

THE NATIONAL FAMILY TREATMENT DRUG COURT EVALUATION

KEY OUTCOME FINDINGS

NPC Research, in a recently completed 4-year study of Family Treatment Drug Courts (FTDCs), has found that FTDCs are more successful than traditional child welfare case processing in helping substance-abusing parents enter and complete treatment and reunify with their children.

In 2002, NPC Research received funding from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) to conduct the first large-scale outcome study of FTDCs, specialized courts designed to work with substance-abusing parents involved with the child welfare system. The national evaluation focused on four FTDCs located in California, Nevada, and New York and examined whether court, child welfare, and treatment outcomes differed for 802 families served through FTDCs as compared to a matched sample of 1,167 families who received traditional child welfare services.

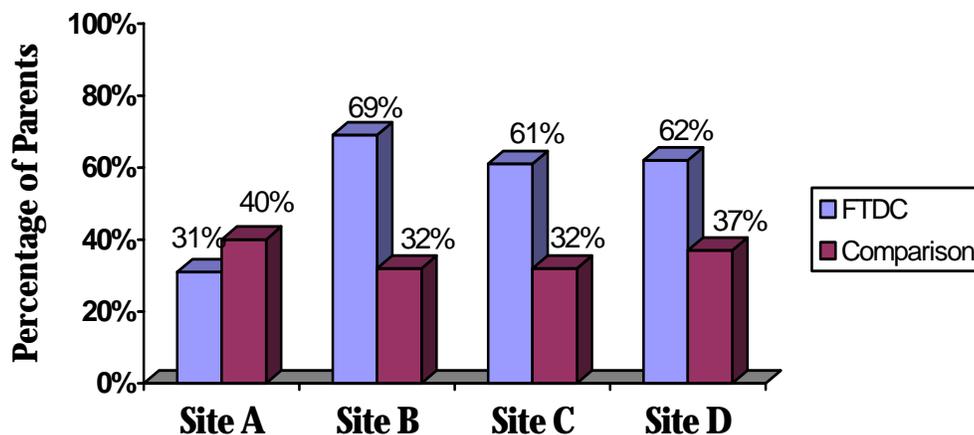


Treatment Outcomes

Overall, the study found that FTDC parents had more positive treatment outcomes than similar parents who were not served by the FTDC. Specifically:

1. **Treatment Entry:** FTDC parents were much more likely to enter substance abuse treatment services than were non-FTDC parents.
2. **Timely Treatment Services:** FTDC parents entered treatment significantly more quickly after their initial court petition than did non-FTDC parents.
3. **Time Spent in Treatment:** FTDC parents spent significantly more time in treatment than did non-FTDC parents.
4. **Treatment Completion:** FTDC parents were significantly more likely to complete at least one treatment episode than non-FTDC parents.

Figure 1. Percentage of Parents Completing At Least One Treatment Episode



* FTDC and comparison group are significantly different from each other at $p < .01$.

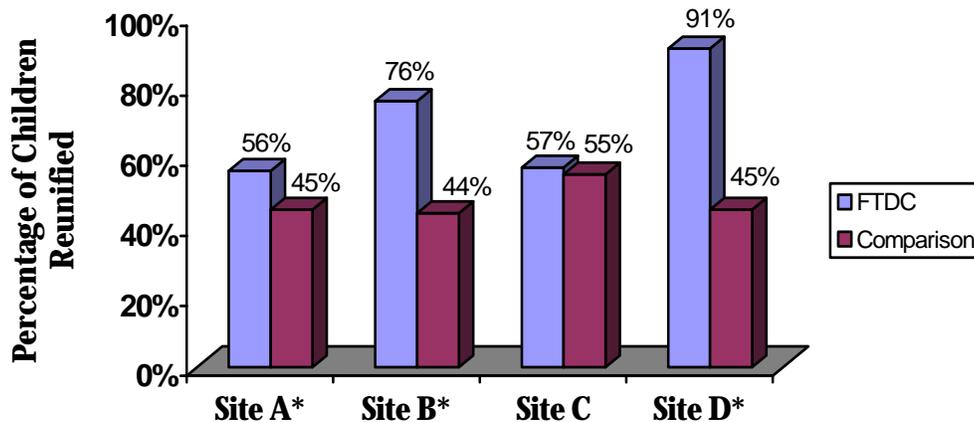
Child Welfare Outcomes

Child welfare outcomes included examination of children's placement stability, length of time in out-of-home care, and likelihood of reunification. The study found the following:

1. **Placement Changes:** There were no significant differences in the number of placement changes for FTDC children compared to comparison children.
2. **Time in out-of-home care:** FTDC children spent significantly less time in out-of-home care than did comparison children, and spent a greater percentage of their case in their parents' care.
3. **Reunification:** FTDC children were significantly more likely to be reunified with their parents than were unserved children. Indeed, at three study sites, reunification rates for children of FTDC parents were up to 50% higher than the rates for comparison children.



Figure 2. Percentage of Children Reunified With Parents



* FTDC and comparison group are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$.

Results from this study indicate that parents who participated in FTDC experienced higher rates of treatment completion, which in turn was associated with higher rates of reunification. However, participating in the FTDC also contributed to the likelihood of reunification *above and beyond* its effect on treatment. Data from qualitative interviews conducted as part of this study begin to paint a picture of the unique features of FTDCs that could contribute to this effect, including the relationship established between parents and judges that fosters emotional support, accountability, and collaboration.

To obtain a full copy of the study report, please visit www.npcresearch.com/Files/FTDC_Evaluation_Final_Report.pdf.