

# Dorchester County Juvenile Drug Court Process Evaluation



*Submitted to:*

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August 2007



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# Dorchester County Juvenile Drug Court *Process Evaluation*

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**August 2007**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is made possible by the great efforts, support, and participation of many people and organizations. In particular, we wish to express gratitude to:

- Frank Broccolina, State of Maryland Court Administrator
- Gray Barton, Executive Director; and Jennifer Moore, Deputy Director, Maryland Office of Problem-Solving Courts
- Hon. Jamey H. Weitzman, Chair of the Judicial Conference Committee on Problem-Solving Courts
- Hon. Kathleen G. Cox, Chair of the Drug Court Oversight Committee
- Maurice S. Nelson, Master of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Causes, Emily Moody, and all team members including judicial/legal partners and treatment providers who participated in key stakeholder interviews. We appreciate their warm and welcoming attitude toward our evaluation team, and thank them for making their program completely available to us
- Dorchester County Juvenile Drug Court focus group participants (youth and parents/guardians) for their candor and providing the evaluation team with their unique perspectives on the program
- Katherine Kissick, Travis Ward, and Charley Korns, NPC Research



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**D**rug treatment courts are one of the fastest growing programs designed to reduce drug abuse and criminality in nonviolent offenders in the United States. The first drug court was implemented in Florida in 1989. There were over 1,700 drug courts as of April 2007, with drug courts operating or planned in all 50 states (including Native American Tribal Courts), the District of Columbia, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico<sup>1</sup> (BJA, 2007).

Drug courts use the coercive authority of the criminal justice system to offer treatment to nonviolent 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.

The Dorchester County Juvenile Drug Court (DCJDC) is located in Cambridge, Maryland. Planning for this program began in response to a local youth survey that was conducted in November 2002 that highlighted alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, school suspensions, and other risk factors of area youth. To address some of these indicated risk factors, community agencies collaborated on the development of the DCJDC program.

The program was implemented on July 1, 2004. The DCJDC operations team is made up of the master, drug court coordinator, Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) case manager specialist and program supervisor, assistant public defender, deputy state's attorney, addictions counselor with Dorchester Addictions, two representatives from Dorchester Youth Services (which provides counseling and case management services as a local branch of the Maryland Association

of Youth Services Bureau), a representative of the Cambridge Police Department, and a representative of the Dorchester County Board of Education. The DCJDC serves juvenile offenders with substance abuse problems, many of whom come from single parent or unstable households. The program combines substance abuse treatment and other therapy/counseling, as necessary, with supervision and accountability. In a minimum of 6 months, the program works to reduce recidivism and get participants engaged in areas such as education and employment.

At capacity, the DCJDC program is currently designed to serve 25 participants at a time. Since the drug court program has been operational, it has not reached capacity and therefore has been able to accommodate all eligible participants. As of June 2007, 28 individuals have enrolled in the drug court; 17% of these participants have graduated, 33% were unsuccessful at completing the program, and 50% are currently active. The process to determine eligibility will be described in the section on program screening below.

The majority (72%) of the program's past and current participants are Caucasian, and 28% are African American. The average age of participants at program entry is 16 years. The drugs of choice for participants of the DCJDC program are marijuana and cocaine.

The stated mission of the DCJDC program is to improve the well being of youth and to enhance public safety in the community through a caring and integrated juvenile justice system approach, which reduces alcohol and other substance abuse and related problems. Currently, the program has six specific goals listed in their *Policies and Procedures* document:

1. To expedite the formal processing of juvenile alcohol and drug offenders for drug court eligibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Update retrieved from <http://spa.american.edu/justice/documents/1966.pdf>

2. To reduce substance abuse among drug court participants.
3. To increase the number of juveniles and their families receiving a mental health/risk screening at DJS intake.
4. To reduce delinquent behavior among drug court participants.
5. To increase capacity to identify information about substance-abusing youth in order to respond to youth, family and community concerns and needs.
6. To facilitate, where appropriate, the acquisition of academic, vocational and pro-social skills development in juvenile offenders.

During the key stakeholder interviews, the DCJDC staff expanded on these goals with a holistic goal of helping participants engage in their lives in a more meaningful way by developing responsibility and a sense of who they are.

## Process Evaluation Results

Using the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts (as described by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals in 1997) as a framework, NPC Research (NPC) examined the practices of the DCJDC program.

The DCJDC should be commended on the quality of the implementation of its program. The program meets the majority of the 10 key components and 16 juvenile strategies through its current policies and program structure. It integrates alcohol and other drug treatment services with juvenile justice system case processing; uses a non-adversarial approach between prosecution and defense counsel; provides a continuum of treatment services; has a consistent structure for responding to participant compliance; has had a continuously serving, voluntary master for many years; ensures team members receive appropriate training; and has worked to de-

velop partnerships with public and private community agencies and organizations.

There are several areas that the program could consider to enhance the quality of services. In order to reduce the time from arrest to drug court entry, the team should analyze the program's current systems of identifying and referring eligible youth. As part of this review, the team may want to discuss the program's target population to ensure that the current process or any future referrals changes (such as increasing school referrals) are accessing the youth that the program is intending to serve. The program may also want to consider whether it would benefit from a slight increase in the frequency of drug testing. Any additional training for core team members and affiliated community partners, such as strength-based practice, cultural competence, or the use of the Statewide Maryland Automated Records Tracking (SMART) data system, will ultimately enhance the quality of service for participants.

Interpretation of the findings of this process evaluation is provided in an analytic framework that distinguishes among community, agency, and program-level issues. Understanding the needs of drug court participants and the larger community, and the impacts of a person's environment on her/his behavior is crucial to establishing a program that best serves the population. Bringing the partner agencies to the table and ensuring consistent and thorough communication and coordinated planning will also enhance program quality. Finally, establishing consistent operational guidelines will provide an efficient and effective structure for service delivery.

## **SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The drug court team should have a discussion about the community need this program is intended to meet and the population that is the focus of this service. This conversation should help confirm the current population as the primary focus or clarify other youth that the program may want to identify. Strategies can then be tested to increase screening and referral of appropriate youth, or improve the efficiency of screening and referral of these youth. For example, if the program would like to increase referrals from schools, it would be useful to hold a meeting with school board members and school faculty to discuss the possibility of schools referring youth to the program as an alternative to expulsion for a drug offense on school grounds. Solving the referral issues should lead to greater numbers of program participants, and result in the program operating at full capacity. If the schools become a referral source, however, the program will need to decide if it will remain post-adjudication or potentially expand to allow youth to participate as a diversion/alternative to adjudication.

The drug court team may want to discuss the potential benefits of creating a steering or policy committee. School representatives could be invited to become members of the committee to strengthen the partnership between the schools and the drug court. The steering/policy committee could enhance or develop additional ties with other community partners, including public and private agencies, creating additional avenues for gaining referrals and resources for the drug court.

Regardless of whether or not a steering/policy committee is created, the program should continue to identify new community partners, connections, or resources that would be interested in supporting the program, and strengthen relationships/ties with existing agency partners. These partnerships

may also foster support for job readiness, career exploration, and employment placement.

## **SUMMARY OF AGENCY-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Once the target population is confirmed, partner agencies will need to work together to ensure the most efficient process for identifying and referring appropriate youth to the drug court, such as identifying youth earlier in the adjudication process. For example, some drug courts take referrals from the prosecuting or defense attorneys, or from court staff.

There should be an expectation of and encouragement for staff to take advantage of ongoing learning opportunities, both locally and nationally. To support this goal, a training plan and a log system should be established, and program administrators should review the results periodically. These tools will be useful in keeping track of training activities and in reinforcing the importance of professional development.

The key stakeholder interviews highlighted several areas in which the drug court team might benefit from additional training, including formal training for new staff members geared toward their new role on the drug court team, drug court training for law enforcement, training on substance abuse/addiction and mental health, and effective interventions for youth with cognitive or learning challenges. The program may want to bring in additional training on motivational or solution-focused interviewing, adolescent development, strength-based practice, or positive youth development, and assess areas of the program that might be adjusted to enhance youth engagement and satisfaction with services.

Cultural competence requires ongoing evaluation of program policies and procedures and regular staff training. DCJDC staff should consider regularly attending training on cul-

tural topics and/or reviewing articles or other materials on the topic.

#### **SUMMARY OF PROGRAM-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The drug court team may want to discuss strategies for increasing family involvement and buy-in to the program. Efforts could include seeking family representation in program planning (e.g., steering or policy committee), reinforcing family involvement through use of incentives (e.g., recognition, gift cards), adjusting the time of drug court hearings to accommodate family/guardian employment schedules, or requesting feedback prior to hearings from family members who are unable to attend them. Based on parent/guardian and participants' independent reports, program requirements can be burdensome; transportation support and scheduling flexibility would help youth succeed in the program.

It would benefit the program to focus on increasing communication with parents/guardians about the program structure, purpose, incentives, and consequences. While information may be provided at the beginning of the program, offering reminders and updates throughout the program would help parents/guardians better understand and retain information.

In response to recent research findings, it may be worth considering increasing the frequency of drug testing in the first two phases

to 3 times per week, regardless of suspicion of use.

The team may want to conduct a case review on a sample of recent cases to identify whether incentives, sanctions, and rewards were used consistently in response to participant behaviors and create a standard schedule that matches types of offenses or good behaviors and number of occurrences with appropriate sanctions or rewards. If the program does not already do this, individualizing incentives and rewards (and even sanctions) based on the youth's interests increases their effectiveness at reinforcing desired behavior.

DCJDC staff should be trained to use the new SMART management information system, both in terms of entering information consistently and accurately, and in extracting information for program review and planning. The drug court team should initiate and continue analysis of data about the drug court and its participants, and use it to inform the team about its participant population and their programmatic needs, and the extent to which the program is meeting its goals. The team will also want to ensure that the program or partner agencies are collecting all appropriate information needed for future outcome evaluation.

The team may want to set a time to discuss the findings and recommendations in this process evaluation, both to enjoy the recognition of its accomplishments and to determine whether any program adjustments are warranted.

## BACKGROUND

**D**rug courts are designed to guide offenders identified as drug-addicted into treatment that will reduce drug dependence and improve the quality of life for offenders and their families. Benefits to society take the form of reductions in crime committed by drug court participants, resulting in reduced costs to taxpayers and increased public safety.

In the typical drug court program, participants are closely supervised by a judge (or master) who is supported by a team of agency representatives who operate outside of their traditional roles. The team typically includes a drug court coordinator, addiction treatment providers, prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, law enforcement officers, and parole and probation officers who work together to provide needed services to drug court participants. Prosecuting attorneys and defense attorneys hold their usual adversarial

positions in abeyance to support the treatment and supervision needs of program participants. Drug court programs can be viewed as blending resources, expertise and interests of a variety of jurisdictions and agencies.

Drug courts have been shown to be effective in reducing recidivism (GAO, 2005) and in reducing taxpayer costs due to positive outcomes for drug court participants (Carey & Finigan, 2003; Carey, Finigan, Waller, Lucas, & Crumpton, 2005). Some drug courts have even been shown to cost less to operate than processing offenders through traditional (business-as-usual) court processes (Carey & Finigan, 2003; Crumpton, Brekhus, Weller, & Finigan, 2004; Carey, Finigan, Waller, Lucas, & Crumpton, 2005).

This report contains the process evaluation for the Dorchester County Juvenile Drug Court (DCJDC).



## METHODS

Information was acquired for this process evaluation from several sources, including observations of a court hearing and a team meeting during site visits, key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and program documents. The methods used to gather information from each source are described below.

### Site Visits

NPC evaluation staff traveled to Dorchester County, Maryland, for site visits in October 2005 and in March 2007. The visits included an observation of a juvenile drug court hearing and a pre-conference team meeting; interviews with key DCJDC staff; and the facilitation of focus groups with current drug court participants and their parents/guardians. An individual interview was also conducted with a graduate of the DCJDC during one of the site visits. These observations, interviews, and focus groups provided information about the structure, procedures, and routines used in the drug court.

### Key Stakeholder Interviews

Key stakeholder interviews, conducted in person or by telephone, were a critical component of the DCJDC process study. NPC Research (NPC) staff interviewed eight individuals involved in the administration of the drug court, including the master of domestic relations and juvenile causes, the drug court coordinator, an addictions counselor with Dorchester Addictions, the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) case manager specialist and program supervisor, the Director of Dorchester Youth Services, the assistant public defender, and the deputy state's attorney.

NPC has designed a *Drug Court Typology Interview Guide*<sup>2</sup>, which provides a consistent method for collecting structure and process information from drug courts. In the interest of making this evaluation reflect local circumstances, this guide was modified to fit the purposes of this evaluation and of this particular drug court. The information gathered through the use of this guide assisted the evaluation team in focusing on the day-to-day operations as well as on the most important and unique characteristics of the DCJDC.

For the process interviews, key individuals involved with DCJDC administration were asked many of the questions in the *Typology Interview Guide* during site visits and telephone calls at several points in time. This approach allowed us to keep track of changes that occurred in the drug court process from the beginning of the project to the end.

### Focus Groups and Participant Interviews

NPC conducted two focus groups in the offices of the DCJDC in March 2007. Three current drug court participants were involved in the first focus group. Two parents/guardians of current participants were included in the other. NPC staff also interviewed a graduate of the DCJDC during the site visit. The focus groups provided the current and former participants and parents/guardians with an opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions regarding

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<sup>2</sup> The Typology Guide was originally developed by NPC Research under a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Administrative Office of the Courts of the State of California. A copy of this guide can be found at the NPC Research Web site at [http://www.npresearch.com/Files/NPC\\_Research\\_Drug\\_Court\\_Typology\\_Interview\\_Guide\\_\(copyrighted\).pdf](http://www.npresearch.com/Files/NPC_Research_Drug_Court_Typology_Interview_Guide_(copyrighted).pdf). See Appendix A for Typology description.

the drug court process. A summary of results can be found in Appendix B.

### **Document Review**

In order to better understand the operations and practices of the drug court, the evaluation team reviewed the program's documents

for program information. These documents included the *Dorchester County Circuit Court Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program Policies and Procedures* and the *Dorchester County Circuit Court Juvenile Drug Court Program Participant Handbook*.



## RESULTS

### Dorchester County Juvenile Drug Court Program Description

#### DORCHESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND

Dorchester County is a rural county located on the eastern shore of Maryland. The county has one city, Cambridge, and several towns and non-Census designated areas. As of the 2000 census, it had a population of 30,674, with more than 76% over the age of 18 and a median age of 40. Dorchester County's racial composition in 2000 was 69% White and 28% African American, with the remaining 3% made up of small percentages of other races. There were 12,706 households reported in 2000 and 4,024 were households with children under the age of 18. The Census also found that the median household income in the county was \$34,077 and the median family (defined as a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption) income was \$41,917. The county's unemployment rate was 3.6%, with 13.8% of individuals and 10.1% of families living below poverty level. Lastly, the main industry categories reported were education, health, and social services; closely followed by manufacturing. Cambridge, the county seat, had a population of 10,911 in 2000.<sup>2</sup>

#### DORCHESTER COUNTY JUVENILE DRUG COURT OVERVIEW

The DCJDC is located in Cambridge, Maryland. The program was implemented on

July 1, 2004. A variety of local agencies comprise the drug court. The DCJDC operations team is made up of the master, drug court coordinator, Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) case manager specialist and program supervisor, assistant public defender, deputy state's attorney, addictions counselor with Dorchester Addictions, two representatives from Dorchester Youth Services (which provides counseling and case management services as a local branch of the Maryland Association of Youth Services Bureau), a representative of the Cambridge Police Department, and a representative of the Dorchester County Board of Education. The DCJDC serves juvenile offenders with substance abuse problems, many of whom come from single parent or unstable households. The program combines substance abuse treatment and other therapy/counseling, as necessary, with supervision and accountability. In a minimum of 6 months, the program works to reduce recidivism and to get participants engaged in areas such as education and employment.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

In November 2002, the Dorchester County Local Management Board administered the Communities that Care Youth Survey. The survey results highlighted alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, school suspensions, and other risk factors of area youth. To address some of these indicated risk factors, community agencies collaborated on the development of the DCJDC program. Implementation of the program began when the program's first coordinator went to observe other drug courts to inform the planning process of the DCJDC. After gaining insight from visits to other drug courts, he contacted various community members and agencies to generate support for a local drug court. Backing and participation was gained from the Circuit Court judge and master, the Office of

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved on June 13, 2007, from the U.S. Census Bureau Web site:

[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?\\_event=Search&geo\\_id=&\\_geoContext=&\\_street=&\\_county=Dorchester+County&\\_cityTown=Dorchester+County&\\_state=04000US24&\\_zip=&\\_lang=en&\\_sse=on&\\_pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&show\\_2003\\_tab=&redirect=Y](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=&_geoContext=&_street=&_county=Dorchester+County&_cityTown=Dorchester+County&_state=04000US24&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&_pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&show_2003_tab=&redirect=Y)

the Public Defender (OPD), the State’s Attorney’s Office (SAO), Dorchester Youth Services (DYS), the Dorchester County Health Department, Dorchester Art Center, and Mid Shore Photography Club.

The planning efforts were funded by a grant from the Maryland Governor’s Grant Office through the Local Management Board. Once the group created the program structure, the DCJDC began operations on July 1, 2004. In August 2004, the current master began to preside over the court, running it as a part of the Dorchester County Juvenile Crime Court.

**PARTICIPANT POPULATION AND PROGRAM CAPACITY**

At capacity, the DCJDC program is currently designed to serve 25 participants at a time. Since the drug court program has been operational, it has not reached capacity and therefore has been able to accommodate all eligible participants. As of June 2007, 28 individuals have enrolled in the drug court; 17% of these participants have graduated, 33% were unsuccessful at completing the program, and 50% are currently active. The process to determine eligibility will be described in the section on program screening below.

The majority (72%) of the program’s past and current participants are Caucasian, and 28% are African American. The average age of participants at program entry is 16 years. The drugs of choice for participants of the MDJDC program are marijuana and cocaine.

**DRUG COURT GOALS**

The stated mission of the DCJDC program is to improve the well being of youth and to enhance public safety in the community through a caring and integrated juvenile justice system approach, which reduces juvenile alcohol and other substance abuse and related problems. Currently, the program has six specific goals listed in their *Policies and Procedures* document:

1. To expedite the formal processing of juvenile alcohol and drug offenders for drug court eligibility.
2. To reduce substance abuse among drug court participants.
3. To increase the number of juveniles and their families receiving a mental health/risk screening at DJS intake.
4. To reduce delinquent behavior among drug court participants.
5. To increase capacity to identify information about substance-abusing youth in order to respond to youth, family and community concerns and needs.
6. To facilitate, where appropriate, the acquisition of academic, vocational and pro-social skills development in juvenile offenders.

During the key stakeholder interviews, the DCJDC staff expanded on these goals with a holistic goal of helping participants engage in their lives in a more meaningful way by developing responsibility and a sense of who they are.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The DCJDC eligibility criteria are listed in the *Dorchester County Circuit Court Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program Policies and Procedures* document. To be eligible for the program, youth must be residents of Dorchester County, Maryland, and be between the ages of 12 and 17 years old at commission of the act that leads to program entry. In addition they must:

- Have a substance abuse issue (can include alcohol) that meets a substance abuse or dependency diagnosis
- Have family/guardian commitment for their involvement in the program
- Be appropriate and eligible for substance abuse treatment according to assessments conducted by the Health Department

- Not be under the jurisdiction of another county unless the case is transferred to Dorchester County

All criminal offenses except major violent and sexual offenses are eligible for the program. Therefore, the individual's charge(s) does not have to be directly drug-related; for example, individuals committing forgery or theft are accepted into the program.

### **DRUG COURT PROGRAM SCREENING**

Potential DCJDC participants have been adjudicated and may enter the program either pre-disposition or post-disposition. Participants are generally referred to the program by probation officers with DJS. Police officers, who usually learn of youths' substance abuse issues through previous law enforcement contacts, may initiate the referral, and will relay that information to DJS. Pre-disposition referrals may also come from the Assistant Public Defender (APD) and the Deputy State's Attorney (DSA).

A DJS staff member conducts a pre-disposition investigation, which includes a risk/needs assessment on the youth and her/his family. The assessment examines medical issues, mental health issues, educational background, career goals, criminal history, and the services that they may be in need of based on five areas: mental health, physical health, substance abuse, education, and cognitive programming. If the DJS staff member feels that the youth is a possible drug court candidate (either through that assessment or because the charge is directly drug related), he/she will refer the youth to the Health Department for an ASAM II Juvenile Drug and Alcohol Assessment.

Another route to drug court entry is when youth on probation violate the conditions of their probation. In these cases, probation officers and/or health workers will initiate the referral. When youth on probation that are required to attend treatment at the Health Department do not attend their treatment ses-

sions, health workers will inform probation officers, at which time they may suggest a referral to drug court.

After DJS and the Health Department determine that a youth is a possible drug court candidate, based on their assessments, they deliver their recommendation to the DSA and to the APD, and the juvenile's case is expedited through the court system. Once the youth is adjudicated and found guilty, the drug court team decides together if the candidate is appropriate for the program. If there is not a team consensus, the drug court master will make the final decision on whether or not to admit the youth into the program. During that timeframe, DJS staff members meet with the youth's parents/guardians to inform them about the drug court. The drug court program is optional to youth pre-disposition, and required of youth post-disposition.

The time between arrest and entry into the drug court program varies due to several factors including delayed referrals from police and time that youth are on probation before they are charged with violating probation. Generally, the process takes between 4 and 6 weeks.

### **INCENTIVES FOR OFFENDERS TO ENTER (AND COMPLETE) THE DCJDC PROGRAM**

The DCJDC operates as both a pre- and a post-dispositional program. The program is a pre-dispositional option for youth and their families; however, the program is not optional for those who are court ordered to the program. The incentive to enter the DCJDC as a pre-dispositional option is that upon successful completion of the program, the circuit court judge will find the graduate non-delinquent on the charge that led to his/her entry into the drug court. Additional incentives for offenders to enter and complete the drug court program include support in their recovery with treatment and case management, receiving praise from the master, and material rewards as they progress through the

program and for successfully graduating (e.g., gift cards).

### **DRUG COURT PROGRAM PHASES**

The DCJDC program has three phases that take between 6 and 18 months (9 months on average) to complete. The length of each phase is dependent upon the participant's compliance with the drug court requirements, but generally Phase I lasts 6 weeks, Phase II lasts 12 weeks and Phase III is 6 weeks. To complete the program successfully, participants must comply with their individualized treatment plan based on ASAM Level of Care criteria and be enrolled in an education program and/or be employed.

Participants in Phase I are required to attend drug court hearings twice monthly. These participants must also have four contacts with the DJS case manager per month, two of which are home visits. A minimum of two UAs per week, compliance with a 7:00 p.m. curfew, and weekly participation in the Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) program are also required. In order to graduate from Phase I, the participant must have had no positive drug tests for the final 4 consecutive weeks of the phase, be in an education program and/or be employed, and complete four steps (out of 12) in the MRT program. In addition they must complete a paper on "Why I am ready to be promoted to Level II" and present it to the MRT group, be in compliance with their treatment plans, and be recommended for promotion by the drug court team.

Phase II participants must attend drug court hearings one to two times monthly. They must have three face-to-face contacts with the DJS case manager per month, one of which must be a home visit. Phase II participants are required to submit to at least two UAs per week, comply with a 9:00 p.m. curfew, and attend the MRT program weekly. To move to Phase III, participants are required to have no positive drug tests for the

final 8 consecutive weeks of the phase, be in an education program and/or have employment, and have completed the MRT program. Finally, a paper on "Why I am ready to be promoted to Level III" must be completed and presented to the MRT group, and the participants must be in compliance with their treatment plans.

Phase III participants are required to appear monthly at drug court hearings. They must have two face-to-face contacts monthly with the DJS case manager and submit to a minimum of two UAs per week. The treatment team and the participant's family establish an individualized curfew requirement. In order to graduate from Phase III and therefore the program, the participant must get approval from the drug court team and meet the graduation requirements listed in the following section.

### **GRADUATION**

In order to graduate from DCJDC, participants must satisfy program requirements for all three phases and fulfill the following requirements, at a minimum:

- Successful completion of substance abuse treatment
- Successful completion of all phase and program requirements, including any recommended treatment and aftercare
- No new criminal charges
- Continued school and/or work participation
- Negative drug tests for all of Phase III
- Participation in an education program and/or employment as directed
- Completion of a paper or presentation on "Why I am Ready to Graduate" and presentation of it to drug court

When a participant is ready to graduate, the DCJDC holds a ceremony at the beginning of the drug court hearing in the large ceremonial

courtroom. Families as well as the other participants are present, and are therefore able to see the rewards that await them when they successfully complete the program. During the ceremony, the graduates' milestones throughout the program, including challenges such as relapses, are described. Graduates then receive certificates of completion and rewards such as gift cards (and some even receive college scholarship money). If the graduate entered the drug court program pre-disposition, they will be found as non-delinquent and will therefore avoid having a juvenile record.

### **TREATMENT OVERVIEW**

Treatment services for drug court participants are provided by Dorchester Addictions, which is a part of the Dorchester County Health Department. Dorchester Addictions provides outpatient treatment through group and individual treatment sessions. They use a combination of the chronic disease and cognitive behavioral models; during treatment sessions the signs and symptoms of the disease are discussed along with coping skills. Typically participants attend the group sessions twice per week; however, if a participant is not able to attend both group sessions due to transportation issues, individual sessions are provided at the clients' convenience. Clients are either placed in a 13-week or a 26-week group based on their diagnosis. Once participants finish outpatient treatment, weekly one-on-one meetings with addictions counselors are provided as aftercare until the participant graduates from the drug court program.

Participants in Phases I and II are required to attend weekly MRT group sessions conducted by the DJS case manager specialist. MRT is a cognitive-behavioral based program organized in 12 steps that encourages self-esteem, social growth, and moral development. In order to advance through the MRT steps, participants must complete 10 hours of community service for each step.

The type of community service is tailored for each participant's interests.

Participants are also encouraged to attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings in the community; however, the participants in the local 12-step group meetings are generally older adults and not adolescents. To address this issue, the program is looking into ways to transport participants to a nearby community that has meetings with younger participants. In the meantime, until transportation issues can be worked out, guest speakers from AA and NA groups conduct mock 12-step meetings during the Dorchester Addictions group sessions.

Dorchester Youth Services provides individual and family counseling as well as case management services (including referral to local services) to eligible drug court participants in a program called Family Preservation. At the time of this evaluation, in order to receive services from DYS, the participant must have had an adjudicatory status and scored high risk on the DJS Classification and Assessment for Adjudicated Youth (6.1) tool. A plan to review and change these criteria was in place at the end of this evaluation.

### **THE DRUG COURT TEAM**

#### *Master*

The drug court master has presided over the program since its inception. In addition to his drug court duties, he hears juvenile delinquency cases through the traditional court process. The master is described as being warm and stern when interacting with participants. The drug court master position is not time limited and does not rotate through other judges/masters.

#### *Coordinator*

Since the inception of the program, there have been two different drug court coordinators. The current DCJDC coordinator's role

is largely administrative. Her main focus is collecting information from all of the participating agencies and synthesizing weekly update reports for the drug court team. The coordinator also directs the team meetings, and facilitates communication and collaboration between team members during and between team meetings. In addition, she manages grants, solicits and screens referrals, and attends community meetings to promote the drug court. Additional responsibilities include managing memorandums of understanding among participating agencies, managing program policies and procedures, addressing training needs of team members, providing oversight on individual participant progress (e.g., tracking phases), and making recommendations regarding incentives, sanctions, phase promotion, and graduation. The coordinator also develops programming activities for youth (art classes, community service, field trips)

#### *Counselor*

Dorchester Youth Services (DYS) staff members meet with participants once per week to provide case management and counseling services. Two representatives from DYS are a part of the team; as members they attend the team meetings and drug court hearings to provide information to the team and to contribute to team decisions.

#### *Probation*

There are two representatives from the Department of Juvenile Services (probation) on the drug court team: the case manager specialist and the program supervisor. They attend all pre-conference meetings. The case manager specialist also attends all drug court hearings, and the program supervisor attends the hearings as his schedule allows. The case manager specialist was the original coordinator of the DCJDC program. Currently, in addition to providing probation case management services (including collecting urine screen samples and enforcing curfews), he conducts home visits, teaches the MRT

classes, and takes participants on field trips at local businesses to explore their career goals.

#### *Treatment Provider*

An addictions counselor with Dorchester Addictions is a member of the DCJDC team. In addition to providing treatment services to participants, the counselor provides written updates to the drug court team and attends pre-conference team meetings and drug court hearings.

#### *Assistant Public Defender*

The assistant public defender (APD) on the DCJDC team refers potential participants to the program and advocates for participants in a non-adversarial manner as a member of the team. The APD contributes to team decisions and attends all pre-conference meetings and drug court hearings.

#### *Deputy State's Attorney*

As a member of the DCJDC team, the deputy state's attorney (DSA) participates in the drug court team decisions including participant acceptability into the drug court program. The DSA also refers participants and regularly participates in the pre-court team meetings and the drug court hearings. The DSA describes her role on the team as an advocate for the state as well as an advocate for the participants.

#### *Law Enforcement Agencies*

Occasionally, based on his schedule, a representative from Cambridge Police Department (CPD) attends the pre-conference team meetings. CPD refers potential participants to the program. Additionally, the representative is on the drug court email list and is therefore updated on the program issues (such as participant issues or policy changes) through team emails.

#### *Board of Education Representative*

As a member of the drug court team, the Board of Education representative provides school records for potential drug court candi-

dates. Additionally, as his schedule allows, the Board of Education representative attends team meetings to provide updates on participant school attendance, discipline and academic performance.

### **DRUG COURT TEAM TRAINING**

Prior to implementing DCJDC, the original coordinator (now the case manager specialist with DJS) observed other drug courts to gather tips on implementing the program. Several DCJDC team members have attended multiple national and statewide drug court training conferences. The current coordinator, master, and Dorchester Addictions counselor attended the 2007 National Association of Drug Court Professionals conference. In addition, the current coordinator, Dorchester Addictions counselor, DJS representatives, assistant public defender, and deputy state's attorney attend the annual trainings sponsored by the Maryland Office of Problem-Solving Courts in Annapolis. Trainings aimed at more specific drug court topics were also attended by DCJDC staff; including a training on drug testing issues in drug court which was attended by the coordinator, DYS staff and Dorchester Addictions staff. The National Drug Court Institute training for defense attorneys was attended by the DCJDC assistant public defender. Finally, team members are scheduled to attend a training on incentives and sanctions and a series of "Drug Court 101" trainings.

### **TEAM MEETINGS**

The pre-conference team meeting is held every first and third Wednesday of the month at 10:30 a.m. The master, coordinator, assistant public defender, deputy state's attorney, and DJS case manager specialist regularly attend the pre-conference meetings. Depending on their availability, the DJS program supervisor, DYS representatives, and Dorchester Addictions counselor also attend the pre-conference meetings.

During these meetings, the team reviews the written *Juvenile Drug Court Report*, compiled before each meeting by the coordinator. The report provides a summary of updates on the participants' progress at home, school, substance abuse treatment, DJS, DYS, and in the drug court program. This report, along with oral reports by team members, informs team discussions on the participants' progress or issues in the program. The coordinator leads the meeting, with everyone getting a chance to provide input. Generally during the meetings, the team makes decisions on sanctions, incentives, and program policies together by consensus; however, the master has the authority to make the final decisions.

### **PROVIDER AND TEAM COMMUNICATION WITH COURT**

Team members, including the addictions counselor (treatment provider), are able to communicate with the court (the master) at the pre-conference meetings. In addition to the addictions counselor having direct contact with the master during meetings, information on participants' progress and their level of participation in treatment, as well as any recommendations for changes in the level of treatment, are reported to the coordinator in a written report that is then compiled with other information on the participant and provided to the team, including the master. If the addictions counselor is unable to attend the team meeting, she will later receive a briefing via email on the meeting from the drug court coordinator.

### **DRUG COURT HEARINGS**

The drug court hearings are held on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 11:30 a.m. Participants in Phase I attend drug court hearings twice monthly, Phase II participants attend one to two times monthly, and participants in Phase III are required to attend monthly. The master, coordinator, APD, DSA, DJS case manager specialist, two bai-

liffs, and a court reporter attend court regularly. Depending on their availability, the DJS program supervisor, DYS representatives, and Dorchester Addictions counselor also attend the drug court hearings. Participants' family members or guardians also attend the hearings with their children.

The master addresses team members directly in court, and team members openly make comments throughout the hearing. Participants and parents/guardians stand when addressing the master. Family members/guardians are encouraged to speak about their child's progress or struggles since the last hearing. The master is warm, yet serious when interacting with participants and prospective participants. The court highlights participants' positive achievements before pointing out any problems they are experiencing. Each participant interacts with the master for an estimated 10-15 minutes.

#### **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

Parents/guardians must sign an agreement when their child enters the drug court program, stating that they will attend the drug court hearings with their child; however, program staff reported that parents/guardians usually only attend the initial hearing. The parents/guardians are encouraged by program staff to become an auxiliary team member, by informing the team about participant issues (both positive and negative) outside of the formal setting of drug court. For example, parents/guardians are requested to inform the drug court staff if their child violates his/her curfew or if they believe that there is continued drug use. It was reported during key-stakeholder interviews that the implied authority of the court to the parents/guardians applies subtle pressure on the parent/guardian to be more attentive to the child's schedule. However, there is not a court order in place to enforce parent/guardian compliance. Occasionally, counseling services may also involve the family/guardian on a voluntary basis.

#### **SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT FEES**

There are no fees required of youth or their families for participation in the drug court; however, the drug court may require a fee for urinalysis as a sanction for non-compliance.

#### **DRUG TESTING**

Participants' compliance with the program is tested by urinalysis (UA) tests observed by same sex staff members at DJS, the Health Department, and occasionally at the drug court. The DJS case management specialist may also test participants in their homes randomly on the weekend. Participants in phases I and II are randomly tested a minimum of twice per week, and Phase III participants are tested at least once per week. Instant urine drug screens are used, and samples are sent to Redwood toxicology lab for confirmation when readings are either unclear or positive; normal-negative samples are also randomly sent to the lab for confirmation. The instant test screens for marijuana, methamphetamines, amphetamines, opiates, and cocaine; if the sample is sent to the lab, alcohol, benzodiazepines, and the creatine level are also tested. A drug court grant covers the cost of all drug court urine analysis screens conducted at the Health Department. While DJS pays for the urine screens conducted at DJS.

#### **REWARDS**

When participants complete phases and eventually graduate from the program, they receive rewards from the master during drug court hearings. The possible rewards are written and provided to staff and participants in the *Dorchester County Circuit Court Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program Policies and Procedures* manual and in the *Dorchester County Circuit Court Juvenile Drug Court Program Participant Handbook*.

Rewards include:

- Praise in court by the master



- “Fishbowl” gifts (small gifts that are awarded when a client who is progressing well pulls a paper out of a bowl with the name of the reward written on it)
- Gift certificates
- Candy baskets
- YMCA memberships
- Extended curfew
- Early release from electronic monitoring (see “sanctions” section below)
- Reduction in drug court reviews

### SANCTIONS

Sanctions are imposed for negative behaviors such as missing a treatment session or a meeting with the DJS case manager. Sanctions are graduated and decided upon by the DCJDC team during pre-conference meetings. The master imposes the sanctions during court hearings. In addition, if a participant is also on probation (a post-disposition case), then DJS staff may also impose sanctions on participants at their discretion. Examples of sanctions include electronic monitoring (usually for 2 weeks to a month) or detention (for a weekend) when participants fail to comply with their curfew or tamper with their UAs.

The sanction examples below are provided to staff in the *Dorchester County Circuit Court Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program Policies and Procedures* manual and given to participants in the *Dorchester County Circuit Court Juvenile Drug Court Program Participant Handbook*.

If participants are continuing to use drugs, increased treatment is used as a response rather than detention. Responses include:

- Increased drug testing
- Detoxification
- Inpatient treatment
- Higher level of care/treatment

- Fee for urinalysis

If program rules/phase requirements are broken, one or more of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- Program behavioral contract
- Program participation extension
- Demotion to earlier phase
- Verbal warnings
- Additional face-to-face appointments with drug court staff
- Stricter curfew
- Writing assignments/thinking reports
- Reenter/extend MRT
- Community service
- Additional drug court review
- Observations of criminal court with written/verbal report for group review
- Electronic monitoring
- Brief detention (2 to 7 days)
- Placement outside the community in DJS facility/group home
- Restart program

### UNSUCCESSFUL PROGRAM COMPLETION (TERMINATION)

Participants’ program participation is terminated for various reasons including, but not limited to:

- Continued non-compliance with treatment recommendations/requirements
- Failure to attend scheduled DCJDC hearings
- Continued non-compliance with supervision requirements
- Arrest on a new charge that warrants termination (team decision)

- Threatening of violence or demonstrating violent behaviors
- Continued non-compliance with phase requirements

Ordinarily there will be team consensus about whether or not to terminate a participant. During stakeholder interviews, program staff reported that the team tends to keep participants in the program if there are any benefits and there is not any detriment to the other participants. If a participant entered the drug court as a post-disposition requirement, once a participant's program participation is terminated, he/she is required to attend the juvenile delinquent (regular) court to receive a different disposition. If entry was granted into the program pre-disposition, the terminated participant will return to juvenile delinquent court to receive a disposition.

#### **DATA COLLECTED BY THE DRUG COURT FOR TRACKING AND EVALUATION PURPOSES**

Data tracked on participants such as demographic data and progress and issues throughout their participation in the program are stored currently in paper files. The drug court staff members are in the process of entering this data in the SMART management information system. Once entered into the SMART system, the data will be able to be entered and tracked electronically.

#### **DRUG COURT FUNDING**

Funding to start the program came from the Maryland Governor's Office of Grants through the Dorchester County Local Management Board. Current funding comes from the state through the Administrative Office of the Courts via the state legislature and the county manages the funds. These funds also support activities for participants at the Dorchester Art Center.

#### **COMMUNITY LIAISONS**

DCJDC has partnered with a number of community agencies in Dorchester County in a concerted effort to provide needed services to its participants. The program has formed a partnership with the Maryland Underage Drinking Coalition, who sponsors a Photography Club and co-sponsors an annual photography contest for drug court participants. The Dorchester Art Center provides art classes to the participants including the Community Boat-works program, which gives participants the opportunity to build canoes together, and a new program called Chaos, in which participants build fine furniture. Family Services assists participants who need mental health counseling and/or medical appointments, and can help participants obtain bicycles for transportation. Additionally, local businesses have allowed the DJS case management specialist to bring participants to their businesses in order to learn about various career opportunities.

## DORCHESTER COUNTY JUVENILE DRUG COURT COMPARED TO 10 KEY COMPONENTS OF DRUG COURTS AND 16 JUVENILE DRUG COURT STRATEGIES

This section lists the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts as described by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP, 1997). Following each key component are research questions developed by NPC for evaluation purposes. These questions were designed to determine whether and how well each key component is demonstrated by the drug court. Juvenile drug court strategies as described by the National Drug Court Institute and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NDCI and NCJFCJ, 2003),<sup>3</sup> are included as well. Within each key component, drug courts must establish local policies and procedures to fit their local needs and contexts. There are currently few research-based benchmarks for these key components, as researchers are still in the process of establishing an evidence base for how each of these components should be implemented. However, preliminary research by NPC connects certain practices within some of these key components with positive outcomes for drug court participants. Additional work in progress will contribute to our understanding of these areas.

The key component, research question, and juvenile strategy(ies) are followed by a discussion of national research available to date that supports promising practices, and relevant comparisons to other drug courts. Most

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<sup>3</sup> NPC felt that both the 10 Key Components and the 16 juvenile drug court strategies provided important perspectives on the operation of juvenile drug courts. We have retained the numbering of the juvenile strategies as they appear in the source document (NDCI and NCJFCJ, 2003), so the strategies are not numbered consecutively in this section. In addition, some juvenile strategies appear more than once, if they contribute to more than one key component.

of the research to date has been conducted on drug courts that have judges in the role of primary court decision-maker. In Dorchester County, the juvenile drug court uses a master in this role, but the functions within the drug court program are comparable. Some comparison data in this section come from the National Drug Court Survey performed by Caroline Cooper at American University (2000), and are used for illustrative purposes. Then, the practices of this drug court in relation to the key component and strategy(ies) of interest are described, followed by recommendations pertinent to each area.

### **Key Component #1: Drug Courts integrate alcohol and other drug treatment services with justice system case processing.**

*Research Question: Has an integrated drug court team emerged?*

#### *Juvenile Strategy #1: Collaborative Planning*

- Engage all stakeholders in creating an interdisciplinary, coordinated, and systemic approach to working with youth and their families.

#### *Juvenile Strategy #2: Teamwork*

- Develop and maintain an interdisciplinary, non-adversarial work team.

### National Research

Previous research (Carey et al., 2005) has indicated that greater representation of team members from collaborating agencies (e.g., defense attorney, treatment, prosecuting attorney) at team meetings and court sessions is correlated with positive outcomes for clients, including reduced recidivism and, consequently, reduced costs at follow-up.

### Local Process

This key component focuses on having a drug court team that integrates substance abuse treatment services with juvenile justice system processing and supervision. The DCJDC has an integrated, non-adversarial treatment and judicial team that includes the master, drug court coordinator, Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) case manager specialist and program supervisor, assistant public defender, deputy state's attorney, addictions counselor with Dorchester Addictions, two representatives from Dorchester Youth Services, a representative of the Cambridge Police Department, and a representative of the Dorchester County Board of Education. The entire drug court team gathers for pre-court meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of every month. In between the team meetings, the team members from various agencies stay in contact via e-mail and telephone. The team members contribute to the written report that the coordinator compiles, which includes a summary of participants' progress at home, school, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment (if applicable), DJS, DYS, and in general for the program. The drug court team, including the master, reviews this report during the pre-court team meetings and discusses participant progress, identifies issues, and determines the participants' next steps together.

Policy issues are discussed as needed during the pre-court meetings, and the team makes decisions about policy changes through team consensus.

### Recommendations/Suggestions

The drug court team should consider convening a steering or policy committee to discuss policy issues outside of pre-court meetings on an as-needed, periodic basis. This group would include representatives from private and public community organizations. The steering/policy committee could make policy decisions, or they could make recommenda-

tions to the drug court team for final decisions.

### **Key Component #2: Using a non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights.**

*Research Question: Are the Office of the Public Defender and the State's Attorney's office satisfied that the mission of each has not been compromised by drug court?*

#### *Juvenile Strategy #1: Collaborative planning*

- Engage all stakeholders in creating an interdisciplinary, coordinated, and systemic approach to working with youth and their families.

#### *Juvenile Strategy #2: Teamwork*

- Develop and maintain an interdisciplinary, non-adversarial work team.

### National Research

Recent research by Carey, Finigan, & Puksas, under review, found that participation by the prosecution and defense attorneys in team meetings and at drug court sessions had a positive effect on graduation rate and on outcome costs.

In addition, allowing participants into the drug court program only post-plea was associated with lower graduation rates and higher investment costs. Higher investment costs were also associated with courts that focused on felony cases only and with courts that allowed non-drug-related charges. However, courts that allowed non-drug-related charges also showed lower outcome costs. Finally, courts that imposed the original sentence instead of determining the sentence when participants are terminated showed lower outcome costs (Carey et al., under review).

### Local Process

DCJDC appears to address the elements of this key component effectively. The assistant public defender (APD) and deputy state's attorney (DSA) feel that their traditional missions of promoting public safety and protecting participant' due process rights are upheld while taking a non-adversarial team approach.

The prosecution and the defense, along with the rest of the team, present a united front during the drug court hearings. The APD continues to advocate for the participants by suggesting to the team what would be in the best interest of the participant while having the understanding that the team decision may not be what the participant would prefer. The DSA describes her role on the drug court as more than being an advocate for the state, equally being an advocate for the youth. The DSA feels that the drug court team upholds the traditional mission of prosecution by working to find solutions that solve the underlying reason for the participants' delinquent behavior (substance abuse, etc.) as opposed to just addressing the immediate charge(s).

### Recommendations/Suggestions

There are no recommendations at this time, as the DCJDC appears to be working effectively in this area.

### **Key Component #3: Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the drug court program.**

*Research Question: Are the eligibility requirements being implemented successfully? Is the original target population being served?*

#### *Juvenile Strategy #3: Clearly defined target population and eligibility criteria*

- Define a target population and eligibility criteria that are aligned with the program's goal and objectives.

### National Research

Carey, Finigan, & Pukstas, under review, found that courts that accepted pre-plea offenders and included misdemeanors as well as felonies had both lower investment and outcome costs. Courts that accepted non-drug-related charges also had lower outcome costs, though their investment costs were higher.

### Local Process

The DCJDC eligibility criteria are listed in the *Dorchester County Circuit Court Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program Policies and Procedures* document. Juveniles eligible for the program must be residents of Dorchester County, Maryland, and be between the ages of 12 and 17 years old at commission of the act that leads to program entry. All criminal offenses except major violent and sexual offenses are eligible for the program. In addition, eligible participants must have a substance abuse issue (including alcohol) that meets a substance abuse or dependency diagnosis; have family/guardian commitment for their involvement in the program (with a signed contract); be appropriate and eligible for substance abuse treatment per assessments; and not be under the jurisdiction of another county unless the case is transferred to Dorchester County.

DCJDC program capacity is 25 individuals at one time; the drug court has not yet reached capacity. Interview responses indicated a need for more drug court involvement with the school board and local schools in the program referral process. The drug court team would like the school board to use the drug court as an alternative to expulsion for violation of the schools' zero-tolerance drug policy in the schools.

The time between arrest and entry into the drug court program varies due to several factors including delayed referrals from police and time that youth are on probation before they are charged with violating probation.

Generally, the process takes between 4 and 6 weeks.

Recommendations/Suggestions

The drug court team may want to conduct a meeting with school board members and school faculty to discuss the possibility of schools referring youth to the program as an alternative to expulsion for a drug offense on school grounds. If the drug court team decides to create a steering/policy committee, they may wish to invite these representatives to become members of the committee to strengthen the partnership between the schools and the drug court. The steering/policy committee may create additional ties with the community, creating other avenues for gaining referrals and resources for the drug court. Solving the referral issues should lead to greater numbers of program participants, and result in the program operating at full capacity. If the schools become a referral source, however, the program will need to decide if it will remain post-adjudication or potentially expand to allow youth to participate as a diversion/alternative to adjudication.

In order to decrease the time between arrest and referral/entry into drug court, the program may want to consider implementing a process for identifying youth earlier in the adjudication process. For example, some drug courts take referrals from the prosecuting or defense attorneys, or from court staff.

**Key Component #4: Drug courts provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.**

*Research Question: Are diverse specialized treatment services available?*

*Juvenile Strategy #7: Comprehensive treatment planning*

- Tailor interventions to the complex and varied needs of youth and their families.

*Juvenile Strategy #8: Developmentally appropriate services*

- Tailor treatment to the developmental needs of adolescents.

*Juvenile Strategy #9: Gender-appropriate services*

- Design treatment to address the unique needs of each gender.

*Juvenile Strategy #10: Cultural competence*

- Create policies and procedures that are responsive to cultural differences, and train personnel to be culturally competent.

*Juvenile Strategy #11: Focus on strengths*

- Maintain a focus on the strengths of youth and their families during program planning and in every interaction between the court and those it serves.

*Juvenile Strategy #12: Family engagement*

- Recognize and engage the family as a valued partner in all components of the program.

*Juvenile Strategy #13: Educational linkages*

- Coordinate with the school system to ensure that each participant enrolls in and attends an educational program that is appropriate to his or her needs.

## National Research

Programs that have requirements around the frequency of group and individual treatment sessions (e.g., group sessions three times per week and individual sessions one time per week) have lower investment costs<sup>4</sup> (Carey et al., 2005) and substantially higher graduation rates and improved outcome costs<sup>5</sup> (Carey, Finigan, & Pukstas, under review). Clear requirements of this type may make compliance with program goals easier for program participants and also may make it easier for program staff to determine if participants have been compliant. They also ensure that participants are receiving the optimal dosage of treatment determined by the program as being associated with future success. Clients who participate in group treatment sessions two or three times per week have better outcomes (Carey et al, 2005). Programs that require more than three treatment sessions per week may create a hardship for clients, and may lead to clients having difficulty meeting program requirements. Conversely, it appears that one or fewer sessions per week is too little service to demonstrate positive outcomes. Individual treatment sessions, used as needed, can augment group sessions and may contribute to better outcomes, even if the total number of treatment sessions in a given week exceeds three.

The American University National Drug Court Survey (Cooper, 2000) shows that most drug courts have a single provider. NPC, in a study of drug courts in California (Carey et al., 2005), found that having a sin-

gle provider or an agency that oversees all the providers is correlated with more positive participant outcomes, including lower recidivism and lower costs at follow-up.

## Local Process

Consistent with most drug courts nationally, this drug court has a single treatment provider. The DCJDC program has three phases that generally take 9 months to complete, so that participants can feel that they have made progress over time and begin to take responsibility for structuring their own lives while under program supervision. One program graduate reported making huge changes in the types of decisions and behaviors he/she was engaged in due to participation in the program.

Typically, participants attend outpatient treatment group sessions at Dorchester Addictions twice per week for 13 weeks or 26 weeks depending on their diagnosis. In order to meet the needs of participants and their families, services are tailored to allow participants to attend individual sessions that fit with their schedule rather than group sessions. Once participants finish outpatient treatment, weekly one-on-one meetings with addictions counselors are provided as after-care until the participant graduates from the drug court program.

Weekly attendance at cognitive-behavioral and strength-based MRT group sessions is also required for all participants during the first two phases of the program. MRT encourages self-esteem, social growth, and moral development. Participants must complete community service geared toward their interests. Between the weekly MRT group sessions and the outpatient treatment sessions, participants attend three group sessions weekly. As described above, research has shown that this dosage of treatment has been correlated with better participant outcomes.

The program is currently determining how to transport participants to a nearby community

<sup>4</sup> Investment costs are the resources that each agency and the program overall spend to run the drug court, including program and affiliated agency staff time, costs to pay for drug testing, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Outcome costs are the expenses related to the measures of participant progress, such as recidivism, jail time, etc. Successful programs result in lower outcome costs, due to reductions in new arrests and incarcerations, because they create less work for courts, law enforcement, and other agencies than individuals who have more new offenses.

to attend 12-step groups with younger participants. Parents/guardians reported a desire for alternatives to the AA groups with which youth are currently involved.

For a participant to be eligible for drug court, an agreement must be signed by parents/guardians prior to their child entering the program. The agreement requires parents/guardians to be actively involved with the program by attending drug court hearings with their child. The drug court staff indicated in the interviews with NPC that retaining family/guardian commitment for their involvement in the program has been a challenge.

Participants and parents reported that the program requirements can be burdensome, particularly due to transportation challenges and trying to balance other issues, demands, and priorities in their lives.

#### Recommendations/Suggestions

The program may want to consider including family representation in planning, such as discussions of drug court policy changes, as this may develop families' "buy-in" to the program. (If a steering/policy committee is convened, family representation on that committee would be of value.)

Reinforce positive behaviors on the part of family members, such as thanking them during drug court for helping to monitor curfew, or presenting a tangible reward for their help, such as a gift certificate. Such activities would satisfy Juvenile Strategies #11 and #12, focusing on strengths and engaging families. It would clearly benefit the program to focus on increasing communication with parents/guardians about the program structure, purpose, incentives, and consequences. While information may be provided at the

beginning of the program, offering reminders and updates throughout the program would help parents/guardians better understand and retain information.

In order to retain family/guardian involvement in the program, the drug court team might want to consider changing the time of drug court hearings, or having some of the hearings after normal work hours, to accommodate family/guardian employment schedules. If this is not realistic, perhaps drug court team member(s) can meet with families the night before each drug court hearing in order to gain any insight they may have on their child's progress or issues.

Cultural competence requires constant evaluation of program policies and procedures and regular staff training. DCJDC staff should consider regularly attending training on cultural topics and/or reviewing articles or other materials on the topic. Scheduling regular reviews of policies and procedures to be sure that gender and cultural needs are being met for all drug court participants might also assist in further implementing Juvenile Strategy #10.

The program may want to bring in additional training on motivational or solution-focused interviewing, adolescent development, strength-based practice, or positive youth development, and assess areas of the program that might be adjusted to enhance youth engagement and satisfaction with services. Parents/guardians requested alternatives to the AA groups with which youth are currently involved.

Finally, the program may want to find ways to assist participants with transportation, to remove that barrier to successful participation in the program.



**Key Component #5: Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.**

*Research Question: Compared to other drug courts, does this court test frequently?*

**Juvenile Strategy #14: Drug Testing**

- Design drug testing to be frequent, random, and observed. Document testing policies and procedures in writing.

National Research

Research on drug courts in California (Carey et al., 2005) found that drug testing that occurs randomly, at least three times per week, is the most effective model. If testing occurs frequently (that is, three times per week or more), the random component becomes less important.

Programs that tested more frequently than three times per week did not have any better or worse outcomes than those that tested three times per week. Less frequent testing resulted in less positive outcomes. It is still unclear whether the important component of this process is taking the urine sample (having clients know they may or will be tested) or actually conducting the test, as some programs take multiple urine samples and then select only some of the samples to test. Further research will help answer this question.

Results from the American University National Drug Court Survey (Cooper, 2000) show that the number of urinalyses (UAs) given by the large majority of drug courts nationally during the first two phases is two to three per week.

Local Process

The DCJDC requires random drug testing (urinalysis). Participants in Phases I and II are randomly tested a minimum of twice per week, and Phase III participants are tested at least once per week. This model is in line with the majority of drug courts nationally (Cooper, 2000); however, uses less frequent

testing than the three times per week drug testing that was found by research in California to be the most effective (Carey et al., 2005). These are minimum requirements, and it is possible that the knowledge that a third test is possible will create equivalent outcomes. As mentioned in a discussion of the California research (Carey et al., 2005), it is unclear whether it is the possibility of having the 3 weekly tests or actually having those tests that leads to better outcomes.

DCJDC's drug testing process meets the requirements of Juvenile Strategy #4. Urine samples are taken frequently, observed and collected by gender-appropriate staff following a written collection procedure.

Recommendations/Suggestions

Randomly test all participants 3 times per week in the first two phases, regardless of suspicion of use.

**Key Component #6: A coordinated strategy governs drug court responses to participants' compliance.**

*Research Question: Does this court work together as a team to determine sanctions and rewards? Are there standard or specific sanctions and rewards for particular behaviors? Is there a written policy on how sanctions and rewards work? How does this drug court's sanctions and rewards compare to what other drug courts are doing nationally?*

**Juvenile Strategy #15: Goal-oriented incentives and sanctions**

- Respond to compliance and noncompliance with incentives and sanctions that are designed to reinforce or modify the behavior of youth and their families.

National Research

Nationally, experience shows that the drug court judge generally makes the final decision regarding sanctions or rewards, based on input from the drug court team. All drug courts surveyed in the American University

study confirmed they had established guidelines for their sanctions and rewards policies, and nearly two-thirds (64%) reported that their guidelines were written (Cooper, 2000).

Carey, Finigan, & Pukstas, under review, found that for a program to have positive outcomes, it is not necessary for the judge to be the sole person who provides sanctions. However, when the judge is the sole provider of sanctions, it may mean that participants are better able to predict when those sanctions might occur, which might be less stressful. Allowing team members to dispense sanctions makes it more likely that sanctions occur in a timely manner, more immediately after the non-compliant behavior. Immediacy of sanctions is related to improved graduation rates.

#### Local Process

In line with the national research, the DCJDC team contributes to decisions about sanctions. The master has the authority to make the final decision, but generally agrees with the team's recommendation. The master imposes the sanction at the participant's next scheduled appearance at a drug court hearing.

Possible sanctions are listed in the *Participant Handbook*. Sanctions are graduated, starting with a warning from the master, moving through more serious sanctions, and finally resulting in time in detention or placement in a DJS facility/group home. The type of sanction is dependent on the offense as well as any history or pattern of noncompliance. Participants reported that expectations of them were clear, and the consequences for not following directions were also clear.

The DCJDC rewards participants for being compliant and for showing positive behaviors and attitudes. Examples of rewards are written in the *Participant Handbook* and include praise and gift cards.

#### Recommendations/Suggestions

- The drug court procedures address the area of sanctions and incentives through team decision-making, the policy of graduated sanctions, and the use of rewards. Program staff indicated that their sanctions and incentives process is currently being reviewed and modified. The team may want to conduct a case review on a sample of recent cases to identify whether incentives, sanctions, and rewards were used consistently in response to participant behaviors and create a standard schedule that matches types of offenses or good behaviors and number of occurrences with appropriate sanctions or rewards.
- If the program does not already do this, individualizing incentives and rewards (and even sanctions) based on the youth's interests increases their effectiveness at reinforcing desired behavior.
- Continue to engage youth in productive, interesting, and educational community service opportunities.

#### **Key Component #7: Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant is essential.**

*Research Question: Compared to other drug courts, do this court's participants have frequent contact with the master? What is the nature of this contact?*

#### *Juvenile Strategy #4: Judicial involvement and supervision*

- Schedule frequent judicial reviews and be sensitive to the effect that court proceedings can have on youth and their families.

#### National Research

From its national data, the American University Drug Court Survey (Cooper, 2000) reported that most drug court programs require weekly contact with the judge in Phase I, contact every 2 weeks in Phase II, and

monthly contact in Phase III. The frequency of contact decreases for each advancement in phase. Although most drug courts follow the above model, a substantial percentage reports less court contact.

Further, research in California and Oregon (Carey et al., 2005; Carey & Finigan, 2003) demonstrated that participants have the most positive outcomes if they attend at least one court session every 2 to 3 weeks in the first phase of their involvement in the program. In addition, programs where judges participated in drug court voluntarily and remained with the program at least 2 years had the most positive participant outcomes. It is recommended that drug courts not impose fixed terms on judges, as experience and longevity are correlated with cost savings (Carey et al., 2005; Finigan, Carey, & Cox, 2007).

#### Local Process

This court uses a master instead of a judge. Participants in the DCJDC attend drug court hearings twice monthly during Phase I, one to two times monthly in Phase II, and monthly in Phase III. For participants in DCJDC, the number of drug court hearings that they are required to attend in Phases II and III, and the decreasing frequency of their attendance over the three phases of the program, is consistent with most drug court programs nationally. Even though the required number of sessions is not as frequent as the majority of programs nationally, the two hearings per month fit with the model of attending hearings at least every 2 to 3 weeks that Carey et al., 2005, and Carey & Finigan, 2003, found correlated with the most positive results.

During drug court hearings, the master speaks directly to the participants in a warm but firm way, and speaks to the drug court team throughout the hearing. The master works with the treatment providers and other members of the drug court team to determine appropriate responses to participants' actions.

The DCJDC benefits from the master's position as a voluntary one that does not rotate. The master has the option of remaining as the drug court master indefinitely. The drug court has also benefited from the consistency and from the master's experience, as he has been with the court since inception.

#### Recommendations/Suggestions

There are no recommendations in this area, as the program is successfully implementing this key component.

#### **Key Component #8: Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness.**

*Research Question: Are evaluation and monitoring integral to the program?*

#### *Juvenile Strategy #5: Monitoring and evaluation*

- Establish a system for program monitoring and evaluation to maintain quality of service, assess program impact, and contribute to the knowledge in the field.

#### *Juvenile Strategy #16: Confidentiality*

- Establish a confidentiality policy and procedures that guard the privacy of the youth while allowing the drug court team [and evaluators] to access key information.

#### National Research

Carey, Finigan, & Pukstas, under review, found that programs with evaluation processes in place had better outcomes. Four types of evaluation processes were found to save the program money with a positive effect on outcome costs: 1) maintaining paper records that are critical to an evaluation, 2) regular reporting of program statistics led to modification of drug court operations, 3) results of program evaluations have led to modification of drug court operations, and 4) drug court has participated in more than one evaluation by an independent evaluator. Graduation rates were associated with some

of the evaluation processes used. The second and third processes were associated with higher graduation rates, while the first process listed was associated with lower graduation rates.

### Local Process

The DCJDC monitors participants' ongoing status and progress in the program through the use of paper files. Currently the drug court is in the process of entering those data into the SMART management information system. In the future, program data will be able to be entered and tracked electronically.

This NPC process evaluation is the first evaluation for the DCJDC.

Each participant, his/her parent/guardian, and their counsel sign the Juvenile Drug Court Agreement before entry into the program is granted. The agreement requires that the parent/guardian signs all authorizations for the release of information requested by case managers and treatment or other resource providers. Therefore, parents/guardians must sign consent forms and releases for the drug court team to discuss their child's case together. The team does not discuss sensitive information in open court hearings; these discussions are held in private meetings.

### Recommendations/Suggestions

DCJDC staff should receive continuing technical support on use of the new SMART management information system, both in terms of entering information consistently and accurately, and in extracting information for program review and planning. The drug court team should initiate and continue analysis of data about the drug court and its participants, and use it to inform the team about its participant population and their programmatic needs.

We recommend that the program examine its goals (with evaluator assistance) to determine the necessary information that will allow future evaluations to assess these goals. The

program can use NPC's list of data elements needed for assessing program impact, to ensure the program or partner agencies are collecting all appropriate information and that it is accessible for use in future evaluations.

The team may want to set a time to discuss the findings and recommendations in this process evaluation, both to enjoy the recognition of its accomplishments and to determine whether any program adjustments are warranted.

### **Key Component #9: Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court planning, implementation, and operations.**

*Research Question: Is this program continuing to advance its training and knowledge?*

### National Research

The Carey, Finigan, & Pukstas, under review, study found that drug court programs requiring all new hires to complete formal training or orientation, team members to receive training in preparation for implementation, and all drug court team members to be provided with training were associated with positive outcome costs and higher graduation rates.

### Local Process

During the planning stages prior to implementation of the DCJDC, the original coordinator (now the case manager specialist with DJS) observed other drug courts to gather tips on implementing the program. Several DCJDC team members have attended national and statewide drug court training conferences. The current coordinator, master, and Dorchester Addictions counselor attended the 2007 National Association of Drug Court Professionals conference. In addition, the current coordinator, Dorchester Addictions counselor, DJS representatives, assistant public defender, and deputy state's attorney attend the annual trainings sponsored by the

Maryland Office of Problem-Solving Courts in Annapolis. Trainings aimed at more specific drug court topics were also attended by DJDC staff; including a training on drug testing issues in drug court which was attended by the Coordinator, DYS staff and Dorchester Addictions staff. The APD also went to the National Drug Court Institute training for defense attorneys. Finally, at the time of this evaluation, the team was scheduled to attend a training on incentives and sanctions and a series of "Drug Court 101" trainings.

### Recommendations/Suggestions

The drug court team, in collaboration with partner agencies, should ensure that all team members receive initial and continuing drug court and cultural competence training. There should be an expectation of and encouragement for staff to take advantage of ongoing learning opportunities, both locally and nationally. To support this goal, a training plan and log system should be established, and program administrators should review the results periodically. These tools will be useful in keeping track of training activities and in reinforcing the importance of professional development.

The key stakeholder interviews highlighted several areas in which the drug court team might benefit from additional training, including formal training for new staff members geared toward their new roles on the drug court team. Another suggestion brought up in the interviews was drug court training for a law enforcement representative, which might create more "buy-in" to the drug court and perhaps more investment from the Cambridge Police Department with monitoring the participants and increasing referrals to the program. Other areas for potential training include substance abuse/addiction—including stages of change, relapse, and withdrawal—and mental health.

The program may benefit from training on motivational or solution-focused interview-

ing, adolescent development, strength-based practice, or positive youth development.

The team should consider bringing in training for key service areas that would benefit program participants, including effective interventions for youth with cognitive or learning challenges, substance abuse/addiction, and mental health. In particular, it would be beneficial for staff who have not yet received this training to obtain information regarding recognition of mental health issues in adolescents and how best to address them.

### **Key Component #10: Forging partnerships among drug courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances drug court program effectiveness.**

*Research Question: Compared to other drug courts, has this court developed effective partnerships across the community?*

#### *Juvenile Strategy #6: Community partnerships*

- Build partnerships with community organizations to expand the range of opportunities available to youth and their families.

### National Research

Responses to American University's National Drug Court Survey (Cooper, 2000) show that most drug courts are working closely with community groups to provide support services for their drug court participants. Examples of community resources with which drug courts are connected include self-help groups such as AA and NA, medical providers, local education systems, employment services, faith communities, and Chambers of Commerce.

### Local Process

DCJDC has partnered with a number of community agencies in Dorchester County, including Maryland Underage Drinking Coalition, which sponsors a Photography Club and co-sponsors an annual photography con-

test for drug court participants; the Dorchester Art Center, which provides art classes to the participants; and Family Services, which assists participants who need such services as mental health counseling. Local businesses have also allowed participants to visit their businesses in order to learn about various career opportunities. Participants also reported that the program assisted them in working toward their GEDs and getting their basic needs met.

#### Recommendations/Suggestions

If DCJDC decides to convene a policy or steering committee, it is recommended that representatives from public and private community agencies serve on that committee, along with drug court team members.

This committee would be responsible for advising partner agencies on program design and ensuring that the program is meeting community needs.

The program should continue to identify new community partners, connections, or resources that would be interested in supporting the program, and strengthen relationships/ties with existing agency partners. These partnerships may also foster support for job readiness, career exploration, and employment placement. Additionally, identifying transportation options or funds to assist with transportation would benefit participants and help them reach the many appointments expected of them during the program.

## DORCHESTER COUNTY JUVENILE DRUG COURT: A SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

**D**rug courts are complex programs designed to deal with some of the most challenging problems that communities face. Drug courts bring together multiple—traditionally adversarial—roles, and stakeholders from different systems with different training, professional language, and approaches. They take on groups of clients that frequently have serious substance abuse treatment needs. Juvenile drug courts add the challenges involved in working with youth, and the additional stakeholders of parents, guardians, custodians, schools, and recreational resources. Adolescents are also a generally underemployed group and face more obstacles than adults in linking to the legitimate economy.

The challenges and strengths found in the DCJDC can be categorized into community, agency, and program level issues. By addressing issues at the appropriate level, change is more likely to occur and be sustained. In this section of the report, we provide an analytic framework for the recommendations in the prior section

### COMMUNITY LEVEL

Juvenile justice-involved youth with substance abuse issues must be seen within an ecological context; that is, within the environment that contributes to their attitudes and behaviors, risks and protective factors. This environment includes their neighborhood, families, and schools. We must understand the various social, economic, and cultural factors that affect them.

Social service and criminal/juvenile justice systems respond to community needs. However, to be most effective, they need to clearly understand those needs. They need to analyze and agree on the problem to be solved, what the contributing factors are, who is

most affected, and what strategies are likely to be most successful at addressing the problem. An analysis of need will begin to define what programs and services should look like, what stakeholders exist, and what role each will play.

### SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The drug court team should have a discussion about the community need this program is intended to meet and the population that is the focus of this service. This conversation should help confirm the current population as the primary focus or clarify other youth that the program may want to identify. Strategies can then be tested to increase screening and referral of appropriate youth, or improve the efficiency of screening and referral of these youth. For example, if the program would like to increase referrals from schools, it would be useful to hold a meeting with school board members and school faculty to discuss the possibility of schools referring youth to the program as an alternative to expulsion for a drug offense on school grounds. Solving the referral issues should lead to greater numbers of program participants, and result in the program operating at full capacity. If the schools become a referral source, however, the program will need to decide if it will remain post-adjudication or potentially expand to allow youth to participate as a diversion/alternative to adjudication.

The drug court team may want to discuss the potential benefits of creating a steering or policy committee. School representatives could be invited to become members of the committee to strengthen the partnership between the schools and the drug court. The steering/policy committee could enhance or develop additional ties with the community,

including other public and private agencies, creating other avenues for gaining referrals and resources for the drug court.

Regardless of whether or not a steering/policy committee is created, the program should continue to identify new community partners, connections, or resources that would be interested in supporting the program, and strengthen relationships/ties with existing agency partners. These partnerships may also foster support for job readiness, career exploration, and employment placement.

#### **AGENCY LEVEL**

Once community and participant needs are clearly defined and the stakeholders identified, the next step is to organize and apply resources to meet the needs. No social service agency or system can solve complicated community problems alone. Social issues—compounded by community-level factors, such as unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, and limited education—can only be effectively addressed by agencies working together to solve problems holistically. Each agency has resources of staff time and expertise to contribute. At this level, partner agencies must come together in a common understanding of each other's roles and contributions. They must each make a commitment to their common goals.

This level of analysis is a place to be strategic, engage partners and advocates, leverage resources, establish communication systems (both with each other and with external stakeholders, including funders), and create review and feedback loop systems for program monitoring and quality improvement activities. Discussions at this level can solidify a process for establishing workable structures for programs and services, as well as identify key individuals who will have ongoing relationships with the program and with other participating agencies and key stakeholders.

#### **SUMMARY OF AGENCY-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Once the target population is confirmed, partner agencies will need to work together to ensure the most efficient process for identifying and referring appropriate youth to the drug court. The program may want to consider implementing a process for identifying youth earlier in the adjudication process. For example, some drug courts take referrals from the prosecuting or defense attorneys, or from court staff.

There should be an expectation of and encouragement for staff to take advantage of ongoing learning opportunities, both locally and nationally. To support this goal, a training plan and a log system should be established, and program administrators should review the results periodically. These tools will be useful in keeping track of training activities and in reinforcing the importance of professional development.

The key stakeholder interviews highlighted several areas in which the drug court team might benefit from additional training, including formal training for new staff members geared toward their new roles on the drug court team, drug court training for law enforcement, training on substance abuse/addiction and mental health, and effective interventions for youth with cognitive or learning challenges. The program may want to bring in additional training on motivational or solution-focused interviewing, adolescent development, strength-based practice, or positive youth development, and assess areas of the program that might be adjusted to enhance youth engagement and satisfaction with services.

Cultural competence requires ongoing evaluation of program policies and procedures and regular staff training. DCJDC staff should consider regularly attending training on cultural topics and/or reviewing articles or other materials on the topic.



## PROGRAM LEVEL

Once a common understanding of need exists and partner agencies and associated resources are at the table, programs and services can be developed or adjusted as needed to ensure that the program is meeting the identified needs and utilizing public funds as efficiently and effectively as possible. Program policies and procedures should be reviewed to ensure that they create a set of daily operations that work best for the community.

The recommendations provided at the community and agency levels already have program level implications; however, there are a few additional areas where program-specific adjustments might be considered.

### SUMMARY OF PROGRAM-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The drug court team may want to discuss strategies for increasing family involvement and buy-in to the program. Efforts could include seeking family representation in program planning (e.g., steering or policy committee), reinforcing family involvement through use of incentives (e.g., recognition, gift cards), adjusting the time of drug court hearings to accommodate family/guardian employment schedules, or requesting feedback prior to hearings from family members who are unable to attend them.

It would clearly benefit the program to focus on increasing communication with parents/guardians about the program structure, purpose, incentives, and consequences. While information may be provided at the beginning of the program, offering reminders and updates throughout the program would help parents/guardians better understand and retain information.

In response to recent research findings, it may be worth considering increasing the frequency of drug testing in the first two phases to 3 times per week, regardless of suspicion of use.

The team may want to conduct a case review on a sample of recent cases to identify whether incentives, sanctions, and rewards were used consistently in response to participant behaviors, and create a standard schedule that matches types of offenses or good behaviors and number of occurrences with appropriate sanctions or rewards. If the program does not already do this, individualizing incentives and rewards (and even sanctions) based on the youth's interests increases their effectiveness at reinforcing desired behavior.

DCJDC staff should have continual training on the new SMART management information system, both in terms of entering information consistently and accurately, and in extracting information for program review and planning. The drug court team should initiate and continue analysis of data about the drug court and its participants, and use it to inform the team about its participant population and their programmatic needs, and the extent to which the program is meeting its goals. The team will also want to ensure that the program or partner agencies are collecting all appropriate information needed for future outcome evaluation.

The team may want to set a time to discuss the findings and recommendations in this process evaluation, both to enjoy the recognition of its accomplishments and to determine whether any program adjustments are warranted.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Dorchester County Juvenile Drug Court should be commended on the quality of the implementation of its program. The program meets the majority of the 10 key components and 16 strategies guidelines through its current policies and program structure. The program appropriately integrates substance abuse treatment services with juvenile justice system processing and supervision; maintains a strong collaborative relationship among team members (including the relationship between the public defender and prosecutor) and includes a comprehensive team from a broad range of community agencies; provides participants—and their family members—access to a wide range of treatment and ancillary services; utilizes a variety of sanctions and rewards to encourage compliance with program and participant goals; and maintains ongoing judicial interaction with participants. The program also includes an education component, has created many partnerships with community agencies, and enables staff to obtain drug court training.

In terms of enhancements, the program may want to increase existing efforts on finding alternative ways to reach capacity. In order to reduce the time from arrest to drug court entry, the team should analyze the program's current systems of identifying and referring

eligible youth. As part of this review, the team may want to discuss the program's target population to ensure that the current process or any future referrals changes (such as increasing school referrals) are accessing the youth the program is intending to serve. The program may also want to consider whether it would benefit from a slight increase in the frequency of drug testing. As the program gains experience and data, it may want to review which program requirements are helping participants to reach their goals and which may be creating barriers to completion/success. Seeking out, participating in, and tracking participation in additional trainings would also benefit the program. It will be important to continue to meet frequently and to consider the addition of a steering committee or policy meetings to make sure that the program's overarching goals/philosophies are maintained. The drug court team should consider having a team discussion aiming at finding solutions for retaining family/guardian involvement in the program.

Overall, the DCJDC is doing well in implementing their drug court program. Taken together, these findings indicate that the DCJDC is both beneficial to participants and to their families.



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**APPENDIX A: DRUG COURT TYPOLOGY  
INTERVIEW GUIDE TOPICS**





## **Drug Court Typology Interview Guide Topics**

The topic/subject areas in the Typology Interview Guide were chosen from three main sources: the evaluation team's extensive experience with drug courts, the American University Drug Court Survey, and a paper by Longshore et al. (2001), which lays out a conceptual framework for drug courts. The typology interview covers a number of areas – including specific drug court characteristics, structural components, processes, and organizational characteristics – that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the drug court being evaluated. Topics in the Typology Interview Guide also include questions related to eligibility guidelines, specific drug court program processes (e.g., phases, treatment providers, urinalyses, fee structure, rewards/sanctions), graduation, aftercare, termination, non-drug court processes (e.g., regular probation), identification of drug court team members and their roles, and a description of drug court participants (e.g., general demographics, drugs of use).

Although the typology guide is modified slightly to fit the context, process and type of each drug court (e.g., juvenile courts, adult courts), a copy of the generic drug court typology guide can be found at [www.npcresearch.com/Files/NPC\\_Research\\_Drug\\_Court\\_Typology\\_Interview\\_Guide\\_\(copyrighted\).pdf](http://www.npcresearch.com/Files/NPC_Research_Drug_Court_Typology_Interview_Guide_(copyrighted).pdf)



## **APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP RESULTS SUMMARY**



## Focus Group Summary

As described in the methodology section of this report, NPC conducted two focus groups in the offices of the Dorchester County Juvenile Drug Court in March 2007. Three current drug court participants were involved in the first focus group. Two parents/guardians of current participants were included in the other. In addition, NPC staff conducted an in-person interview with a graduate at that time. The focus groups provided the current and former participants and parents/guardians with an opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions regarding the drug court process.

The topics discussed during the interviews and focus groups included what participants liked about the drug court program, what they disliked, general feelings about the program (including program staff), the program's effect on personal relationships, why youth were referred to the program, (for parents/guardians) how the participant had changed since starting the program, perceptions regarding family treatment team meetings, advice participants would give someone considering entering the drug court program, and recommendations for the program.

### ***What they liked/what worked***

#### Active/graduated participants:

- They are helping me with my GED and helping get my child support.
- They're pushing me to get my GED.
- I like the MRT class. I don't mind going there. It's a fun class and only about a half-hour long.
- They gave me chances. It wasn't like they sent me away immediately when I messed up. At the beginning, I messed up a lot. At the beginning they were really strict, but I wanted to change. So I got involved in NA and got a sponsor and went to meetings every night. I made friends in NA. The friends I was making didn't use drugs and were more responsible. I changed the people, places, and my whole attitude.
- For our community service, five of us got to build a boat. That was really fun. After we built it, it got donated.
- If it wasn't for DC, I wouldn't be where I am today.
- They gave me choices: Either follow directions or accept the consequences. There was one week where they told me to come back the following court date and, if I didn't have a good plan to change the way I was going to live my life, I was going to get sent away for a long time. I realized, when they told me that, I was really messing up.

#### Parents/Guardians:

- [DJS case manager] has been tremendous for my [child]. He told her how proud he was of her. That was big, because I don't think she's ever had anyone in the system praise her.

### ***What they didn't like***

#### Active /graduated participants:

- I got too much on my schedule to come here every two weeks, I don't like the drug court, I don't like being here.
- It's just a lot, everything that you have to be in, ... it's hard for me to get to all these things, I've got to do drug classes and my GED classes. It's just hard for me to get everywhere.
- I don't feel like going to any of my appointments.
- Talking with the counselor when we've got problems pisses us off even more and makes our problems even worse.
- I can't think of anything about drug court that was bad, because everything bad that happened to me was self-inflicted.

#### Parents/Guardians:

- The program's been good for my [child] but it's been a struggle for me...it's really hard for me to get her to and from appointments. The transportation issue has been very hard...

### ***General feedback regarding the program (including drug court staff)***

#### Active /graduated participants:

- [The DJS case manager] He's been really helpful [others agreed].
- The judge is a pretty cool dude. He could have "laid the book down on me" plenty of times...
- I still always get nervous before going up; because it's not my thing to come up in front of a judge all of the time.
- [The DJS case manager] was really involved. The whole drug court team was very involved. They still call me to see how I'm doing.
- The judge was tough in the beginning. But he could have just sent me away [to detention], because I had a lot of dirty urines and getting into more trouble... [The judge] does his job, but he works with you at the same time.
- Stuff that I thought no one knew about, the judge always knew. He always had the information in front of him when I came to court.

#### Parents/Guardians:

- We have been told that they wish we could attend [drug court sessions], but I tell them that we're doing everything we can to keep everything together. If they made me come, I would lose my job.
- [Parent/guardian discussed master being overly harsh in response to what parent/guardian believed should have been excused absence from the program, for a child who had been doing well, which hurt/discouraged the child.]

### ***Drug court's effect on personal relationships***

#### Active /graduated participants:

- It's helped to build trust. When I was on drugs my mom and dad didn't trust me; my dad wouldn't even talk to me.

- Everybody I know does drugs or is on probation. Almost all of my family members are in [city] and just about every one of them is on probation. I don't smoke because of [my family].
- [Two participants talked about surrounding themselves with more positive people (as opposed to the negative models of their past)].
- [One participant talked about changing living environments to be in a healthier situation/location, which helped the youth do better].
- I used to get into trouble sometimes so I wouldn't have to go home... You know, I'd rather be in rehab...That's why drug court helps a lot: they just don't look at you; they look at your home situation.

***How is your child different now than when he/she first entered drug court?***

Parents/Guardians:

- I've seen such a big difference in her. We're able to talk, she sits down, she's home all of the time, she's more honest, and she's willing to do family things. We can believe her now. She wants dad's approval. I think she's changed all of the people she's hung around with in the past. She's got a new boyfriend too...that's a big difference right there.
- ...She says "it's my choice...I see it there, but it's my choice...I'm better than that and I know I can do this, I want to become a nurse, I want to get on my lifelong track."

***Reported Successes***

- One hit and you're done; that's why I don't smoke. I just want to get out of trouble and not come back.
- DC got me involved in GED classes in the beginning, but I didn't really go that much. When I moved and met people who were doing well, I decided to go back to school and got my diploma on the internet. Now I'm in college. DC donated \$250 for my education, in addition to another anonymous donor.
- I really wanted to be successful. My biggest fear was to not succeed in life. The only person in my family who is successful is [family member]. So I kept my stuff together and I'm doing good.

***Why they decided to participate in drug court***

- My mom put me in here. I would have rather paid my fines than come in here.
- I could have refused drug court, but I went along with it. Later, when I was getting into trouble, [drug court staff] told me they could drop me out of drug court and I would just get sent away, or I could change my life. It was my choice whether I would complete successfully. I told them that I wanted to stay in drug court. I completed it, and they gave me an award and gift certificate, and I got a chance to stand up in drug court and tell everyone what I did to help me. It was pretty cool.

***What advice would you give someone considering drug court (a prospective participant or parent)?***

Active/graduated participants:

- If they're definitely trying to change, I'd tell them to go for it. It's not just a program that you can go into and manipulate them. They set guidelines that you have to follow. You have a choice whether you do it or not.

***What advice would you give another parent who asked you whether they allow their kids to go into drug court?***

Parents/Guardians:

- Talk to the parents...be honest, keep the line of communication open with the parents.

***Recommendations for the program***

Active/graduated participants:

- Decrease the program requirements. Going to all of the drug classes and AA, along with the other things is hard... It's hard on me and my family. If I had a car, I wouldn't have to worry about all of the things that need to get done.

Parents/Guardians:

- If they had transportation support, it would do a world of difference. Because they want her to do her GED, go to AA, see [DJS case manager], go to class...it's hard. Even if parents could get together and come up with a carpool plan, that might help.
- I wish [they had other options, AA groups that the kids could go to.] I'd rather she not go in there. I wouldn't feel safe going there myself; it's such a mixture.