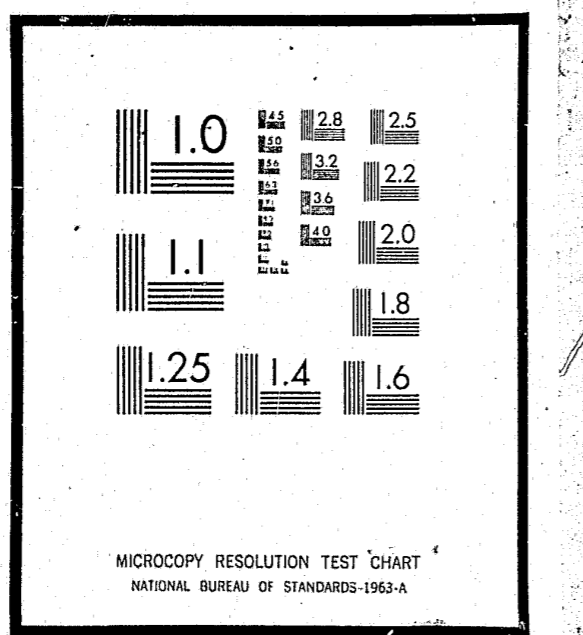


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TREATMENT ALTERNATIVES TO STREET CRIME (TASC):  
A NATIONAL EVALUATION PROGRAM  
PHASE I STUDY

Working Paper for Product No. 5  
Evaluation Design for the TASC Program

Final Report

Supported Under a Grant From the

National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice  
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration  
U.S. Department of Justice

November 1975

THE LAZAR INSTITUTE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

This working paper presents an evaluation design for the Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC) program, which channels criminally involved drug abusers into treatment. The assessment of the current state of knowledge regarding TASC found three major gaps in that knowledge:

- the lack of outcome data on TASC clients after they leave the program, especially as compared with otherwise similar persons who did not enter TASC;
- the absence of standardized data collection and analysis procedures for items of concern to many TASC projects; and
- the fact that neither the process nor the impact of the institutionalization of TASC projects has been studied.

This report describes three studies, along with their associated costs and possible alternatives, which would fill these gaps.

### Client Outcome Evaluation

The outcomes of TASC clients after leaving the program should be analyzed, since TASC is obviously more effective if it induces long-run changes in client behavior than if only short-term improvements in performance result. This analysis should consider whether the combined TASC/treatment intervention leads to significantly better outcomes than the lack of such intervention and whether TASC's activities alone are crucial for achieving improvements in client outcomes.

To address these issues, Lazar proposes conducting follow-up interviews with TASC clients from several programs selected to represent the full range of TASC interventions. These outcome data would be compared with those for two groups which did not participate in TASC: drug abusers on probation in similar treatment programs and persons eligible for TASC who did not volunteer for it.

Outcomes to be considered include changes in criminality, drug abuse, employment and health. In addition to analysis of outcomes of TASC clients vis-a-vis those of comparison group members, outcome differences should be assessed for various TASC client subgroups, including those participating in pretrial intervention as compared with diversion and posttrial processing; those abusing heroin versus other types of drugs; and those charged with less serious crimes, as compared with clients charged with more serious ones.

The client outcome study should be supplemented with a brief analysis of TASC project operations and the external factors affecting those operations. This will permit consideration of whether significant outcome differences are associated with particular project or community characteristics. Issues of interest include whether TASC projects which operate most efficiently have the greatest impact on client outcomes and whether the projects which receive the greatest cooperation from the criminal justice and treatment systems are the most effective at client rehabilitation.

### Data Improvements

A major finding of the state of knowledge assessment for the TASC program was that individual projects maintain a vast amount of information on client characteristics, client flows and project operations. However, each project tends to approach data collection and analysis in its own way. As a result, projects interested in analyzing the same problem may collect similar data but define the terms or processing stages differently, select different time periods for analysis, and so on. These differences preclude comparable cross-project analysis and thus greatly reduce the ability to expand the state of knowledge regarding TASC.

Since these differences are often only small ones, Lazar proposes a study designed to facilitate agreement among projects on a set of data which would be defined, collected and categorized in similar ways. The Phase I report assessing the current state of TASC knowledge suggests a variety of measures of project functions, client flows and resource allocation. These could form the basis for discussions with individual projects to identify areas of common interest for which greater data comparability among projects would be of general value.

### Institutionalization Analysis

Provision of Federal "seed money" for TASC projects is based on the assumption that State or local funding will support the project after the Federal demonstration period has shown the value of its activities. Although achieving such institutionalization is a major goal of the TASC program, the outcomes of institutionalization have not been analyzed. Issues of interest include:

- whether the projects are preserved intact or whether some functions are dropped and others changed;
- whether there are major differences in the clientele served before and after institutionalization; and
- whether sharp differences in client outcome are noticeable before and after institutionalization.

In addition to the lack of analysis of the outcomes of institutionalization, there has been no study of the process itself. Important issues to address include whether certain project or community characteristics are prerequisites for institutionalization, identification of important local groups and techniques used to obtain their support, time phasing of activities related to institutionalization, and the problems encountered during the process.

To fill these gaps in knowledge, Lazar proposes preparation of case studies documenting the process and outcomes of institutionalization in several TASC communities. Such case studies would require detailed interviews with the various local persons who participated in the institutionalization process, including TASC staff, representatives of the agency which

provided continuation funding, and members of the criminal justice and treatment systems. These case studies would provide insight on the institutionalization process, which should be of value to TASC projects seeking State and local funding, as well as information on institutionalization outcomes, which should be of value to LEAA in assessing the long-range impact of initial Federal support for the TASC program.

#### Concluding Remarks

There are a number of other reasons for conducting additional analysis of the TASC program. For example, the size of the Federal commitment of funds (\$21.8 million through October 1975) in itself suggests the need for adequate evaluation of the impact of that expenditure. Moreover, the Domestic Council Drug Abuse Task Force recently recommended that TASC not only be maintained at its present Federal funding level of about \$4 million per year but that the program be expanded to any jurisdiction with a population of over 200,000 which can demonstrate eligibility.

In addition to the Federal funds allocated to TASC, State and local funding commitments are increasing. TASC projects have so far been very successful in obtaining State and local funding to replace the initial Federal funds. However, without data on long-range outcomes, it is hard to judge the extent to which TASC should be supported by any level of government.

An additional consideration is that evaluation findings for the TASC program may have broader applicability than to TASC alone. TASC is similar in many respects to other pretrial intervention programs, which have often not been carefully evaluated.

LEAA should also consider the fact that it is presently in the position of having no reliable long-range evaluation data for one of the major programs it supports through relatively scarce discretionary funds. If this situation continues, the agency may find itself encouraging state planning agencies to evaluate their projects at the same time that LEAA is making little effort to evaluate the projects funded directly from its national office. Such a situation may reduce the credibility of LEAA's statements regarding the importance of evaluation.

Finally, it should be noted that this is an opportune time to evaluate the TASC program; projects have been in operation long enough for many persons to have experienced the intervention and returned to unsupervised life within the community but projects have not been operating so long that their procedures have become rigid. Consequently, if evaluative results suggest changes in project operations, such changes may in fact be implemented. Therefore, an evaluation of TASC is likely to have operational impact as well as provide the long-range outcome data required for adequate assessment of TASC's importance.

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC) program evolved from observations that many drug-dependent persons engaged in street crime to support their habits and were recurrently arrested, released and rearrested. To break this cycle, TASC projects were established to help channel drug-dependent arrestees into treatment, which can rehabilitate them into productive, law-abiding citizens. As of October 1975, thirty-six TASC projects had received \$21.8 million in Federal funds and had enrolled approximately 17,000 clients.

The TASC program is one of many selected for Phase I analysis under the National Evaluation Program of the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. A Phase I study assesses current knowledge about a project type, the additional information which could be provided through further evaluation and the estimated cost and value of obtaining the additional information. In some cases Phase I assessments will be followed by Phase II evaluation studies to collect the additional information warranted.

A Phase I analysis has six parts:

- review of existing literature and work in progress;
- descriptions of actual project operations;
- development of an analytical framework for understanding project operations and impacts;
- assessment of current state of knowledge, including determination of whether additional evaluation is needed;
- design of an evaluation for the overall program (if necessary); and
- design of an evaluation for an individual project (if necessary).

This working paper is concerned with the fifth Phase I stage and presents an evaluation design for the overall TASC program. The assessment of the current state of knowledge regarding TASC found three major gaps in that knowledge:

- The most serious information gap is the lack of outcome data on TASC clients after they leave the program, especially as compared with otherwise similar persons who did not enter TASC. Without such data no conclusive statements can be made regarding TASC's long-range impact on drug-related crime or the associated processing burdens of the criminal justice system.
- A major problem inhibiting cross-project analyses of client flows, processing costs and similar operational considerations is the absence of standardized data collection and analysis procedures for items of concern to many TASC projects.
- An additional knowledge gap is that neither the process nor the impact of institutionalization has been analyzed. Since institutionalization within State and local budgets is a major goal underlying Federal funding of TASC, it seems important to analyze changes in project operations before and after institutionalization and to study the process itself.

This report describes three studies, along with their associated costs and possible alternatives, which would fill these gaps. Chapter II discusses client outcome evaluation; Chapter III, data improvements; and Chapter IV, institutionalization analysis. Chapter V presents concluding remarks applicable to the entire set of recommended analyses.

## CHAPTER II

### CLIENT OUTCOME EVALUATION

#### A. Need for Study

The outcome of TASC clients after leaving the program must be analyzed, since the program is obviously more effective if it induces long-run changes in client behavior than if only short-term improvements in performance result. Moreover, outcomes of TASC clients should be considered in connection with outcomes of an appropriate comparison group to assess whether changes in behavior of TASC clients can be attributed to the program's intervention or might have occurred in any event.

Since the TASC program is primarily designed to identify potential clients, refer them to treatment and monitor their progress, long-run client outcomes must be partly attributed to the treatment intervention, which TASC often does not influence directly. It could be argued that TASC projects should not be held accountable for the effectiveness of treatment programs and that, therefore, long-run client outcomes should not be analyzed. However, if a brilliantly run referral program were only inducing clients to complete poor treatment programs which had little impact on their subsequent behavior, it would be hard to maintain that the referral program was worthwhile. Alternatively, if treatment results in client rehabilitation, then mechanisms which encourage clients to enter and complete treatment merit support.

Although the combined TASC/treatment intervention must be assessed, it is also important to separate the effects of TASC from those of treatment to the extent possible. If criminally involved drug abusers referred through informal, inexpensive mechanisms do as well as TASC clients, then the TASC expense may be unnecessary. On the other hand, if TASC clients do

significantly better, then the TASC intervention must be considered a critical factor in achieving client rehabilitation.

These issues concerning the outcomes from the combined TASC/treatment intervention and the impact of TASC alone on those outcomes could be addressed through analysis of outcome data for TASC clients and appropriate comparison groups. Without such analysis, which has not yet been conducted, all discussions of TASC's long-range impact will remain purely speculative ones.

#### B. Design Considerations

In order to accomplish a useful client outcome study for the TASC program, a number of design considerations must be addressed. These include the determination of major analytical issues to be considered, development of measures to address those issues and the identification of the associated data requirements for those measures.

Major analytical issues include:

- whether the TASC/treatment intervention results in significantly better outcomes than the absence of such intervention; and
- whether TASC's activities are crucial for achieving improvements in client outcomes.

Related issues of interest concern whether outcomes vary significantly for:

- clients in TASC through pretrial intervention, diversion or posttrial processing;
- type and seriousness of clients' drug problems (e.g., heroin vs. other drugs);
- criminal history of clients;
- type and seriousness of present charge (e.g., drug vs. property charges);
- treatment modalities to which clients are referred (e.g., drug free residential, drug free outpatient, methadone maintenance);
- other client characteristics (e.g., age, race, sex); or
- length of TASC participation.

In order to address these issues, changes in the behavior of TASC clients must be analyzed, and these changes compared with those of otherwise similar persons who did not participate in TASC. The ideal comparison group would require random assignment of persons eligible for TASC either to TASC or to a control group which did not receive TASC's services. However, it is highly unlikely that such an experimental design could be implemented for the TASC program. TASC projects operate under conditions reflecting accommodations with various representatives of the criminal justice and treatment systems, and these systems are not likely to endorse random assignment of individuals to experimental and control groups in order to improve the quality of evaluative research. The need to serve each individual as effectively as possible, given present knowledge, will probably always be considered a more important program goal.

Fortunately, the lack of a true control group for TASC clients does not preclude the possibility of conducting meaningful evaluation, since several comparison groups are available which approximate a control group. These comparison groups include:

- Drug abusers in treatment and on probation but not in TASC. This group receives treatment similar to that of TASC clients and is under criminal justice system pressure but is not subject to TASC's formal referral and monitoring processes. This group would not, however, provide data on the importance of TASC's identification function. It is possible that the performance of TASC clients during and after treatment is the same as that of other treatment clients under criminal justice system pressure but that TASC is more successful at getting persons into treatment than less formal mechanisms. If so, TASC's identification function might deserve continued or increased support, although its referral and monitoring functions might be considered relatively unimportant.
- Persons recommended by TASC to become clients but whose participation was not approved by the courts. Presumably, persons are in this group more because of judges' predispositions toward TASC than because of any particular characteristics which distinguish them from persons approved for TASC participation. If so, members of this group are similar to TASC clients and form an appropriate comparison group.



- Persons who were eligible for TASC but did not volunteer to participate. If failure to volunteer reflects poor motivation, then this group might be expected to have worse outcomes than TASC clients. Alternatively, if they fail to volunteer because their drug and crime problems are in fact not very serious ones, then better outcomes might be expected. Consequently, the reasons for failure to volunteer should be analyzed to assess probable biases in outcome results.

One additional comparison group which could be considered consists of persons who would have been eligible for TASC, selected from the period immediately prior to TASC's inception. However, this group faces the limitations of any group selected from a different time period than the one under consideration, such as the fact that differences in outcome may be due more to external changes in the environment over time than to the project's intervention (or lack of it).

On balance, considering the various advantages and disadvantages of these groups, Lazar recommends that two be used for comparative analysis with TASC clients:

- Drug abusers in similar treatment programs on probation. This group probably provides the closest approximation to a group which is similar to TASC clients in all important respects except TASC participation and would provide a good test of the effect of TASC's formalized referral and monitoring mechanisms as compared with less formal procedures.
- Persons eligible for TASC who did not volunteer for the program. This group provides a partial test of the importance of TASC's identification function. If most members of this group have outcomes equivalent to those of TASC clients, it may be hard to justify TASC's interventions.

Once appropriate comparison groups have been identified, it is necessary to consider the outcomes which should be compared and the ways that they can be measured. Although changed criminality is a major outcome of interest,

other types of behavioral changes may also occur, such as lessened drug abuse, improved economic status and revitalized health, both physical and mental. Such outcomes could materialize because successfully treated clients would no longer be drug dependent or have the associated need to commit crimes to obtain funds to purchase drugs. Moreover, they would be better able to hold steady jobs or otherwise participate in the economy through legal means and would no longer be prone to a variety of drug-related illnesses.

Any major outcome category should probably be analyzed with several measures. For example, criminality changes should probably be considered in terms of changes in patterns of crime as well as changes in such overall measures as arrest rates, conviction rates, incarceration rates or self-reported criminal behavior (whether apprehended or not). Similarly, drug abuse can be analyzed in terms of overall changes in frequency of drug use and changes in patterns of drug abuse. Analysis of changes in economic status might include changes in employment, income, type of job held or stability of employment. Changes in health might include analysis of changes in types of illnesses as well as changes in the overall incidence of sickness.

Possible use of such measures poses a number of problems. One of these is that persons may face differing degrees of opportunity to commit anti-social acts, and outcome comparisons must consider these differences. For example, TASC clients residing full-time in therapeutic communities have little opportunity to commit crimes, but persons in outpatient treatment are not so restricted.

An additional problem is determining the appropriate time period over which to assess outcomes. Although a long-term, longitudinal follow-up study may ultimately be required to assess TASC's impact properly, Lazar recommends that less comprehensive analyses be conducted first. More complex studies should be considered only if the simpler ones show them to be essential.



Lazar proposes that one set of follow-up interviews be held with a sample of TASC clients and comparison group members at a time long enough after TASC entry (or, in the case of the comparison groups, after the possibility of TASC entry) to permit successful completion of the program's requirements and unsupervised return to the community. A minimum period of approximately two years after TASC entry is probably required; this would permit about one year for completion of TASC requirements and an additional year of unsupervised behavior.

After the results of this follow-up study have been analyzed, a determination can be made as to whether additional follow-up analysis of the same groups over a longer time period is needed. If there is little evidence that TASC has had an immediate impact on clients, there is probably little reason to think that any longer-term improvements in client outcomes could be attributed to TASC's intervention. On the other hand, if there appear to be significant improvements in the outcomes of TASC clients vis-a-vis the comparison group members, then longer-term analysis of the durability of these outcome differences over time might well be warranted.

In addition to analysis of outcome differences for TASC clients and comparison group members, the implications of those differences for criminal justice system processing burdens and their associated costs should be considered. For example, if comparison group members have higher recidivism and incarceration rates than TASC clients, they are creating a greater processing burden, with higher costs, for the criminal justice system.

Although analysis of outcomes and their associated costs is the major objective of the proposed study, it would be desirable to supplement this study with a brief assessment of the operations of the specific TASC projects included and of the external factors affecting those operations in individual communities. Such documentation of the TASC interventions and the environments

within which they occur would permit analysis of whether significant outcome differences are associated with particular project or community characteristics. Issues of interest include whether the TASC projects which operate most efficiently have the greatest impact on client outcomes and whether the projects which receive the greatest cooperation from the criminal justice and treatment systems are the most effective at client rehabilitation.

### C. Implementation Considerations

In addition to design considerations, a number of issues related to implementation of the proposed analysis must be addressed. These issues concern the number of TASC projects to be evaluated, the way to select them, techniques for collecting the needed data and the estimated cost and time requirements for conducting the study.

Lazar recommends selecting a relatively small number of projects for evaluation (e.g., five to ten). These should be chosen to represent the range of TASC interventions. After these projects have been analyzed, the need to evaluate additional projects can be addressed. This approach, coupled with the recommendation of one set of follow-up interviews, provides an evaluation strategy which starts with minimal data requirements and moves to more complex data collection procedures (e.g., to more interviews over a longer time period or to more TASC communities) only if they are shown to be essential once the more limited data have been carefully analyzed.

A major implementation decision is selecting the specific projects to evaluate. Lazar recommends that the set of projects chosen meet the following conditions:

- They should have been in operation long enough to have a reasonable number of clients who have completed the program. Lazar suggests that projects operational by July 1974 meet this requirement. This would permit at least two years of operation before Phase II interviewing could begin. Fifteen of the projects now in operation meet this requirement.

- Pretrial intervention, diversion and posttrial processing should all be included.
- Projects which serve a significant number of poly-drug users should be included as well as those which primarily serve heroin addicts.
- The projects should reflect different geographic regions and project sizes.

For the fifteen current TASC projects which were operational by July 1974, Table 1 provides data on client throughput, type of intervention, percent of clients mainly using heroin, and Federal funding level. Several sets of projects could be chosen from this list which meet the selection criteria outlined above. An example of such a set of projects consists of Birmingham, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Marin County, Miami, and Philadelphia. These projects provide variety in terms of geographic region and project size. In addition, Birmingham and Kansas City serve substantial numbers of polydrug abusers, and all projects except Cincinnati offer diversion in addition to other forms of intervention.

Once the TASC projects for evaluation have been selected, data on a sample of client and comparison group members must be collected. Lazar recommends that a random sample of at least 75 persons be used for each group. Since a response rate of 85% is considered good for follow-up interviews with this type of population, it is important to have a large enough sample for adequate analysis. Moreover, if at a later date additional rounds of follow-up interviewing are desired, the initial sample must be large enough to permit further attrition over time. Sample sizes of 75 for each group should meet these requirements; smaller samples would increase the risk that too few responses would be available to permit adequate analysis.

Although some of the outcome data required could be collected from existing records, Lazar believes these records will be inadequate for evaluating TASC. This assessment is based both on on-site discussions with a variety

Table 1. Selected Data on TASC Projects Operational by July 1974

Project Name	Date Operational	Total Entrants through Oct. 1975				Percent of Clients				Federal Funds (000)	
		Number	Percent Successful Completions	Percent Failed or Dropped	Percent Returned to CJS	Percent Rearrested	Pretrial Intervention	Pretrial Diversion	Posttrial Processing		Percent Clients Mainly Using Heroin
Alameda County	Jan. 74	1,245	5%	65%	16%	1%	23%	4%	48%	88%	\$1,700
Albuquerque	Mar. 74	360	8	25	12	27	61	0	24	95	139
Austin	Nov. 73	402	22	0	16	16	3	0	97	N.A.	378
Birmingham	Oct. 73	712	15	34	16	20	---	77	23	28	1,100
Boston-Adult	May 74	268	9	44	0	18	---	61	40	N.A.	739
Cincinnati	Dec. 73	619	18	23	23	22	62	0	37	68	601
Cleveland	Mar. 73	1,282	13	64	5	12	---	23	20	80	1,600
Dayton	Oct. 73	333	28	28	11	15	60	1	40	60	419
Denver	Jan. 74	358	16	13	26	N.A.	3	10	85	N.A.	997
Indianapolis	May 73	546	33	29	18	N.A.	---	45	54	53	661
Kansas City	Nov. 73	684	33	16	17	9	0	38	61	30	1,000
Marin Co.	Oct. 73	876	45	37	7	2	5	46	49	N.A.	339
Miami	Nov. 73	2,773	6	33	38	5	77	6	17	82	1,200
Philadelphia	Dec. 72	2,378	21	38	12	N.A.	---	41	59	N.A.	1,400
Richmond	July 74	346	3	14	46	7	82	0	16	83	568

of persons in individual TASC communities and on comments of researchers engaged in follow-up analyses of similar populations. Existing records are usually quite limited in scope, often containing only criminality data and not addressing such outcomes as drug use or employment history. In addition, even criminality data are often maintained in different sets of records (e.g., the police may have arrest and charge data but disposition information appears in court records). Moreover, data systems containing information of interest are often inaccurate or incomplete, since quality control procedures vary widely across the country. Moreover, even if the data are accurate, it is sometimes difficult for outside researchers to obtain access to the information.

All of these factors influenced Lazar's recommendation that personal interviews be used to obtain the required follow-up data. However, the feasibility and usefulness of data from existing records should probably be analyzed, since use of these records may be the only option available to an individual project which wants to analyze client outcomes and is unable to afford personal interviews. Such records assessment could be incorporated into the client outcome analysis.

The costs of the proposed follow-up study can be estimated from data on the cost per interview for similar studies. Table 2 summarizes these data for several follow-up studies of drug abusers. As shown, costs (including methodology development and analysis, as well as actual field data collection) average more than \$400 per interview.

If six TASC projects were evaluated, with two comparison groups and one TASC client group of 75 persons each, at an average cost of \$400 per interview, the follow-up study would cost an estimated \$540,000 ( $6 \times 3 \times 75 \times \$400 = \$540,000$ ). Costs of alternative studies can also be estimated in this way. For example,

Table 2. Cost Per Interview for Selected Follow-Up Studies

Group Interviewed and Organization Conducting Study	Dollar Amount	No. of Interviews	Cost Per Interview
Clients of several community-based treatment programs, Johns Hopkins University <sup>1</sup>	\$1,200,000	1,300	\$ 923
Department of Defense treatment clients, Arthur D. Little, Inc. <sup>2</sup>	1,200,000	3,000	400
Military personnel who abused drugs in Vietnam, Washington University (St. Louis) <sup>3</sup>	400,000	1,000	400
NARA I/III treatment clients, Johns Hopkins University <sup>4</sup>	300,000	1,044	287
NARA I/III treatment clients (additional interviews), Johns Hopkins University	109,000	241	452
NARA II (Bureau of Prisons) treatment clients, CONSAD Research Corporation	188,000	370	508
New York City treatment program clients, MACRO Systems, Inc.	295,000	578	510
Washington, D.C., treatment program clients, Burt Associates, Inc.	<u>145,000</u>	<u>310</u>	<u>468</u>
TOTAL: Eight studies	\$3,837,000	7,843	\$ 489

<sup>1</sup>This study also included detailed analysis of project operations.

<sup>2</sup>Most of these interviews were of persons still in the armed forces, including many who were not drug abusers.

<sup>3</sup>Many of the persons interviewed were no longer abusing drugs.

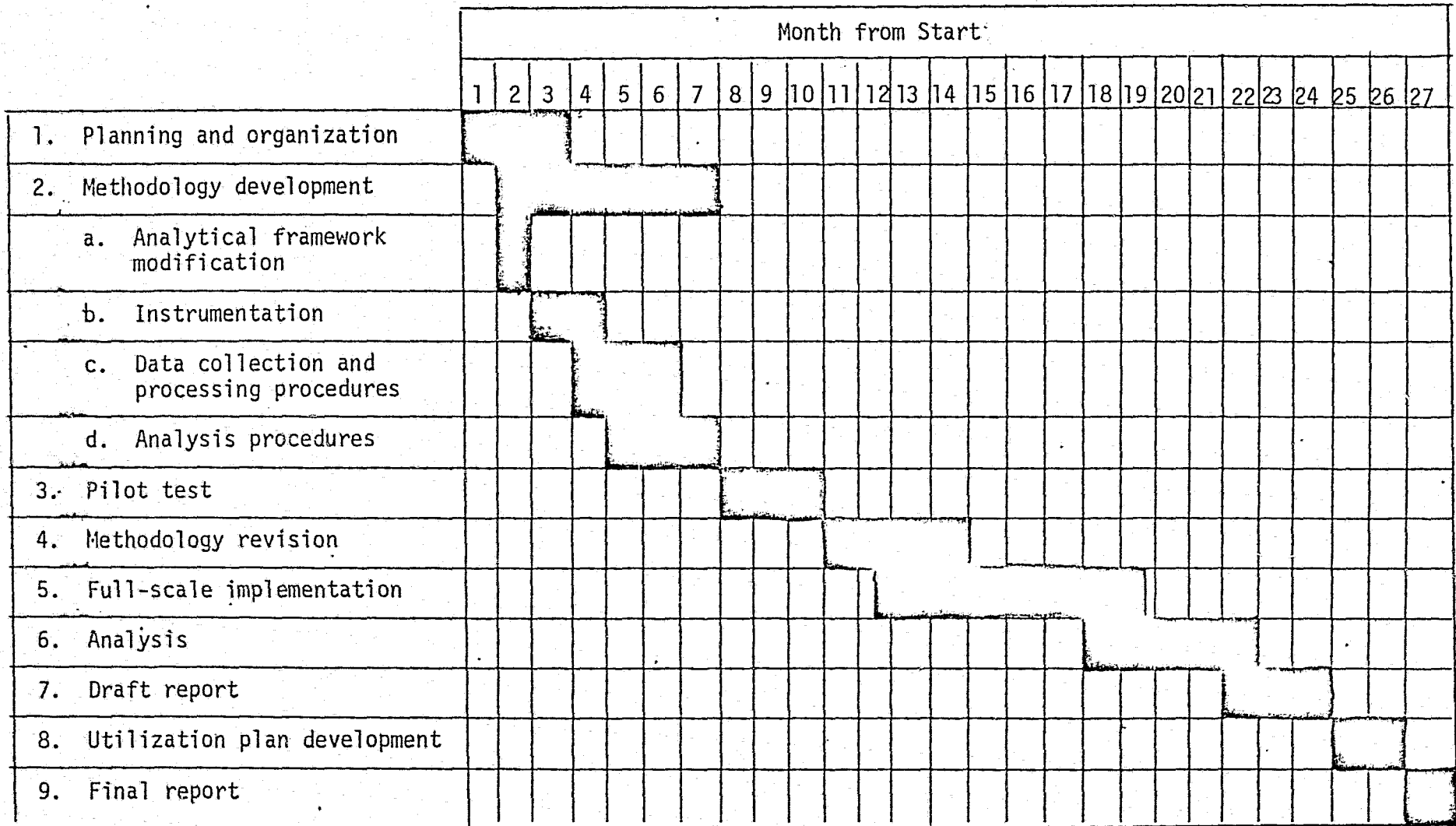
<sup>4</sup>This study had a lower response rate (70%) than the others.

more projects and fewer comparison groups could be analyzed: ten projects with one comparison group could be evaluated at a cost of about \$600,000 ( $10 \times 2 \times 75 \times \$400 = \$600,000$ ).

An additional implementation consideration concerns the time requirements for conducting the study and specification of major study phases. Figure 1 indicates Lazar's recommended phasing of tasks for the client outcome study. Nine tasks are included, with some of them overlapping in terms of time:

- Planning and organization (two to three months). This should include such activities as review of the Phase I results and related materials, development of initial contacts with projects to be evaluated, and recruitment and orientation of staff.
- Methodology development (five to six months). This task includes making necessary modifications of the analytical framework developed in the Phase I study, preparing the required instrumentation, developing data collection and processing procedures, refining the analysis plan and selecting appropriate analytical techniques.
- Pilot test (two to three months). One city should be selected for a complete test of the proposed methodology, including data collection, processing and analysis.
- Methodology revision (one to four months). The pilot test results should be used to revise the methodology, as needed. The length of time required for this task is subject to a great deal of uncertainty, since it is difficult to predict whether methodological procedures will work well before they are actually tried. Therefore, it is hard to estimate whether substantial or only minor revisions will be needed in the methodology.
- Full-scale implementation (seven months). The tested methodology should be applied to the remaining TASC projects.

Figure 1. Recommended Phasing of Tasks for Client Outcome Study



- Analysis (five months). The collected data should be analyzed on a cross-project basis, as well as for individual projects.
- Draft report (three months). This report should include the results of the follow-up analysis as well as the methodology used to conduct the study and appropriate recommendations concerning the TASC program.
- Utilization plan development (two months). Since a frequent problem with evaluation studies is that results are not rapidly disseminated to people who could use them, Lazar proposes that development of a utilization plan be included in the study. This would require consideration of a variety of dissemination techniques and should probably include holding a seminar at which study results and recommendations would be presented to TASC project directors and other interested parties.
- Final report (one month). Comments obtained on the draft report, including feedback from any seminars held to discuss the study findings, should be reviewed and necessary changes in the report should be made.

This schedule of tasks, overlapped as shown in Figure 1, would result in a draft report within two years. An additional three-month period is recommended for disseminating the draft report, holding a seminar to discuss the findings and recommendations, reviewing the comments and making appropriate revisions, so that the final report can be as accurate and useful as possible.

Besides follow-up interviews, Lazar recommends that limited analysis of project operations and external factors be conducted for the projects evaluated. Such analysis would assess the intervention which TASC clients received and the environment within which clients, comparison group members and the TASC project exist. Specific types of analysis would be similar

to those described in the earlier Phase I report assessing the present state of knowledge regarding TASC.\* The level of analysis anticipated would require approximately two person-months of effort (at an estimated cost of \$10,000) for an individual project. This work should be done concurrently with the follow-up interviewing and completed in time for use in the analysis portion of the study. For six projects, addition of this feature would cost about \$60,000.

#### D. Concluding Remarks

Given the uncertainties associated with a major client outcome study and the costs of such analysis, Lazar suggests that LEAA consider conducting such a study in two stages. The first stage would consist of methodology development, pilot test and methodology revision (the first four tasks discussed earlier), and the second stage would comprise full-scale implementation of the tested methodology, analysis of results, utilization plan development and final report preparation (the last five tasks discussed earlier). Such staging would insure that pilot test results were carefully considered before full-scale implementation began. If the pilot test results were unimpressive (i.e., very low response rates, poor analysis, etc.), there might be little need to conduct a broader scale study. However, if full-scale implementation were warranted, LEAA would have much better estimates of the costs, time requirements and results of such an effort.

Although conducting the client outcome study in two stages has a number of advantages, it should also be noted that such an approach would probably increase the time (and possibly cost) required to conduct a complete two-stage study, since some time would probably elapse between the two stages while the decision was being made concerning the value of the second stage.

\*Mary A. Toborg, et al., "Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC): An Evaluative Framework and State of the Art Review" (Washington, D.C.: The Lazar Institute, 1975).



Such delays could, however, be minimized if the decision about the second stage were made after the field procedures had been tested and preliminary analysis had been done, but before the detailed analysis had been completed.

## CHAPTER III

### DATA IMPROVEMENTS

#### A. Need for Study

A major finding of the state of knowledge assessment for the TASC program is that individual projects maintain a vast amount of information on client characteristics, client flows and project operations. Moreover, projects have conducted a number of evaluation studies and expressed interest in addressing many additional evaluation questions. However, each project tends to approach data collection and analysis in its own way. As a result, projects interested in analyzing the same problem may collect similar data but define the terms or processing stages differently, categorize the information differently, select different time periods for analysis and so on. Although these differences may only be small ones, they preclude comparable cross-project analysis and thus greatly reduce the ability to expand the state of knowledge regarding the TASC program.

Since these differences are often minor ones, many projects would probably be willing to make the changes required to increase the comparability of their findings with those of other projects. However, there is at present no mechanism for accomplishing this. One way to increase data comparability is to increase the reporting requirements now imposed on individual projects. However, since an extensive reporting system would be expensive to develop, test and maintain, only a minimal amount of essential data should probably be collected in this manner.

A second approach is to facilitate projects' agreement on a set of data which would be defined, collected and categorized in comparable ways. Such data could include information on client characteristics,

client flows and losses, processing costs, and so on. Maintenance of such data would permit periodic cross-project analysis of important operational considerations.

Projects might also agree to conduct evaluation studies using similar designs. This might be of particular use to new projects, which are often interested in evaluating their operations but may have little time to allocate to structuring such analyses. Use of comparable evaluation designs would increase the value of studies which would otherwise be applicable mainly to individual projects.

Lazar recommends that both of these approaches for increasing data comparability be adopted: a limited amount of data should be added to existing reporting requirements and projects should be encouraged to collect other data in comparable ways.

#### B. Design Considerations

The Phase I report assessing the state of TASC knowledge provides an analytical framework for considering project operations in terms of functions, client flows and resource allocation. It also suggests a variety of measures which could be used to analyze the validity of the assumptions underlying those operations and to test major hypotheses concerning the impact of those operations. Therefore, this report provides a basis for discussions with TASC project directors and others interested in TASC data concerning information which should be routinely reported and other data of interest which should be collected in comparable ways.

In addition to analysis of project operations, the Phase I assessment report considers external factors affecting those operations and selected outcome measures. Consequently, data improvements in these areas could also be developed.

#### C. Implementation Considerations

A major implementation consideration is that data improvement procedures should be developed through discussions with individual TASC projects. This is needed to insure that the data improvements will in fact be both useful and used at the project level. Consequently, the following phases are recommended for a study to improve TASC data at the project level:

- preliminary review of relevant materials (e.g., Phase I report, individual evaluation studies) and identification of issues where greater data comparability would be beneficial, two months;
- meetings with selected TASC projects to discuss these issues and possible data improvements and distribution of working paper to all TASC projects, three months;
- development of specific revised data collection procedures, including additional reporting requirements and recommended (but optional) ways to increase the comparability of other data, four months;
- pilot test of recommendations with a small number of projects (e.g., three to five), and solicitation and review of comments from other projects, three months;
- revision of recommendations, based on pilot test results and projects' comments, two months; and
- preparation of final report, one month.

Consequently, the data improvements could be developed, pilot tested and "packaged" for use by all projects within fifteen months. The study would probably require two full-time persons at an estimated total cost of \$125,000.

## CHAPTER IV

## . INSTITUTIONALIZATION ANALYSIS

A. Need for Study

Provision of Federal "seed money" for TASC projects is based on the assumption that State or local funding will support the project after the Federal demonstration period has shown the value of its activities.

Although achieving such institutionalization is a major goal of the TASC program, little analysis has been done of the outcomes of institutionalization. The implicit assumption at the Federal level is that projects will be absorbed into local budgets virtually unchanged. However, in practice it is likely that a number of important changes may occur, including deletion of some activities, expansion of others or addition of completely new ones.

Analysis of these changes would assist the Federal government in assessing whether the programs being retained are in fact the ones it wished to support or whether the projects become so different after a short time that they have little resemblance to the initial concept. Moreover, if certain changes are consistently made when the projects become institutionalized, this finding could have important implications for Federal funding of future projects, since there may be little reason to continue funding activities which are never retained by local governments.

In addition to the lack of analysis of the outcomes of institutionalization, there has been no study of the process itself. Since LEAA is encouraging local projects to become institutionalized, it seems reasonable to provide them with guidance on ways to accomplish this. Such guidance could include documentation of the institutionalization process

in other places (for example, the approach used, the important local organizations and how their support was solicited, the time phasing of activities related to institutionalization, etc.).

Such analysis of the outcomes and process of institutionalization might be of interest beyond the TASC program. Many of LEAA's activities are designed to initiate new programs in the hopes that they will prove their worth and be retained within local budgets. However, there has been little analysis of the extent to which this has been accomplished or the way in which it has been achieved.

B. Design Considerations

A major design consideration is to identify the important analytical issues. For outcomes these include:

- whether the projects are preserved intact or whether some functions are dropped and others changed;
- whether there are major differences in the clientele served before and after institutionalization; and
- whether sharp differences in client outcomes are noticeable before and after institutionalization.

For process analysis, important issues include:

- whether certain characteristics of TASC projects appear to increase the likelihood of receiving State or local funding;
- whether certain community characteristics seem to be prerequisites for institutionalization;
- whether the support of certain local groups is especially important in the institutionalization process; and
- whether certain TASC actions, over the course of a project's life, increase the probability of becoming institutionalized.

C. Implementation Considerations

Analysis of the process and outcomes of institutionalization could best be accomplished through in-depth consideration of several specific

cases. This would require a number of semi-structured interviews with the various local persons who participated in the institutionalization process, including TASC staff, representatives of the local agency which provided the continuation funding for the project, members of the criminal justice and treatment systems, etc.

The case studies should be developed by persons having some knowledge of the TASC program, so that the interviewers will be alert to changes in program scope, intent or implementation which resulted from institutionalization. Use of such persons would probably permit one case study to be developed with five person-months of effort at a cost of approximately \$25,000. Lazar proposes that five or six such case studies be conducted. If two people worked on this analysis, the study could be completed within fifteen months.

It should be noted that some cost savings could be made if the projects selected for this analysis were those included in the client outcome study. Since it is the older TASC projects which will be used for the client outcome analysis (since the clients of these projects have had the longest opportunity to demonstrate changed behavior after the end of TASC supervision), these are also the projects which will have experienced institutionalization (or been unable to achieve it) by the time the client outcome evaluation begins. Since limited analysis of external factors has been recommended as a supplement to the client outcome study, such analysis could be expanded to incorporate the proposed study of institutionalization. If this option were exercised, the additional cost of conducting the institutionalization study would probably be about \$20,000 per project, for a total of \$120,000 for six projects.

## CHAPTER V CONCLUDING REMARKS

This working paper has recommended that three additional analyses of the TASC program be conducted to fill major gaps in existing knowledge.

These studies are:

- an analysis of TASC client outcomes vis-a-vis outcomes of two comparison groups for six projects, at an estimated cost of \$540,000, with supplementary analysis of project operations and external factors at a total cost of \$60,000;
- development of improved data collection and analysis procedures for individual projects to facilitate cross-project analyses, at an estimated cost of \$125,000; and
- analysis of the process and outcomes of institutionalization, through preparation of six case studies, at a cost of \$150,000 (or \$120,000 if the projects are those selected for the client outcome study).

The importance of these studies has been discussed for each of them individually. However, there are a number of other reasons for conducting additional analysis of the TASC program. These reasons apply to the entire set of recommended studies and are discussed below.

The size of the Federal commitment of funds to the TASC program in itself suggests the need for adequate evaluation of the impact of that expenditure. Through October 1975, \$21.8 million in Federal funds had been allocated to the TASC program. Moreover, the program is likely to continue at least at its present level of Federal support. The September 1975 "White Paper on Drug Abuse," prepared by the Domestic Council Drug Abuse Task Force, recommended not only that TASC be maintained at its present Federal funding level of approximately \$4 million per year but also that the program be expanded to include any jurisdiction with a population of over 200,000 which can demonstrate eligibility.

The report also recommended that additional ways be sought to expand the interface between the criminal justice and drug treatment systems and otherwise improve the coordination and communication among these systems. Since TASC has been cited in many communities as an effective linkage mechanism between the criminal justice and treatment systems, expansion of TASC would seem to be in accordance with this recommendation. However, without better information on long-range outcomes of the TASC program, such a conclusion cannot be supported with any but speculative arguments. On the other hand, if TASC is indeed as effective as its advocates state, then this fact should be documented and made available to all communities which might benefit from initiation of a TASC project.

In addition to the sizeable Federal commitment of funds to TASC, State and local commitments are beginning to increase. TASC projects have so far been very successful in obtaining State and local funding to replace the initial Federal funds. There is some reason to believe that other TASC projects will be similarly successful. However, without data on long-range outcomes, it is hard to know whether TASC is a good investment for a community.

An additional consideration is that evaluation findings for the TASC program may have broader applicability than to TASC alone. TASC is similar in many respects to other pretrial intervention programs, which have often not been carefully evaluated. Analysis of TASC may, therefore, provide insight concerning the likely impact of these programs, which are receiving increased attention as possible ways of reducing the overcrowding found in many pretrial detention facilities.

LEAA should also consider the fact that it is presently in the position of having no reliable long-range evaluation data for one of the major programs it supports through relatively scarce discretionary funds. If this situation continues, the agency may find itself encouraging state planning agencies to evaluate their projects at the same time that LEAA is making little effort to evaluate the projects funded directly from its national office. Such a situation may reduce the credibility of LEAA's statements regarding the importance of evaluation.

Finally, it should be noted that this is an opportune time to evaluate the TASC program: projects have been in operation long enough for many persons to have experienced the intervention and returned to unsupervised life within the community but projects have not been operating so long that their procedures have become rigid. Consequently, if evaluative results suggest changes in project operations, such changes may in fact be implemented. Therefore, an evaluation of TASC is likely to have operational impact as well as provide the long-range outcome data required for adequate assessment of TASC's importance.

**END**