



Missouri
Recovery
Network

**THE STATEWIDE
VOICE FOR
RECOVERY**

*Bringing
Awareness,
Education
and Public
Understanding
of Recovery
Throughout
Missouri*

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**MISSOURI
RECOVERY NETWORK**
A PROGRAM OF ACT MISSOURI

Drug Courts: A Pathway to Recovery

The Missouri Recovery Network respects and educates on the multiple pathways to recovery. This fact sheet was developed to educate individuals on drug courts. Perhaps the biggest waste of state resources is spent on the incarceration of non-violent offenders who use, abuse and are addicted to alcohol and/or other drugs. This fact sheet will provide answers to questions you might have regarding drug courts and their effectiveness.

What are Drug Courts?

Drug courts were conceived in Miami, Dade County, Florida in 1989 when the correctional system was overwhelmed with non-violent, substance use/abuse related crimes. Missouri adopted this principle in Jackson County in 1993, and now leads the nation in drug courts per capita.

Drug courts specialize in cases where substance abuse is the chief cause of the crime. Drug courts represent the combined efforts of justice and treatment professionals to actively intervene and break the cycle of substance abuse, addiction, crime, delinquency, and child maltreatment. Typically only non-violent offenders are eligible for drug court.

How Do Drug Courts Work?

In the blending of justice, treatment, and social service systems, the drug court participant undergoes an intensive regimen of substance abuse treatment, case management, drug testing, supervision, monitoring, immediate sanctions and incentives while reporting to regularly scheduled hearings before a judge with expertise in the drug court model. In addition, drug courts increase the probability of participants' success by providing ancillary services such as mental health treatment, trauma and family therapy, job skills training, and other services which might be needed. Most drug court programs keep individuals in treatment long enough for treatment to work, while supervising them closely for a minimum of 12 months.

Drug courts operate in phases. The most intense supervision is in the beginning of Phase I, with each phase lessening slightly in intensity. For example, in Phase I the participant must appear before the judge once per week, attend three group counseling sessions and one individual session each week, and report at least twice to the probation office. Attendance at Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or a comparable support program is also required. Frequent and random drug tests are administered by the drug court throughout the entire program.

To advance phases, the participant must meet all requirements of the drug court including attendance at all treatment meetings, appointments with their probation officer, court dates with the judge, and random drug testing. They must stay clean and sober by testing negative on all drug tests, complete community service as directed, continue working towards a G.E.D (if applicable), and maintaining (or actively pursuing) employment.

Other requirements may be assigned for advancement in the program depending on the circumstances of the participant. This can include making child support payments, obtaining a driver's license, finding suitable housing, or enrolling in school.

Why are Drug Courts Successful?

Drug courts add substance abuse treatment and intensive judicial supervision to traditional probation. The participants learn discipline and sobriety skills so they can return to their families and communities as productive, tax-paying citizens.

Drug courts are operated locally to mirror community values, strengths, circumstances, and capacities. They provide a comprehensive collaboration of community stakeholders including: judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, substance abuse specialists, probation officers, police and correctional officers, educational and vocational experts, and community leaders.

Participants are treated holistically and given the skills to deal with the complications surrounding addiction including divorce, child neglect and abuse, literacy, juvenile delinquency, and mental health diagnoses. This approach makes them more capable of transitioning back into society, thus reducing recidivism.

Drug courts save money by keeping non-violent offenders out of prison. The average incarceration cost is \$30,000 a year per offender, while drug courts cost approximately \$3,000 annually.

Drug courts are a proven, cost-effective alternative to incarceration and probation in addressing the increased rates of sentencing and new prison admissions for drug and alcohol offenders. Successful participants are far less likely to recidivate than those that have been incarcerated or sentenced to probation without treatment.

Types of Drug Courts

Adult Drug Courts are for adult felony offenders whose addiction or substance abuse has led to their referral to the program.

Juvenile Drug Courts are for delinquency offenders under the age of 17 whose substance abuse has led to their referral to the program.

Family Drug Courts are for parents charged with the civil offense of abuse and/or neglect whose addiction or substance abuse has led to their referral to the program. The goal of this court is to provide safe, nurturing, and permanent homes for children while simultaneously providing parents the necessary support and services to assist them in regaining control of their lives, long-term stabilized recovery, enhancing the possibility of family reunification.

DWI Courts are for repeat DWI offenders whose addiction or severe alcohol abuse has led to their referral to the program. This court makes offenders accountable for their actions while treating their underlying substance abuse problem, thus bringing about a behavioral change that ends DWI recidivism, halting the abuse of alcohol, and protecting the public from impaired drivers.

Veterans Courts offer specialized services to address the unique needs of veterans. This court uses veterans as mentors to help individuals engage in treatment as well as partner with local VA offices to ensure that participants are aware of and receive proper benefits.

Reintegration Courts are pilot treatment court programs that facilitate the reintegration of drug offenders back into the community under the jurisdiction of the court upon their release from local or state correctional facilities.

Drug Courts —The Facts

The first drug court was founded over 20 years ago. Since that time, there has been more research published on the positive effects of drug courts than on virtually all other criminal justice programs combined. Drug courts work better than jail or prison and better than probation and treatment alone. Drug courts reduce crime, save money, ensure compliance, and restore families.

- Drug courts reduce crime as much as 35 % more than other sentencing options.
- Four or five people can be treated in a drug court each year for the same cost as keeping one person in prison.
- Drug courts produce cost savings ranging from \$4,000 to \$12,000 per client. These cost savings reflect reduced prison costs, reduced revolving-door arrests and trials, and reduced victimization.
- In 2007, for every Federal dollar invested in drug court, \$9 was leveraged in state funding.
- Drug courts are six times more likely to keep offenders in treatment long enough for them to get better.
- Children of family drug court participants spend less time in out-of-home placement such as foster care.
- Family re-unification rates are 50% higher for family drug court participants.

Drug Courts Work! They are significantly improving substance abuse treatment outcomes, substantially reducing crime, reuniting families, and producing greater cost benefits than any other justice strategy. Since their inception, Missouri drug courts have had 8,500 graduates and over 438 drug-free babies born to female participants in drug court. Drug courts transform over 120,000 addicts yearly into drug-free, productive citizens; yet drug courts are not widely available to everyone who needs them and can benefit from them. Drug courts should serve as the model for how to address the broadest population of substance abusers involved in the justice system. Short of this, we are failing to provide the best solution to America's greatest justice problem - addiction.

www.nadcp.org

www.modrugcourts.org

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (1997) *Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components*

National Association of Drug Court Professional, *A Drug Court Within reach of Every American in Need and the Facts: Facts on Drug Courts*

*For more information, contact the Missouri Recovery Network, a program of ACT Missouri,
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