

*Standing the Test of Time:
An Examination of the STARS Notification Program's Efficacy over Time*



*Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships
University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

Initiative Overview

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

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

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

Past analyses of this program have shown Durham Police Department's S.T.A.R.S. Notification Program to be highly effective in reducing violent recidivist behavior in offenders who participated in the program. Specifically, past analyses have shown that violent offenses per month decreased by 75%, while weapon violations per month were reduced by 57%.¹

¹ Gathings, M. J., & Frabutt, J.M. (2005). *Evaluation of the Durham Police Department's S.T.A.R.S. Notification Program*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The Present Analysis

The present analysis examines the impact of the notification's message over time. Message impact, or effectiveness, is assessed through examination of participant recidivism for various periods of time. Only data for individuals that attended the first four call-in sessions ($n = 39$) were included in the analysis. This sample size was selected because it provides both a preliminary assessment of the efficacy of the notification program and determines whether there is need for a more extensive examination of the program.

Data Preparation

Participant information was provided by Cynthia McCollough, S.T.A.R.S. Case Manager for Durham Police Department. Data were entered into an SPSS file by a graduate research assistant at the Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships during the summer of 2005.

Methods

Rates of recidivism for the four years following notification attendance were examined, including a separate examination of recidivism during the first year following participation in the program. A small sub-sample of notification attendees was selected for this analysis; specifically, only participants from the first four call-ins are included. Additionally, time periods were examined independently to assess during which time period the most offenses were occurring for the sample.

Traffic violations and other minor infractions were not considered to be re-offending for the purposes of this analysis. Only violent crimes², drug-related crimes³, crimes against person(s)⁴, or weapons violations⁵ were regarded as recidivist offender behavior.

A raw count of offenses was computed for each participant. In order to compare rates of re-offense among individuals from different call-ins that occurred many months apart, each individual offense was categorized based upon when the offense occurred in relation to the individual's respective call-in date. For instance, if an offender from the first call-in committed an offense two months after his call-in and an offender from the third call-in committed an offense one month after his call-in, both offenders committed an offense between zero and three months after attending their respective call-in session.

Demographics of the Sample

Individuals from the first four call-ins ($n = 39$) were included in the sample. As illustrated in Figure 1, the sample consists of predominately African American males (94.9%). All participants were male (100%); females were not excluded – no females attended the first four call-in sessions.

² Includes homicide, manslaughter, armed robbery, aggravated assault offenses, etc.

³ Includes possession, sale and delivery, counterfeit substances, etc.

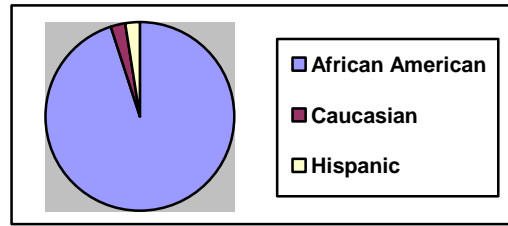
⁴ Includes kidnapping and crimes that are sexual in nature.

⁵ Includes carrying concealed weapon charges, firearm possessed by felon, weapon near school grounds, etc.

Figure 1. Demographics

Race

Black	37 (94.9%)
White	1 (2.6%)
Hispanic	1 (2.6%)



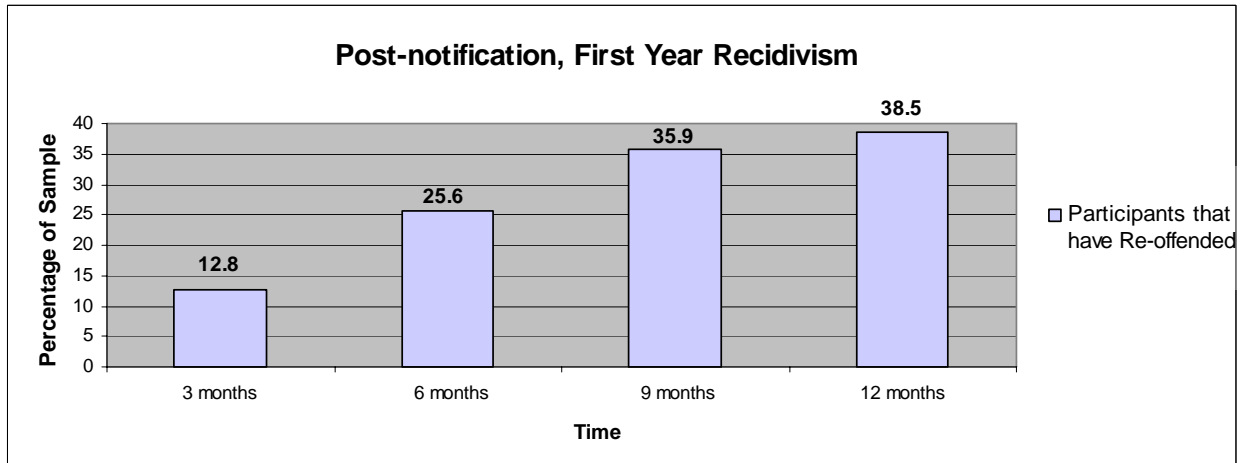
Sex

Male	39 (100%)
Female	0 (0%)

ONE YEAR LATER

The following chart and table provide information for the first year following notification attendance. The number graphed for the sample represents the percentage of the sample that had re-offended during the time period specified. Information in the table provides data on actual numbers of recidivists.

Figure 2. First Year Recidivism



- A steady increase in re-offending is observed during the first year following notification.
- In the three months following notification attendance, 12.8% of all participants had re-offended. This percentage doubled in the following three months – in other words, approximately one-quarter of participants (25.6%) had re-offended six months after attending a notification session.

- By nine months after call-in attendance, approximately one-third of participants had re-offended.

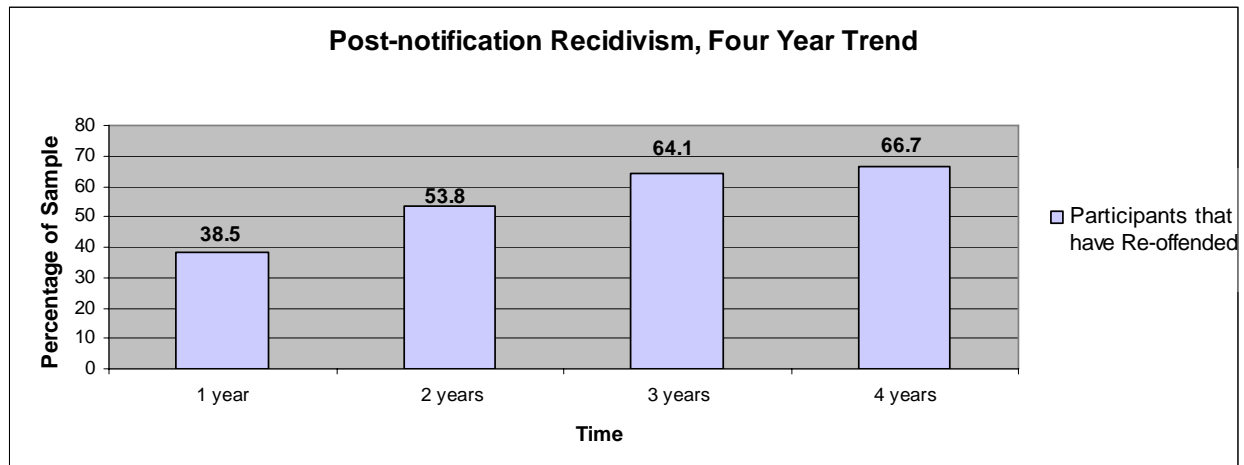
Table 1. First Year Recidivism

Time	# of Recidivists during Respective Time Period	Cumulative # of Recidivists	% Change ⁶
< 3 months	5	5	--
3 – 6 months	5	10	+100%
6 – 9 months	4	14	+40 %
9 – 12 months	1	15	+7%

- Five participants had re-offended three months after attending their respective call-in sessions. By the end of year one, this number had tripled to 15.

FOUR YEAR TREND

Figure 3. Four Year Trend



- A steady increase in offending is observed for the four year period examined.
- 38.5% of the sample had re-offended by one year after attending a notification session.
- The greatest increases in recidivism occur in the first two years following notification attendance. And as time progresses, fewer individuals re-offend.
- Four years after attending a call-in session, two-thirds of the sample had re-offended.

⁶ Percent change for cumulative number of recidivists.

Table 2. Four Year Trend

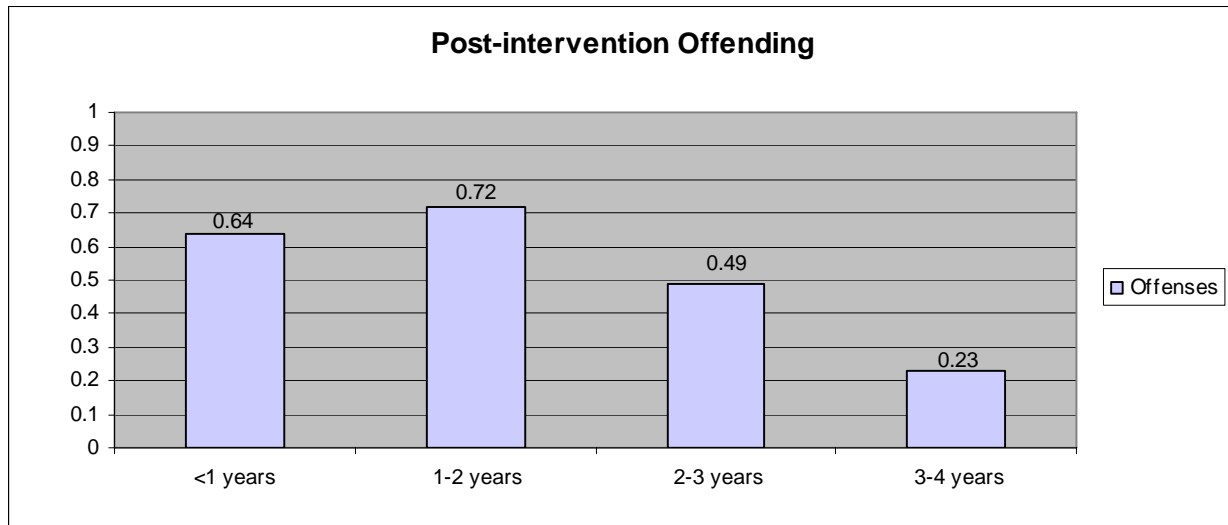
Time	# of Recidivists during Respective Time Period	Cumulative # of Recidivists	% Change ⁷
< 1 year	15	15	--
1 – 2 years	6	21	+40%
2 – 3 years	4	25	+19%
3 – 4 years	1	26	+4%

- Between year one and year two, the number of participants that had re-offended increased by 40%.
- 26 out of 39 participants had re-offended by four years after attending a call-in session.

PEAK PERIODS FOR RE-OFFENDING

The following bar charts illustrate during which time period most re-offending occurred. The bar charts do not represent cumulative offenses; in other words, unlike the previous graphs, the bar charts below do not include offenses that occurred in the first year with offenses that occurred in the second year following notification attendance.

Figure 4. Post-intervention Offending



- Most re-offending occurred between one and two years after attending their respective call-ins. On average, participants committed 0.72 offenses between years one and two following call-in attendance.

⁷ Percent change for cumulative number of recidivists.

- The first year following the notification session also appears to be a pivotal time for re-offending. Participants committed 0.64 offenses in the first year following notification.

Key Findings

- Most recidivism occurred in the two years subsequent to call-in attendance.
- Participant re-offending increases over the first two years, but fewer re-offended in years 3 and 4. However, incarceration of recidivists may play a significant role in this finding—participants that re-offended within the first two years may be incarcerated for their crimes by years three and four.

Conclusions

As a data-driven crime prevention initiative, PSN and its related programs make use of available data for a multitude of reasons. Data provides insight into which programs work for a community and which do not, the extent to which a program is impacting the community, and as in the case of the present analysis, suggestions for improving upon programs that are already successful.

Due to the small size of the sample, a more in-depth analysis is needed to provide a comprehensive depiction of the notification program's effectiveness over time. However, this preliminary analysis suggests that the notification program may not be a program that can sustain its message without repeated exposure to the offender. Though the program is clearly an effective strategy for violence reduction, a redelivery of the notification message through follow-up home visits or forthcoming invitations to call-ins for previous participants may be necessary. This program modification may maximize program impact by achieving greater reductions in successful transition to positive lifestyles.

This fact sheet was authored by M. J. Gathings and James M. Frabutt.

The Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is the Project Safe Neighborhood Research Partner for the United States Attorney's Office, Middle District of North Carolina. These efforts are supported by Project Safe Neighborhoods funding (180-1-03-001-BB-094) awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice through the North Carolina Department of Crime Control & Public Safety, Governor's Crime Commission.