstrates consistent motivation and outstanding performance in various program areas throughout the previous week. A squad within a platoon may also receive a reward of ice cream and soda for having maintained the best hygiene and squad bay cleanliness over the previous week.

Since the inception of the Wharton Tract program, individual recognition awards for a wide range of personal achievements have been given to the cadets at graduation. Additionally, individual rewards during the cadets' stay in the program consist of additional phone calls home on recommendation of staff to a supervisory person. An "Honor Ribbon" is also given weekly to the cadet who has demonstrated outstanding motivation during the week.

Despite improvements in the area of providing rewards, there are currently only limited opportunities in place to provide rewards *on an individual basis* for accomplishments or positive behavior.

### *Cadet Grievances*

There is currently a grievance policy and procedures regarding cadet grievances, although not provided to cadets in writing. Cadets may report any grievances they have regarding the program, staff behavior or behaviors of peers by filling out a "Supervisor

Request Form.” This is then presented to a supervisory Sergeant. If the grievance cannot be satisfied at this level, it is referred to the Lieutenant; and if not satisfied at this level, it is presented to the Superintendent for review.

### ***Aftercare/Parole Services***

Aftercare services are widely considered to be a key component to the success of a boot camp program (Peters, 1997). Effective Aftercare supervision and treatment services are needed to facilitate the transition to the community after an adult or juvenile has experienced a very structured environment. Tasks include helping participants maintain any gains they may have achieved while in the boot camp, and continuing the remediation of their various areas of need.

As noted earlier, poor planning and implementation of Aftercare have been common in juvenile boot camp programs, limiting overall program effectiveness. A major concern is the achievement of continuity and integration between boot camp and Aftercare components (NIJ, 1996).

#### ***SRP Aftercare***

Aftercare services were provided to SRP graduates initially by staff of the Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program (JISP) of the Administrative Office of the Courts. The first platoon graduated from the Wharton Tract facility in June 1996 and entered Aftercare supervision. In March 1997, JISP staff and responsibility for the supervision of the graduates were transferred from the Judiciary to the Juvenile Justice Commission. It is worth noting that the Commission has only subsequently (in September 1997) entered the final stages of a transfer of all aftercare/parole responsibilities from the Bureau of Parole. The current Aftercare approach for the broader committed youth population has been strongly influenced by the SRP Aftercare model and experience.

Aftercare provides individualized community based services for each youth committed by the Family Court. No distinction in terms of program requirements or supervision/service strategies is made between graduates of the Stabilization and Reintegration Program and those who complete their term of confinement in any of the institutions or community programs operated by the Juvenile Justice Commission.

The community based program is designed to achieve a balanced approach toward

handling juvenile parolees. This approach utilizes varied techniques needed to maintain public safety, foster offender accountability and “restorative justice,” and provide for the individualized services and service brokerage for parolees that is essential for personal development and responsibility.

Aftercare involvement begins prior to release from custody with the development of a case plan. The case plan considers each participant’s levels of risk and service need, and identifies a plan to establish appropriate surveillance and treatment provision/referral. A parole officer and youth worker, in conjunction with education specialists, manage juveniles in the community through specified levels of supervision based on the pre-release assessment, and compliance with case plan objectives. The initial period of supervision is onerous, calling for a 7:00 p.m. curfew, eight face to face contacts during the first month of community supervision, frequent drug screening, and restorative services through a community service requirement. Additional key elements of all supervision plans call for continued education toward a high school diploma or beyond, employment for those youth old enough, and individual and family counseling when deemed appropriate.

Community involvement is another core element of the program. Aftercare attempts to recruit community volunteers to work one on one with program participants in the role of mentors. Mentors are expected to work closely with the youth and their families under the direction of the supervision teams. They provide a linkage to the community and support networks by making themselves available to the participants and by accepting a degree of responsibility for the juveniles’ behavior.

A total of 217 cadets successfully completed the Stabilization and Reintegration Program through January 1998 and have been supervised by Aftercare. During February 1998 there were 99 graduates of the SRP under community supervision by Aftercare, representing graduates from the thirteen platoons. Sixty-six of the program participants were “on the street” for the entire month of February, while 33 were incarcerated pending a hearing on a charge of violation of parole. Information was collected from Aftercare staff to examine the nature of the Aftercare experience for SRP graduates, including levels of surveillance, involvement in educational/employment activities and therapeutic services. Information was made available for the following analysis for 96 graduates active during

February 1998.

### *Education*

Aftercare policy requires that all participants be either in an educational program, employed, or whenever possible, both. A total of 86.4% of the SRP graduates attended school (including an alternative or vocational education setting) while on Aftercare. Figures for current involvement were lower. Currently, 53.0% of those remaining in the community were attending/enrolled. Six participants successfully completed their GED while on Aftercare, two others graduated high school, and two youth were admitted to local community colleges.

### *Employment*

Employment provides a legitimate limit to the “free time” available to juveniles, decreasing the opportunity to get into trouble. It also provides a mechanism to earn money to support themselves, assist their families, and pay court ordered fines and penalties. A total of 28.1% of the youth held a full-time job at some time during Aftercare supervision; 34.4% held a part-time job. The figure for current full-time employment was 16.7%, and for part-time employment, 15.2%. In addition, 15.6% of the participants were enrolled in a formal job training program at some point; 9.1% of those remaining in the community were currently enrolled.

Finally, information was analyzed to determine the proportion of SRP youth who remained in the community (66 youth) who were involved with school or work in February. Nearly six out of ten (59.1%) were either attending school or otherwise involved with educational activities or employed full time in February 1998.

### *Counseling/Treatment Services*

Formal counseling/treatment services play a key role in the program’s rehabilitative efforts. A total of 76.0% of the youth participated in one or more counseling/treatment services at some time while under community supervision. This included 45 youth (46.9%) who received drug abuse counseling and 24 (25.0%) who received other forms of individual or group counseling/treatment (e.g., anger management). In addition, family counseling/therapy was provided to 8 (8.3%) of the participants and their families at some point. Figures for current involvement in counseling/treatment services were as follows.

A total of 26 of 66 (39.4%) juveniles in the community in February were currently receiving counseling/treatment services. This included 34.8% for drugs, 16.7% for general counseling/treatment services, and 6.1% receiving family counseling/therapy.

### *Community Service*

One goal of Aftercare is to have all participants fulfill some form of community service obligation as part of a restorative justice program. During their term in Aftercare, 63.9% of the youth performed community service. In February, 36.4% of participants performed a total of 128 hours of community service.

### *Mentors*

Community involvement in the successful completion of the case plan is an integral ingredient in Aftercare. The clearest example of community presence is the participation of mentors who are expected to work one on one with youth serving as adult role models. A total of 59.7% of the parolees had contact with a mentor at some time during Aftercare/Parole; only 29.9% of those remaining on the street in February currently met with mentors.

### *Surveillance*

The surveillance aspects of the program are designed not only to provide a level of safety to the community but also to teach juveniles responsibility and the need to adhere to specific rules and regulations. The various facets of surveillance include a curfew, face-to-face contacts and drug testing.

### *Curfew*

An initial curfew of 7:00 p.m. is imposed on all new program participants for the first thirty days in Aftercare. It can be changed (earlier or later) depending on the individual's behavior and adherence to the requirements of the program. Curfews are enforced through several mechanisms including telephone calls, personal contacts, and state-of-the-art electronic devices.

Of the 66 SRP graduates supervised in the community in February, (28.8%) had achieved a level of supervision requiring no programmatic curfew constraints. Curfew hours ranged from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. for the remaining youth. The most common curfew time was 9:00 p.m. (36.4%), followed by 8:00 and 10:00 p.m. (12.1% each), and

7:00 and 9:30 p.m. (4.5% each).

To enforce curfew hours, various techniques are employed by the supervision team. These range from telephone check-in via pagers, to electronic monitoring devices, to personal contacts. The main objective is to monitor and secure participant compliance with program rules. However, the contacts also afford the opportunity to interact with other family members. Each of these methods is discussed below.

### *Telephone Contacts*

Juveniles are instructed to page the members of the supervision team whenever there is an emergency. They may also be required to “check-in” when they are at home for curfew, or when they have been permitted to leave the house. The officer may then confirm their whereabouts with a direct telephone call. During February, 305 telephone contacts were attempted between juveniles and program staff. Four out of every five *attempted* contacts initiated by staff with juveniles were successful. A total of 104 of the 305 attempted contacts were directly related to curfew verification (an average of 2.2 attempted contacts for the month per youth under curfew regulation).

### *Electronic Monitoring*

An electronic wristlet is worn by some program participants, especially during the first month of program participation. Known as *Voice Track*, the system makes telephone contact with selected juveniles and through a sophisticated voice identification system confirms the identity of the caller, the time of the call, and the originating location of the call. Participants are contacted randomly during hours when youth are required to be at home. In February, 12 SRP graduates were connected to the *Voice Track* system. A total of 375 contacts were attempted (averaging 31 per youth) and 318 were recorded as successful contacts (84.8%).

### *Face-to-Face Contacts*

Depending on the level of supervision, Aftercare staff are required to make from one to eight face-to-face contacts with each participant during the course of a month. Those under higher levels of supervision must receive a minimum of two face-to-face curfew verification visits; the requirement for others is lower. The curfew verification visits are generally done late at night between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. An average of

4.2 face-to-face meetings were held with each youth remaining in the community in February. There was an average of 0.7 curfew verification visits per youth in February.

### *Drug Testing*

Testing for the use of illegal drugs is an integral part of the program's surveillance strategy. Urine samples are required to be collected from one to eight times each month. The samples are then sent to the state laboratory for analysis. During February, 214 urine specimens were collected from the 66 SRP graduates remaining in the community, an average of 3.2 per youth. Thirteen samples from nine different participants (13.6%) proved positive (most frequently for marijuana, followed by cocaine).

### *Collateral Contacts*

In order to help ensure compliance with the requirements of the State Parole Board and Aftercare, and to help integrate the youth into the community, contacts are made with various members of the local community who work closely with the youth. These individuals may include family members, mentors, school personnel, employers, or counselors. In February, 301 collateral contacts were made on behalf of 57 participants (an average of 5.3 contacts related to each participant).

### *Graduated Sanctions*

Aftercare recognizes that, with varying degrees of frequency, participants will fail to comply with the stringent requirements imposed by both the State Parole Board and their case plan. Measures employed by the supervision team in response to these infractions are designed to contribute to the resolution of the incident in the least restrictive manner possible, while still helping to ensure community safety. Within a flexible structure of behavioral management guidelines, supervision team staff are trained to handle infractions using their sound professional judgement.

Graduated sanctions offer a continuum of steps to respond appropriately to youth who violate the rules. The sanctions imposed are to be progressive and consistent – and commensurate with the seriousness of the rule violation. Whenever possible and appropriate, the supervision team works in conjunction with parents to impose required penalties. Sanctions may range from a verbal reprimand to placement into custody.

### *Aftercare Survey and Related Focus Group*

A survey was administered to SRP youth prior to completion of their Aftercare experience. The purpose was to gain insights into their perceptions regarding the nature of their experience and its value to them. The following reports on 32 completed surveys of youth prior to their completion of Aftercare, each youth having between three and eight months under Aftercare supervision. Overall, the SRP graduates' perceptions of the usefulness of the Aftercare Program were fairly positive, as seen below.

Of the 32 participants surveyed, over three-quarters of them, (78.1%) agreed that “the Aftercare Program constantly challenged [them] to do better.” Nearly four-fifths (78.1%) reported that “as a result of the Aftercare Program, [they had] stayed away from

drugs.”

For the most part, the Aftercare participants not only felt that they were “on” Aftercare, but that they were actually a “part” of the Aftercare process. A total of 71.9% reported that Aftercare staff “involved [their families] in efforts to help [them]”; and about 59.4% agreed that they “...helped to develop...” their own Aftercare plan.

Close to three-quarters (71.9%) of the SRP graduates reported “...leaving Aftercare with a more positive attitude about [the] future.” In addition, more than two-thirds (68.8%) saw the Aftercare Program as “...a positive experience...” Also, almost three-quarters of the respondents agreed that “most Aftercare staff cared about [them],” and 84.4% reported that “Aftercare staff treated [them] with respect.”

This positive view of Aftercare did not typically include the mentoring component of the program. Only 34.4% percent of the participants reported that “having a mentor was a positive experience...” In addition, 25.0% of the juveniles reported that “[their] mentor spent a lot of time with [them]”.

One of the main requirements of Aftercare and a concern of the SRP legislation, is employment. However, many in this group of SRP graduates did not generally perceive the efforts of Aftercare staff to be particularly helpful in this area. A total of 65.6% responded that “Aftercare should have paid more attention to helping [them] find a job.” In addition, a little over half (53.1%) of the respondents thought that “Aftercare should have focused more on improving [their] job skills.”

#### *Aftercare Focus Group*

The second of two focus groups conducted at the Training School on July 16, 1997 (see supra pp. 33-35) sought to elicit information from juveniles who had graduated from the Wharton Tract program, entered Aftercare supervision and returned from the program to the Training School for potential revocation of their parole status. The following summary examines the responses provided by four youth returned from Aftercare.

#### *Incidents Related to Returns*

Two youth admitted to being returned on dirty urines; one due to repeated curfew violations; and another due to curfew violations and failure to report. The youth reported being on Aftercare status ranging from 1 ½ to 4 ½ months.

### *Factors Related to Return from Aftercare*

The four youth were asked about the main reasons for return to the Training School. Reasons included too early curfew (one reported an 8:00 p.m., the other a 7:00 p.m. curfew) and pressures for drug use/selling from their immediate environment (reported by three youth). Regarding what they personally could have done differently to avoid problems they noted: getting a job, relocating out of their city and trying harder to keep their curfew. Each of these responses was tied by the youth to perceived problems with Aftercare -- too early curfew; a shared belief that Aftercare did not do much to help them get jobs or vocational training -- or pressures in their immediate environment.

The group was questioned regarding what SRP might have done differently to help them. One youth suggested that “groups” at Wharton Tract could have done a better job of preparing them for their return to the community -- “We really needed to sit down (in our “group sessions”) and talk about how we’re gonna react when we get back out on the road.” Two youth faulted Aftercare for being slow to relocate them out of their home or neighborhood environment resulting which they saw as contributing to their subsequent trouble. For one this involved a plan to live with his grandmother in the South; for the other, a plan to live with an aunt in an adjacent town.

One of the above youth blamed slow “paper work” by Aftercare for not getting him the life skills counseling and support he felt he needed and had expressed to Aftercare. He also noted that the substance abuse intervention (NA/AA) he was required to attend was inappropriate and unnecessary. He did, however, use drugs. One youth suggested that pre-release planning and initial Aftercare efforts (regarding getting back in school; getting a job) needed improvement.

### *Demands of the Program/Discipline*

Disciplinary action was generally considered to be fair and deserved by all four respondents. However, there were exceptions with regard to particular staff. One mentioned that his math teacher sometimes responded unfairly when he attempted to help other students -- “(She responded like) I’m trying to take over the class.” One DI on the second shift was singled out as being a particular problem with regard to fairness and appropriate treatment of cadets -- all four youth saw him as a problem. “My whole platoon

(had a beef with this DI). Nobody want him. Any platoon you go to, nobody be wanting him...cause they all know he's bad."

#### *Youths' Intentions and Expectations*

The four youth were asked why they volunteered for the program. Three of the four admitted to volunteering for the program to get home more quickly. The other suggested that he went to Wharton Tract to "better himself" and felt that SRP maximized the likelihood of that happening: "I had a chance to go to programs, be on grounds, or go to boot camp." The others changed their mind once they were in the program. One said, "I looked at (boot camp) like 'yeah, I'm going home real quick this time.' Once I got to Wharton Tract, my whole mentality changed...there's a lot of things you can learn up there."

The youth were asked what (if anything) it was about themselves that they hoped the program would change. They all mentioned their "attitude"; help dealing with one's temper and self-discipline were also mentioned. By attitude some seemed to be focusing on how they dealt with other people (i.e., often in a physical or confrontational way); one talked about being a "play fiend." Another put it this way: "Before, a person looked at me wrong, I snapped." A third echoed this and added, "I say discipline 'cause all my life, I did what I wanted to do. So I figured, once I got there, they could change me." The fourth cadet said, "I went there for my temper and attitude...to straighten [these things] out...My mother passed so after that day I didn't care about [or respect] nobody except my aunt and father. So I had to go work on that." This last youth reported that, with the help of a social worker and his DI, he reached his goals in this area.

#### *Perceived Qualities/Impact of the Program*

The four youth were asked their opinions regarding the "best" and "worst" things about the residential component of the program. The best things included: the program helping cadets deal with problems; some "groups," including those dealing with what's "really gonna happen when we get home"; running (but nothing else); the obstacle course; nature walks; school; drill & ceremony. Regarding the group meetings held with social workers, one stated the following: "They pick a subject and you talk about it...everybody just be happy or something when you leave...[I] think about what they talked about a lot; it helped me on the street -- like staying away from drugs...selling drugs...I stayed away;

stopped hanging with some of the people I was hanging with.” The worst things included marching everywhere and standing in formation for too long a time.

The youth were also asked about the best and worst characteristics of the Aftercare component. The best things included development of positive and warm relationships with Aftercare workers; being “shown lots of new things, like job skills”; and Aftercare staff’s willingness to talk to them. The worst things included the early curfews; limited case planning and follow through with planned interventions and actions; too frequent and late night monitoring (one noted that while the monitoring was annoying, he felt that it was helpful as a “deterrent.” With reference to the late night calls, one youth didn’t see the need for it, and had this to say: “I can understand that’s their job but that’s waking up everybody, even the kids and everything and plus the babies and everything. It’s hard to put them back to sleep.”

When asked about their mentors, the youth gave a largely negative response. One reported never seeing his mentor (planning and follow through issues), although he saw his Aftercare worker as a mentor; two purported to never having a mentor; the other developed a very positive relationship with his mentor. One youth described his negative experience this way: “I ain’t have no mentor...I think they should’ve started planning stuff before [they did]. They came to see me like three weeks before I came home. They tried to get everything straightened out in those three weeks. I guess it didn’t work out. So I figured, I don’t know...when I came home, I seen they ain’t really trying to do nothing so I stopped going to see them. I just did what I wanted to do.”

The former cadets were asked whether their family relationships improved while on Aftercare. One said they were fine to begin with; the others said they had improved.

### *Who or What Had the Greatest Impact?*

The youth were asked to identify the one thing or person that had the greatest impact on them (at Wharton Tract and while on Aftercare). *With reference to Wharton Tract:* One said nothing and after prodding said “running.” Two identified the same DI as having the greatest impact on them, one of them adding, “I’d say the whole program.” One said that two social workers had the greatest impact. With regard to the DI, the comments were as follows: “Me and my father don’t get along for nothing...I look at him like he’s another guy on the street. But I got to Wharton Tract and DI Smith fell right into the spot...Some of the things I spoke to him about, I didn’t talk to my mother about.” The other stated that “ Anytime I needed somebody to talk to about anything, I go talk to him. And I trusted him a lot, so I’d see him.” With regard to the social workers, the youth stated: “I had problems, my girl, she had my baby and I didn’t know where to go from there. So he sat me down and talked to me about being a father and everything ’cause he has a couple of kids himself. And the lady social worker told me about problems about the baby, problems about what goes on out there ’cause she lived in my area, so she just told me everything straight. They both told me straight up and when I went home, that’s how it was.”

*With reference to Aftercare:* Two youth could mention no source of positive impact. One stated that his Aftercare worker helped him out a lot; he found the everyday contact useful. Another identified his mentor and Aftercare worker as having the greatest impact on him. Both of them were “always there for me.”

The juveniles were also asked directly about their relationships with staff. The overall impression of staff at Wharton Tract was generally positive. Most had a positive response to the majority of DIs -- their relationships with them were okay and they were seen as “fair people.” The response to teachers and social workers was even more positive. One responded: “They was cool people...They all help you with life.” Another said, in agreement with one youth who spoke of their active involvement with the cadets: “They was always there for me too. Anything I needed to talk about, they’d talk about it to me. Anytime I had a problem with somebody or was stressin’...I’d talk to [the social worker].”

The four former cadets were asked whether they were prepared to get and keep a job while at Wharton Tract. Each of the youth answered in the affirmative. They said they were taught how to complete a resume and cover letter, complete job applications, and handle job interviews -- and noted that this skill training was useful. One responded: "They told us everything about the job interviews and everything. That's how I got my job so quick when I went home (he sought out and got this job on his own)." Another said: "Same thing...helped me a lot. Before I wasn't trying to do nothing but sell drugs. But after that [job skills training] I made some efforts. I didn't go on any interviews but I filled out some applications."

Next, they were asked whether Aftercare helped them find a job. There were some efforts by Aftercare in this area, but no job was landed as a result of these efforts. One youth mentioned that Aftercare set up appointments "once or twice." Each time, however, the job was in Paterson, near projects -- areas where he purported to be unable to work safely. He said, "If you gonna get a job, you gotta get a job out of Paterson. If you from the streets, you gotta get a job out of Paterson." Two responded that Aftercare did nothing to help them get a job. On further prompting, one stated that he had talked about getting a job with his Aftercare worker but that was the extent of the involvement. The final youth sought and secured a job on his own.

### ***Integration of Wharton Tract With Aftercare***

A major theme in the boot camp literature is the critical need for clear articulation between and integration of the boot camp and Aftercare components of a program (Peters, 1997; NIJ, 1996). This is at least as critical for juvenile boot camp programs as for adult boot camps. A number of strategies for linking programs are offered in the literature, from coordinated management, to continuity or sharing of staff, to providing a common philosophy and treatment modalities. The examination of the extent of integration and linkage between the two components of the SRP revealed limited success in this area, although some efforts to enhance integration have begun recently and others are being discussed.

The question was posed to Wharton Tract staff. With regard to "integration," a majority (52%) of the staff reported having very little understanding about what Aftercare

was all about. Another 20% of the staff responded that they simply did not know how well the Aftercare component of the SRP is linked to or integrated with the Wharton Tract program.

In a preliminary review of Aftercare interviews it should be noted that most Aftercare staff did not see these two components of the SRP as well linked or integrated. Some noted that they personally kept in touch with the social workers at Wharton Tract regarding the progress of their graduates, however, there is no formal mechanism for Aftercare to report to Wharton Tract staff on the status of graduates. As the SRP has grown there are some indications of increased integration between its various components. For example, as mentioned earlier, efforts have recently begun to facilitate a smoother transition of youth back to their community school setting by scheduled meetings between Wharton Tract and Aftercare staff.

The limited integration of residential and aftercare components is reflected in the lack of a “specialized” Aftercare response, i.e., there is no distinction made by Aftercare between SRP and other youth. One result of this is that there is no set length for the Aftercare component for SRP youth. In addition, there is no apparent attempt to utilize the experiences of SRP graduates once they leave the Wharton Tract setting to “educate” new cadets, nor is there much of an opportunity for members of the Aftercare supervision team to communicate with cadets prior to community supervision.

### ***Timely Implementation of Aftercare Case Plans***

In reviewing several sources of information from this evaluation’s data collection process, issues emerged regarding the implementation of individual Aftercare case plans. Concerns were expressed regarding Aftercare’s ability to develop plans sufficiently early during cadets’ stay at Wharton Tract and to follow through on plan implementation once youth are back in their communities. For example, focus group responses suggested a need for better communication between Wharton Tract staff and Aftercare staff to help make sure that the plan is in place when the juvenile is released.

Timely and effective implementation of case plans is critical for youths’ success in the community. One concern is that potentially lengthy waiting periods between release and implementation of the Aftercare plans, in select cases, may affect a parolee’s attitude

and resolve to be successful in the community. As a result, Aftercare has attempted to refine the planning process and related efforts over time to facilitate the appropriate referral for and delivery of needed services. It should be recognized that Aftercare planning, efforts and bottom-line results (e.g., getting jobs for youth) must occur within the context of frequently limited community resources and related barriers.

Aftercare staff report that many school systems often “misplace” referral materials for cadet graduates. School personnel are reluctant to deal with individuals who may have had very poor attendance and/or presented disruptive and otherwise challenging behaviors in their past enrollment. Referred juveniles wait to be admitted until the referral information is gathered. This waiting period has taken up to several months.

Aftercare staff indicate more success with youth getting re-enrolled in an educational setting whether it be regular school, adult night school or an alternative school setting, than with linking youth with jobs. Program participants returned to the Training School commented that they were not adequately assisted in finding jobs while on Aftercare. The Aftercare staff frequently stated that those cadet graduates who really wanted to work were able to find jobs on their own.

A further issue concerns impediments to getting parolees involved in substance abuse or other counseling/treatment services. If a parolee’s family has insurance, community treatment services tend to be readily available. This is, however, rarely the case with the committed youth population. Frequently, provision of needed services must await location of a funding source. Aftercare and local planning bodies are currently in the process of developing collaborative strategies to facilitate and expedite service provision for these youth.

## **RESULTS OF OUTCOME/IMPACT ANALYSES**

### ***Individual-level Outcomes***

Measurable gains with regard to individual outcomes included positive behavioral change and personal growth in terms of skills, attitudes and orientation. The primary behavioral gain examined for this report was recidivism. Additional information regarding education and employment once released from Wharton Tract was provided supra at pp. 46-47.

### ***Recidivism***

While the performance and effectiveness of a correctional program can be measured in numerous ways, the “bottom line” for the public, as for most researchers, is whether an individual continues to break the law or reenters the system – i.e., does he or she recidivate.

Recidivism, for purposes of this report, is defined as any subsequent filing on delinquency charges in family court (based on a search of the Family Automated Case Tracking System, FACTS), and/or any arrest as an adult (based on a search of the State Police Criminal Case History and Interstate Identification Index data bases). In most cases, juveniles who turned 18 during the follow up period, were tracked into the adult system utilizing a discrete State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) number; others were searched using name and date of birth. It is important to note that “new filing in family court/adult arrest” is a more stringent measure of recidivism than subsequent adjudications of delinquency or convictions, a strategy for assessing recidivism that is often utilized in examinations of juvenile boot camp programs (Peters, 1997).

To provide a context within which recidivism rates can be understood, recidivism results are also provided for the comparison group of youth, i.e., a sample of those held in the Training School or community residential programs. A random sample of the comparison group youth was drawn and information analyzed regarding prior and current offenses and sentencing. Information was gathered on 54 of the 288 comparison group youth (18.8% of the group). The following table provides a profile comparing select offense characteristics for the SRP vs. comparison group youth.

**Table 11. Profile of SRP vs Comparison Group**

| CHARACTERISTIC   | % (OR MEAN NUMBER) OF SRP GROUP | % (OR MEAN NUMBER) OF COMPARISON GROUP |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Age at First Court Filing                                    | 14.6                            | 14.2                                   |
| Number of Prior Adjudications                                | 3.4                             | 3.6                                    |
| Number of Violent Prior Adjudications                        | 0.5                             | 0.6                                    |
| <b>Most Serious Prior Adjudicated (Type)</b>                 |                                 |  |
| Violent  | 7.1%                            | 4.7%                                   |
| Weapon   | 5.7%                            | 11.6%                                  |
| Property   | 45.4%                           | 37.2%                                  |
| Drug   | 22.0%                           | 32.6%                                  |
| Other  | 14.2%                           | 9.3%                                   |
| VOP  | 5.7%                            | 4.7%                                   |
| <b>Most Serious Prior Adjudicated (Degree)</b>               |                                 |  |
| 1st Degree   | 3.5%                            | 2.3%                                   |
| 2nd Degree   | 22.0%                           | 18.6%                                  |
| 3rd Degree   | 48.9%                           | 41.9%                                  |
| 4th Degree   | 9.9%                            | 2.3%                                   |
| Disorderly Persons   | 7.8%                            | 13.9%                                  |
| No Degree  | 7.8%                            | 20.9%                                  |
| Number of Charges Adjudicated at Commitment                  | 2.6                             | 1.9                                    |
| <b>Most Serious Commitment Offense (Type) *** p=.00027</b>   |                                 |  |
| Violent  | 9.7%                            | 7.4%                                   |
| Weapon   | 3.6%                            | 16.7%                                  |
| Property   | 32.7%                           | 22.2%                                  |
| Drug   | 13.9%                           | 31.5%                                  |
| Other  | 18.2%                           | 5.6%                                   |
| VOP  | 21.8%                           | 16.7%                                  |
| <b>Most Serious Commitment Offense (Degree) *** p=.00331</b> |                                 |  |
| 1st Degree   | 0                               | 1.9%                                   |
| 2nd Degree   | 24.1%                           | 9.3%                                   |
| 3rd Degree   | 38.6%                           | 44.4%                                  |
| 4th Degree   | 3.0%                            | 14.8%                                  |
| Disorderly Persons   | 7.2%                            | 5.6%                                   |
| No Degree  | 27.1%                           | 24.1%                                  |
| <b>Length of Sentence (Months) **** p=.00000</b>             | 23                              | 17                                     |

\*\*\* indicates a significant difference using the chi square statistic

The profile illustrates differences and similarities among the two study groups. It is important to recognize these differences and similarities as they provide context for the following outcome analyses.

The groups did not differ significantly on average age at first court filing, average number of prior adjudications or average number of prior violent adjudications. Neither were the groups significantly different in terms of their most serious prior adjudicated offense, either in terms of the type or degree of the most serious offense, or in terms of the number of charges involving an adjudication of delinquency at the time of commitment.

The groups were, however, significantly different on three items: type of most serious commitment offense, degree of most serious commitment offense and length of sentence. The SRP juveniles were more likely to have been committed on a property, violent, or a violation of probation adjudication. The comparison group juveniles were more likely to be committed on weapon, drug or “other” adjudications.

The groups were also different in terms of most serious degree of commitment offense. Practically no one in the overall study sample had a first degree offense at commitment. Through legislative mandate, the SRP is not available to first degree offenders, and the researchers attempted to control for that in screening youth into the study. Beyond that, SRP juveniles were more likely than the comparison group to have been committed on a second degree offense. The comparison group was more likely to be committed on a third or fourth degree offense. Overall, in comparing the two groups, the SRP juveniles were committed on more serious charges, in terms of degree of adjudicated offense.

The difference in length of sentence (reported in months) between the two groups was highly significant. SRP juveniles received an average sentence of 23 months (typically receiving two year sentences) compared with 17 months for the comparison group youth. SRP juveniles’ longer sentences may be one reason why they volunteered for the SRP program. By volunteering for the program, many significantly reduced their incarceration time.

For this report, recidivism was measured beginning at release from custody (i.e., graduation from Wharton Tract for the SRP youth, and release from the Training School or community program for the comparison group) and ending at a cutoff date of November 15, 1997. As noted earlier, not enough time has elapsed to do recidivism analysis to gauge the potential gains related to the entire SRP program, i.e., the combined residential and

Aftercare components. This would be critical to a full appreciation of the SRP program's potential for reducing recidivism (and thus contributing to the goal of lowering subsequent offending, as well as the system goals of reducing overcrowding and reducing costs).

Note that youth varied greatly with regard to the amount of time between release from custody and the cutoff date spent under supervision in the community. For example, some youth from the earliest platoons still remain under supervision by Aftercare. Others completed their period of Aftercare shortly after release from custody. The same variation exists for youth in the comparison group.

The analysis attempted to take into consideration the relative length of "time at risk" for each of the study youth, i.e., the amount of time they were free in the community to reoffend. For this report, "time at risk" is defined solely as the amount of time between release from custody and a cut-off point of November 15, 1997. Therefore, the analysis does not take into consideration the portion of that time that a youth may have been incarcerated, either in a county detention center or in a state facility. An attempt will be made in future analysis and reporting to examine recidivism within that context.

The recidivism analysis included the sample of all youth graduating or successfully completing the Wharton Tract program from Platoons 1 through 11 (i.e., 186 youth), and the sample of 288 comparison youth. All youth were released some time prior to November 15, 1997.

For platoons 1 through 11, the rate of recidivism, the rate at which there was at least one new family court filing for delinquency or a new arrest as an adult, was 40.9%. The average length of "time at risk" for the SRP cadets was 10 months (303 days). The analysis for the comparison group included 288 youth. The rate of recidivism for the comparison sample was 53.5% (53.47%). The average length of "time at risk" for the comparison sample was 7.4 months (222 days). The overall recidivism rate for the entire group of study youth was 48.5%. Therefore, the SRP youth recidivated at a substantially lesser rate despite having a longer "time at risk." A chi square analysis was done to examine whether there was a significant difference in the recidivism of the two groups. The difference (40.9% vs. 53.5%) was statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ).

### ***Survival Analysis***

In addition to the above, a “survival analysis” was conducted to examine the pattern and timing of recidivism for individuals within the two groups. While recidivism is analyzed to a set date, the youth enter the analysis at varying points, i.e., on their varied release dates. As a result, each of them will have a different chance to recidivate. The survival analysis takes that into account.

Survival refers to the likelihood of not recidivating of individuals varying in the length of time they are “at risk” of recidivism. Chart 1 depicts, for each group, the likelihood of rearrest/return to court at a particular point in time, given the number of youth at risk at that point in time. The chart does *not* depict the aggregate group rates of rearrest; for example, the chart does *not* indicate (although it may appear to do so) that about 90% of the comparison group recidivate by just after 400 days. What the survival analysis does indicate, consistent with the findings noted earlier, is that the likelihood of SRP youth to recidivate is less, and that they recidivate less quickly than the comparison group youth. The difference in survival distributions across individuals for the two groups was highly significant ( $p < .0001$ ).

***Chart 1: Survival of SRP and Comparison Groups***

A number of factors may come into play to partially account for the substantial success of the SRP youth vs. the comparison group youth. Among them, two potential factors can be noted here. One contributing factor might be related to potential differences between the two groups in their likelihood of having received technical violations while on Aftercare/Parole supervision. For example, if the SRP youth were more likely to receive technical violations while on Aftercare (and, perhaps, have their Aftercare status revoked) than the comparison group (most receiving parole supervision through the Bureau of Parole), they would have their actual “time at risk” on the street shortened. This is at least plausible as the Juvenile Justice Commission’s Aftercare model is more “intensive” in its surveillance and responsibilities than the traditional model of parole provided by the Bureau of Parole. Another (related) factor is that the Aftercare component of SRP provides a substantial amount of control over the actions of the youth. This includes stringent curfews for many, electronic monitoring for some, and, responsibilities for community service and, overall, high levels of contact between Aftercare personnel and the youth. As a result, SRP youth spend less time away from their homes and have greater need to account for their whereabouts to the Aftercare staff -- or have more activities to keep them busy (school/work/community service). They, therefore, may well have *less opportunity* to reoffend than the comparison group youth.

To date, no attempt has been made to control for these or other potentially confounding factors that might partially account for the differences in recidivism reported above. Future analyses will include multi-variate modeling to control for confounding factors, as well as to collect and analyze information that may shed light on the significance of differential surveillance for offender recidivism.

### ***Measurement of Personal Growth***

Several areas of personal growth and adjustment potentially relevant to subsequent delinquency/criminal involvement were examined for this report. The analysis attempted to measure potential intervention effects, i.e., gains in personal growth and adjustment by the time youth were released from custody. The areas included academic education and skills, antisocial attitudes/orientations and alienation/distrust; locus of control; and attitudes and awareness concerning substances.

## ***Academic Education and Skills***

The Juvenile Justice Commission's Office of Education staff administer the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to youth as a primary method of measuring baseline academic skills and change over time. The results of this testing were provided to research staff. Youth were initially tested either at the Training School or the Orientation Unit shortly after admission and retested shortly before graduation from Wharton Tract – a period of about five to six months. Gains in overall basic skills were examined, combining scores in Math, Reading and Language. Substantial gains in TABE scores were made in this relatively brief period of time.

A majority of the cadets scored well below their age appropriate grade level in their initial testing. However, basic skill levels varied substantially – typically within the same platoon. Overall TABE scores at initial testing ranged from a low score of grade level 1.4 to a high of 12.9+ (the maximum score).

The overall basic skill levels for Platoons 1 through 13 increased an average of 1.1 grade levels. A total of 43.6% of the graduating cadets had an increase in the overall TABE score of 1.0, a gain in basic skills of at least one whole grade level. Performance in this area varied greatly by platoon. The proportion of cadets with at least one grade level increase ranged from a low of 25.0% for Platoon 12 to a high of 71.4% for Platoon 13.

One additional measure of potential gains in academic education was examined – number of credits earned while at the Wharton Tract facility. The level of educational services, both academic and vocational, was substantially upgraded between the early platoons and the more recent ones. The level of staffing increased as well as the hours of classroom activity. In line with this, the number of credits earned grew, based on the use of a standard formula. For platoons 1 through 7, each cadet received a blanket 9.5 earned credits. Since Platoon 8, the number of earned credits has increased greatly. For graduating cadets in the latest platoon for which information was made available (Platoon 13), the average number of earned credits was 20.4. Since Platoon 8, the average number of credits is 22.1. These figures do not include earned credits for “recycled” cadets, who spend more time in the program and, typically, receive a greater number of

earned credits.

### ***Attitudes and Orientation***

The following report of analysis of potential gains in the measures of attitudes and orientation is limited to youth in Platoons 3 through 11. The data collection process was not initiated in time to examine this information for the first two platoons.

The Jesness Inventory is a frequently utilized standardized test measuring various attitudes and orientations thought to be related to delinquent behavior. Two of the “subscales” of the overall Jesness Inventory were analyzed for this report: “social maladjustment” and “alienation” (Jesness, 1991). The social maladjustment scale attempts to measure attitudes “associated with inadequate or disturbed socialization.” A high score on social maladjustment is indicative of holding attitudes shared by “persons who do not meet personal needs and environmental demands in socially approved ways, i.e., a youth characterized by antisocial attitudes and orientations”. The “alienation” subscale attempts to measure “the presence of distrust and estrangement in a person’s attitudes toward others, especially toward those representing authority.”

Cadet scores on the social maladjustment scale decreased somewhat (i.e., indicative of a decrease in antisocial attitudes) between initial testing and retesting just prior to graduation. Specifically, mean (average) scores decreased from 31.3 at initial testing to 29.6 at retesting. A t-test of cadets’ “change scores” (from initial test to retest) found the improvements in this area to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Cadet scores on the alienation scale *increased* slightly (i.e., indicative of an increase in distrust and estrangement) between initial testing and retesting. Specifically, mean (average) scores increased from 12.0 at initial testing to 12.3. The cadets’ “change scores” were not found to be statistically significant.

To provide some context for these findings, an examination of results for the comparison group was completed. Youth in the comparison group had small but statistically significant improvements for both the social maladjustment and alienation scales. The youth had an initial score of 31.4 on the social maladjustment scale, and a retest of 29.0; change scores were found to be statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). In addition, comparison group youth had an initial score of 12.9 on the alienation scale, and

a retest of 11.4; change scores were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ).

The SRP youth were also examined to measure potential gains in “internal locus of control.” Persons with a high level of “internal locus of control” are more likely to feel in control of their environment and what happens to them. Persons with a high level of “external locus of control” are more likely to have a fatalistic approach to life. Those characterized by an internal orientation may be more likely to have a greater sense of competence or “efficacy” and be less likely to give in to immediate pressures and “temptations” that can lead to delinquency (see Aloisi, 1984).

All study youth were administered the Children’s Locus of Control Scale (Nowicki and Strickland, 1973). A high score on the scale indicates a high level of “external locus of control.” Cadet scores on the locus of control scale decreased somewhat (i.e., indicative of a decrease in external locus of control) between initial testing and retesting.

Specifically, mean (average) scores decreased from 12.9 at initial testing to 12.1 at retesting. A t-test of cadets’ “change scores” (from initial test to retest) found the improvement to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

The comparison group also had a small but statistically significant improvement in locus of control. Mean (average) scores decreased from 14.1 at initial testing to 13.1 at retesting. A t-test of cadets’ “change scores” found the improvement to be statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ).

### ***Substance Abuse Awareness***

A somewhat shortened and modified version of the NJ High School Substance Abuse Survey was utilized by the researchers. The survey is conducted by the Department of Law & Public Safety’s Division of Criminal Justice. The author of the survey collaborated on the revisions to the survey.

For this report, the results of the survey are primarily utilized to assess potential change in attitudes and awareness among cadets concerning the use of substances. In later phases of the Commission’s research, survey results will provide a measure of behavioral gains between entry into the Wharton Tract facility and release from Aftercare supervision (and, potentially, one year after that).

Survey items measured: 1) attitudes regarding/awareness of the risk of physical

harm posed by the use of various drugs; attitudes regarding the “wrongness” of particular drug use. The youth were also asked whether fear of physical harm (such as accidents, health problems, or violence) might “prevent you from using alcoholic beverages in the future.”

An examination of “change scores” for cadets measuring change from initial testing to retesting just before graduation suggested few gains. Separate questions were posed for particular drugs (i.e., marijuana, cocaine, crack, hallucinogens, heroin, amphetamines, tranquilizers and barbiturates). For the questions regarding beliefs about the physical harmfulness of occasional use, no statistically significant gains (based on t-tests of differences from initial testing to retesting) were made. With regard to whether “it is wrong to use any of these drugs,” statistically significant gains were made for hallucinogens ( $p=.01$ ), crack ( $p=.03$ ), heroin ( $p=.03$ ) and barbiturates ( $p=.0001$ ); change in attitudes regarding cocaine was marginally significant ( $p=.057$ ). With regard to the preventive effect (regarding future use) of perceived fear of physical harm from alcohol use, a statistically significant gain was recorded ( $p=.0001$ ).

Again, to provide some context for these findings, the analysis was conducted for the comparison group as well. Gains were similarly limited but present. The statistically significant gains were limited to the “wrongness” questions for some drugs, and the alcohol question: marijuana ( $p=.002$ ), hallucinogens ( $p=.03$ ), amphetamines ( $p=.03$ ), heroin ( $p=.02$ ), and barbiturates ( $p=.0001$ ). With regard to the preventive effect of perceived physical harm of using alcohol, a significant gain was recorded ( $p=.0001$ ).

### ***Measuring Achievement of System Goals***

Legislators included among the overlapping goals for the SRP two key goals regarding justice system impact: 1) to reduce costs by shortening stays of incarceration; and 2) to help alleviate overcrowding in juvenile facilities. This report provides an initial attempt to gauge the potential impact in each of these areas.

### **Reducing Costs by Shortening Incarceration Stays**

An important goal of the SRP is to reduce overall Juvenile Justice Commission costs by shortening incarceration stays. This goal is shared by most juvenile and adult boot camp programs around the country. As noted earlier, cost savings have been

identified in a number of the programs around the country. However, cost savings are likely to occur under, or are facilitated by, certain conditions. These include the need to avoid “net widening” and limiting the proportion of participants who drop out or “fail” out of the boot camp and return to traditional incarcerative settings.

There are two factors that drive total costs of a program: cost per day; and length of stay in the program. Once a male juvenile is committed to the care and supervision of the Juvenile Justice Commission, his ultimate placement is decided through a classification process which takes place at the Training School. There are three basic placement options: continued secure custody at the Training School; placement in a Juvenile Justice Commission operated or contracted community residential program; and, placement in the Stabilization & Reintegration Program. The cost per day and average length of stay of each of these options varies.

Of the three settings, the Training School is the most expensive placement option per day per youth estimated at \$125, with an annual cost of \$45,710. The second most expensive placement option is the Stabilization & Reintegration Program (custody phases). The combined cost of the SRP Orientation Unit and Wharton Tract facility stay is estimated to be slightly less than that for the Training School, at \$117 per day per youth, with an annual estimated cost of \$42,536. The community residential programs cost considerably less than the other placement options. Their estimated cost per day per youth is \$87, with an annual cost of \$31,740. These are current cost estimates per youth (for fiscal year 1999). The costs are limited to those directly related to running the programs/facilities, including (primarily) the cost of salaries but also non-salary costs such as maintenance and supplies.

*Examination of the length of stay of study youth with comparable sentence lengths* led to the following estimation of a typical length of stay for each of the three placement options. Since a large majority of youth are admitted to the SRP with two year sentences (the average sentence is 23 months), the length of stay of youth alternately placed was examined for those with two year sentences only.

Of the three placement options, graduating SRP youth remain in custody for the shortest period of time – six months. For the current analysis, variation across SRP youth in actual time spent in the program is not considered. In actuality, some youth graduate in less than six months (if their stay at the Orientation Unit is curtailed); some remain in custody more than six months (in the event of being “recycled” to a later platoon for disciplinary reasons).

In comparison, the average length of stay for youth (with two-year sentences) placed in community residential programs is estimated at eight months; the average stay for youth (with two-year sentences) at the Training School is estimated at ten months. It is important to note that the above estimates of length of stay involve only the amount of time served in each type of program/setting. Additional time on their original sentence is typically served in a county detention center before sentencing and, due to overcrowding in Commission facilities, after sentencing awaiting placement with the Commission. For example, the total time served for a youth who remains at the Training School on a two year sentence is estimated to be, on average, 14 months.

The comparison of total per capita cost for each of the three placement options is estimated as follows:

|                                |   |          |
|--------------------------------|---|----------|
| Training School                | $\$125 \times (10 \text{ months}) 300 \text{ days} =$ | \$37,500 |
| SRP (custody)                  | $\$117 \times (6 \text{ months}) 180 \text{ days} =$  | \$21,060 |
| Community Residential Programs | $\$ 87 \times (8 \text{ months}) 240 \text{ days} =$  | \$20,880 |

The overall cost of the custody portion of SRP (through successful graduation at Wharton Tract) falls well below the cost of the average stay at the Training School of a juvenile with a two-year sentence, \$37,500. This figure is substantially higher than the estimated cost of the SRP program (\$21,060) and the essentially equivalent figure for the community residential programs (\$20,880), for similarly sentenced juveniles.

In order to determine, broadly, potential cost savings there needs to be a determination regarding the likely placement of youth in the absence of available SRP beds. That is – Where would the youth who entered SRP otherwise have been placed through the classification process – in the absence of the program? As noted above, there were two other options – the Training School or community residential programs. The availability of SRP beds has, in fact, “diverted” committed youth *from both the Training School and the community residential programs*. There are clear cost savings for those who would otherwise have remained in secure custody at the Training School. Essentially no cost savings are apparently gained, however, for those who would otherwise have been placed in a community residential program. Further analysis is required to clarify this important consideration.

Note, finally, that a reduction in correctional costs can occur not only by shortening incarceration stays but, also, by reducing recidivism. A significant reduction in the rate of recidivism of offenders has an important role to play in “bottom line” long-term costs. However, the goals of (immediate) cost savings and reducing recidivism can be in “competition.” In fact, a decision was made during the operation of the SRP to extend the Wharton Tract stay from four to five months. While this decision is counter to the goal of “shortening incarceration stays,” it was seen as consistent with the goal of rehabilitation and, ultimately, the reduction of recidivism. In this case, a short-term increase in costs was judged as desirable to maximize the potential for the program to effect lasting behavioral change in youth – a goal that is consistent with an interest in long-term cost reduction.

### **Overcrowding in the Juvenile Justice Commission**

One of the legislative objectives for SRP was to help alleviate overcrowding in juvenile facilities – a problem at the time the legislation was introduced, and a continuing problem for the Juvenile Justice Commission. Reducing overcrowding can be achieved in one of three ways: increase bed capacity; shorten stays of incarceration; and reduce recidivism. The latter two strategies are conducive to cost savings, while the first increases overall costs.

The legislature envisioned that each of the above factors would come into play to

contribute to a reduction in overcrowding. The above analysis suggests that the SRP has led to shorter stays of incarceration. It also suggests that the short-term SRP recidivism rates are lower than the rates for youth in other placements. In addition, the Wharton Tract facility increases Commission bed capacity – it was initially designed as a 60-bed facility. Currently the facility serves approximately 70 cadets. The SRP Orientation Unit can serve an additional 30 youth at any one time.

The current research examined the potential efficacy of the SRP regarding overcrowding by attempting to estimate the number of beds “freed up” by the existence of Wharton Tract on an annual basis. The calculation “assumes” completion of the program by all that are admitted. The extent of the program’s ability to reduce overcrowding is dependent on the nature of the offenders admitted into the program and whether they would have been likely to have been served at the Training School or a Juvenile Justice Commission community residential program.

There were 167 (unduplicated) juveniles admitted to Wharton Tract in 1997. How many beds would be “freed up” annually at the Training School if all of the juveniles were to be placed there? As noted before, the estimated average stay of offenders at the Training School who are serving a two year sentence is ten months. Utilizing these figures, Wharton Tract would provide the equivalent of 139 beds at the Training School on an annual basis (i.e.,  $10 \text{ months}/12 \text{ months} \times 167 \text{ youth} = 139 \text{ beds}$ ).

Alternately, how many beds would be “freed up” annually in community residential programs if all the SRP youth were placed there? As noted earlier, the estimated average stay of committed youth in community residential programs who are serving a two year sentence is eight months. According to this scenario, Wharton Tract would provide the equivalent of 111 beds at the community residential programs on an annual basis (i.e.,  $8 \text{ months}/12 \text{ months} \times 167 \text{ youth} = 111 \text{ beds}$ ).

Utilizing these assumptions, the real number of beds “freed up” for other offenders on an annual basis by the operation of the Wharton Tract facility is somewhere between a high of 139 and a low of 111 beds. The actual number would depend on the proportion of youth who would have been placed in the Training School vs. community residential programs. While this proportion is undetermined at this point, it is clear that a significant

number of youth would be community residential program “bound.”

It seems relevant to point out that the mix of offenders at community residential programs since the opening of the Wharton Tract facility has changed substantially. The community residential programs traditionally have held both youth committed for incarceration and noncommitted youth (or “probationers”). Noncommitted youth can be sentenced by judges to be placed in a Commission community residential program. Paralleling the existence of the Wharton Tract facility, the proportion of noncommitted youth in the residential programs has grown significantly. It appears, after discussion with Commission officials, that there is a link between the two trends. In short, along with “freeing up” beds at the Training School, the SRP has also “freed up” beds in the residential programs, some of which are filled by noncommitted youth. As a result, there appears to be some degree of “net widening” with regard to admissions to Juvenile Justice Commission beds, i.e., some utilization of beds that may not have occurred in the absence of the new (Wharton Tract) beds. While the relative desirability or undesirability of “net widening,” discussed widely in the correctional literature, remains an open question, the existence of “net widening” does tend to have an effect on limiting potential cost savings and reduction in overcrowding.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

To date there is evidence of positive accomplishments by the Juvenile Justice Commission's Stabilization & Reintegration Program, consistent with the varied goals of the enabling legislation.

The SRP is New Jersey's first attempt to implement a "boot camp." As such it is an innovative use of correctional resources, one of the legislative goals. The program has been implemented as a creative attempt to blend a broad array of therapeutic interventions within the overarching context of military-like discipline and regimentation. Though not an "easy fit," there is evidence of growth and greater balance consistent with an effort to create change in a difficult juvenile population.

The legislation calls on the SRP to reduce both facility overcrowding and costs. The Wharton Tract facility has an impact on overcrowding by freeing beds at both the Training School and the community programs. The potential is for the program to free between 111 and 139 beds annually. However, the relevant issue regarding potential "net widening" – admission of greater numbers of noncommitted youth into community residential programs -- needs to be examined. Further, the SRP is considerably less expensive -- both in per day and overall costs -- than incarceration in the Training School (\$21,060 vs. \$37,500) for comparable youth. However, its cost is essentially equivalent to that of the community residential programs (\$20,880) for comparable youth.

The bottom line with regard to a correctional program for the public is – "Does the program cut recidivism?" The SRP appears to do so. Analysis of recidivism was limited to follow up of youth once released from the custody component of the SRP. It is too early to study the long-term impacts on youth who have completed the entire program – Wharton Tract and Aftercare. The research showed that the SRP youth "failed" significantly less often and less quickly than the comparison group (youth released from the Training School or community programs and (generally) supervised in the community by the Bureau of Parole).

The SRP also showed gains in various measures of personal growth and adjustment. Academic basic skill levels grew by more than one full grade level over a

period of between five to six months. In addition, small but statistically significant improvements were achieved in level of antisocial attitudes, level of “internal locus of control” and in some areas of substance abuse awareness. Comparison group youth had similar gains. There were other, more subjective, indications of broad gains in self-discipline, self-respect and respect for others, and broad social skills.

Once released, many SRP graduates were back in school, working or in job training. Nearly six out of ten under Aftercare supervision recently were either currently attending school or involved in other educational activities or had a full-time job. While these statistics are encouraging, there is clearly need for further efforts to assist those remaining juveniles currently not enrolled in school and without a job placement.

### ***Recommendations***

The evaluation project has led to the accumulation of a significant amount of “data” or information about the program. Some important data remains to be collected, as suggested at various points above. While staff and “client” reports were encouraging, suggesting both positive program impact and growth, they also suggested areas that needed improvement, either regarding the quality of programming or the behavior of select staff. The following recommendations are offered as contributions to the ongoing development and refinement of the Stabilization and Reintegration Program.

#### ***Recommendations for Wharton Tract***

- C Visit other Juvenile Boot Camps. Use recommendations from knowledgeable sources regarding “model” or promising juvenile programs. Several have already been identified by the consultants, Doris MacKenzie and Tyrone Vick. Following visits to these sites, there should be a reevaluation of the usefulness of the model currently guiding the philosophy of New Jersey’s program, i.e., the adult model provided by the New York Shock Incarceration program. As part of this re-evaluation, administrators should scrutinize the present 12-Step model to determine its appropriateness for use in treating adolescents.
- C Explore the potential for expanding parental/guardian involvement with youth while in the Wharton Tract facility. Periodic visitation should be allowed. This should be further discussed and weighed against the realistic concerns that have been

voiced by administrators. This would benefit not only the cadet but would also facilitate development of treatment planning both at Wharton Tract and for Aftercare.

- C Increase the use of rewards provided for individual accomplishments or positive behavior. Despite improvements in the area of providing rewards, partially in response to consultant recommendations, there are currently only limited opportunities in place to provide rewards *on an individual basis*. This practice would be especially beneficial as applied by education staff. Rewards should include both earned privileges (not threatened loss of privileges) and certificates and other forms of recognition. Opportunities for rewards should be frequent and ongoing.
- C Incorporate into the Cadet Handbook (Appendix 4) written specification of acceptable staff behavior toward cadets including the nature of acceptable “learning experiences” and when they can be appropriately applied. There should also be incorporated into the Cadet Handbook clearly written policy and procedures regarding cadets’ right to report grievances. There should be a clear assurance that there will be no retribution for initiating any grievance. Policy and procedures regarding cadet grievances do currently exist but not in writing. Currently, the Cadet Handbook includes rules and regulations to guide cadet behavior while at the Wharton Tract facility. This includes the “10 General Orders” and an array of general rules and regulations.
- C Explore the potential for broadening participation in the SRP more proportionately across the state, *consistent with existing patterns of commitment*. A few counties are disproportionately represented among SRP admissions, even beyond their proportion of all youth committed to the Juvenile Justice Commission. For example, Passaic County currently accounts for 30% of all admissions to the SRP.
- C Evaluate the extent to which existing curricula at Wharton Tract (i.e., *Keys to Innervations, Doing Life and Clean Slate*) complement each other or, alternately, compete or strain cadets’ capacity to absorb differing approaches to problem solving and choice. For example, do the 5 Steps to Decisions in the *Doing Life*

curriculum complement or compete with the Four Steps for thoughtful decision making in *KIV*?

- C Implement more formalized parenting classes and human sexuality classes at Wharton Tract (Planned Parenthood has contracted with other JJC residential facilities).
- C Provide greater supervision and/or consultation of Social Work staff through the services of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Licensed Clinical Psychologist.

*Recommendations for Aftercare*

- C Implement strategies to achieve greater integration and linkages between Wharton Tract and Aftercare. The Wharton Tract and Aftercare components of the SRP currently operate with virtual autonomy. The boot camp research literature persuasively details the critical need for such integration and continuity. The literature speaks to sharing philosophy, treatment modalities, staffing, etc. There needs to be more staff communication including greater input from Wharton Tract staff in the development of the Aftercare case plan as well as feedback from Aftercare staff to Wharton Tract staff on the status of graduates while on Aftercare. The program would benefit from involvement of Aftercare supervision staff visiting Wharton Tract periodically to discuss the Aftercare experience with youth from the geographical areas for which they are responsible. Wharton Tract graduates should return to the facility, periodically, while they are on Aftercare, to provide insights into the pressures and realities they are experiencing.
- C Provide a more identifiable, "specialized," SRP Aftercare program. Currently, there is no distinction made by Aftercare staff between the SRP graduates and other youth under supervision. The Commission needs to explore the possibility of having a delimited period of Aftercare for SRP youth, as was the original plan. The possibility of group activities for cadets from the same geographical areas needs to be considered to take advantage of existing cohesiveness developed while at Wharton Tract. Explore the possibility of specialized caseloads or Aftercare staff that have primary responsibility for SRP graduates.
- C Conduct a graduation ceremony once participants complete the SRP, i.e., once

they have completed the Aftercare component. Graduation could be held, periodically, at the Wharton Tract facility. This practice would benefit not only youth graduating from Aftercare but would also benefit cadets still at Wharton Tract and would reinforce the notion that this is *one* program.

- C Explore strategies for achieving more timely implementation of case plans. These strategies should include both efforts to initiate and complete pre-release planning earlier during the Wharton Tract stay and efforts to engage other system actors (e.g., local school districts, Department of Labor) in cooperative and collaborative activities.