

HARFORD COUNTY FAMILY RECOVERY COURT (FRC) EVALUATION SUMMARY

Background

The Harford County Family Recovery Court (FRC) serves families involved with child welfare due to substance abuse. This program aims to bring sobriety and quality of life to parents and, in turn, increase the likelihood of reunification for families. To be eligible for the program the participant must be a parent named in a Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) petition and be determined, through an assessment, to have a substance abuse issue.



NPC Research conducted a process, outcome, and cost study of the Harford County Family Recovery Court. This evaluation was guided by several research questions under one of three evaluation components. In summary, this evaluation:

1. Examined the historical and current context of the FRC (process study);
2. Examined the extent to which the FRC is meeting its stated goals and desired child welfare, treatment, and criminal justice outcomes (outcome study); and
3. Provided a cost analysis comparing the FRC to traditional case processing (cost study).

Key Findings

The evaluation compared child welfare, treatment, and criminal justice outcomes and cost savings for parents that received FRC services between April 2004 and April 2006 to comparable families that did not receive these services. Results from the evaluation indicate that:

- On average, during the CINA case, non-FRC children were in foster care more than 3 times as long as FRC children: children in families served by the FRC spent 136 days in foster care as compared to 443 days for children in non-FRC served families;
- FRC families were twice as likely to be reunited than non-FRC families: whereas 60% of FRC families achieved reunification, 30% of non-FRC families achieved reunification;
- FRC parents were almost 3 times as likely to complete treatment than non-FRC parents: 85% of FRC parents completed treatment, while just 29% of non-FRC parents completed treatment;
- While there was no difference in the percent of parents arrested on drug charges after the start of their CINA cases, of those parents who were arrested, FRC parents were arrested on average 1.5 times, whereas non-FRC parents were arrested on average 3.6 times; and
- Of those parents who were arrested, FRC parents spent an average 26 days in jail, and non-FRC parents spent an average of 120 days in jail.

Because FRC families utilized less foster care and were more likely to achieve reunification, FRC cases were less costly to the child welfare system than other CINA cases. Moreover, as FRC parents spent less time in jail, the total cost savings per year of Harford County FRC operations was nearly **\$317,000**, or approximately **\$12,000** per served family.

For further information, or a copy of the complete report, please contact Scott W.M. Burrus, Ph.D., at burrus@npcresearch.com.