

**Research Conducted on the ARK Program's Impact  
on Juvenile Recidivism  
Harris County Juvenile Justice System  
Houston, Texas, Precinct 4, Place 1  
Honorable Judge J. Kent Adams**

Judge J. Kent Adams, whose Northwest Houston court has the largest juvenile justice case load of any court in the State of Texas, believes that the family-system approach is a primary way of addressing the misbehavior of kids (including those youth charged with truancy, school dropout, assault, soliciting gang violence, and drug-related offenses). So, he sends the parents (or other adult caregivers) to ARK for Parents and sends the young people to ARK for Teens.

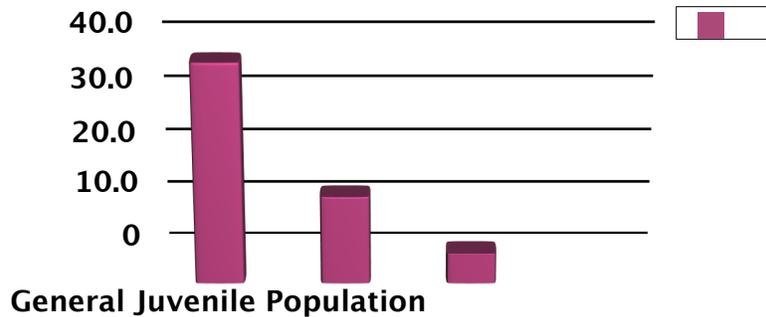
ARK for Parents addresses the difficult issues of parenting and provides tools and guidance for dealing with the ever-changing set of problems, issues, and barriers the typical family faces. The adult participants attend parenting sessions which help to improve their parenting skills, enhance family function, open communication lines, build confidence and self-esteem, discipline behavior appropriately, resolve problems, and encourage healthy participation with their kids. The one-hour meetings include presentation of DVDs and written materials in English, Spanish and Vietnamese and include "situation circles" whereby the participants have an opportunity to share issues within a climate of support and confidentiality. ARK for Teens classes take place at the same time their parents are attending ARK for Parents, and they provide a venue where teens can learn the language of respect, self-discipline, and unconditional love.

A recent study examined the recidivism rates of juvenile offenders who were referred and participated in the Judge Adam's two major referral programs: ARK and a program offered by the YMCA.<sup>1</sup> The rates were then compared to the recidivism rates of those who received no program referral. After many years of involvement in the juvenile courts, Rich Schmidt, Chief Clerk (Harris County, Precinct 4, Place 1), estimated that 35 to 40% of children who offend are back in the court for either the same or a different issue within the next year.

The recidivism rate for juveniles who completed the Adults Relating to Kids Program was 5.5% --11 out of 196 referrals. The recidivism rate for juveniles who attended the YMCA Mentoring program was 15.9% --27 out of 169 referrals. The results, which have far-reaching implications as they indicate a VERY LOW RECIDIVISM RATE FOR THE ARK PARTICIPANTS in Judge Adams' Court, are displayed in the following graph:

## JUVENILE RECIDIVISM RATES

Harris County Juvenile Court, Precinct 4, Place 1



The Harris County juvenile justice system has recognized ARK's enlightened policies and the tremendous value it possesses to address the needs of today's youth. It is also being effectively expanded to the State Jails in the Texas prison system. In Judge Adam's words, "ARK has been extremely successful, and today other judicial systems are referring families to them as well."

The ARK Program has demonstrated its value in enhancing self-esteem, social success, academic performance, increased parent and community involvement in children's lives. It also has demonstrated its ability to prevent the problems of violence, drug and substance abuse, truancy, and school dropouts. The ARKGroup can be contacted at [www.thearkgroup.com](http://www.thearkgroup.com) or at 281-537-1301 (Houston) or 817-268-2100 (Dallas). It is imperative that this program and others which reduce recidivism be expanded to our nation's courtrooms to achieve the goal of preventing a criminal future for our country's juvenile offenders!