

AN EVALUATION OF THE SPECIAL NARCOTICS
ADDITION PROGRAM AT THE MASSACHUSETTS
CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION, WALPOLE

Massachusetts Department of Correction

John A. Gavin
Commissioner

Researchers:

Edward F. Callahan
Northeastern University
Work Study Program

First Printing July, 1969
Second Printing October, 1971

Social Science Research Specialist

Francis J. Carney

Approved by Alfred C. Holland, State Purchasing Agent, Publication No. 5881

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1962, a program was established at M. C. I. Walpole for the drug user. It was called the Special Narcotics Addiction Program or simply SNAP. Its purpose was to establish on a purely voluntary basis, a self-help organization which would hopefully be geared to the needs of the inmate with a drug problem.

Since its inception, members in the addiction program have been meeting once a week for an hour and a half. The meetings, patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous, center on the problems of drug addiction and how the inmate can best solve his drug problem. The discussion and focus of each meeting is determined and led by members of the group with a representative of the Counseling Service attending in an advisory capacity.

Over the past six years approximately 150 inmates have taken part in this group. It is the purpose of this paper to evaluate the program on the basis of the success or failure of these inmates when they were released to the community; i.e., their recidivism rate.

SAMPLE

Since recidivism was to be used as the means in evaluating the program as a whole, two samples were derived for comparison. The first was obtained from a list of SNAP members which contained all those who were involved with the program from its inception through September 1, 1968, a total of 139 inmates. From this number, 84 members fit the criteria necessary for a recidivism follow-up period of one year; i.e., they were released to the community before September 1, 1967.

The second sample, the NON-SNAP group, was obtained from several sources, such as release and commitment data of the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions, and information concerning behavior disorders (drug abuse) among inmates who are or were confined at M. C. I. Walpole. From these sources a total of 46 individuals fit the following three criteria which determined inclusion within the NON-SNAP sample.

1. Must have spent at least one month of his commitment at M. C. I. Walpole.
2. Must have been released between January of 1963 and September of 1967.
3. Must have admitted to drug use.

The first category, the "one month criterion" was established in order to allow the inmate enough time to become familiar with the programs of the institution and to either join or not join the SNAP organization. Here, the primary concern was that the individual's motivation in joining the SNAP group may be a determining factor in his success in the community upon release. It was therefore necessary to have all the members of the NON-SNAP sample exposed to the opportunity of joining SNAP. Actually, of the 46 inmates of the NON-SNAP sample, only six spent less than one year of their incarceration at M. C. I. Walpole.

The second category was the same for both samples. Each individual had to be released to the community after January of 1963, (which was one month after the SNAP program started), and released before September of 1967, (which allowed enough time for a one year follow-up).

In creating this time span of four years and nine months in which an inmate can be released, a problem arose in that an individual within this period would be a member of SNAP, be released, and on a new commitment could rejoin the SNAP program. In order not to disregard this renewed activity in the group, it was necessary to consider both samples on the basis of all commitments within the four year and nine month period. It is therefore possible for a single individual to be included within one sample more than once or for an individual to be a member of both samples, if he joined SNAP on one commitment and didn't join the group during another commitment.

In discussing the final criterion, that of drug use, one cannot help but refer to the term "addiction". It is important to note that in this study use and addiction are not meant to be synonymous. Addiction is a term which can have several different meanings. It can be described as physical dependence, psychic dependence, habitual use, etc. The definitions are varied and the characteristics of the individual drug user are also varied. Consequently, use rather than addiction was used as the final criterion for the NON-SNAP sample.

At this point in the study it may be useful to point out a limitation involved in collecting material on drug use. This concerns the stigma which is attached to the inmate who has used drugs. He is considered a security threat, and at the time of this study, was limited in his chances of institutional transfers. With this in mind he is naturally somewhat reticent in revealing the extent of his drug abuse to authorities. This in turn limits the amount of information that can be collected about his drug background. Consequently, a complete picture of the nature and extent of drug abuse among known drug users is difficult to obtain. However, enough material was available to reveal many important aspects of his background.

First, the samples displayed a wide variety of drugs used and the length of time using them. Some individuals were users for only a matter of months, while others were users for up to 30 years. Types of drugs ranged from marijuana to heroin and included in some cases hallucinogenic substances. Similarly, the age at which the user has his first drug experience also varied greatly, ranging from 14 to 30 years of age. The average age, however, was 18 years for both samples. In the majority of these cases (66.6%) the drug first used was either marijuana or cough medicine containing codeine or its equivalent.

Another characteristic of the drug population is its high percentage of black people. Table I shows that 55.3% of the combined samples were black as compared to 30.9% of a general sample of inmates at M. C. I. Walpole.(1)

TABLE I

Race	General Walpole Sample		Walpole Drug Users	
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
White	104	67.0	58	44.6
Black	48	30.9	72	55.3
Chinese	3	2.1	0	

This significant difference is primarily due to the extreme overrepresentation of blacks who use one particular drug, heroin. From among the 80 inmates who admitted to heroin use, 72.5% were black.

A COMPARISON OF THE SNAP
AND NON-SNAP SAMPLES

Appendix A provides a comparison of the two samples in three general categories:

- (a) Background factors
- (b) Criminal history
- (c) Present incarceration

Included also in the Appendix are the recidivism rates for each variable of both samples.

When the samples were compared on the variables within these categories, they were found to be quite similar, having only one significant difference. This significant variable (B-5) was prior drunkenness arrests. Over half of the NON-SNAP sample (60.9%) had prior arrests for drunkenness while only 42.9% of the SNAP members had drunk arrests.

(1) Francis J. Carney - "Predicting Recidivism in a Maximum Security Correctional Institution: Some Emerging Generalizations", Massachusetts Department of Correction, Mimeo (Oct., 1966).

One other variable, age at present commitment (A-1) although not statistically significant indicated a substantial difference between the two samples. The SNAP members tended to be somewhat younger at commitment. 63.1% were 30 years of age or younger compared to 45.7% for the NON-SNAP sample.

Variables that showed no significant differences included on background factors: race, marital status, education, and military service. In the categories of criminal history and present incarceration those with no significant differences included the following variables:

Age at first arrest	B-1
Age at first narcotic arrest	B-2
Number of prior arrests	B-3
Prior narcotic arrests	B-4
Prior felonies vs. person	B-6
Prior sex offenses	B-7
Prior felonies vs. property	B-8
Prior state or federal incarcerations	B-9
Prior state or federal narcotic incarcerations	B-10
Prior House of Correction incarcerations	B-11
Prior House of Correction narcotic incarcerations	B-12
Length of present incarceration	C-1
Type of release	C-2

In sum, then, one can see that the samples tended to be quite similar and in only two cases were found to have substantial differences. These were prior drunkenness arrests and the age at commitment.

FINDINGS ON RECIDIVISM

During the one year follow-up period which was designated for the sample, anyone who returned to a state or federal prison or to a house of correction for more than a month, was considered a recidivist. It should be noted that this definition includes both parole violators and new commitments. With recidivism defined as such, the SNAP group had a recidivism rate of 40.5% compared to 47.8% for the NON-SNAP sample. Although the rate for SNAP recidivism in this case is lower than the NON-SNAP sample, it is not significantly lower.

The next question to be considered was whether or not the SNAP program had a differential impact with various types of inmates. In order to shed some light on this issue, a comparison of the recidivism

rates of SNAP and NON-SNAP subjects was made with the variables in Appendix A held constant. Only one variable yielded a statistically significant difference between return rates of SNAP and NON-SNAP subjects; i.e., age at first arrest (Table B,1). SNAP subjects who were 18 or older at their first arrest had a significantly lower recidivism rate (23.1%) than their NON-SNAP counterparts (55.0%).

Besides age at first arrest several other variables were found to have substantial differences in regard to the recidivism rates between SNAP and NON-SNAP subjects. Although the differences are not statistically significant, they are worth noting since they do indicate the general characteristics of inmates who are most likely to benefit from participation in the SNAP program.

Among background factors four variables were important in terms of spotlighting differences in recidivism - age (A,1), race (A,2), marital status (A,3), and education (A,5). In these categories SNAP subjects who were 30 or younger, or who were white, or who were single, or who had less than a ninth grade education had recidivism rates that were at least 17 percentage points lower than their NON-SNAP counterparts.

Under criminal history, there were three factors, in addition to age at first arrest (B,1), that were found to have substantial recidivistic differences. These factors were: prior narcotic arrests (B,4), prior drunkenness arrests (B,5), and prior state or federal narcotic incarcerations (B,10). In these categories SNAP subjects who had fewer than two prior narcotic arrests, or no prior drunkenness arrests, or no prior state or federal narcotic incarcerations had recidivism rates that were at least 18 percentage points lower than NON-SNAP subjects with the same characteristics. It is interesting to note that on each of the 12 variables under criminal history, SNAP subjects had lower recidivism rates than NON-SNAP subjects on those sub-categories which indicated fewer contacts with law enforcement or correctional agencies. These sub-categories included those who were older at first arrest (B,1-2), those with fewer prior arrests (B,3-5), those with fewer prior felonies (B,6-8), and those with fewer prior incarcerations (B,9-12). The probability of finding this set of differences in recidivism rates; i.e., with such a consistent pattern in the same direction - is less than one in a thousand. Thus the data in these tables indicate that the SNAP program tends to be more beneficial for those drug users who have had relatively few contacts with law enforcement or correctional agencies. This suggests that SNAP is more effective with those who are as yet not too deeply involved in drug use or criminal behavior.

One other important issue, related to the possibility of a differential impact to the SNAP organization, is the type of drug used. The data in Table II indicate that the SNAP program was more effective with non-users of heroin than it was with heroin users. The recidivism

rate of heroin users who were in SNAP (50.9%) was very similar to that of heroin users who were not in SNAP (52.0%). However, the return rate of non-users of heroin who were in SNAP (20.7%) was just about one-half that of their NON-SNAP counterparts (42.9%).

TABLE II

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TYPE OF DRUG USED AND RECIDIVISM

<u>Drug Use</u>	<u>SNAP</u>		<u>NON-SNAP</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>
<u>Users of Heroin</u>	55	(65.5)	25	(54.3)
<u>Non-Users of Heroin</u>	29	(34.5)	21	(45.7)
<u>Total</u>	84	(100.0)	46	(100.0)

The next question to be considered was whether or not there was a relationship between the length of time in SNAP and recidivism. As the Data in Table III indicate, there is a tendency for the recidivism rate to increase as the length of time in SNAP increases.

TABLE III

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LENGTH OF TIME IN SNAP AND RECIDIVISM

<u>No. of Sessions</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>
24 or fewer	29	(34.5)	34.4%
25 - 39	27	(32.1)	40.7%
40 or more	28	(33.3)	46.4%
<u>Total</u>	84	(99.9)	40.5%

It is important to note that the relation between time in SNAP and recidivism may have been influenced by the proportion of heroin users in each of the three time categories, inasmuch as the recidivism rate of heroin users in the SNAP sample (50.9%) was significantly higher than that of non-users (20.7%) (X^2 equals 7.20, df equals 1, $p < .01$). Table IV reveals that there was a significant difference in the proportions of heroin users in the three time categories (X^2 equals 7.32, df equals 2, $p < .05$). For example, 25.5% of the heroin users were in SNAP for 24 or fewer sessions, while 51.7% of the non-users were in SNAP for this long. On the other hand, 41.8% of the heroin users were in SNAP for 40 or more sessions, compared to only 17.2% of the non-users of heroin.

TABLE IV

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME IN SNAP AND RECIDIVISM FOR
HEROIN USERS AND NON-USERS OF HEROIN

<u>No. of Sessions</u>	<u>Heroin Users</u>			<u>Non-Users of Heroin</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>
24 or fewer	14	(25.5)	57.1%	15	(51.7)	13.3%
25 - 39	18	(32.7)	50.0%	9	(31.0)	22.2%
40 or more	23	(41.8)	47.8%	5	(17.2)	40.0%
Total	55	(100.0)	50.9%	29	(99.9)	20.7%

The data in Table IV also indicate that the recidivism rate of heroin users tends to decrease as the length of time in SNAP increases. Conversely, the return rate of non-users increases with an increase in time in SNAP. However, the numbers in each of these cells are too small to allow any generalization, particularly with respect to the non-users of heroin.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The recidivism rate of the SNAP participant (40.5%) was found to be 7.3 percentage points lower than their NON-SNAP counterparts (47.8%). Further analysis revealed that participation in the SNAP organization had a differential impact upon its membership in terms of reducing recidivism. The first, and only, variable that indicated a significant difference in the recidivism rates between the samples was age at first arrest. Despite the fact that only one variable was significant, the data did show a very interesting and consistent pattern with respect to the variables under the heading of Criminal History. Of the 12 variables which measure the extent of the inmates' criminal history, the SNAP sample had consistently lower recidivism on each of the 12 variables in those sub-categories which indicated few contacts with law enforcement and correctional agencies. It appears from these results that the SNAP organization is most effective in reducing recidivism among those inmates who are as yet not too deeply involved in the use of drugs or in criminal behavior.

Several other interesting trends were noticed when information on the type of drug used and the length of time spent in SNAP were compared. Specifically, the non-users of heroin did significantly better when released to the community than the heroin users. It was also true that as the number of sessions attended increased the recidivism rate also increased. But, as was pointed out earlier, this increase in recidivism was due to a consistently increasing proportion of heroin users among those who attended the most sessions. The final table discussed in this study indicated that although the recidivism rate for heroin users is relatively high it does tend to decrease as the length of time in SNAP increases. On the other

hand, the recidivism rate for non-users of heroin tends to increase as the length of time in SNAP increased. It is difficult, however, to generalize about these findings since the numbers in these cases are quite small. Perhaps future research on a larger sample will be able to clarify this relationship.

APPENDIX A

A COMPARISON OF THE SNAP AND NON-SNAP
SAMPLES INCLUDING RECIDIVISM RATE

<u>Variable</u>	<u>SNAP</u>			<u>NON-SNAP</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>
	84	(100.0)	40.5%	45	(100.0)	47.8%
A. <u>Background Factors</u>						
1. <u>Age at Present Incarceration</u>						
30 or younger	53	(63.1)	41.5%	21	(45.7)	61.9%
31 or older	31	(36.9)	38.8%	25	(54.3)	36.0%
2. <u>Race</u>						
Black	45	(53.6)	48.9%	27	(58.7)	44.4%
White	39	(46.4)	30.8%	19	(41.3)	52.6%
3. <u>Marital Status</u>						
Single	31	(36.9)	32.3%	18	(39.1)	50.0%
Married	28	(33.3)	39.3%	15	(32.6)	46.7%
Div., Sep., Wid.	25	(29.8)	52.0%	13	(28.3)	46.2%
4. <u>Service</u>						
None	46	(54.8)	47.8%	21	(45.7)	57.1%
Honorable	24	(28.6)	33.3%	11	(23.9)	45.5%
Other than Honorable*	14	(16.7)	28.6%	14	(30.4)	35.7%
*Other than Honorable Includes Dishonorable, Undesirable, Etc.						
5. <u>Education</u>						
8th Grade or Less	44	(52.4)	36.6%	24	(52.2)	54.2%
9th Grade or More	40	(47.6)	45.0%	22	(47.8)	40.9%
B. <u>Criminal History</u>						
1. <u>Age at First Arrest*</u>						
17 or Younger	58	(69.0)	48.3%	26	(56.5)	42.3%
18 or Older	26	(30.9)	23.1%	20	(43.5)	55.0%
2. <u>Age at First Narcotic Arrest</u>						
23 or Younger	36	(49.3)	36.1%	17	(41.5)	47.1%
24 or Older	37	(50.6)	43.2%	24	(58.5)	45.8%

*An asterisk beside a variable indicates that the variable is significant - i.e., a significant difference was found between the recidivism rates of SNAP and NON-SNAP subjects in a category under this variable.

Variable	SNAP			NON-SNAP		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>
B. Criminal History						
3. <u>Number of Prior Arrests</u>						
10 or Fewer	46	(54.8)	32.6%	20	(43.5)	45.0%
11 or More	38	(45.2)	50.0%	26	(56.5)	50.0%
4. <u>Prior Narcotic Arrests</u>						
No Priors or One Prior	40	(47.6)	42.5%	18	(40.0)	61.1%
More than One Prior	44	(52.4)	38.6%	27	(60.0)	37.0%
5. <u>Prior Drunk Arrests</u>						
None	48	(57.1)	41.7%	18	(39.1)	61.1%
Any	36	(42.9)	38.9%	28	(60.9)	39.3%
6. <u>Prior Felonies vs. Person</u>						
None	46	(54.8)	34.8%	23	(50.0)	47.8%
Any	38	(45.2)	47.4%	23	(50.0)	43.5%
7. <u>Prior Sex Offenses</u>						
None	56	(66.7)	37.5%	33	(73.3)	42.4%
Any	28	(33.3)	46.4%	12	(26.7)	58.3%
8. <u>Prior Felonies vs. Property</u>						
3 or Less	57	(67.9)	31.6%	24	(53.3)	41.7%
4 or More	27	(32.1)	59.3%	21	(46.7)	52.4%
9. <u>Prior State or Federal Incarcerations</u>						
None or One	38	(45.2)	39.5%	26	(56.5)	53.8%
More Than One	46	(54.8)	41.3%	20	(43.5)	40.0%
10. <u>Prior State or Federal Narcotic Incarcerations</u>						
None	49	(59.0)	40.8%	20	(46.5)	65.0%
Any	34	(41.0)	41.2%	23	(53.5)	34.8%

<u>Variable</u>	<u>SNAP</u>			<u>NON-SNAP</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>
B. Criminal History						
11. <u>Prior House of Correction Incarcerations</u>						
2 or Less	52	(61.9)	34.6%	24	(52.2)	41.7%
3 or More	32	(38.1)	50.0%	22	(47.8)	54.5%
12. <u>Prior House of Correction Narcotic Incarcerations</u>						
None	46	(55.4)	41.3%	20	(46.5)	45.0%
Any	37	(44.6)	40.5%	23	(53.5)	52.2%
C. <u>Present Incarceration</u>						
1. <u>Length of Present Incarceration</u>						
1.5 yrs. or Less	39	(46.4)	38.5%	25	(54.3)	40.0%
More than 1.5 yrs.	45	(53.6)	42.2%	21	(45.7)	57.1%
2. <u>Type of Release</u>						
Parole	57	(67.9)	47.4%	32	(69.6)	53.1%
Discharge	27	(32.1)	25.9%	14	(30.4)	35.7%

Note: In some instances the (N) is somewhat less than the total sample population. This indicates that there was no information available in some cases and that the percentages were calculated on the basis of a new (N).