

Clackamas County Juvenile Drug Court Enhancement: Process, Outcome/Impact and Cost Evaluation

Final Report Executive Summary



Submitted to:

**Clackamas County Juvenile Drug Court
and the Bureau of Justice Assistance**

Submitted by:

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*Research designed to promote effective decision-making by policymakers
at the national, state and community levels*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Drug courts are one of the fastest growing programs designed to reduce drug abuse in non-violent offenders in the United States. The first drug court was implemented in Florida in 1989. As of 2005, there were more than 1,200 drug courts operating in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam (OJP Drug Court Clearinghouse, 2003). This model has also translated into other areas of criminal justice including mental health court programs, domestic violence court programs, and juvenile drug court programs.



Drug courts use the coercive authority of the criminal justice system to offer treatment to non-violent addicts in lieu of incarceration. This model of linking the resources of the criminal justice system and substance treatment programs has proven to be effective for increasing treatment participation and decreasing criminal recidivism.

Clackamas County is part of the metropolitan, tri-county area surrounding the city of Portland, Oregon. During a 3-year period in the mid-1990s, the Clackamas County Sheriff reported a 38% increase in drug-related cases. According to Clackamas County Juvenile Department statistics, 80% of all youths on their caseloads are active substance abusers. These statistics led the county to begin planning a juvenile drug court.

In September 2001, Clackamas County received a drug court implementation grant from the Drug Court Program's Office (a part of the U.S. Department of Justice at that time) and in November of that year, the Clackamas County Juvenile Drug Court (CCJDC) began operations. The implementation grant provided funds for evaluation and NPC Research was hired to perform a process and outcome study of the CCJDC. The process evaluation was completed in July 2003 (Carey, Weller and Roth, 2003) and the outcome evaluation was completed in January 2004 (Carey, 2004).¹ Both evaluations were very positive. The process evaluation showed that the CCJDC program was implementing the ten key components of drug courts (NADCP, 1997) in an exemplary fashion. The outcome evaluation revealed that the juvenile drug court participants decreased their drug use substantially over their time in the program and had lower recidivism than similar juveniles who did not attend the Drug Court program.

In October 2003, the CCJDC received a drug court enhancement grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to implement additional services with the goals of 1) increasing family support resources and enhancing family treatment and 2) strengthening participant links to sustainable community resources. The CCJDC again contracted with NPC Research to perform process and outcome evaluations of the CCJDC enhancements. In addition, the CCJDC requested that NPC perform a cost evaluation of the CCJDC. Following is a summary of the results of this most recent evaluation.

¹ The final 2003 process report, "Clackamas County Juvenile Drug Court Process Evaluation: Final Report," and the final 2004 outcome report, "Clackamas County Juvenile Drug Court Outcome Evaluation: Final Report," are posted at www.npresearch.com.

Process Results

Overall, the CCJDC implementation of their enhancements has been a resounding success. In spite of unexpected staff leaves-of-absence and staff turnover, the CCJDC program implemented the enhancements to the program as intended. The CCJDC Team and the participants and their families had a positive response to the new services. The families had many positive things to say about the Drug Court Team. The successes reached further than just the CCJDC program itself. The benefits of the Community Resource Liaison position were so strong that the Clackamas County Juvenile Department decided to continue to fund the position full-time after the enhancement grant funds ran out.

“The Team is there 24/7. You can call anyone at any time. If you don’t know how to handle a situation, they are there for advice.”

Recommendation: Due to the CCJDC program remaining below its intended capacity, the main recommendation that grew out of this process evaluation was that the Drug Court Team should continue to look for ways to augment enrollment in the program. This augmentation has already begun in that the Community Liaison position on the Drug Court Team is also a part-time position at the Clackamas Juvenile Department, so the Drug Court Program is a much more salient option for the Juvenile Department staff than in the past. An increase in participant numbers would provide an economy of scale in terms of drug court program costs. In addition, the CCJDC program is already having a positive effect on participant outcomes so increasing the numbers of juvenile offenders that receive CCJDC services can lead to an even larger benefit to the criminal justice system and society.

Outcome Evaluation Results

Drug Court participants were matched with a similar group of high-risk juvenile offenders who were eligible for the Drug Court program but were not referred and therefore received traditional Clackamas County Juvenile Department processing. Drug Court participants were measured against the comparison group on re-referrals and adult re-arrests.

Figure 1. Average Number of Re-Arrests Over 24 months

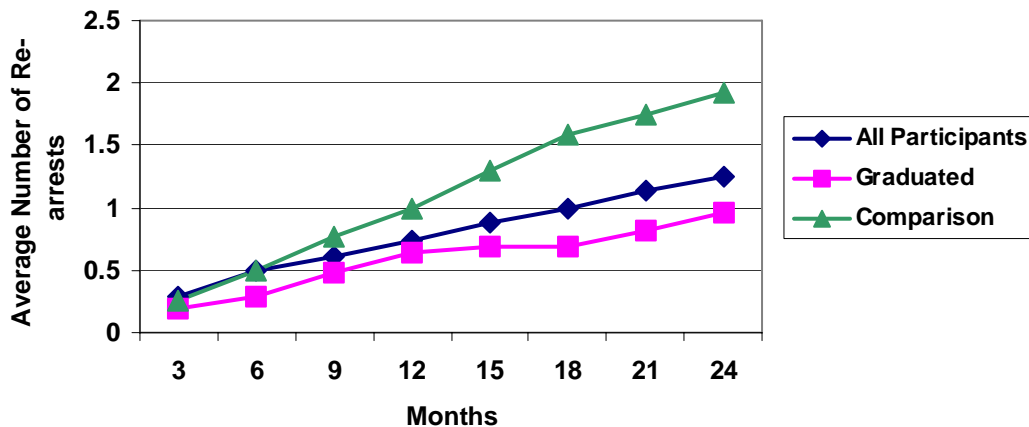
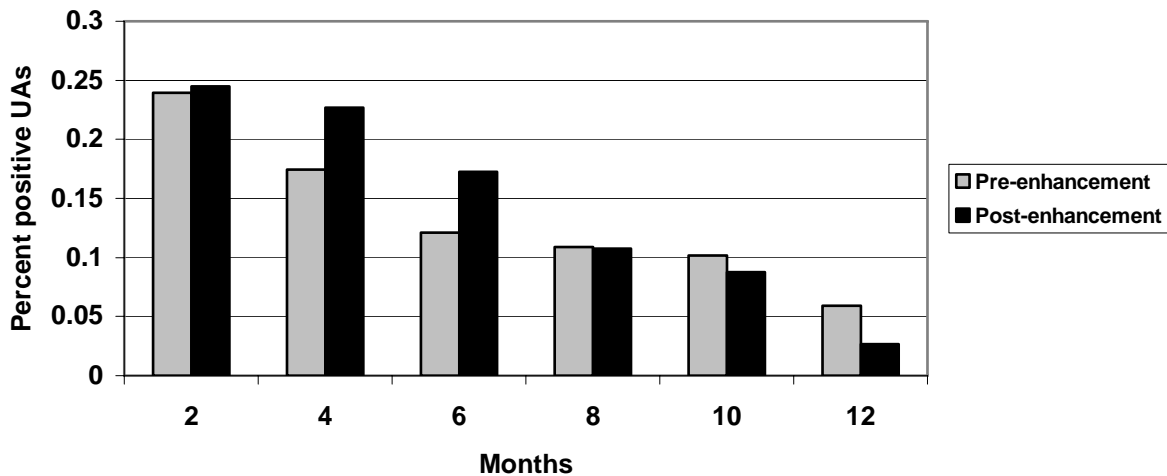


Figure 1 shows the average number of re-referrals² and adult arrests for 24 months after entering the Drug Court program for CCJDC graduates, all participants and the comparison group. Although the number of re-referrals and re-arrests is similar in the first 3 months after Drug Court entry, by 9 months from program entry the Drug Court participants (regardless of whether they graduated) show lower recidivism. By 15 months from program entry the difference between Drug Court participants and the comparison group is significant. At 24 months the comparison group shows 63% more re-arrests than those who participated in the Drug Court program whether or not they graduated.

**Re-arrest rate in the 2 years
after drug court entry:
29% graduates
44% all participants
82% comparison group**

In addition, one of the key CCJDC program goals is to reduce substance abuse in their participants. To test whether the program was approaching its goal, the percentage of positive drug tests (urinalyses – UAs) was calculated in 2-month blocks over 12 months in the program. Figure 2 shows a clear decrease in the percentage of positive UAs over time in the program both for youth who participated in the program before the enhancements were implemented and afterward.

Figure 2. Percent of Positive UAs



Interestingly, post-enhancement participants started out with a higher percentage of positive UAs (indicating more extensive drug use in that population) but by the end of the year in the program show a lower percentage of positive UAs compared to pre-enhancement participants. This suggests that the program enhancements are effective in reducing drug use, even among a population of more challenging youth.

A primary goal of the enhancement was to increase the types, frequency, and accessibility of family support programs. By increasing family support programs, the CCJDC sought to improve overall family functioning, particularly in the areas of problem solving and communication.

² Re-referrals are defined as incidents of juvenile criminal behavior officially reported to the court and recorded in the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS).

To determine whether enhanced family services improved family functioning, a survey was developed based on existing family functioning measures. The original evaluation plan was to give the survey to participants and their families at program entry, when participants entered Phase III, and at program completion. However, due to the limited time between the implementation of enhancements and the data collection for this evaluation as well as the small number of post-enhancement participants, few participants or their family members took the survey at all and even fewer took it at more than one time point. Therefore, it was not possible to obtain significant results and it was necessary to look at this data in a more qualitative fashion to discuss possible trends.

The evaluation team targeted three general categories of family functioning on which to focus, based on the express goals of the CCJDC enhancement and the particular developmental needs of adolescents and their parents. The three categories were (1) communication (2) problem solving and (3) family rules/expectations. In all three categories, the families that took the survey at more than one time point (n=9) showed clear improvement in communication and problem solving from time point 1 to point 2. In the category of family rules and expectations, results showed that although parents felt that their rules and expectations had become clearer over time, the youth did not agree. This is not surprising and is often true in families outside of the juvenile justice system. All results from this study regarding family functioning should be taken with caution due to the very small sample size. The collection of family functioning data on more families must occur for future evaluation to be able to verify these results.

Taken as a whole, the outcome results show that the CCJDC program is successful in reducing criminal activity and substance use. Despite the small number of post-enhancement participants, the data suggests that the enhancement services have impacted Drug Court participants and their families in a very positive way.

Cost Evaluation Results

A Transactional and Institutional Cost Analysis (TICA) approach, developed by NPC Research, was used to calculate the costs of each of the transactions that occurred while participants were engaged in the program. Transactions are those points within a system where resources are consumed and/or change hands. In the case of juvenile drug courts, when a participant appears in court or has a drug test, resources such as judge time, defense attorney time, court facilities, and urine cups are used. The costs for this study were calculated including taxpayer costs only. All cost results provided in this report are based on fiscal year 2005-2006 dollars.

Results showed that the cost of the program per day was less than most other referral options commonly used by the Clackamas County Juvenile Department for high-risk youth. Table 1 demonstrates these results.

Table 1. Per Day Costs of Placement Options for High-Risk Youth

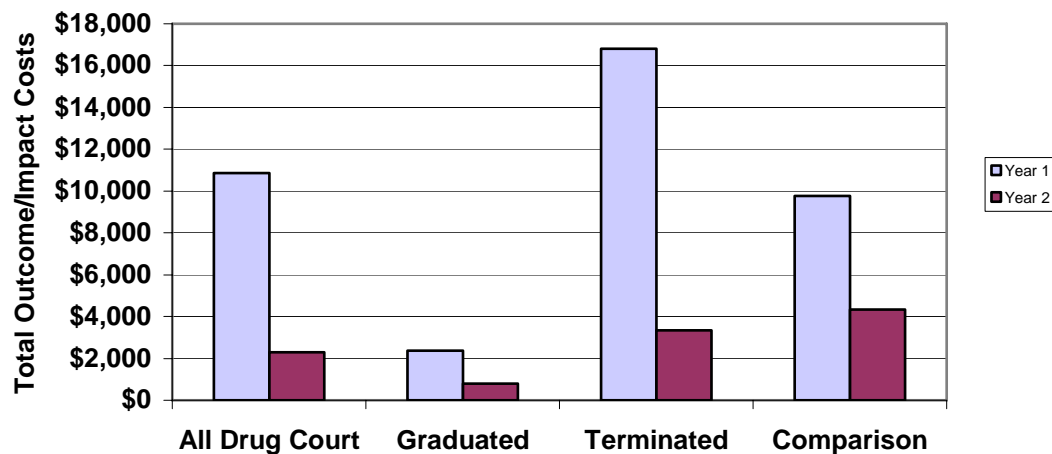
Placement Options	Cost Per Day
CCJDC Program	\$66.26
Residential Treatment	\$134.19
Shelter Care	\$115.57
Detention	\$183.65
Youth Correctional Facility	\$171.00
Adult Jail	\$96.77

Outcome transactions were defined as any juvenile justice related transaction that occurred after entry into the CCJDC program but was not related to the program itself. The outcome transactions that were assigned costs included re-referrals and adult arrests, detention time, time in a youth correctional facility, subsequent court cases, foster care, and adult jail time.

In the 2 years after Drug Court entry, CCJDC participants cost the taxpayers **\$961 less** per participant than similar individuals who did not attend the Drug Court program. This represents an overall benefit to the taxpayer due to the investment in the CCJDC program. Those who terminated unsuccessfully from CCJDC program cost the taxpayer **\$6,037 more** than those in the comparison group due entirely to a greater number of days in detention and jail. Conversely, CCJDC graduates cost the taxpayers **\$10,958 less** per participant than the comparison group.

Figure 3 provides a break down of outcome costs per youth between the first year and the second year after Drug Court entry. This figure shows that the terminated participants cost the taxpayer less than the comparison group members in the second year after program entry. However, it also shows that the largest amount of resources is spent on terminated participants in the first year. A deeper examination of these costs revealed that the majority of this cost in the first year is due to detention.

Figure 3. Total Outcome Costs Averaged per Participant 2 Years Post Drug Court



Recommendation: Although the amount of time on detention due to sanctions was not tracked by the CCJDC program, it is likely that most of this detention time was served in the first year as part of CCJDC program sanctions. Although the CCJDC is creative in the type of sanctions used in the program, in light of the high cost (and apparent high use) of detention, it is recommended that the CCJDC Team brainstorm further on some other types of sanctions to use in place of detention whenever possible. This is currently beginning to occur much more often as the Team takes advantage of the increasing number of community service options provided by the Community Liaison Team member.

Promising Practice: The addition of the Community Liaison member to the Team and the increased use of a variety of community service options in the drug court process is a practice that appears exceptionally promising. The cost of detention as a sanction is prohibitive while community service costs little or nothing. The Community Liaison's relationship with community service organizations allows for regular, pre-arranged community service openings and better supervision during community service hours. The presence of the Community Liaison at Drug Court Team meetings and in Court Sessions reminds the Team of the availability of community services as an option and allows sanctioned youth to sign up for individually appropriate community service hours immediately at the time of the sanction.

Conclusion

As found in the process evaluation performed in 2003, and once again in 2006, the CCJDC program demonstrates the 10 key components of drug courts in an exemplary fashion. The program has a strong, well-coordinated and integrated Team that includes members from multiple agencies including the Court, Treatment, District Attorney, Defense Attorney and the Juvenile Department.



The outcome results showed that, overall, CCJDC participants were re-referred/re-arrested less often than a comparison group of similar youth who did not enter the program and that CCJDC participants reduced their drug use over time in the program.

The average cost for the CCJDC program in Clackamas County was \$23,656 per participant. Outcome costs were less for Drug Court participants than for the comparison group. Taxpayer savings due to positive outcomes for Drug Court graduates were **\$10,958 per participant** and, in spite of large costs for detention for terminated participants, savings due positive outcome for all participants, regardless of program completion status, were **almost \$1000 per participant**.

In general, the CCJDC program appears to be an extremely cost effective approach to treating high-risk youth involved in the juvenile justice system.