
Juvenile and Family Drug Courts

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Since the establishment in 1989 of the nation's first drug court—the Dade County Circuit Court Diversion and Treatment Program in Miami, Florida—the innovation has been widely adopted, not only by adult criminal courts in nearly every state, but by numerous juvenile and family courts as well. The basic idea is a simple one: instead of repeatedly (and often futilely) punishing nonviolent offenders whose real problems are related to untreated addiction, use the occasion to force them to choose between punishment and the treatment and support services they need. Collaborate with a team of professionals in devising and monitoring a program of treatment and rehabilitation for each offender. Insist upon abstinence over the long term, and test frequently. Sanction backsliding. Reward success.

According to the Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project (DCCTAP) at American University in Washington, D.C., this simple formula has gotten results:

- Drug court programs have retention rates that more than double those of traditional treatment programs.
- Drug use among defendants participating in drug court programs is substantially reduced and significantly lower than those reported for non-drug court defendants.
- Recidivism ranges between 5% and 28% for drug court participants (as compared with an estimated 45% recidivism rate for defendants convicted of drug possession in ordinary criminal courts).

The drug court approach is proving itself adaptable outside the criminal court setting as well. A *juvenile* drug court is a special docket within a juvenile court, to which court-involved, substance-abusing juveniles are referred for handling by a designated juvenile drug court judge. A *family* drug court is a special docket for cases in which the parental rights of adult parties have been placed in jeopardy because of their substance abuse. Family drug court cases may be either criminal or civil in origin, and may include custody and visitation disputes; abuse, neglect, and

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dependency proceedings; petitions to terminate parental rights; and guardianship matters, among others. In either type of court, the judge, through frequent status hearings and active collaboration with a “drug court team” of prosecuting and defense attorneys, social service workers, treatment providers and other involved professionals, uses the court’s oversight authority to induce the substance abuser to commit to a course of treatment and rehabilitation.

Figures compiled by DCCTAP indicate that, as of June 1999, there were 69 juvenile drug courts in operation in the United States, with an additional 48 in the planning stages. Also as of June 1999, there were 10 active family drug courts, with 7 more being planned. Finally, 3 combined adult/juvenile/family drug courts were in operation as of June 1999, with 2 more combined drug court programs being planned.

Juvenile and Family Drug Courts

Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project (DCCTAP) Resources

- ***Juvenile and Family Drug Courts: An Overview***

Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project. 1998. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office. 19 pages. NCJ#171139

This report, one of a series from DCCTAP, provides a good authoritative introduction to juvenile and family drug courts—their operational definitions, their structures, their goals, the ways they differ from traditional courts. It also discusses

issues and challenges that are unique to juvenile and family drug court programs, and gives advice on forming partnerships with schools, community organizations, health providers, law enforcement agencies and the local bar.

- ***Juvenile and Family Drug Courts: Profile of Program Characteristics and Implementation Issues***

Cooper, Caroline S., and Shanie Bartlett. 1998. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office. Approximately 180 pages. NCJ#171142

This report lays out detailed results of a 1998 survey of 36 juvenile and family drug court programs, including operational, caseload, and demographic information, organizational descriptions, eligibility criteria, drug testing procedures and costs, treatment and other services provided, frequency of program contact, requirements for program completion, implementation issues encountered, and much more.

To order a copy of either publication, call the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800) 851-3420. To download a copy, go to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/dcpo/pubs.htm>

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Resources

- ***The Promise and Challenge of Juvenile Drug Courts***

Juvenile Drug Court Advisory Committee, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. 1999. Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. 4 pages.

This NCJFCJ position paper declares juvenile drug courts to be “a promising new early intervention strategy that addresses adolescent substance abuse through the combination of treatment and accountability.” Although the “basic concepts” underlying adult drug courts “are consistent with traditional juvenile court practice,” the paper cautions that the drug court model cannot be successfully adapted to young offenders without taking developmental and other differences between adults and juveniles into account.

- **“Juvenile Drug Courts”**

Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project. Juvenile and Family Justice Today 5.4 (1997): 12-17.

This article reports on a focus group meeting of juvenile drug court officials and planners from 27 different jurisdictions. Participants agreed that juvenile drug courts resemble adult drug courts in emphasizing early diversion, multi-agency coordination, close supervision and treatment, and a range of graduated sanctions for noncompliance, but they face different challenges, including more rigorous confidentiality requirements and complications relating to the developmental differences between adult and adolescent substance abusers. The article describes the objectives, structure, and operations of the typical juvenile drug court, and the nature of its collaborations with other local institutions.

- **“Family Drug Court: Another Permanency Perspective”**

McGee, Charles M. Juvenile and Family Court Journal 48.4 (1997): 65-70.

The author of this article incorporated the drug court model into his approach to dependency cases

in the family court over which he presided in Reno, NV, and found the experience “the most rewarding aspect of my judicial career.” He lists various elements that are essential to the success of a family drug court, including a CASA program, collaboration with the local criminal court, and an integrated case manager with flexible funding resources.

- **“Juvenile Drug Courts Showing GREAT Promise”**

Riddell, Steven G. Juvenile and Family Justice Today 7.4 (1999): 12-13.

This article does a good job describing the day-to-day running of a typical juvenile drug court program—this one in Maricopa County (Phoenix), AZ—featuring on-going court contact, frequent testing, participation in a Drug Court group, rewards for good behavior and detention and other sanctions for violations.

All of the above publications are available from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, P.O. Box 8970, Reno, NV 89507, (775) 784-4858, <http://ncjfcj.unr.edu>.

Other Juvenile and Family Drug Court Resources

- ***The Juvenile Drug Court Movement***

Roberts, Marilyn, Jennifer Brophy, and Caroline Cooper. 1997. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2 pages.

This OJJDP Fact Sheet gives a quick overview of the federal Drug Court Grant Program, describes the philosophy behind the juvenile drug court

movement, and concludes with brief descriptions of juvenile drug courts in Escambia County (Pensacola), Florida and Jefferson County (Birmingham), Alabama.

To order a copy, call the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800) 851-3420 and ask for FS#9759. To download a copy, go to <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>.

- ***Evaluation of the Juvenile Drug Court Diversion Program***

Miller, Marsha L., Evelyn A. Scocas, and John P. O'Connell. 1998. Dover, DE: State of Delaware, Executive Department, Statistical Analysis Center. 10 pages.

This report evaluates a juvenile drug court program instituted by the Delaware Family Court and the city of Wilmington in 1995, describing program activities and population served, and measuring program compliance and juvenile justice outcomes, including recidivism, arrests during program treatment and risk factors associated with recidivism in the treatment group. Although the results were preliminary, the Wilmington program appeared promising: participants in the program, both during and after the treatment period, were considerably less likely to be arrested for new offenses than members of a control group.

Available from State of Delaware, Executive Department, Statistical Analysis Center, 60 The Plaza, Dover, DE 19901, (302) 739-4626. State of Delaware Doc. #100703 980304.

- ***Spotlight on Juvenile Drug Courts***

American Prosecutors Research Institute's Juvenile Justice Program. 1998. Alexandria, VA: American Prosecutors Research Institute's Juvenile Justice Program. 2 pages.

This issue of the APRI publication, *In Re*, discusses juvenile drug courts from a prosecutor's perspective: as a middle-ground alternative featuring "swift and firm punishment combined with effective and aggressive intervention." The discussion focuses particularly on the juvenile drug court experience of Jacksonville, FL, and concludes with a resource list.

Available from American Prosecutors Research Institute, Criminal Prosecution Division, 99 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 510, Alexandria, VA 22314, www.ndaa-apri.org.

- ***Applying Drug Court Concepts in the Juvenile and Family Court Environments: A Primer for Judges***

McGee, Charles, John Parnham, Thomas Morrigan, and Michael Smith. 1998. Washington, DC: The American University. 37 pages.

This primer is the final product of the 1995 National Drug Court Symposium, conducted by the American University under the sponsorship of the State Justice Institute. According to the authors—three judges involved in pioneering drug court projects and the director of a substance abuse clinic—it is designed "to answer common questions judges often ask" relating to the development of juvenile and family drug courts, including not only what they are and how they differ from adult drug courts, but also what new roles and duties they require of the judges who preside over them.

Available from The American University at 4400

Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20016, (202) 885-1000. To download a copy, go to <http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/justice/jfintro.htm>.

Drug Courts in General

Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project (DCCTAP) Resources

- ***Drug Courts Program Office Fact Sheet***

Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project. 1998. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office. 2 pages. FS#00099.

This fact sheet describes the Drug Courts Program Office’s grant program for planning, implementation, enhancement, and continuation of local drug court programs, as well as its technical assistance, training, and evaluation initiatives.

- ***Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components***

Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project. 1997. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office. 43 pages. NCJ#165478.

This Drug Courts Program Office (DCPO) publication lists ten key components that every drug court must have, including alcohol/drug treatment services integrated with justice system case processing; frequent alcohol/drug testing; monitoring and

evaluation to measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness; and partnerships with public agencies and community-based organizations.

- ***Drug Court Monitoring, Evaluation, and Management Information Systems***

Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project. 1998. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office. 43 pages. NCJ#171138.

According to the foreword of this DCPO focus group report, “This document reports the best thinking of drug court practitioners and experts on [the] important topics of evaluation and management information systems.” Specific sections include: drug court program monitoring and process evaluations; evaluating the impacts and effectiveness of drug courts; drug court management information systems; and recommendations for follow-up to the focus group meetings.

- ***Looking at a Decade of Drug Courts***

Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project. 1998. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office. 15 pages. NCJ #171140.

This DCPO report highlights the major accomplishments of the drug court movement to date. Specific sections of the report discuss the following: retention rates; cost-effectiveness of drug courts; benefits to prosecutors and police; program growth; and impacts on recidivism, employment prospects, long-term sobriety, and birth of drug-

free babies.

- ***Guideline for Drug Courts on Screening and Assessment***

Peters, Roger H., and Elizabeth Peyton. 1998. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office. 73 pages. NCJ#171143.

This DCPO report offers guidelines related to screening and assessing drug court clients, describes the screening and assessment processes in detail, summarizes key issues for drug courts to consider as they screen and assess participants, and provides resource materials for those seeking additional information.

To order a copy of any of the above DCPO publications, call the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800) 851-3420. To download a copy, go to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/dcpo/pubs.htm>.

Other Drug Court Resources

- ***Drug Courts: Overview of Growth, Characteristics, and Results***

United States General Accounting Office. 1997. Washington, DC: U.S. General Accounting Office. 175 pages.

This is a characteristically thorough and balanced GAO report to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees regarding the effectiveness and impact of federal grants for drug courts under the Violent

Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The report describes in general terms the wide variety of approaches, characteristics, and completion and retention rates of these programs, affirms that most programs follow federal guidelines for the collection of data, but acknowledges that existing evaluations (at least as of 1997) do not warrant firm conclusions regarding the overall usefulness of drug courts. The report recommends that drug court programs be required to collect more follow-up data on recidivism and relapse among program participants.

Available from the U.S. General Accounting Office, PO Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015, (202) 512-6000.

Juvenile Substance Abuse

- ***Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report***

Snyder, Howard M., and Melissa Sickmund. 1999. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Delinquency Prevention. 221 pages.

This handy compendium of data and analysis on juvenile crime and victimization contains a great deal of up-to-date information on juvenile substance abuse, with sections on the prevalence of drug and alcohol use among teenagers, attitudes toward drugs, alcohol and risk, recent trends and usage patterns, and correlations between drug use and criminal behavior as well as victimization.

To order a copy, call the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800) 851-3420 and ask for NCJ#178257. To download a copy, go to <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>.

·Drug Offense Cases in Juvenile Court, 1986-1995

Stahl, Anne. 1998. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2 pages.

This OJJDP Fact Sheet examines drug offense cases processed by juvenile courts from 1986 through 1995. Among other findings, the author reports that the volume of drug cases increased 145% from 1991 to 1995, and that the number of formally handled drug cases more than doubled during that period.

To order a copy, call the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800) 851-3420 and ask for FS#9881. To download a copy, go to <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>.

· Drugs—The American Family in Crisis: A Judicial Response; 43 Recommendations

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' Alcohol & Substance Abuse Committee. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* 46.1 (1995). 114 pages.

Here the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges presents and comments upon its recommendations for reducing and preventing drug abuse among American youth. The recommendations are organized into five broad categories: the community's responsibility for substance abusing youth; the family's responsibility; assessment, referral and treatment issues; the unique role of the court; and general public policy recommendations.

Available from the National Council of Juvenile

and Family Court Judges, P.O. Box 8970, Reno, NV 89507, (775) 784-4858, <http://ncjfcj.unr.edu>.

· “How To Do It Right: Ten Principles for Identifying and Intervening With Drug-Involved Youth”

Crowe, Ann H. *Perspectives* (1996): pp.37-43.

This is a summary of the broadly applicable lessons learned from a four-year (1990-94) American Probation and Parole Association project, *Identifying and Intervening with Drug-Involved Youth*, under which training, technical assistance, and program evaluation were provided to five drug identification/intervention program sites across the country.

Available from the American Probation and Parole Association, c/o The Council of State Governments, 3560 Iron Works Pike, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578-1910, (606) 244-8205.

· Capacity Building for Juvenile Substance Abuse Treatment

Crowe, Ann, and Tanya Dickinson. 1997. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 11 pages.

This Juvenile Justice Bulletin from OJJDP discusses the consequences of adolescent substance abuse, the connection between adolescent substance abuse and delinquency, and drug testing; identifies five innovative juvenile justice programs serving substance-involved youth; and advocates the development and implementation of effective

community-based substance abuse services for adolescent drug offenders and their families.

To order a copy, call the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800) 851-3420 and ask for NCJ#167251. To download a copy, go to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/dcpo/pubs.htm>

Other Drug Court Links

- ***Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project***

<http://www.american.edu/justice/dcclear.htm>

This site, maintained by the Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project at The American University, has everything: general information regarding juvenile and family drug courts; all of the Clearinghouse's publications as well as an extensive on-line reference collection, featuring program and operational materials on dozens of drug court-related topics; current updates of juvenile and family drug court activity around the country, including program enrollment, retention rates, enrollment requirements, and demographic and drug use information on participants; and links to other sites related to drug courts and substance abuse treatment.

Note: to see the 1999 update on juvenile drug courts, go to <http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/justice/Juvoverviewinsert.htm>

To see the 1999 update on family drug courts, visit <http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/justice/familyinsert.htm>

- ***The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges***

<http://ncjfcj.unr.edu>

The NCFCJ's website offers substance abuse programs and publications, an annual one-week course on substance abuse issues ("Judicial Response to Alcohol and Other Drugs"), and links to drug, alcohol, and self-help online resources. For information on juvenile drug court training and technical assistance available from NCJFCJ, contact Iris Key, Manager, Substance Abuse Programs, P.O. Box 8970, Reno, NV 89507, (775) 784-1663, key@ncjfcj.unr.edu.

- ***Drug Courts Program Office***

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/dcpo.htm>

This site offers information about the Office of Justice Programs Drug Courts Program Office, including grant solicitations and application kits; information on currently active DCPO grantee programs in each state; and a schedule of conferences, regional training and workshops.

- ***Drug Court Technology***

<http://www.drugcourtech.org/>

This site, from the Center for Court Innovation in New York and the DCPO, provides information on building drug court information systems that make it easier to retrieve offender data, hold participants to a higher level of accountability, promote communication between a drug court and its partners, and facilitate outcome evaluations. Users are allowed to tour computer applications from 3 drug courts.

- ***National Association of Drug Court Professionals***

<http://www.drugcourt.org/>

This site, operated by a membership organization of drug court professionals founded in 1994, provides information on the DCPO-funded “Mentor Drug Court Network” under which seven mentor drug courts (in Kansas City, MO, Las Vegas, NV, Louisville, KY, Pensacola, FL, Rochester, NY, San Bernadino, CA, and Stillwater, OK) host monthly site visits from those interested in starting their own drug courts.

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