

# Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court *Process Evaluation*



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*Process Evaluation*

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*Informing policy, improving programs*



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	I
BACKGROUND.....	1
METHODS .....	3
Pre-Evaluation .....	3
Site Visits.....	3
Key Stakeholder Interviews.....	3
Participant and Parent Interviews .....	4
Document Review.....	4
Analysis .....	4
RESULTS .....	5
Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court Program Description.....	5
10 KEY COMPONENTS OF DRUG COURTS AND 16 JUVENILE DRUG COURT STRATEGIES.....	23
Key Component #1 .....	23
Key Component #2.....	26
Key Component #3 .....	28
Key Component #4 .....	30
Key Component #5 .....	34
Key Component #6.....	36
Key Component #7 .....	38
Key Component #8 .....	40
Key Component #9.....	41
Key Component #10 .....	43
CALVERT COUNTY JUVENILE DRUG TREATMENT COURT: A SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT .....	47
Agency Level.....	48
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	51
Unique and/or Promising Practices.....	51
Areas that Could Benefit from More Attention .....	51
REFERENCES .....	53
APPENDIX A: DRUG COURT TYPOLOGY INTERVIEW GUIDE TOPICS.....	55
APPENDIX B: RESULTS SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN INTERVIEWS .....	59





## 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 2,147 drug courts as of December 2007, with drug courts operating or planned in all 50 states (including Native American Tribal Courts), the District of Columbia, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam (NADCP, 2007).

Drug courts use the authority of the juvenile justice system to offer treatment to nonviolent offenders in lieu of detention. This model of linking the resources of the juvenile justice system and substance treatment programs has proven to be effective for increasing treatment participation and for decreasing criminal recidivism.

In 2004, the original idea for the juvenile drug court was brought to a sub-committee of Calvert County's local management board, called the Youth Strategies Sub-Committee. The supervisor for the county Department of Juvenile Services (who currently serves on the drug court team) brought the drug court idea to the sub-committee as a strategy to help local youth in danger of abusing alcohol or drugs. The group spent several months gathering relevant information on drug courts, and then made a recommendation to the local management board of directors to consider the program as an option for Calvert County. The board decided that the program was worth investigating and began recruiting people for the initial planning team, which started to take shape in Fall 2004.

The program began serving participants in May 2006. According to staff interviewed for the evaluation, the program moved quickly from the planning stages to going "live" (as a pilot program). Implementation involved

putting together policies and procedures, developing a participant handbook, and—the biggest task—building a full caseload of participants appropriate for the program. Master for Juvenile Causes, Tracey A. McKirgan, became the court's first master and continues to serve in that capacity.

The Calvert County Juvenile Drug Treatment Court (CCJDTC) admitted 21 participants from September 2006 through May 2008. During that period, 2 participants graduated (5 as of October 2008) and 5 were released unsuccessfully from the program. At capacity, the CCJDTC program is currently designed to serve 25 participants (its goal was to achieve capacity by the end of fiscal year 2008). Since the drug court program became operational, it has not reached capacity and therefore has been able to accommodate all eligible participants. At the end of May 2008, the program had 15 active participants. These participants work with a counselor from Calvert County Health Department's Substance Abuse Services in structured group and individual therapy.

Information was acquired for this process evaluation from several sources, including observations of court reviews and team meetings during site visits, key stakeholder interviews, and interviews with current program participants and their parents. The methods used to gather this information from each source are described in detail in the main report.

According to its *Policies and Procedures Manual*, CCJDTC's program goals are to:

1. Offer nonviolent, delinquent county teenagers, who have a history of drug abuse, an opportunity to end their dependence on drugs through an intensive, four-phase program that combines intensive treatment with a system of incentives and sanctions.

2. Assist the participant's family with an array of community resources that will assist them in creating and maintaining a safe, stable and drug-free environment for the participant.
3. Achieve an overall decrease of the number of drug dependent youth in the county and lower the number of delinquent offenses committed by these individuals.

## Process Results

Using the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts (as described by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 1997) as a framework, along with the 16 juvenile drug court strategies, described by the National Drug Court Institute (NDCI, 2003), NPC examined the practices of the CCJDTC program.

The CCJDTC fulfills many of the 10 key components and 16 juvenile strategies through its current policies and structure. It integrates alcohol and other drug treatment services with juvenile justice system case processing and has formed a partnership with local law enforcement. The program uses frequent alcohol/drug testing, supervision meetings and court hearings to monitor abstinence and program compliance; includes a team that is committed to supporting youth involved in the program, who share a sincere desire for participants to be successful, and who make an ongoing effort to be creative (e.g., with program activities) to keep the youth engaged; has implemented pro-social activities that involve both participants and drug court team members; has invested in training for drug court team members; has had a continuously sitting judge since the program was implemented; and has worked to develop numerous partnerships with public and private community agencies and organizations to meet the needs of program participants.

There are several areas in which the CCJDTC should and can make program im-

provements. The program should examine the prospective participant screening and referral process and create ways to increase capacity; use incentives and rewards liberally (more frequently than at phase changes), balance needed sanctions and rewards to reinforce a positive, strength-based program climate; communicate clearly with participants/families why an incentive/reward is being provided, especially if the reinforcements are individualized; during the initial assessment process include time for youth and parents/guardians to be interviewed separately as well as together, to increase the likelihood that the interviewer will be able to collect accurate/complete information

A summary of suggestions and recommendations that emerge from this evaluation include the following:

### SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

CCJDTC has created relationships with a number of community supporters. The program should continue to maintain and develop new community resources (including local businesses) as they relate to the most common participant needs. Identified needs include recreational activities (especially activities available after school and more pro-social activities involving the program team), opportunities for mentoring, and creative/individualized incentives that are tied to participants' specific interests and talents. The program should consider the relative benefit of adding additional agency partners that could enhance its functioning; these include local representatives from mental health and state law enforcement.

### SUMMARY OF AGENCY-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The CCJDTC should address the challenge some team members have experienced with regard to attending all scheduled team meetings, court sessions, and/or other program-related activities/meetings. Team members

should discuss the difficulties faced in balancing drug court and non-drug court responsibilities and see if there are solutions that can be found for those whose workload or schedules prevent their full attendance. The team should also look into the reasons behind turnover in representatives from key partners (such as the State’s Attorney’s Office and the Department of Juvenile Services)—in an effort to increase cohesiveness and key stakeholder buy-in—and consider options for ensuring new agency representatives will be genuinely interested in and committed to the program. The team should consider opportunities for cross-training, to better understand each others’ roles, activities, and challenges (in and outside of the drug court program). Also, ensure that staff and agency partners are trained in strength-based practices, including strength-based assessment and service planning, and make sure that all program staff and providers are trained to be culturally responsive to participants and their families, taking a broad view of culture, including gender, age, rural/urban differences, and socio-economic status. If feasible, it would be prudent to identify an individual who could serve as a back-up judge/master, in the event that the need for a substitute judge/master arises. Until the SMART data management system is fully in use by all program partners, the team should discuss ways that relevant and important information is best disseminated among all staff (e.g., participant treatment information).

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

The team should address the participant screening and referral process and create ways to increase capacity, including continuing to be flexible about eligibility requirements, reviewing the referral process to ensure all eligible youth are being identified, and reviewing the decision-making process regarding determining appropriateness for the program. The program should use incentives and rewards liberally, to balance needed sanctions and to reinforce a positive, strength-based program climate. It is important to make sure that the use of rewards is consistent and to communicate clearly with participants/families about why an incentive/reward is being provided, especially if the reinforcements are individualized. The drug court might want to review the initial assessment process, specifically including time for youth and parents/guardians to be interviewed separately as well as together, to increase the likelihood that the interviewer will obtain accurate/complete information. Although it is understood that the drug court program cannot require a formal aftercare component, it may be worth exploring with community partners ideas for following up on youth and their families at some point after program completion to see if they need to be connected with additional resources.



## BACKGROUND

**D**rug treatment courts are programs designed to reduce drug abuse and criminality in nonviolent offenders in the United States. As of December 2007, there were over 2,147 drug courts, with drug courts operating or planned in all 50 states (including Native American Tribal Courts), the District of Columbia, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam<sup>1</sup>.

Drug 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 crimes 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 who is supported by a team of agency representatives who operate outside 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 et al., 2005).

In 2001, NPC Research (NPC), under contract with the Administrative Office of the Courts of the State of Maryland, began conducting studies of drug courts in Maryland. The current contract includes a series of technical assistance assessments, process evaluations, and cost and outcome studies. This report contains a process evaluation for the Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court (CCJDC).

The first section of this report is a description of the methods used to perform this process evaluation, including site visits and key stakeholder interviews. The sections that follow include a detailed description of the drug court program and its local implementation, a presentation of the national research on the 10 key components of drug courts, and an analysis of the CCJDC in terms of these 10 key components.

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from the National Association of Drug Court Professionals' Web site on April 25, 2008, <http://www.nadcp.org/whatis>



## METHODS

Information was acquired for this process evaluation from several sources, including a completed pre-evaluation of the site, observations of court hearings and team meetings during site visits, key stakeholder interviews, participant and parent interviews, and program documents. The methods used to gather information from each source are described below.

### Pre-Evaluation

Prior to conducting the full process evaluation, a pre-evaluation of the CCJDC site was completed. Pre-evaluation activities included an introductory site visit to the drug court, utilization of an electronic survey, and a telephone interview with the program coordinator. The data that were collected through these activities provided NPC researchers with a general understanding of the drug court's organization and current processes, and assisted the evaluation team in determining the direction and content of further process evaluation questions. In addition, contact information for key informants, a description of general roles of partnering agency representatives, and related information was collected during the pre-evaluation process.

The pre-evaluation report resulting from the above-mentioned activities included a summary of data elements collected by the program and additional elements that were recommended for collection for future evaluation purposes, and a summary of general program findings, in particular as they related to the 10 Key Components of Effective Drug Court Programs.

### Site Visits

NPC Research (NPC) evaluation staff traveled to Calvert County, Maryland, for site visits in April and May 2008. The visit included observations of a juvenile drug court

hearing and a pre-court team meeting; interviews with key CCJDC staff; and interviews with current drug court participants and their parents. These observations and interviews provided information about the structure, procedures, and routines used in the drug court.

### Key Stakeholder Interviews

Key stakeholder interviews, conducted by telephone, were a critical component of the CCJDC process study. NPC staff interviewed 10 individuals involved in the administration of the drug court, including the Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court Master, the program coordinator, a case management specialist III with Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), the assistant public defender, and the assistant state's attorney. Other team members interviewed included a child and adolescent coordinator with the Calvert County Core Services Agency, a representative from the Calvert County Sheriff's Office, an evaluation and monitoring specialist with Calvert County Family Network, an addictions counselor with the Calvert County Health Department, and the Calvert County Public Schools juvenile court liaison.

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. Prior to each interview, evaluation staff identified the questions needed from the general typology, and added

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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 modified for juvenile drug courts can be found in Appendix A of this report.

additional questions based on information gathered in prior interviews and/or in program documents. The additional questions were included to resolve inconsistencies received through various information sources or to elaborate on information already obtained, to clarify the evaluation team's understanding of the local process and implementation. The information gathered through the use of this guide assisted the evaluation team in focusing on the day-to-day operations as well as the most important and unique characteristics of the CCJDC.

For the process interviews, key individuals involved with CCJDC administration were asked many of the questions in the *Typology Interview Guide* during 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.

## **Participant and Parent Interviews**

NPC conducted two small group interviews in the offices of the Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court in July 2008. Two current drug court participants attended the first interview; two parents of current participants attended the second group. The interviews provided the participants and parents with an opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions regarding the drug court process.

## **Document Review**

In order to better understand the operations and practices of the program, the evaluation team reviewed the most recent version of the Policy and Procedure Manual for Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court. In addition to this document, all of the materials received from the site during the pre-evaluation process phase were reviewed.

## **Analysis**

Once the data were collected, they were compiled into a Microsoft Word table and organized into general categories, such as eligibility criteria, team member training, etc. As much as possible, data from multiple sources were compared in order to account for the variability of perceptions of interviewees and to minimize bias. The other sources of information included other interview responses, the drug court hearing and team meeting observations, and the Policy and Procedure Manual. When necessary, confirmation of data was achieved through follow-up questions with the drug court team members.

NPC evaluators extracted key themes that emerged from the interview responses that related to the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts (NADCP, 1997) and the 16 strategies of juvenile drug courts (NDCI and NCJFCJ, 2003). The evaluators then compared the practices with the 10 key components and 16 strategies. This process was also informed by earlier findings from the pre-evaluation.



## RESULTS

### Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court Program Description

#### CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND

Calvert County is a rural county located on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Calvert is a peninsula, bounded by the Chesapeake Bay on the east and the Patuxent River on the west. It is the smallest county in the state of Maryland. The county has two municipalities: Chesapeake Beach and North Beach, and several towns, villages, and unincorporated areas. According to the 2005 Census estimate, it had a population of 88,804, with more than 75% over the age of 18 and a median age of 38. Calvert County's racial/ethnic composition in 2006 consisted of 83% White, 12% Black or African American, less than 1% American Indian and Alaska Native, less than 2% Asian, less than 1% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and less than 1% some other race. There were also 2% of respondents who identified as two or more races. Those individuals of Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race) comprise 2% of the County's population. The median household income in the county in 2006 was \$84,891, and the median family<sup>3</sup> income was \$91,175. The county's unemployment rate was 3.2%, with 2.8% of individuals and 1.5% of families living below poverty level. Lastly, the main industry categories reported (from highest percentage of total population) were:

- Educational services, and health care and social assistance;
- Public administration;

- Professional, scientific and management, and administration and waste management services;
- Construction; and
- Retail trade.

Prince Frederick, the county seat, is located 35 miles southeast of Washington, DC, and 55 miles south of Baltimore; it had an estimated population of 1,432 at the 2000 census.<sup>4</sup>

#### CALVERT COUNTY JUVENILE DRUG COURT OVERVIEW

The Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court is located in Prince Frederick. The program started serving participants in May 2006. The CCJDC operations team is composed of the Master for Juvenile Causes, drug court coordinator, addictions counselor from Calvert Substance Abuse Services, Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) case management specialist and acting case management specialist supervisor, a representative from the Office of the Public Defender, a representative from the State Attorney's Office, a child and adolescent coordinator with the Calvert County Health Department's Core Services Agency, an Evaluation and Monitoring Specialist with the Calvert County Family Network, Calvert County Sheriff's Office liaisons, and a Calvert County Public Schools juvenile drug court liaison. The CCJDC serves juvenile offenders with substance abuse problems. The program combines substance abuse treatment with court supervision and holistic case management services for

<sup>3</sup> Defined as a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved on March 12, 2008, from the U.S. Census Bureau Web site:  
[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?\\_event=Search&geo\\_id=&\\_geoContext=&\\_street=&\\_county=Calvert+County&\\_cityTown=Calvert+County&\\_state=04000US24&\\_zip=&\\_lang=en&\\_sse=on&pc txt=fph&pgsl=010](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=&_geoContext=&_street=&_county=Calvert+County&_cityTown=Calvert+County&_state=04000US24&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&pc txt=fph&pgsl=010)

6½ to 14 months to reduce substance abuse and delinquent conduct among youthful offenders.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In 2004, the original idea for the juvenile drug court was brought to a sub-committee of Calvert County's local management board, called the Youth Strategies Sub-Committee. The supervisor for DJS (who currently serves on the drug court team) brought the drug court idea to the sub-committee as a strategy to help local youth in danger of abusing alcohol or drugs. The group spent a couple of months gathering relevant information on drug courts, and then made a recommendation to the local management board of directors to consider the program as an option for Calvert County. The board decided that the program was worth investigating and began recruiting people for the initial planning team, which started to take shape in Fall 2004.

The local management board, in particular the current evaluation and monitoring specialist serving on the drug court team, and the court administrator (serving as the acting coordinator at that time) were responsible for coordinating the first training trip in Philadelphia (in January 2005), before the circuit court in Calvert County took over the task of program planning. The second drug court team training occurred in Boston in Spring 2005.

The program began serving participants in May 2006. According to staff interviewed for the evaluation, the program moved quickly from the planning stages to going "live" (as a pilot program). Implementation involved putting together policies and procedures, developing a participant handbook, and—the biggest task—building a full caseload of participants appropriate for the program.

According to one team member, there were only a few participants enrolled in the program initially, but with the decision to im-

plement a fully functioning program, there was a noticeable increase in participant referrals. He added that program staff "sat down and talked to everybody," including talking with Juvenile Services about sending referrals even before the case went to the States Attorney's Office ("so we can be aware of them earlier"). The team also decided to expand the original target population to include youth who were in violation of their probation (VOP), as it quickly became clear that most of the youth being referred to the program were in VOP status.

Initial (and continuing) funding for the program had been procured through a state grant. In addition, the drug court receives local support (namely, businesses donating incentives, such as gift certificates for restaurants, a local guitar shop, and a movie theater). The steering committee members have worked hard to identify and secure these types of donations. Because the steering committee is unsure of the level of funding it will receive from the state this year, it is in the process of trying to bring more business partners on board.

The master for Juvenile Causes, Tracey A. McKirgan, became the court's first master and continues to serve in that capacity.

Recently, the planning committee has been working to modify program policies and procedures, and the participant handbook, as they more fully develop—and grow—the program in the county.

## PARTICIPANT POPULATION AND PROGRAM CAPACITY

At capacity, the CCJDC program is currently designed to serve 25 participants. Since the drug court program became operational, it has not reached capacity and therefore has been able to accommodate all eligible participants. As of May 2008, 22 individuals had entered the drug court; 2 of these participants had graduated (5 had graduated as of October 2008), 5 were unsuccessful at completing the

program, and 15 were active. The process to determine eligibility will be described in the section on program screening below.

As of May 2008, the majority (19; 90%) of the program's past and current participants was male; 15 are Caucasian, 5 are African American, and 1 is mixed-race. In terms of the program's racial composition, the percentage of African American participants is slightly greater than the percentage of African Americans in the general county population. The average age of participants at program entry is 16 years. The main drug of choice for participants of the CCJDC program, based on positive test results, is marijuana, followed by opiates, and then alcohol.

### **DRUG COURT GOALS**

The CCJDC program works to reduce delinquent behavior and substance abuse by participants. Currently, the program has identified primary, secondary and more broad goals, as listed in its *Policies and Procedures Manual* (described below in that order):

1. To offer nonviolent, delinquent county teenagers, who have a history of drug abuse, an opportunity to end their dependence on drugs through an intensive, four-phase program that combines intensive treatment with a system of incentives and sanctions.
2. To assist the participant's family with an array of community resources that will assist them in creating and maintaining a safe, stable and drug-free environment for the participant.
3. To achieve an overall decrease of the number of drug dependent youth in the county and lower the number of delinquent offenses committed by these individuals.

The CCJDC staff's goals for the program, as reported during the key stakeholder interviews, are in line with those listed in the participant handbook. Additionally, several team

members expressed a similar goal: to assist families in creating a supportive environment at home for participating youth. The staff also expressed a commitment to helping participants become productive citizens through education support and connecting them with the necessary resources that will support their remaining drug free.

### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The CCJDC eligibility criteria are listed in the *Policy and Procedure Manual*. Juveniles eligible for the program must be residents of Calvert County, Maryland, and be between the ages of 14 and 17 years (Exceptions may be made for younger or older persons, on a case by case basis; not to exceed entrance at the age of 18). In addition they must:

- Currently not be on probation for/have not been adjudicated delinquent for a crime of violence as defined by Maryland Criminal Law Article, Section 14-101;
- Be assessed as a substance user; and
- Be a non-sex offender.

Generally, potential drug court participants have not responded to regular probation and outpatient treatment. The individual's charge(s) does not have to be directly drug-related; for example, individuals committing burglary or theft are accepted into the program.

### **DRUG COURT PROGRAM SCREENING AND ENTRY PROCESS**

The following description explains the process that potential CCJDC participants go through before entering the program. The majority of participants are referred to the program by DJS.

The entry process starts with the individual being arrested and his/her paperwork being sent to DJS. At that point, the family is called in for an intake meeting. During the intake process, DJS staff makes a determination

about the status of the case (e.g., whether it should be informal, unsupervised probation, or should be sent to the court for a petition). If DJS decides to send the case to court for a petition **and** that the offending youth is potentially a good candidate for drug court, the file is forwarded to the State's Attorney's Office (SAO) and a referral is sent to the drug court coordinator. The SAO then lets the coordinator know if the youth is legally eligible (based on the arrest report, charges, etc.). If the individual is determined to be legally appropriate for the program, the coordinator then emails the entire team about the prospective participant and requests that any information they have about the youth be brought to the next drug court meeting (during which the individual is discussed as a potential program participant).

If the team decides to offer the program to the youth and his/her family, the option of drug court was presented to the family and youth's attorney, if desired. At that point, the coordinator explains the program and provides written materials (brochures, business card, etc.), and makes the offer. He also explains the alternative to program participation, which is standard probation. Then, once the youth and his/her family are actually in the disposition hearing, the youth states on the record that he/she wants drug court. If he/she does want drug court, he/she will be scheduled for the next drug court date.

Although most referrals come from DJS, it was noted that referrals to the program could happen at any time during the process, and from a variety of agencies. For example, Substance Abuse staff could decide that a youth has "drug court potential." If that happens, the appropriate disclosure forms can be signed at that time.

If the drug court coordinator has the opportunity to talk with the new participant and his/her parents/guardians after the adjudication hearing, he will explain the drug court process and outlines the requirements at that

time. At disposition, if the team decides to offer the prospective participant program entry, the coordinator confirms his/her desire to enter and will get the paperwork signed at that time. However, if the participant first meets with the coordinator at disposition, the youth and his/her parents/guardians may either sign the official documents then or they may elect to wait until the first drug court hearing to do so. Generally, the program tries to have youth enroll prior to assigning them to the CCJDC docket.

It was reported that the process from a youth's referral to the program until he/she enters the program usually takes about 1-2 weeks. The period from arrest to referral can range from 4-6 weeks for individuals who do not enter the program as a result of probation violation. However, most of the current participants were on probation prior to entering the program, so the time from arrest to referral is much longer (as they have to violate their probation first before they can be considered eligible).

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

The CCJDC is a post-dispositional program for juveniles as a condition of probation or after they have violated the conditions of their probation. At the point the youth enters drug court, she/he has already been found "involved" (i.e., "guilty") and has been through "disposition" (i.e., "sentenced"). Thus, the youth are essentially convicted and sentenced, but the disposition is supervised probation; they have the option of coming into drug court and, at that point, everything is put on hold pending the outcome of program involvement. The alternative to participation in the program is long-term inpatient treatment or probation with outpatient treatment (if ordered by the court).

The incentive for participants to enter the CCJDC program is to remain in their homes and communities while getting support for

gaining control of their lives and for treating their substance use issues. Upon a participant's successful completion of the program, the modification of findings results in the youth being found "not involved and not delinquent" and his/her probation is closed successfully. Additional incentives for offenders to enter and complete the drug court program include the structure of the program, the high level of supervision, frequent contact with the case worker and treatment to support their recovery, receiving praise from the judge, and material rewards as they progress through the program and for successfully graduating (e.g., gift cards).

### **DRUG COURT PROGRAM PHASES**

The CCJDC program has four phases that generally take between 6½ months to 14 months complete. The length of each phase is dependent upon the participant's compliance with the drug court requirements. Participants in all phases of the program are required to comply with their individualized treatment plans and to regularly attend school or be working on their GED (if not enrolled in school). Those who have either graduated, received a GED, or dropped out prior to entering the drug court program (and are not planning on continuing their education) are required to find employment. All drug court participants receive home visits from their case management specialist, no matter what phase they are in. On average, each individual may be seen around four times per week (e.g., at home, in court, and in school).

Participants in Phase I, the orientation phase, are required to submit to urinalysis (UA) three times per week (including a random test) and attend the drug court hearings twice a month. In order to advance to Phase II, participants need not show consistent clean UA tests but must show an appropriate level of compliance with program requirements, including attending drug court sessions and other appointments as directed.

During Phase II, drug court attendance requirements continue at twice per month. These participants are required to submit two urinalysis samples per week, one of them on a random schedule. Participants must remain in Phase II for at least 3 months, be satisfactorily progressing towards program goals, and maintain sobriety for 30 consecutive days before advancing to Phase III.

Phase III participants must attend drug court hearings once a month and submit to one random urinalysis sample per week. Participants are held to these requirements for at least 2 months and must have 60 consecutive days of clean drug tests, in addition to actively participating in the program's pro-social activities and required service project, before moving on to Phase IV.

Phase IV participants are still required to attend drug court hearings once a month. In order to complete Phase IV, and therefore graduate from the CCJDC, participants must meet the graduation criteria described below.

### **GRADUATION**

In order to graduate from CCJDC, participants must satisfy program requirements for all four phases, including:

- Meeting all probation requirements, including paying all restitution;
- Completing community service and other program assignments (e.g., participate in pro-social activities and "give back" program);
- Completing substance abuse counseling with at least 90 consecutive days clean;
- Receiving a recommendation of the treatment counselor;
- Receiving no additional charges during program participation;
- 100% participation in an educational or vocational program;

- Submission of a written request to the court for graduation.

Other requirements for graduation:

- The CCJDC team grants a recommendation for graduation;
- The CCJDC master approves the graduation; and
- Participant and case manager have created and started a written relapse prevention plan;
- Approved housing and aftercare plan have been completed.

Although the CCJDC has held individual graduations for each graduate, the plan is to hold periodic graduation ceremonies (for multiple graduates) in the future when there is an increased number of individuals completing the program. As of October 2008, five participants had completed the program successfully. The graduation ceremony occurs immediately following the regular drug court hearings, and the other participants are asked to wait after the hearing in order to celebrate with the graduate. The graduate receives a certificate and an individualized gift. In addition, treats such as cake and soda are served.

Upon successful completion of the CCJDC program, the graduate's probation is closed successfully and the findings are automatically modified to "not involved" or "not delinquent." One team member commented that the drug court youth are aware of that potentiality and that it serves as a good incentive to successfully complete the program.

## TREATMENT OVERVIEW

Since the implementation of CCJDC, the program has utilized treatment providers (addictions counselors) from the Calvert County Health Department's Substance Abuse Services. Treatment offered to program participants combines a strength-based and cognitive behavioral approach. Individual and

group sessions address addiction issues, anger management, coping skills, peer pressure, and social skills. Gender-specific treatment for the female participants is available (through a girls' group), as well as is family therapy. In fact, all participants and their families undergo a family assessment, generally upon entering the program.

Treatment offers a number of groups, which vary depending on participants' needs (generally identified through the initial needs assessment); they include psycho-educational, process, Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), and recovery-based groups. The groups typically include a mix of drug court and non-drug court youth, since not all program participants have the same needs and, given the number of active participants, there really aren't enough for a full group. Once they have completed their assigned groups, participants move into a relapse recovery phase, which could include participation in an in-recovery group and/or individualized treatment.

The phase that the participant is in does not necessarily dictate the level of treatment he/she receives. Of course, as individuals move through the program phases, there's an expectation that the amount of treatment will probably decrease; however, according to staff members, there may not necessarily be an exact correlation (though, that is the goal). For example, additional treatment may be recommended if it is determined that an individual is in a risky situation, or he/she is experiencing relapse triggers or cravings. If that happens, participants can request an extra individual treatment session. According to one team member, the youth drop by the treatment office "all the time," and are aware that treatment has "an open door policy."

Long-term treatment services have also been offered to program participants. A few individuals have been sent to 60-day residential placements. Additionally, one participant received long-term treatment for approximately

9 months; this person has since returned to the drug court program and is reportedly doing well. Historically, when a participant returned from long term placement, he/she began the program again at Phase I. This 30-day “orientation” phase was seen a good place to re-enter because it helped to “jump start” the youth’s involvement in the program again. However, the team has recently considered determining the re-entry status of participants on a case-by-case basis.

During the team interviews, it was pointed out that there are limited mental health resources for youth in Calvert County who don’t have insurance; so in some situations when a child needs to be referred for services, it is sometimes difficult to get him/her in, in a timely manner. However, drug court staff members try to anticipate needs as early as possible to combat this challenge (e.g., getting those who need services on the waiting list as soon as possible). Service areas where this is a challenge include counseling (e.g., the initial intake and assessment, and counselor assignment), as well as medical assistance.

In terms of aftercare, there is no formal program. However, participants do create a relapse prevention plan through treatment and continue with that from the end of formal treatment to drug court graduation. Also, because the community is small, team members run into current and former participants frequently. Regarding this issue, an interviewee commented: “I tell kids, ‘I live in this jurisdiction. If I see you again, I want it to be to say ‘hi’ in Wal-Mart; I don’t want you showing up in my office with new numbers after your name.’”

If participants turn 18 years of age before completing group treatment, they are transitioned to a group at an adult outpatient treatment program. If they have completed group treatment, the drug court treatment provider can continue to see them on an individual basis.

With regard to addressing special developmental issues/needs related to education, the team can request that an IEP (individualized education plan) be developed for a program participant. It was reported that the drug court program works to keep kids in school, rather than encouraging them to get their GED. However, participants who do decide not to go to school are required to have a plan for obtaining a GED and employment before they can leave school.

In working with program participants, the treatment representative primarily uses a cognitive-behavioral model. However, she has the flexibility to meet the youth “where they are,” using appropriate treatment strategies to address individual needs.

## **THE DRUG COURT TEAM**

### *Juvenile Master*

Master Tracey McKirgan has presided over the CCJDC since February 2006, when the drug court was still considered a pilot program. Master McKirgan presides over the pre-court meetings and drug court hearings. She has never missed a session and it was not clear if there was a substitute judge/master available to preside over the court in her absence. Vacations are scheduled at the beginning of the year, so she is able to plan accordingly. The position of the drug court master is part of the general duties of the juvenile master in Calvert County; it is not limited in length, nor is it a rotating position.

The master is seen as the “chairperson” of the drug court team. She seeks input from all team members, particularly when making a decision about a sanction or reward. Team members reported that she did a good job keeping them on task during pre-court meetings and in determining fair and appropriate consequences for participants who are not abiding by program rules/requirements. The master will also consider any information/input offered by the participant and

his/her parents before making a final decision.

The master is directly involved in drug court-related activities (e.g., talking about DC, working on DC activities, presiding over meetings and court sessions) between 5 to 6 hours per week. She was characterized by one team member as “nice, though, she demands a lot of respect.” There was also a consensus among team members that participants and their parents respect her, and that she creates a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere in the courtroom. One interviewee reported that, while the master’s job is very time consuming, “she handles it very well.”

#### *Coordinator*

The CCJDC coordinator, who has been on the drug court team since March 2005, is employed by the Calvert County Circuit Court. He oversees the program and is responsible for organizing and disseminating information to the team on an ongoing basis (e.g., new referrals, status of current participants, policy changes, and available trainings). The coordinator attends pre-court meetings and drug court hearings and makes sure that everything runs smoothly. In addition, he educates the general court and the community about the CCJDC program, and meets with prospective participants and their parents/guardians to present the program and get all necessary documents signed prior to program entry.

The coordinator has been the main team member who finds sources for the rewards given to participants. The team checks with him to see what incentives are available when it wants to reward a participant’s positive behavior/accomplishments.

#### *Case Management Specialist / Probation*

The drug court case management specialists are DJS probation officers. There are two case management specialists who share supervision duties, one who works with drug court youth in the north half of the county

and the other who supervises residents in the southern half. These team members sit on the planning committee and drug court team. They are involved in all general probationary duties, which include supervising random UAs, making sure that the youth comply with all conditions of drug court, assisting participants with their community giveback projects, and participating in all pro-social activities.

The case management specialists typically spend 15-20 hours a week working with drug court participants, in addition to carrying a full caseload of non-drug court probationers. Because of this demand on resources, the biggest challenge that the case management specialists face is a limited amount of available time.

CCJDC case management specialists were identified by many team members as the most influential members of the team, in terms of their impact on participating youth, and the individuals who have the most contact with participants (doing home visits, conducting UAs, going to the schools). Because of their experience, dedication to helping youth, and connections in the community, they are seen a very critical part of the drug court program. As one team member commented about one of the CM specialists, “The kids adore her and she just tries to get them out of bad situations. She’s willing to go out there and do what needs to be done to get them out of the home, if it’s an unsafe environment (even if it means detention). We’re fortunate to have someone like her, because she’s out there and really sees what’s going on.”

All drug court participants receive home visits no matter what phase they are in. In Phase 1, because participants get three drug tests per week, they will typically see the case management specialist at home 2 to 3 times per week. In Phase 2, that number can go down to 2 visits per week. Because program staff cannot currently test in the schools, ran-



dom drug tests are conducted by the case management specialist during the home visit. On an average, these team members may see each participant 4 times per week (at home, school, and in court).

A case management specialist supervisor is also involved in the drug court program, to the extent that she sits on the planning team and comes to the team meetings periodically (the monthly planning meeting, which addresses policy issues, is held prior to the team meeting, so she goes to both on that day).

#### *Treatment Provider*

An addictions counselor from Calvert Substance Abuse Services (Calvert County Health Department) serves on the CCJDC team as the primary treatment provider. This individual regularly attends the pre-court team meetings and drug court hearings and makes suggestions and recommendations about how the drug court team can assist the participants with their substance abuse issues. While this team member receives information from all providers working with the drug court youth (which she includes in her reports to the team), the majority of participants are in treatment with her. She facilitates treatment groups and will also work one-on-one with program participants.

Staff in the treatment provider's office have, in some cases in the past, made recommendations for psychiatric evaluations, family therapy, and anger management (or supported those recommendations). Information regarding those services goes to juvenile services (monitored through the court); however, the treatment representative to the drug court team will get releases for the treatment information so that she can check up on those participants. Since state mental health services are in the same building, (anger management groups are held right next door, and drug testing services are also close by) this team member sees participants quite frequently.

#### *Assistant Public Defender*

The assistant public defender (APD) on the CCJDC team is assigned to each client to make sure that they are not treated unfairly or detained unnecessarily. She represents the program's participants using a non-adversarial team approach. The APD, who is the only individual from the Office of the Public Defender (OPD) involved in drug court, attends the pre-court team meetings, where she contributes to team decisions and advocates for participants along with the other team members. The assistant public defender also attends the drug court hearings.

At the point when the youth are entering drug court, they have already gone to trial, so the APD's (legal) role is somewhat limited. However, she typically will argue against the team giving out a jail sanction to a participant. This team member spends about 3 hours per week on drug court-related activities, although all of the related responsibilities, at times, can be quite time-consuming. In fact, the OPD was supposed to budget special time for drug court work (to take away from regular court time), but that has not yet been done.

Since her role is to do what is in the best interest of her clients-to work on their behalf-she feels that the traditional mission of her office is being upheld in her work with the drug court program.

#### *Assistant State's Attorney*

The assistant state's attorney (ASA) on the CCJDC team is part of the referral process of potential participants and helps determine their legal eligibility for the program. As a part of this process, this team member reviews cases to determine if the SAO is willing to commit in advance to an automatic reconsideration of findings (to "not involved, not delinquent") if the youth successfully completes the drug court program. In her role as ASA, she attends the pre-court team meetings and drug court hearings.

The current assistant state's attorney is also the only representative from that agency working directly with the drug court program. However, in cases where policy questions are involved (e.g., when a drug court participant received an adult drunk driving charge), she will confer with the state's attorney.

As her agency's goal is to make the public safer, while assisting juvenile offenders to become successful, productive citizens, the traditional mission of her office has been upheld in her work with the drug court program.

#### *Law Enforcement Liaison*

Two representatives from the Calvert County Sheriff's Office serve on the drug court team. They both attend pre-court team meetings and drug court sessions. One of these team members, who also serves as a local school liaison, works directly with drug court youth. He does drug testing for the male participants in the program (when doing home visits with the female DJS case management specialist), checks on the youth at school, and serves as a support and mentor. The second law enforcement liaison is a DARE officer for the county and an original member of the drug court team.

#### *Public School Liaison*

During Summer 2008, a new public school liaison joined the team. The prior Calvert County Public Schools juvenile court liaison, whose official title with the school system was "Pupil Personnel Worker" (PPW), was an original member of the drug court team (she attended the first three trainings).

The role of this liaison is to advise the team on school related issues, in particular what the school can or cannot do in regards to juvenile drug court. The school liaison provides information to the team about participants' grades and attendance during team meetings. He also monitors drug court youth that have been placed in alternative school

(as long as it is a county school placement), and follows them as they transition back to their original school (or monitors their progress if they stay in the alternative program for the rest of the year). If a participant is placed in treatment or rehabilitation services outside of the county, the school liaison is sometimes able to obtain the youth's education information (related to that facility's school); however, those data are generally more difficult to obtain compared to in-county facilities.

The school liaison is one of eight PPWs who work in the Calvert County school district. The original liaison had a good relationship with the other PPWs (who work in different buildings throughout the county), so was able to get any information needed on all drug court youth rather quickly.

The biggest challenge to performing the role of school liaison is a limited amount of available time, as this person worked to ensure that s/he has the most current information (from all sources) before going into team meetings. Also, in terms of reporting school attendance, the school liaison is dependent on the schools' attendance secretaries providing the correct information (which is not always up-to-date).

#### *Child and Adolescent Coordinator (Core Services Agency)*

The child and adolescent coordinator first became involved in drug court approximately 3 years ago. Her job is to ensure that children and adolescents throughout the county receive the services they need. She attends the planning and operational committees. As a member of the drug court team, she reviews cases and sits in court during the session. This team member also works in the public mental health system and provides input into decisions that the court makes. She spends approximately 1½ hours a week on drug court related activities. While her time with drug court is limited, a team member re-

ported that she is an important resource for the program.

*Evaluation and Monitoring Specialist (for the Calvert County Family Network)*

The Calvert County (CC) Family Network is the local management board for the county. The State of Maryland has instituted local management boards in each of the 24 counties. This organization takes state and federal grant dollars and disperses them to agencies at the local level. Essentially, it acts as a grant money pass-through organization for the governor's office for children in Maryland on the state level (to make sure that organizations that need it are getting the money). However, the CC Family Network's involvement in the drug court does not include the dispersal of funds to the program; instead, it has provided an agency representative whose evolving role is described below.

The current CC Family Network's team representative, whose title is "evaluation and monitoring specialist," began working with the drug court at the program's inception, but was replaced by another agency representative. He returned again in January 2008. Among his drug court related roles is sitting on the program's planning team, assisting with the development/modification of drug court policies and procedures, and helping with the planning process (especially early on in the program's development).

Initially, this team member was asked by the program to develop a tool for collecting program data, and to create performance measures and outcomes (for evaluative purposes); but because the drug court was told that the Statewide Maryland Automated Records Tracking (SMART) system would soon be implemented, it decided that the development of the evaluative tool was unnecessary. Recently, because of delays in getting the SMART system up and running, the CC Family Network representative and the local management Board were asked by the program to go back and look again at the evalua-

tion tool that was initially put together, with the possibility of restructuring it to current standards.

### **DRUG COURT TEAM TRAINING**

CCJDC team members have attended national and statewide drug court training conferences. The drug court coordinator and master actively encourage staff to attend trainings whenever possible.

The former school liaison, attended all three of the initial start-up trainings (in Philadelphia, Boston, and Charlotte). The coordinator was hired after the first training, but was present for the last two. The Evaluation and Monitoring Specialist (from the CC Family Network) went to the first two trainings but was replaced before the 3<sup>rd</sup> training in Charlotte. He has also attended several drug court trainings at the Judicial Center in Annapolis.

The juvenile master attended the Drug Court 101 training program and has been to at least two other trainings in Annapolis (through the Office of Problem-Solving Courts). Early on in the program, she and several members of the team were able to observe the drug court in St. Mary's County, during which they watched a pre-court team meeting and court session. Since then, the CCJDC program team has had access to St. Mary's staff, who have made themselves available as a support (e.g., she can get in touch with the judge if she needs information/advice). Last year, there was a week-long judiciary training that the master wanted to attend; however, it was held on the same week as the 3-day mandatory judiciary juvenile conference for Maryland, so she was unable to attend.

When she first joined the team, the assistant state's attorney attended a week-long training in Annapolis (through the National Drug Court Institute) called, "Comprehensive Drug Court Prosecutor Training." It was an informative introduction to the program, as staff from all over the country talked about the different types of programs in which they

were involved, including alcohol court. She has not attended any other training.

The case management specialist has attended four different trainings since joining the team, including Drug Court 101 and the Winter Symposium, where she learned everything from general case management skills (specific to drug court), to strategies for sanctions and rewards, to drug testing.

The Child and Adolescent Coordinator attended state training, Drug Court 101, and initial implementation trainings (although she went to the trainings some time after the initial drug court team).

The program's treatment provider representative attended the Winter Symposium in Annapolis, and has attended trainings specific to drug courts and treatment. She also went to the National Conference on drug courts last year and tried to attend as many trainings as possible, especially those outside of the area (to learn about what other drug courts are doing).

The law enforcement liaison (who works directly with drug court participants) went to the national conference in Washington, DC, last year and attended Drug Court 101.

### **TEAM MEETINGS**

The pre-court meeting is held the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month from 2:00 p.m. until about 3:30 p.m. The master, coordinator, APD, ASA, case management specialist, addictions counselor, Calvert County Public Schools juvenile court liaison, and law enforcement liaisons regularly attend the pre-court meetings. Occasionally, depending on necessity and availability, the acting case management specialist supervisor, child and adolescent coordinator (with the Calvert County Health Department's Core Services Agency), and the Calvert County Family Network representative attend the pre-court meetings.

During the team meeting, the master engages the entire team, as the program participants are individually discussed. The team is comfortable with the master and is willing to speak openly on behalf of participants. As each individual's name is called, the case management specialist provides an updated progress report on the participant. The case management specialist and treatment provider are very knowledgeable about each client's status and progress. Also, significant time and attention is given to the juvenile's progress in school, as the school liaison provides a thorough report. The same amount of attention is given to the youths' progress in treatment, with a comprehensive update being provided during the meeting by the addictions staff.

From the observation of the team meeting, it appears that the team communicates about the client's progress on a regular basis. The team meeting is just one of many times that they are updated on a client throughout the week. The team members are very respectful of one another and listen quietly as members provide input. Drug court staff members appear to respect the disciplines of each member and rely on each other for their expertise. The master appeared extremely invested in each youth and was very involved the entire meeting.

Once per month, policy issues (e.g., logistical and operational issues) are discussed in a special meeting, held just before the pre-court team meeting. Attending this meeting are the program coordinator, the master, the state's attorney, the local supervisor from the Public Defender's Office, the court administrator, DJS representative, law enforcement, public school liaison, treatment representative, Core Services Agency representative, and the family services coordinator. The policy committee has recently been working hard to update the CCJDC Policy and Procedure Manual.

In addition to monthly policy meetings, the program coordinator also holds a quarterly steering committee meeting, whose purpose, according to the CCJDC Policy and Procedure Manual, is “to provide advice and guidance to identify community resources and to support the mission of the Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court.” The manual identifies the steering committee as comprised of executive level personnel of public and private sector businesses serving the local community, whose charges are:

- Identifying the key questions to be asked.
- Advising on strategies for gathering community input—especially with under-represented groups.
- Bringing a community view to the data as they are reviewed and analyzed by the program coordinator.
- Making recommendations for strategies to address the issues identified as priorities in the community.
- Acting as the “community voice” in the juvenile drug court process, and thereby increasing the likelihood of community buy-in.
- Representing specific points of view or areas of expertise in the juvenile drug court process, its analysis and its presentation/publication to the community—for example, media expertise, familiarity with faith-based communities, specific ethnic and cultural minority community perspectives, business approaches.
- Taking the results of the juvenile drug court back to their own communities/networks, and lending their name to the results.
- Identifying and assisting in developing and/or accessing potential resources for participant incentives.

- Identifying and assisting in developing and/or accessing external financial resources.
- Identifying and assisting in developing and/or accessing other resources as needed.

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

Team members, including the addictions counselor, are able to communicate with the court (the juvenile master) at the bi-weekly pre-court meetings. The drug court treatment representative generally communicates with the case management specialist (DJS representative) several times during the day. She is in contact with other team members less frequently (approximately one or two times per week), depending on what is currently happening with participants. In cases where a major concern arises, she could be in contact with drug court staff frequently.

The bulk of the treatment issues are addressed by the treatment agency in internal staffing meetings. However, regardless of what is discussed in those meetings, all treatment-related information on drug court participants is brought to the drug court team during pre-court meetings.

Treatment does not send reports on participants prior to the team meeting, although that request has been made by the coordinator. The response from the Health Department is that, eventually, drug court staff will be able to access treatment information on participants through the statewide SMART data management system. Currently, the type of information provided to the team during team meetings includes UAs/results, groups attended, groups missed, treatment progress and current status, and any issues that need to be noted/acknowledged (e.g., participants who are doing particularly well, were sick during the past week, are on new prescriptions, had a “bad day” in school, or who sought out the therapist’s help).

## DRUG COURT HEARINGS

The drug court hearings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month at 3:30 p.m., immediately following the pre-court meeting, and usually last until between 4:30 and 5:00 p.m., depending on the number of participants in attendance. Participants in Phase I and II attend drug court hearings every 2 weeks, and participants in the remaining phases attend hearings once per month. Team members that regularly attend the hearings include the juvenile master, coordinator, assistant public defender, assistant state's attorney, case management specialist, Calvert County Sheriff's Office liaisons, Calvert County Public Schools juvenile court liaison, and the program's addictions counselor. In addition, the case management specialist supervisor, core services agency representative and evaluation and monitoring specialist attend the hearings as needed.

The drug court hearings are open to the public (the result of a 1986 judicial decree), unless there is a sensitive issue that needs to be addressed by the court. Visitors who are not familiar to drug court staff are approached by the team to determine whether they are in the appropriate courtroom. Often, these individuals are outside family members, most of whom are asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Participants are typically expected to remain for the entire hearing to observe the rewards and sanctions administered to their peers. At times, however, the master may excuse everyone to deal with a sensitive issue on a case (which would be held until the end of the docket). Additionally, a participant may be excused after his/her case is heard as a reinforcement for progress made, or simply because the youth has asked appropriately through his/her case manager (and it is seen as a way to support the family in dealing with logistical challenges).

When called up during the drug court session, each participant stands (facing the master) at the counsel's table along side of the

public defender. The assistant state's attorney and case managers sit at the other counsel's table. If they are present during the hearing, parent(s) will go up with the youth.

### *Observation of the Court Session*

During the drug court session, the master is respectful as she interacts with participants and their family members (if present), and shows genuine interest as she asks each of the participants about their lives and how things are going for them in the program. Her demeanor is very warm, compassionate and supportive, and she appears to make a concerted effort to ensure that the courtroom experience is not intimidating to participants or their parents/guardians.

While the master speaks directly to each participant, she reviews (out loud) the progress reports that have been provided by team members, and acknowledges the participant's hard work and positive progress when appropriate. In addition, she offers encouragement and may impose a sanction if the participant is not meeting program requirements/goals. The participant is also encouraged to address the master during this time.

The drug court hearing that NPC staff observed had 12 participants (and 5 parents/guardians) in attendance. On average, each participant stood in front of the judge for just under 5 minutes while discussing her/his performance in the program since the last hearing.

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Participating family members have to sign the consent form for disclosure of confidential information along with the child upon admission into the drug court program. The parents/guardians are expected to come to the drug court hearings; however, there are currently no consequences in place for non-compliance with this expectation. While the court would prefer family involvement, it understands the challenges faced by some parents/guardians with regard to attending

drug court sessions and providing transportation to meetings and appointments (e.g., because of lack of availability due to work responsibilities). However, one team member pointed out that the majority of parents/guardians participate.

The Health Department provides a family intervention specialist, a licensed social worker, to the program for the purpose for conducting psychosocial family assessments. The family assessment is designed to identify the strengths and needs of participants' families. The intention is that the assessment be used to establish a plan between the family and the juvenile drug court (to include court attendance, treatment involvement, and curfew/academic/employment enforcement). This plan is seen by team members as critical to the success of the CCJDC participant, as they are currently working to utilize this process on a more consistent and thorough basis. The desire is that the family assessment leads to specific recommendations being made to the drug court, and that the resulting plan be revised with the family throughout program participation, as needed. Currently, there is no standard time for re-assessment.

In terms of treatment and support of families associated with the program, team members pointed out that there are a few different wrap-around services in the county that it uses to assist families in need. One of these organizations, The Institute for Family Centered Services, will actually go out to the home several times per week to provide support.

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

Participants and their families are not asked to pay program fees for their participation in drug court.

#### **DRUG TESTING**

Participants' compliance with the program is tested by urinalysis. Participants in Phase 1 are tested three times per week, including

one random UA. In Phase 2, youth are tested twice per week, including one random UA. Individuals in Phase 3 receive one random UA per week, and, in Phase 4, they get tested randomly as needed (e.g., if there is suspected use or perceived risk of future use). Testing is not used as a sanction.

The DJS representatives and substance abuse treatment provider staff are responsible for conducting the drug and alcohol tests. Tests administered by case management specialists are typically urine tests with immediate results, taken during home visits. UA tests assess a wide variety of substances, including amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, marijuana, methadone, MDMA, methamphetamines, opiates, oxycodone, phencyclidine, and TCA (a type of antidepressant). The case management specialists have also used instant alcohol swabs and the SCRAM units.

The treatment provider also conducts drug testing at the Health Department, including breathalyzer tests, UAs, and oral swabs. Primarily, the provider gives full UA tests (that are lab analyzed) to participants. While the treatment provider occasionally conducts instant tests, these tests are more commonly conducted by DJS. When participants come in for their treatment appointments, they are expected to give a UA.

According to the CCJDC Policy and Procedure Manual, "whenever possible (same gender staff will directly observe the collection of the drug test sample. If the juvenile cannot be observed by same gender staff, he or she will be asked to empty all pockets, remove as practicable all loose fitting outerwear and wash his/her hands prior to sample collection." This process was reported as a challenge by some team members because of a lack of male program staff and a large number of male participants, so most UAs are not observed. To address the issue, the drug court's male law enforcement representative will often accompany the female

case management specialist on home visits. Also, at times, the law enforcement representative has arranged to go to the Health Department, which only has one male staff member, and observe UAs when the youth are present for group treatment. Currently, the drug court is attempting to reschedule their activities to coincide with the Health Department male staff member's availability.

Testing is currently free to all participants. However, recently, the drug court team has been talking about associating costs with positive drug tests if participants deny use and request a re-test (with full lab analysis).

The program has also been working on being able to test in the schools. The school system has put together an MOU and it has gone to DJS, but the issue is still being discussed.

#### REWARDS

CCJDC participants receive rewards from the court for doing well in the program, including verbal praise (from the master and other drug court team members) for compliance with program rules/expectations. Rewards are received at the participants' next scheduled drug court hearings after they are agreed upon by the whole team during the pre-court team meeting. Examples of possible rewards are written in the handbook that is given to participants, as well as in the CCJDC *policy and procedure manual* and include, but are not limited to:

- Encouragement or praise from the bench and peers
- Ceremonies, tokens or certificates of progress
- Reduced court appointments
- Reduced Case Management contacts
- Less frequent drug testing
- Modification of curfew
- Gift certificates
- Family outings

- Modification of service hours
- Participation in special program or event
- Upon graduation, striking of finding of involved.

#### SANCTIONS

According to team members, participants are aware of what is required of them in the program, and of the consequences for not meeting expectations. They are all provided with a handbook that outlines program rules and potential consequences (for not following the rules). Further, if the team feels that a youth is beginning to "get off track," the case management specialist will make the youth aware of it, and it will generally be brought up by the master during the drug court session. If the youth's compliance does not improve after that step, then the youth will receive a sanction.

After a non-compliant act occurs, the CCJDC team discusses the issues related to the infraction at the pre-court team meeting prior to the participant's next regularly scheduled drug court hearing. The entire drug court team contributes to decisions on sanctions. The master listens to the team and then makes the final decisions, but generally agrees with the team's decision. The master then imposes the sanctions at the drug court hearing that day.

Sanctions are graduated, starting with a verbal warning/reprimand and then moving gradually through more serious sanctions, and finally resulting in time in detention or jail. The type of sanction is also dependent on the type of offense. If a participant does not attend a required drug court hearing, the master may issue a writ of attachment (i.e., a bench warrant). However, prior to taking this step, the court tries to determine why the omission occurred and will take into account the participant's progress to date, efforts to notify the court, etc. The drug court team realizes that transportation is often a barrier for



youth and their families (due to the fact the court is located in a small rural county), so it may use this fact to inform decisions regarding the issuance of bench warrants.

Possible sanctions are listed in the CCJDC *policy and procedure manual*, the participant handbook and, to a more limited degree, the agreement that participants sign prior to program entry. Participants who violate program rules and requirements are subject to the following sanctions:

- A verbal warning from bench
- Curfew changes
- Electronic monitoring
- Increased court appearances
- Writing assignment
- Delay in phase movement
- Extension of phase
- Confinement/Detention
- Termination of CCJDC program participation

#### **UNSUCCESSFUL PROGRAM COMPLETION (TERMINATION)**

Program participation may be revoked for various reasons including, but not limited to:

- Threatening a drug court team member.
- Commission of a violent, sexual or drug distribution offense.
- Continued, significant non-compliance with program rules and expectations.
- Failure to appear as scheduled for court, visitation or treatment
- Absconding from the program and the court
- Participant voluntarily petitioning the court for termination

Once program participation is revoked, the participant remains on probation and will be required to complete the court ordered terms of her/his probation (as determined by the master). These youth also lose the guarantee that the findings of their case will be reconsidered. The youth may still request reconsideration at the completion of probation, but he/she will have to go through the formal process, with the defense attorney filing a motion, and the arguments being heard in front of the master.

#### **GRADUATION**

In order to graduate from CCJDC, participants must satisfy program requirements for all four phases, including:

- Meeting all probation requirements, including paying all restitution;
- Completing all community service and other program assignments (e.g., participate in pro-social activities and “give back” program);
- Completing substance abuse counseling with at least 90 consecutive days clean;
- Receiving a recommendation of the treatment counselor;
- Receiving no additional charges during program participation (exceptions to this rule are handled on a case-by-case basis);
- Participation in an educational or vocational program;
- Submission of a written request to the court is required for graduation. Other requirements for graduation include:
  - The CCJDC team grants a recommendation for graduation;
  - The CCJDC master approves the graduation;

- Participant and case manager have created and started a written relapse prevention plan; and
- Approved housing and aftercare plans have been completed.

The CCJDC holds individual graduations for each graduate. As of October 2008, five participants have completed the program successfully. The graduation ceremony occurs immediately following the regular drug court hearings, and the other participants are asked to wait after the hearing in order to celebrate with the graduate. The graduate receives a certificate and an individualized gift. In addition, treats such as cake and soda are served. Upon graduation from the CCJDC, the court modifies the findings on the participant's case.

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

The CCJDC program tracks participants' ongoing status and progress in the program in an Excel spreadsheet and on paper records, including drug court entry and exit dates, attendance at drug court sessions, phase advancement dates, participants' infractions and the resulting sanctions, and dates when participants received rewards for their achievements. There is a plan for the drug court to transition to the statewide SMART data management system, but that has not yet occurred, due to delays at the state level.

DJS also maintains records on drug court youth, including the dates and drug(s) participants tested positive for, general demographic information (e.g., age, gender, race, and housing status), and participants' drugs of choice. Re-arrests are also documented by DJS, along with the type of charge and date of the offense. All treatment-related data are kept by the Calvert County Health Department, and are entered into the SMART system and kept in paper files.

#### **DRUG COURT FUNDING**

Initially, the CCJDC program received start-up funding from the county's branch of the Family Services Administration (a state agency), which is part of the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Office of Problem-Solving Courts then stepped in to provide financial support. To pay for additional non-direct drug court costs, like incentives, the drug court has also received some money from BJA formula grants.

Program staff members (i.e., judicial staff) do not actively solicit financial support. However, several program partners have gone out into the business community to present the program and have been offered support. Some local businesses have offered discounts on items (for incentives), while others have made donations.

The remaining program and treatment costs (e.g., for functional family therapy, inpatient services) are paid by Calvert County through DJS. These same services would also be covered by DJS for non-drug court individuals.

#### **COMMUNITY LIAISONS**

CCJDC has partnered with, or is currently creating partnerships with, a number of community agencies in Calvert County, in a concerted effort to provide needed services to its participants. These organizations/agencies include Holler and Associates, (for job readiness skills and career services), Big Brothers and Big Sisters (for mentoring support), "Tutoring Club" (for education assistance), Calvert County Department of Adult Education (for GED classes), and the Calvert County Department of Parks and Recreation and Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Maryland (for leisure/athletic activities). The drug court has also worked with local businesses that have provided goods and services for incentives/rewards.

## 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>5</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. Comparison data come from the National Drug Court Survey performed by Caroline

Cooper at American University (2006), 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

The drug court (DC) team is representative of the agencies involved in drug court. In addition to the traditional core members (juvenile master, coordinator, probation officer, treatment staff, public defender, and state's attorney), the team includes representatives from education, law enforcement, the local

<sup>5</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.

Core Services Agency, and the Calvert County Family Network. Having the partnering agencies participate in all aspects of the drug court process is seen as critical to the program's success. The team meets twice per month for the pre-court meetings; drug court hearings are held twice per month. Policy meetings, in which operational and logistical issues are discussed, take place once per month and involve additional program partners and agency representatives (court administrator, Family Services coordinator, and State's Attorney).

Law enforcement representatives are present at most pre-court team meetings; however, they cannot always attend. A sergeant comes to the meetings periodically and a corporal from the local Sheriff's Office attends on a fairly regular basis (this person also goes on home visits with the DJS case manager). One staff member recommended that the drug court consider whether it might benefit from having a member of the Maryland State Police sit on the team, as this agency could be a potential referral source and an additional support to participants in the community.

Treatment representatives from the Calvert County Health Department are also an integral part of the drug court team. Currently, the bulk of participants' treatment issues are dealt with by the treatment agency in internal staffing meetings, and they may at times bring in the probation officer (PO) for additional input. Relevant treatment information is brought into the drug court team via verbal reports from the team treatment representative (or that person's supervisor if she is unavailable for the meeting), along with a hard copy summary; the treatment representative does not currently provide hard copy reports ahead of time, though it was suggested written reports might be helpful in the future.

The education liaison that serves on the drug court team is a teacher liaison with the pub-

lic schools and a juvenile personnel worker (as well as a liaison to school administration). She provides disciplinary and attendance information, in addition to participants' grades. Since she is one of eight pupil personnel workers in the county, she has worked hard to maintain a good relationship with the other seven education staff and, as a result, is able to get information on all program participants relatively quickly.

Although there were a few suggestions offered about adding new team members (mentioned above), there was general consensus that the current team composition is appropriate for addressing the programs' many goals and tasks. However, there was an expressed desire by some for more consistency among the represented agencies with regard to level of involvement in the program. For example, if a core staff member could not attend a team meeting, it was felt by some that the team could not function optimally (that they would be missing out on an important source of feedback/input). As one team member put it, "We need the same people there, talking about the same people all the time; we need partners that are fully committed that can attend, to share information with everyone there." It is important to note, however, that the typical reason team members miss meetings has to do more with workload and other competing responsibilities, rather than a decreased commitment to the drug court program.

From staff feedback, there seem to be some areas where role definition and increased communication across partner agencies would benefit the team and the program's operations. In an attempt to address this and other program-related concerns, the team has been meeting periodically to review the drug court program's policies and procedures, and to make any changes it believes will result in improved program functioning. Related to the importance of this type of systematic review, one team member commented, "It's a learning process, so as we've

learned what does and does not work we update our policies and procedures.” One of the challenges in doing this, however, is the availability of time, which related to the earlier-mentions limitation of staff related resources.

### Recommendations

- There was a suggestion that inviting a private mental health therapist from the community to join the drug court team might be a support for the program, as this type of individual could offer additional expertise with regard to the varying mental health care needs of program participants. If such a need is identified, consider partnering with a retired (or semi-retired) mental health professional or with a trained clinical intern in the field of mental health, or find grant-funding to support the cost of this resource.
- The program should work to create an efficient process for having the treatment agency provide written reports to the team prior to the drug court meeting/court session.
- Have a discussion with all agency partners about the challenge some team members are experiencing with regard to making it to meetings and drug court sessions. Work with team members whose workload or schedule prevents their full attendance, to see if there are solutions that can be found (if necessary, discuss with partnering agencies possible options for supporting more drug court time for their representatives).
- Further engage law enforcement to encourage at least one representative to attend team meetings on a regular basis. Consider the relative value to the program of inviting a representative of the MD State Police onto the drug court team.
- Consider the resource implications of having both Sheriff’s Office and DJS case management staff on home visits—unless there are safety concerns or a need for gender-specific UA observations, it might be more efficient to have staff conduct home visits separately (especially if staff in either of these roles is experiencing challenges with regard to finding time for drug court meetings/sessions). In addition, consider the impact on the youth and family of having law enforcement staff coming to the home and whether they would be more comfortable with the program if home visits were conducted solely by case managers. If there is a need for an additional observer (due to gender restrictions) consider adding a part-time staff person to fulfill this role.
- Until the program has fully implemented the SMART data system, treatment providers should provide a hard copy summary of each participant’s treatment status/progress at team meetings to the coordinator and/or Master. Alternatively, the summary could be e-mailed prior to the team meeting.
- Focus on maintaining consistent, clear and timely communications between team members related specifically to supervision and monitoring, and responses to participant behavior. Be aware that when sanctions can be imposed by multiple partners (e.g., the team, treatment, probation), it’s important for all partner agencies to communicate clearly with one another about the consequences levied, so the total “package” of responses to noncompliant behavior is appropriate to the infraction. Prior evaluation research has found that when only the judge can impose sanctions in a program, participant anxiety is reduced and participants have a clearer sense of what to expect from the program (in terms of responses to their behavior).

- Responses from the participant and parent interviews highlighted a concern that sometimes individuals received conflicting information from different drug court team members (e.g., regarding participant's curfew compliance). About this issue, it was recommended that the team make a more coordinated effort to provide consistent information to participants/families, specifically around program expectations and behavior compliance.

## 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, and Pukstas, in press, 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 outcome costs.

In addition, allowing participants into the drug court program only post-plea was associated with lower graduation rates and high-

er investment costs.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> Finally, courts that imposed the original sentence instead of determining the sentence when participants are terminated showed lower outcome costs (Carey et al., in press).

### Local Process

From the feedback provided by team members and observations, the program appears to be operating as a non-adversarial and interdisciplinary team. In particular, the representatives from the Office of the Public Defender and State's Attorney's Office appear to get along and work well together. The defense and prosecution have developed an understanding of the non-adversarial model of drug courts, and that this framework is intended to be in the best interest of both the youth and the community. Regarding this relationship, one team member commented that, initially, there were a few challenges related to getting the OPD and the SAO "on the same page, to understand that the DC process is not supposed to be confrontational." Over time, however, the willingness of individuals participating in the drug court program to come together for a common cause resulted in a more open and collaborative relationship for all agencies. Part of this evolution had to do with the shared perception by those involved that the program is

<sup>6</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>7</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.

worthwhile and has the potential to make a profound positive impact on youth in the community (“All of the agencies involved in the program work together well as a team, for the overall good of the youth”).

Another reason for drug court team members being able to develop such a strong, positive working relationship was attributed to the fact that Calvert is a relatively small county, and that most of the agency representatives have worked in the community for many years. In fact, prior to joining the program, most of the drug court team had already worked with one another in some other capacity. It was expressed by many respondents that this prior familiarity with one another has resulted in “a comfort and trust level among team members, which existed even before the program was created.” Another result of this phenomenon is that it allowed the team to move relatively quickly with regard to getting the program up and running and supporting one another in the process. Team members also highlighted the value of having prior knowledge about the county’s available resources, “So if we’re struggling for something, we’re usually pretty much on the same page (about where referrals can be made)...I think that our agencies were pretty connected as we went into the process.”

An additional strength of the team, adding to its cohesiveness, is its shared commitment to the youth involved in the program, its desire for participants to be successful, and the creative efforts it makes to keep them involved. This commitment was seen as having a positive impact on participants, if not their families. Regarding this outcome, one team member offered, “I think that message has been conveyed pretty well to the kids (the commitment of team members); I think that (the positive impact) is a result of motivation and the willingness of the team members to participate in activities and try to make transportation arrangements for them and try to make them successful.”

While representation from the Public Defender’s Office has been fairly consistent, the current Assistant State’s Attorney is the 5<sup>th</sup> one that the program has had since inception. The representation in this position seems to have stabilized, as the same person has participated in the team over the past year. However, there has been recent turnover in representation from the Department of Juvenile Services.

It was reported that private defense attorneys can participate in the drug court team meetings, in support of their clients. In doing so, they may provide input regarding their clients, which is taken into consideration when the Master makes the final decision on responses to behavior and/or next steps for participants. Further, while private attorneys can provide input regarding their own clients, they may not comment on any of the other program participants and generally will not stay any longer than the time that their clients are being discussed.

Generally, the team appears to have done a good job coming to agreements in response to participants’ behaviors. However, if the team members cannot come to a consensus, then the Master makes the final decision.

It was noted by many key stakeholders that the drug court coordinator’s efforts to “make sure that everything is working the way it’s supposed to” is critical to the program functioning effectively. Adding to his effectiveness as program coordinator is his ability to approach the families of potential participants in a non-threatening way and make a clear and reasoned (and influential) argument for their participation in the drug court program.

Although data from the process interviews clearly reflect a drug court team that is fully committed to supporting the program, there was some evidence that this commitment might not always be apparent to participants/parents. Regarding this differing perception, one of the participant/parent inter-

view participants reported overhearing a team member making negative comments about the program in the court room.

### Recommendations

- As mentioned earlier, it was noted that there has been some turnover of representatives from the partnering agencies, in particular the State's Attorney's Office and the Department of Juvenile Services. In identifying/selecting new team members, it is important for the program to bring on staff who are interested in drug court and willing to make a commitment to the program. The drug court team functions well when positive relationships have been established between team members. Reducing turnover will benefit the program, by reducing training costs, increasing efficiency, and contributing to improved outcomes for participants.
- It is important that all team members be supportive of the program, especially in public (e.g., in the court room) and work to maintain the drug court's non-adversarial model.

## 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 (2008), 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 CCJDC program is a post-disposition program; the youth plead guilty after accepting the program. Individuals can be referred from anywhere other than the Public Defender, including the State's Attorney's Office, DJS, law enforcement, and the schools. Everyone who is accepted into the program has to be involved with juvenile services. If a referred youth does not meet program eligibility requirements (including DJS involvement), he/she will be referred to other appropriate resources in the area. According to team members and participant/parent interview participants, prospective participants and their parents are made aware, beforehand, of all their options and of everything that is involved in participating in the program.

The CCJDC program works to get prospective participants into the program as quickly as possible. For youth who are not on probation, the time frame from arrest to referral into the program reportedly takes about 4 to 6 weeks. Though, as one interviewee admitted, "We've had some slow police reports," which can delay the referral. However, because most participants in the program were on probation prior to entry, the time from arrest to referral can be much longer, as there needs to be a violation of probation before the referral can occur. It was reported, at that point, that it typically takes between 1 week to 10 days from referral to program entry (for both first-time offenders and violation of probation cases). During the time that the pre-disposition investigation is going on, and the order is being written, youth go to the Substance Abuse assessment office for an assessment. The drug court team reviews the assessment information at



the next team meeting and decides whether the youth is appropriate for the program. If there is not a consensus, the Master will make the final decision on entry.

Currently, the drug court has 15 active participants, with a target capacity of 25 youth (as recommended by the Office of Problem-Solving Courts). There is an identified target population that excludes sex offenders and youth with violent convictions. However, there have been exceptions made with regard to the designated age restriction (14 to 17 at time of offense) and youth with distribution offenses (which are dealt with on a case-by-case basis). The program does accept youth with misdemeanor (including 2<sup>nd</sup> degree) assault offenses, because they no longer qualify as “violent offenses” under federal law.

It was reported by some respondents that certain youth being referred to the program were not appropriate for the program, because they were not truly committed to participating. Regarding this concern, one team member commented, “If they’re not going to go voluntarily, then they shouldn’t be referred; our drug court asks that all kids be referred, then we screen them out, but that doesn’t always happen.” This individual admitted that, in some cases, youth should not be given the option of turning down the DC program:

“I think it should be ordered and not just a voluntary program. Calvert County has many youth that are using substances who do not want to participate in the DC, so they’re not getting the structure or the level of treatment/supervision that they need to stay sober.”

Still other team members felt that there were youth who could benefit from program involvement that were not being referred. This particular problem was identified as occurring at the juvenile services level. Specifically, it was felt that DJS did not take some of the first-time offenders (for substance

abuse or other offenses) as seriously as they could, and that a more in-depth investigation into what caused the charge to come about might reveal that an individual was appropriate for referral to the DC program:

“I think that, often times, when that kid has a first offense, we just let him/her sit on informal probation; if they re-offend and we catch them, then okay, but if they’re using and don’t get caught, then they don’t get identified. Those kids may not be deep in the system but may be in terms of drug/alcohol abuse. We’ve had this discussion in our DC team and sometimes they’ll say it comes from the sheriff’s department/state police not forwarding it on to them (DJS); situations where kids that are using who are not being charged or who are not being brought before any authority.”

The CCJDC program is considering the possibility of creating a reciprocity agreement with two other drug court jurisdictions in the area, since the counties are located so close together. Thus, they are looking at the possibility of the offense not necessarily being required to occur in the county (but to transfer some type of jurisdiction over the case). There has also been an effort by program staff to increase the visibility of the drug court in the community, through providing brochures/information about the program (for example, at the local county fair). It is felt that increasing visibility will have the benefit (intended outcome) of increasing referrals to the program; helping to identify those youth who could benefit from services and are currently slipping through the cracks or otherwise going unnoticed and helping the program to meet its capacity goals; and forging new connections with community partners. Additional avenues for increasing visibility in the community have been discussed by the team, including involving representatives from the local business community.

## Recommendations

- In order for the program to increase capacity in the near future, the team will need to look at the screening and referral process of participants to the program. Options may include:
  1. Continuing to be flexible about eligibility requirements, including age guidelines and offense restrictions when flexibility allows the program to serve youth in need of these services. (The team should also discuss whether to request that the master commit those youth to drug court who could most benefit from intensive supervision and treatment but who may not volunteer.
  2. Reviewing the referral process to ensure all eligible youth are being identified (and that risk factors are being identified to ensure that appropriate supports and services are being provided to youth to help them be successful in the program),
  3. Looking at the rate of referral compared to the rate of drug court entry to see if there is a large percentage of eligible youth who are not entering the program, or
  4. Reviewing the decision-making process regarding determining appropriateness for the program.
- The team may want to discuss the implications of allowing the Public Defender or other defense counsel to refer youth to the program. This change could potentially increase referrals to the program.
- The existing program flow chart can be used as a guide to monitor whether the entry process changes over time, and also to identify any bottlenecks in the process that may exist. Doing so can potentially result in quicker time to entry, which in turn means quicker intervention/access to needed services, and likely avoidance of additional future problems, etc. Additionally, as a way to address

both issues (time and capacity), the program might want to consider the implications of accepting pre-plea clients.

## **Key Component #4**

### **DRUG COURTS PROVIDE ACCESS TO A CONTINUUM OF ALCOHOL, DRUG, AND OTHER RELATED TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION SERVICE.**

*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 3 times per week and individual sessions 1 time per week) have lower investment costs<sup>8</sup> (Carey et al., 2005) and substantially higher graduation rates and improved outcome costs<sup>9</sup> (Carey, Finigan, & Pukstas, 2008). 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. These requirements 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, 2006) shows that

<sup>8</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>9</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.

most drug courts have a single provider. NPC, in a study of drug courts in California (Carey et al., 2005), found that having a single 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

All of the services that are offered through drug court exist in this community without drug court. However, the benefit of receiving these services through drug court is seen as twofold: the coordination of those services and the ability of the court to leverage participants to continue using those necessary services. There is an emphasis in the program on designing individualized treatment plans, to meet each youth and their family's needs, which can vary greatly. For example, in an effort to assist a parent with recognized transportation challenges, the team procured a gas card for her. Staff feels that because the program exists within a relatively small jurisdiction, they can be more hands on with regard to addressing participants' (and their families') needs. This approach is consistent with the programs' goal of keeping participating youth in the community and engaging them with family-centered and other wraparound services.

Drug court team members recognize that many of the youth entering the program do not have a lot of family support. The program would prefer family involvement, but it is wavering on that issue currently, as staff has, 1) found it difficult to hold parents accountable for their participation, and 2) faced challenges in engaging parents or working within the constraints of parents' other time commitments, and with some parents who are struggling with their own issues. As a primary level of support, then, participants often come to realize that the drug court program gives them opportunities that the traditional juvenile system does not. Regarding how this shift in thinking results

in a positive impact on youth, a team member commented, “Seeing that, when they’ve messed up just once we’re just not going to automatically throw them into detention...we’re going to give them some other, creative sanctions, or we’re going to give them a different chance, or we’re going to give them some resources to do better and not just throw the book at them.”

All participants receive a substance abuse assessment prior to entry into the program. The level of care of substance abuse treatment is provided to the participant based on the results of the assessment. Services are provided by the Health Department or private providers. After completing substance abuse treatment, participants create and follow a relapse prevention plan through the treatment provider. The drug court does not require a post-drug court aftercare program; however, because the County is small, staff members often run into youth informally in the community.

The drug court team includes the Child and Adolescent Coordinator for the County’s Core Services Agency (which is part of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene). Her job, specifically, is to make sure that resources that children and adolescents need are made available to them. With regard to the treatment resources, psychiatric services for program participants are available through the Health Department, as needed; in addition, youth can receive a wide variety of physical and mental health services. Family therapy is available if indicated, as well as gender-specific treatment sessions (e.g., female clients have, in the past, been placed in a girls’ group). Alcoholics Anonymous is also available to participants, if the treatment provider recommends it. However, it is often not recommended because providers are aware of a lack of existing adolescent groups in the area. Other services provided include medications for participants without health insurance coverage (typically because their parents did not qualify) and vision ser-

vices (e.g., prescription glasses). For non-English (Spanish) speaking participants (there have been none so far), the program is able to provide language-specific services as part of their drug court participation.

Among the major strengths of the drug court program identified during interviews was the level of supervision participants receive throughout their participation. Additionally, the amount of involvement by staff in all aspects of the participants’ lives, from their education to extra-curricular activities, and in their work with families (connecting them with needed resources) who are open to that level of assistance, was seen as a program characteristic that resulted in positive participant outcomes. Staff also identified the “Giving Back” Program, a project-based community service requirement for drug court youth, as a positive program component.

The program has focused a great deal on supporting participants’ education needs. It was reported that the master is very serious about this issue, which was in evidence during the drug court observation, when she was observed addressing education issues with almost all of the youth in attendance. The education liaison has assisted the program with a variety of education concerns (e.g., reporting on school attendance, grades, and behavior, and monitoring the success of participants in individualized education programs), and the drug court has worked to keep youth in school whenever possible (rather than automatically directing those not doing well to get their GEDs). If efforts to support/encourage educational success have not been successful and the youth decides to leave school, he/she must have a plan in place to achieve a GED and secure a job prior to leaving school. With regard to education support, participant/parent interview responses did not necessarily support the program’s reported efforts to provide assistance with education needs. If this area continues to be an area of program emphasis, it

may be useful for the staff to clearly convey this interest to participants, and establish a consistent method for documenting the educational support they provide to each youth.

The drug court is currently trying to work with the education liaison to get PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention System) information, a program in the schools. Through PBIS, the youth are recognized in a positive way (and rewarded) for doing well and, using this information, the drug court feels like it can be more strength-based with its interactions with participants.

Several team members felt that the program should work harder to identify more opportunities for participating youth to develop practical life skills through local resources, and that these services should, according to one staff member, “Go hand-in-hand with their substance abuse treatment, along with emotional therapy and medications that they might need so, hopefully, we can have a more integrated adult coming out of the program.” Regarding this suggestion, it was recommended that a “Life Skills Assessment” be implemented for all participants, which would help the team to better identify these types of needs a youth might have, and to develop a strategy for engaging the necessary and appropriate resources to satisfy those needs. Among the types of services recommended by staff were tutoring support, resume writing, interviewing skills, and dressing for a job interview. It appears that the team has already discussed the creation of such an assessment with Human Services, but nothing has been created so far. According to a team member, “It’s on a list of things that we’d like to integrate into DC, so when they graduate, we just don’t cut them loose...they’ll know how to interview and prepare a resume.”

One of the main challenges for youth in rural Calvert County is the lack of facilities for positive activities. Participation in sports, for example, requires transportation and enroll-

ment fees through the Parks and Recreation Department. In response to this challenge, the program has recently implemented a pro-social activities component, specifically creating positive events/activities in the community involving both participants and drug court team members. After the first of these activities was held, which included youth from another drug court program, the response was overwhelmingly positive by all of those involved, with a recommendation that additional activities planned for the future. The first pro-social activity involved the youth playing in a basketball game, with DC team members cheering from the sidelines, and then a game of dodge ball that included both participants and DC staff (including the juvenile Master). According to one interviewee, “Our team was not afraid to go the distance to hang out with these kids, to engage these kids and even to take a hit from one of these kids (during dodge ball).” The DC is planning on scheduling more pro-social activities in the future, in addition to more community activities in general (e.g., raising money for Relay for Life,<sup>10</sup> getting involved with bowl-a-thons, and taking DC participants to a local paint-ball course). The excitement expressed by staff regarding the pro-social activities is reflective of the high level of team unity described during team interviews, and the many comments made about how much members enjoy interacting with the youth and desire to more fully participate in the program. This energy has a positive impact on participants, according to one team member, who added, “They’re really wanting to be there and the kids can see that.”

Participant/parent interview participants were concerned about the overall length of the program and about the amount of work/time commitment involved in partici-

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<sup>10</sup> A nationally held team walk/run event that celebrates cancer survivors and raises money for the American Cancer Society

pation. About this concern, one respondent commented:

“The length of time of the whole Drug Court process, from Phase 1 to the end is too long. The length of time itself is an obstacle. You feel like you will never finish, so sometimes you get discouraged.”

Parents present at the small group interview also reported that they experienced stress related to program requirements, specifically balancing what is required of them as a drug court parent with their other responsibilities. With regard to the challenges faced as a result of making sure that the child attends all required meetings, one parent stated, “That part is hard, with having to work and everything. All of this has a negative affect on our work schedules too.”

#### Recommendations

- Ensure that all program staff and providers are trained to be culturally responsive to participants and their families, as it is often important to take a broad view of culture, including gender, age, rural/urban differences, and socio-economic status. These differences can create unintended misunderstandings and misinterpretation of certain beliefs or behaviors.
- Based on emerging drug court literature, programs requiring a minimum number of treatment sessions per week have done better in terms of participant outcomes. While individualizing treatment is important in order to adequately meet each participant’s specific needs, the program should maintain a certain level of ongoing treatment contact with drug court youth (i.e., a minimum number of required sessions per week) as it works to achieve long-term sobriety goals.
- Program documents (e.g., Policy and Procedure Manual) indicate the program is founded on strength-based principles.

Ensure that all staff and agency partners are trained in strength-based philosophy and practices, including strength-based assessment and service planning.

- While it is understood that the drug court program cannot require a formal after-care component, it may be worth exploring, with community partners, ideas for following up on youth and their families at some point after program completion to see if they need to be connected with additional resources. While follow-up may occur informally, it would be beneficial to implement a structured and consistent mechanism and time to connect with all graduates.
- Because of the challenges for youth in accessing recreation resources, this would be a great topic to discuss or develop with community partners. In addition, as the staff have already discovered, recreational activities that are part of the program provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships between staff and participants, build self-confidence related to engagement in positive activities, develop safe and healthy interests, and allow an informal, natural setting where some youth may feel comfortable disclosing personal information.

### **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 oc-

curs 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, 2006) show that the number of urinalyses (UAs) conducted by the large majority of drug courts nationally during the first two phases is two to three per week.

#### Local Process

Participants in the Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court program receive three drug tests per week. They are tested by the treatment provider during each visit. Depending on how often they are tested there, they will receive the remainder of the tests through DJS (the DC case manager facilitates the test). There was general consensus among team members that a consistent testing process supported drug court participants' sobriety. It was also reported that one of the program's main challenges regarding drug testing has to do with the sometimes limited availability of same gendered treatment and case management staff to fully observe the UAs.

Substance Abuse Services is the local treatment provider doing all of the treatment and it also conducts the majority of UA lab work. The program primarily uses full UAs that are lab tested but it also uses instant

tests (quick tests). If a youth gives a positive result on a quick test and objects to the result, then that test is followed up with a lab test (full UA). Lately, the drug court team has been considering charging participants for positive tests if they deny use. However, to date, all participants have admitted use after testing positive on an instant test. The drug court can also do breathalyzer tests and has recently begun using SCRAM<sup>11</sup> as an alcohol testing option.

Currently the drug court does not have the ability to conduct drug testing in the schools. As the program would like to be able to tell youth and parents that participants could be tested any day or time (and anywhere), the drug court is currently in contact with the school system to explore this option. The projected outcome of these efforts was met by some with skepticism, specifically with regard to whether probation officers would ever be allowed to test on school grounds.

#### Recommendation

- While it is understandable for the program to want to have the authority to conduct drug testing on participants at any time (e.g., during school), keep in mind that the process of how testing is conducted reflects the program's philosophy (e.g., being strength-based). If the program develops a testing protocol in the schools, the team is encouraged to discuss issues of confidentiality, peer perceptions, youth dignity, potential labeling issues, etc., to ensure that testing is conducted sensitively and that the implementation of this component does not result in negative repercussions.

<sup>11</sup> The SCRAM (Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor) is a device, attached to the ankle, which provides continuous, 24-hour monitoring of alcohol concentration through the skin.

## 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 do 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, 2006).

Carey, Finigan, and Pukstas, 2008, 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

The CCJDC program has made a concerted effort to collect information about participants' likes and dislikes, so that it can individualize incentives and make them more meaningful (e.g., sending a participant to the Maryland International Raceway, arranging guitar lessons for another, giving a participant a day at one of the local spas, paying for an SAT prep course for a participant excelling in school). Graduates (there have been five (as of October 2008) since the program's inception) are provided with a reward for successful completion of the program. However, staff members recognize that the program needs to continue to work at tailoring incentives in a more meaningful way in order to have the greatest impact.

The team also realizes the importance of giving out non-material rewards for positive behaviors. It was reported that participants will often receive verbal praise from the bench regarding their accomplishments, such as achievements as sports or academics. At the time of the interviews, respondents reported that verbal rewards (as positive reinforcement) were "starting to kick in" as a powerful incentive for further positive behaviors.

Rewards (or sanctions, for that matter) are not tied to specific behaviors in a standardized way. However, material rewards given to participants have generally occurred at phase changes. Being clean is not a requirement to move from Phase I to Phase II (this requirement does not start until Phase II); however, staying clean early on in the program is recognized by the court as a positive behavior. Before participants can graduate, they must be compliant with all drug testing requirements throughout the phase, attend all court sessions, treatment-related meetings and family assessments, and participate in post-drug court planning (for life/sobriety); they must have 90 consecutive days clean. With regard to missing meetings,



that issue (and the determined consequence) is addressed on a case by case basis by the team. It is important to note that participants must formally apply (through a letter to the court) to change phases or to be considered for graduation, and to explain why they should be considered for movement.

Information from the participant/parent interviews revealed a perception that incentives have not been applied consistently across the youth participating in the program. About this issue, one participant commented:

“I don’t think it is always fair the way they decide who gets an incentive. I have seen kids do good and they get nothing. Then somebody else, who might not be doing that great, gets an incentive.”

Further, one of the parents stated a concern that the during court sessions negative behaviors were being emphasized more than positive accomplishments. This individual added:

“I just want to reiterate that the Magistrate needs to respond to the progress that these kids make. My child has sometimes gotten so discouraged that he wanted to drop out. This was directly because his progress was not recognized.”

The CCJDC program is committed to addressing behavioral concerns with participants quickly to prevent problems from escalating. According to one team member, “The *immediate* rewards and sanctions are really beneficial for (participants), versus in regular court where you write a review and it happens in 30 days.” If the team cannot come to a consensus regarding sanction-related decisions, then the bench ultimately decides. To this point in the program, the team members have mostly agreed on the sanctions given to participants. Early in the program, the PD’s office raised concerns that there would be a potential for moving quickly through graduated sanctions due to the frequent judicial contact with partici-

pants. The drug court team members have utilized a strength-based approach and have to date avoided extensive use of sanctions.

DJS also has the ability to levy sanctions on DC participants. It was reported that the DJS Case Workers involved in the drug court are very adept at dealing with issues that arise while in the field, including providing more immediate consequences for negative behaviors. Regarding this practice, one team member commented:

“They’re really working on not making the kids wait 2 weeks for a sanction. Often, it’s over by the time they come in to (court). (The Master) can say, ‘Okay, you did it, let’s move on.’”

There is an effort to get the DJS staff working with the drug court program to step away from automatically giving out severe sanctions (like jail time) after discovering a youth has broken a DC rule. Advocating for this change was a challenge early on for the program, which supports DJS case managers giving out a sanction immediately after a discovered infraction, as long as the level of severity is consistent with the observed behavior.

There was a concern raised that changes in treatment requirements (e.g., increased sessions or testing) in response to negative/problematic behaviors may sometimes be viewed by participants as a punitive measure (i.e., as a sanction) rather than a needed therapeutic intervention. The worry is that this perception may then jeopardize treatment staff’s rapport with drug court participants.

Changing parents’ minds with regard to how the court should respond to negative behaviors has sometimes been a challenge, especially in instances where a parent wants a more severe sanction than what the court finds appropriate. Regarding this issue, one interviewee reported:

“We’ve had some parents come in to DC and say, ‘Please take my kid and lock him up,’ and the judge says, ‘I’m sorry, no, you’re going to take him home, and he’s going to write me an essay telling me why it’s important to take responsibility for his actions.’”

### Recommendations

- Be aware that when sanctions can be imposed by multiple partners, it is important for all partner agencies to communicate clearly so the total package of responses to noncompliant behavior is appropriate to the infraction. While the benefit of multiple partners imposing sanctions is a quicker response to behavior (desirable), prior programs have found that when only the judge can impose sanctions it can reduce participant anxiety and help them know what to expect from the program (and is associated with higher graduation rates). The program should continue to discuss how best to achieve balance in this area.
- It is beneficial for drug court teams to have policy discussions about the use of sanctions by individual agencies and for the team to talk about individual participant sanctions whenever possible.
- The program is encouraged to use incentives and rewards liberally (not only during phase changes), to balance needed sanctions and to reinforce a positive, strength-based program climate. Further, to create an atmosphere of fairness, the team should work on making sure that its use of rewards is consistent and that it communicates clearly with participants/families why an incentive/reward is being provided, especially if the reinforcements are individualized.
- Consider how the court imposes sanctions compared to how it orders changes in treatment requirements. Make sure that participants fully understand the

reasons for court-ordered changes in treatment, specifically that they are not being done as a punishment but, rather, a way to support the youth in being successful in the program and, ultimately, in life.

- It is also important that program staff is clear with youth and their parents/guardians that successful completion of the program does not mean that their record will be expunged, rather that successful completion provides a guarantee that the findings of the case will be modified to “not involved, not delinquent” and the record will be sealed. Several participant/parent interview participants reported as one of the program benefits that the records are expunged. Staff should make sure that prospective participants understand the technicality of all potential outcomes (and what each one means) prior to allowing youth to enter the program.

## **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 judge? 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, 2006) 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

The amount of time a Master can preside over this drug court program is currently open-ended. There is no time requirement. The current Master has been involved with the CCJDC since February 2006, when the program was still in its planning stages. She was hired into the position, and also serves as the domestic relations and juvenile master for Calvert County. There is no identified substitute for the Master if she is unable to preside over a drug court session; that need has not yet arisen, as vacations are scheduled at the beginning of the year and she has not been sick on a drug court day.

By the time the drug court session begins, to a large extent all issues/concerns have been handled in pre-court staffing meeting. The Master will generally follow a consensus model regarding decisions about participants; unless she really feels strongly about an issue, she is not likely to go against the team's decision (which is a rare instance). Essentially, the main focus of the DC session is the interaction between the participant and the Master. During drug court team interviews, respondents provided positive

feedback with regard to the master's involvement in team meetings and facilitation of drug court sessions.

The Master works to create a relaxed, non-intimidating atmosphere during the court session and her demeanor is warm, compassionate and supportive, an approach that appeared (during the drug court observation) to make both the participating youth and their families comfortable. She shows interest by asking participants about their lives, in general, and with regard to the program (currently and over the past few weeks). The Master acknowledges participants' hard work and progress when appropriate, and she offers encouragement and gives directives/levy sanctions when participants are not meeting program and/or treatment related goals. She also recommends alternative behaviors and possible decision-making strategies to youth who are not doing well, to help them get back on track and, if needed, is an advocate for utilizing all available resources to help them turn their lives around.

The Juvenile Court Judge in the County (who presides over other juvenile matters outside of drug court and oversees the drug court Master) has become an advocate for the program (such as supporting systemic changes to accommodate the drug court's needs).

#### Recommendation

- If it is feasible, it would be prudent to identify an individual who could serve as a back-up judge/master (in the event that the need for a substitute judge/master arises), and assist that person in getting to know the program, learning the process, etc.

## Key Component #8

### MONITORING AND EVALUATION MEASURE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PROGRAM GOALS AND GAUGE EFFECTIVENESS.

*Research Question: Is 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, and Pukstas, 2008, 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 to 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

In the initial stages of its development, the CCJDC asked the county's local management board, the Calvert County Family

Network (CCFN) to help with collecting participant data for evaluative purposes. Through a tool developed by the CCFN's Evaluation and Monitoring Specialist, the program looked primarily at the types of youth that were coming into the drug court (e.g., the types of offenders), the length of time spent in the program, the success rates, and what levels (phases) participants were able to achieve. Because of the promise of a statewide data system for recording drug court information (SMART) as a more efficient process for collecting and analyzing participant data, that initial evaluation effort was suspended. However, as a result of the delays in getting the SMART system satisfactorily implemented, there was a concern that the program would not be able to collect the information needed when it was applying for additional grant funding (i.e., the program felt that it did not have the statistical data to back up a request for funding). In response to this concern, the local management board was asked to review the evaluation tool that it initially developed and to restructure it to current standards (with specific performance measures and outcomes). The updated tool, then, would be a way to at least measure the program's success and progress, if not at the state level (through SMART), then at the local level.

The drug court coordinator has continued to collect and record information about participants in a local data system. The program is planning to transition to SMART in the future, once the system has resolved some of the statewide administrative issues, such as merging existing data from databases already in use (e.g., ASSIST and HATS).

In terms of confidentiality, juvenile courts in Maryland are open. However, every parent signs a visitor's agreement as a part of the admissions paperwork, stating that he/she understands that anything heard in court is not to be disclosed. Also, unfamiliar individuals in the courtroom during the drug court session are usually approached and

asked why they are there. New people usually stand out as the court docket is relatively small (so the number of participants and family members attending court is small as well). On occasion, the team has conversations about confidentiality during pre-court meetings. One example of when confidentiality concerns arise is when referrals come in, in advance of adjudication. The program has a “watch list,” which contains the names of youth referred to the program; however, there is no discussion of charges, and no real discussion of the case. The Master cannot discuss the case (or even hear it) until after adjudication. Added to that is the fact that Substance Abuse Services may not have gotten the appropriate consent forms signed at the point of referral (so they cannot tell the program anything about the youth’s substance abuse concerns).

#### Recommendations

- Retain data from the current program monitoring system even after transitioning to SMART, including both paper records and electronic files. These materials will be useful for future evaluations.
- If inter-agency data infrastructure issues are not yet resolved, the program is encouraged to facilitate a meeting to discuss concerns and develop solutions so that the program can use the SMART data system.
- Use of program statistics and program evaluation data to modify program operations is associated with higher graduation rates. It is suggested that the team review the findings from this process evaluation to discuss the recommendations that are offered. Further, it is recommended that the team schedule a regular time (e.g., annually) to review program data and discuss the findings and their implications for any potential program changes/adjustments; or they may take that time to identify any current

program issue(s)/challenges and devise a process for collecting information that could inform viable options/possible solutions.

- When the program begins using SMART, it is suggested that the program enter information that is currently in hard copy form, especially program data, into that data system. In particular, it is recommended that the program enter school attendance information and drug testing information into the electronic system, at least for current participants. In addition, it is suggested that the program begin collecting information on the race/ethnicity or cultural background of participants.

### **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, and Pukstas, 2008, study found that drug court programs requiring 1) all new hires to complete formal training or orientation, 2) team members to receive training in preparation for implementation, and 3) all drug court team members be provided with training were associated with positive outcomes costs and higher graduation rates.

#### Local Process

Initially, all of the CCJDC team members went through the national trainings; however, by the time the program was implemented there was only one person (the education liaison) who remained on the team, as everybody else had either been promoted or moved on to something else. Currently, all

of the team members attend trainings offered through the Office of Problem-Solving Courts [OPSC] (e.g., Drug Court 101), as well as the Winter Symposium (in Annapolis). The program is aware that the OPSC is working to bring to Maryland all of the role-specific trainings that the National Drug Court Institute puts out, and plans to fully participate in all that is offered. There was some difficulty regarding scheduling the judicial trainings as the date conflicted with a state's judicial conference.

The team has talked at length about cross-training possibilities for its members. It was suggested that offering a training for the entire team, where their fellow team members' roles and responsibilities would be more thoroughly explained, would provide everyone with a better understanding of their other agency partners and of the drug court program as a whole. However, it is anticipated that some team members may be resistant to this idea, due to limited time available to them beyond their agency-related job responsibilities.

During team interviews there were a number of suggestions made regarding future training topics/areas. One team member felt that there was value in offering a training that focused on the impact drug court has on families, and visa versa. This view relates to an overall perception that some families have limited buy-in regarding the program and, as a result, are resistant to make changes at home (even though individual change can be happening with the youth). Thus, an opportunity for staff to learn various strategies to better support drug court families, so they can see the program as an investment for them and their child, was believed to be a worthwhile addition to the current trainings being offered. Related to the need for parental support, one team member reported that the program is considering implementing a class for parents on drug court (i.e., a more intensive orientation for family members), an idea they picked up

during the Winter Symposium. Also learning about the participants' and their families' different cultures and how to best address those issues was seen as a potentially valuable training need, as it was recognized that the youth entering the program represent a number of different backgrounds and experience (e.g., socioeconomic, educational, cultural, racial).

Among the trainings that were described as most helpful by program staff were the informal panels comprised of individuals representing different drug courts around the state. This training was seen as a great opportunity for programs to learn from one another, and there was a recommendation made by staff for future opportunities for this type of learning, specifically including a "question and answer" format to address what works and what does not work in various drug courts around the state (and even the country).

Regarding treatment aspects of drug court, one staff commented that the initial training he received was very comprehensive; however, he felt that it would be helpful if there were opportunities for staff to get periodic updates on treatment options and testing issues. Other respondents recommended additional future trainings to help them better understand substance abuse, in particular trainings with up-to-date, cutting edge information (e.g., the link between the adolescent brain and drug treatment).

It was reported that there were some early challenges with regard to getting the steering committee up and running; this difficulty was related, according to one team member, to the program not having a clear idea about how a drug court steering committee was supposed to function. Related to this issue, there was a recommendation made for a future training involving the steering committee, one that included strategies for getting community businesses/partners involved in the drug court (for example, to assist the

program with finding meaningful incentives for participants).

There was a concern raised by one of the participant/parent interview participants that because the youth and parents were interviewed together for the entire initial assessment, there often was not an opportunity to be more open about what led to the youth's difficulties/challenges. This person felt that the assessment process must include both scenarios (speaking with youth and parents together and apart) in order to allow each individual a chance to talk openly without being unduly influenced or inhibited by the presence of the other.

#### Recommendations

- Ensure that new members of the team receive orientation and training about the drug court model, about the specifics of the Calvert County Juvenile Drug Court program, and about their role in the program and the roles of the other team members.
- Establish a training log to ensure that team members are receiving ongoing training necessary to be an effective part of the drug court program.
- Cross-training staff benefits multi-disciplinary programs such as drug courts by helping all team members better understand the roles, activities, and challenges of their colleagues. In addition to investigating formal cross-training opportunities or requirements, the team may want to dedicate meeting time for members to share about their work (e.g., have each agency rotate presenting about their role quarterly at a team or policy meeting).
- The list of training topics suggested by drug court team members include: impact of families on drug courts and impact of drug courts on families, strategies for engaging and supporting families, cultural trainings (identified as a

need in KC 4), treatment options, testing issues, and substance abuse in adolescents. Additionally, team members recommended further opportunities to attend panel discussions comprised of staff from other drug courts (for sharing of program experiences and lessons learned), and a training for steering committee members regarding how to most effectively engage community partners.

- All team members should to be trained on the drug court model (in particular, the non-adversarial aspect of the process) and make sure to present a united team in front of participants and their families.
- The program might want to review the initial assessment process, specifically including time for youth and parents/guardians to be interviewed separately as well as together, to increase the likelihood of that the interviewer collects accurate/complete information. This procedure should be added to the training process.

## 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, 2006) 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 Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, medical providers, local education systems, employment services, faith communities, and Chambers of Commerce.

### Local Process

Several team members reported that the drug court could benefit from partnering with agencies that provide mentoring services for participating youth. According to one interviewee, "We often talk about some of our kids who don't have a connection with an appropriate adult figure; they can't relate to anyone at home and we don't have anyone to link them to, so it would always be nice to have a mentoring program." This team member recommended working with the education department to create a school mentoring program. Related to this reported need, the drug court has been working on putting together a Memorandum of Understanding to work with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, to find mentors for its participants. Typically, the Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program has an age limit of 14 years old; however, through this special arrangement, the drug court will be responsible for recruiting mentors, and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program will train them, do background checks, monitor the match, etc.

Regarding education related support, the program has been working with an organization called the "Tutoring Club," a franchise operation similar to Sylvan Learning Centers. It has been talking with this organization out of a concern that many of the drug court youth who are academically behind are in that situation purely because of lack of

school attendance (they miss so many days and they automatically fail and are consequently suspended). Participation in the Tutoring Club would be a way for these youth to stay on track, academically, while they are waiting to be reinstated at their regular school program. Additionally, some participants have attended GED classes, which are offered through the local Adult Education Department.

In terms of employment support, Holler and Associates, a local career consulting firm, has offered to provide free career services to drug court youth. In the initial session, they would assess the participant's job readiness skills and career development goals, and conduct a quick needs assessment. Then, over the course of three sessions, they would assist the youth in building a resume, exploring future career possibilities, and engaging them in other career development activities.

Several team members reported that finding adequate transportation in Calvert County, which currently has a fairly limited bus system operation, has been a major challenge. However, the program has obtained funding to assist participants and their families with the cost of transportation. It has also recently arranged a contract with a local transportation provider to provide regular transportation services (getting participants who need it to appointments). The service will set up regular routes for youth and their families who will consistently need transportation (they will invoice the program for those services). Also, the drug court is currently working to find a cab company that can take care of emergent transportation needs (e.g., where somebody's ride falls through).

It was reported that none of the participants (and their families) has had housing concerns. Early on in the process, the program brought in the local housing office as a partner. This agency is not currently represented on the team since it was determined that there was not an existing need for housing-



related assistance. However, they are available as a future support if the need arises.

It was recognized that securing funding for additional services has been an ongoing challenge for the program. With additional monies, team members felt that the program would be better able to meet participants' numerous and varied service needs, including being able to offer more pro-social activities, additional community service options and more meaningful incentives. Related to the program's need for more money to fund additional supports, most staff felt that the program should do more to tap into the local business community. It was felt that community support for the program could take some of the pressure off of the drug court.

Regarding this issue, one team member commented that, because they live in a bedroom community, most of the participant's parents commute outside of the county for work. As a result, they do not return home until late in the evening, so a lot of the teenagers in the area are left on their own after school. Her recommendation was for the drug court to engage local businesses as partners, working with them to offer activities for the youth to do in the afternoon. For example, there are several music stores and music teaching facilities in the county that could provide an opportunity for youth to learn music while keeping them busy after school. Additionally, the drug court could provide participants with memberships to the local gym. However, most staff admitted that, in Calvert County, there is not much in the way of services for youth living outside of the Prince Frederick area. Because of this limitation, transportation becomes an issue if teens want to be involved in ongoing activities (e.g., playing in a sports league, taking weekly music lessons, joining a club). Again, these options increase the need for reliable transportation support. Although it was recognized as a challenge, and sometimes an issue of "small town politics," one recommendation was to find ways for the

program to gain more visibility in the local press (e.g., in articles about the drug court program, graduations, or drug court youth participating in volunteer projects). Related to this suggestion, an interviewee commented:

"I think that it would be a positive message to send to the community, that kids who have gotten into trouble are not hopeless; they can do positive things too. That would get us some help in accessing more community resources; it would get help in getting these kids access to jobs, and in funding scholarships."

### Recommendations

- Continue outreach to community agencies and organizations (including local businesses) to maintain or build relationships and connections to support the program (a need identified in KC 3). Some ways of doing this might be to create a pooled list of team members' personal and professional connections, asking the steering committee to invite a new potential partner each month to their meeting, or asking DC youth to collaborate on the creation of a directory of teen-friendly activities in the area that could meet the program's community service requirement.
- Among the needs identified by staff are additional recreational/sports, pro-social and after school activities, mentoring opportunities, and a greater focus on developing creative/individualized incentives for drug court youth.



## CALVERT COUNTY JUVENILE DRUG TREATMENT 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 individuals that frequently have serious substance abuse treatment needs.

The challenges and strengths found in the CCJDTC 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 individuals with substance abuse issues must be seen within an ecological context; that is, within the environment that has contributed to their attitudes and behaviors, risks and protective factors. This environment includes the neighborhoods in which they live, their schools, and their family members and friends. In an effort to better address the needs of these individuals, then, it is important to understand the various social, economic and cultural factors that affect them.

Social service and criminal/juvenile justice systems are designed to respond to community needs. To be most effective, it is important that these systems clearly understand the components and scope of those needs. System partners must analyze and agree on the specific problems to be solved, as well as what the contributing factors are, who is most affected, and what strategies are likely to be most successful when addressing the

problem. A formal/informal needs analysis will help to define what programs and services should look like, who the stakeholders are, and what role each will play.

### *Summary of Community-Level Recommendations*

CCJDTC should continue to maintain and develop community resources as they relate to the most common participant needs. Needs identified in this process study include recreational activities (especially activities available after school and more pro-social activities involving the program team), opportunities for mentoring, and creative/individualized incentives that are tied to participants' specific interests and talents. As the drug court staff members have already discovered, organized recreational activities that are part of the program structure provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships between staff and participants, encourage youth to build self-confidence and develop safe and healthy interests, and create an informal, natural setting where participating youth may feel more comfortable opening up to staff about personal concerns/issues.

The program should also continue outreach to community agencies and organizations with the goal of building and maintaining relationships/connections that will help to support the program and increase sustainability. Suggested strategies for building community connections include creating a pooled list of connections that each team member has, asking the steering committee to invite a new potential partner each month, or asking drug court youth to create a directory of teen-friendly activities to fulfill their community service hours. Specifically, make an effort to further engage community businesses as program partners, as these organizations may help secure resources to support future pro-

social/recreational activities and the creation of meaningful incentives.

In terms of drug court team membership, further engage law enforcement to encourage at least one representative to attend team meetings on a regular basis. Consider the relative value to the program of inviting a representative of the Maryland State Police onto the team. Also, discuss the merits of inviting a private mental health therapist from the community to join the drug court team; an individual with this background could offer additional expertise with regard to the varying mental health care needs of program participants.

#### 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*

As often happens in programs, many of the CCJDTC's team members face challenges with regard to balancing drug court and non-drug court responsibilities, which can result in an inability to attend all scheduled team meetings, court sessions, and/or other program-related activities/meetings. This issue should be discussed with team members to see if there are solutions that can be found for those staff members whose workload or schedules prevent their full attendance. These discussions may also include administrators from the agencies represented in the program, who might be able to provide additional creative solutions to this challenge.

It was noted that there has been some turnover of individuals representing the partnering agencies, in particular past team members from the State's Attorney's Office and the Department of Juvenile Services. In identifying/selecting new team members, it is important for the program to bring in individuals who are genuinely interested in drug court and willing to make a commitment to the program. Further, it is important that new team members understand that they need to be supportive of the program, especially in public (e.g., in the court room) and work to maintain the drug court's non-adversarial model. The drug court team functions well when positive and productive relationships have been established between team members, a process that can take time. Reducing turnover will benefit the program in the long run, by reducing training costs, increasing efficiency, and contributing to improved outcomes for participants.

All team members should be thoroughly trained on the drug court model (in particular, the non-adversarial aspect of the process). Ensure that staff and agency partners are trained in strength-based philosophy and practices, including strength-based as-

assessment and service planning. Also make sure that all program staff and providers are trained to be culturally responsive to participants and their families, taking a broad view of culture, including gender, age, rural/urban differences, and socio-economic status. These differences can create unintended misunderstandings and misinterpretation of certain beliefs or behaviors.

Cross-training staff benefits multi-disciplinary programs such as drug courts by helping all team members better understand the roles, activities, and challenges of their colleagues. In addition to investigating formal cross-training opportunities or requirements, the team may want to dedicate meeting time for members to share about their work (e.g., have each agency rotate presenting about their role quarterly at a team or policy meeting).

If feasible, it would be prudent to identify an individual who could serve as a back-up judge/master, in the event that the need for a substitute judge/master arises. Once identified, it would be important to assist that person in getting to know the program (including all team members), and in learning the drug court process (e.g., program rules, requirements, sanction/rewards process).

Until the program has fully implemented the SMART data system, treatment providers should provide a hard copy summary of each participant's treatment status/progress at team meetings to the coordinator and/or Master. Alternatively, the summary could be emailed prior to the team meeting. Regarding the implementation of SMART, if inter-agency data infrastructure issues are not yet resolved, the program is encouraged to facilitate a meeting to discuss concerns and develop solutions so that the program can use the data system effectively.

#### **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 works best for the community.

#### *Summary of Program-Level Recommendations*

In order for the program to increase capacity in the near future, the team will need to look at the screening and referral process of participants to the program and create ways to increase capacity, including continuing to be flexible about eligibility requirements (such as age guidelines and offense restrictions), reviewing the referral process to ensure all eligible youth are being identified (and that risk factors are being identified to ensure that appropriate supports and services are being provided to youth to help them be successful in the program), and reviewing the decision-making process regarding determining appropriateness for the program.

Consider the resource implications of having both Sheriff's Office and DJS case management staff on home visits—unless there are safety concerns or a need for gender-specific urine testing observations. In addition, consider the impact on the youth and family of having law enforcement staff coming to the home and whether they would be more comfortable with the program if home visits were conducted solely by case managers.

Focus on maintaining consistent, clear and timely communications between team members related specifically to supervision and monitoring, and responses to participant behavior. Be aware that when sanctions can be imposed by multiple partners (e.g., the team, treatment, probation), it is important for all partner agencies to communicate clearly with one another about the consequences levied, so the total "package" of responses to non-compliant behavior is appropriate to the infraction. It is beneficial for drug court teams

to have policy discussions about the use of sanctions by individual agencies and for the team to talk about individual participant sanctions whenever possible. The program is encouraged to use incentives and rewards liberally (in addition to planned rewards at phase changes), to balance needed sanctions and to reinforce a positive, strength-based program climate. Also, to create an atmosphere of fairness, the team should work on making sure that its use of rewards is consistent and that it communicates clearly with participants/families why an incentive/reward is being provided, especially if the reinforcements are individualized. Although it is understood that the drug court program cannot require a formal aftercare component, it may be worth exploring with community partners ideas for following up on youth and their families at some point after program completion to see if they need to be connected with additional resources. While follow-up may occur informally, it would be beneficial to implement a structured and consistent mechanism and time to connect with all graduates.

While it is understandable for the program to want to have the authority to conduct drug testing on participants at any time (e.g., during school), keep in mind that the process of how testing is conducted reflects the program's philosophy (e.g., being strength-based). If the program develops a testing protocol in the schools, the team is encouraged to discuss issues of confidentiality, peer perceptions, youth dignity, potential labeling

issues, etc., to ensure that testing is conducted sensitively and that the implementation of this component does not result in negative repercussions.

The drug court might want to review the initial assessment process, specifically including time for youth and parents/guardians to be interviewed separately as well as together, to increase the likelihood of that the interviewer collects accurate/complete information. This procedure should be added to the training process.

When the program begins using SMART, it is suggested that it enter information that is currently in hard copy form, especially program data, into that data system. In particular, it is recommended that school attendance information and drug testing information be entered into the electronic system, at least for current participants. In addition, it is suggested that the program begin collecting (and recording) information on the race/ethnicity or cultural background of participants. The team should also find a regular time (e.g., annually) to review program data and discuss the findings and their implications for any potential program changes/adjustments; or to identify any current issue(s) and collect information so that the team can discuss options/possible solutions. Also, retain data from the current program monitoring system even after transitioning to SMART, including both paper records and electronic files. These materials will be useful for future evaluations.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Calvert County Juvenile Drug Treatment Court appears to understand the 10 key components of effective drug courts and 16 juvenile strategies, and is actively working to fully implement them into their program. Some particular findings (also included in the 10 key component summary) are:

### Unique and/or Promising Practices

- Implementation of pro-social activities that involve both participants and drug court team members (“They just don’t sit on the sidelines, but are interacting fully with the kids”).
- A high degree of comfort and trust among team members (most of whom knew each other before the drug court was implemented) and a shared knowledge of available county resources (e.g., where referrals can be made).
- The commitment of team members to the youth involved in the program, including a sincere desire for participants to be successful, and ongoing effort to be creative (e.g., with program activities) in order to keep the youth engaged.
- Transportation arrangements made frequently by team members for drug court youth, to support their full participation.
- A shared perception that the program is worthwhile and a willingness of all agency partners to come together and offer feedback for the good of the program.
- Having a drug court coordinator with a background in law enforcement running the program (making sure that everything is working the way it is supposed to).
- The skill level of DJS Case Workers. Key stakeholders reported that they are very good at case management and dealing with issues as they arise in the field (“They go above and beyond in supporting the participants”).
- The level of drug testing that occurs in the program, the high degree of supervision, and the frequency of appearances in court.
- Verbal praise youth receive from the bench regarding their accomplishments (the focus is not just on sporting achievements but on academics).
- The individualized treatment focus.
- The fact the program is located in a small enough jurisdiction where drug court staff can be hands on and know what is going on with participants (outside of the program).
- Being able to keep participating youth in the community and engaging them with family-centered and other wrap-around services.
- Tailoring incentives in meaningful (individualized) ways.
- Youth participation in “Giving Back,” a project-based (as opposed to time-based) community service requirement.

### Areas that Could Benefit from More Attention

- Continue to maintain and develop community resources as they relate to the most common participant needs. Identified needs include recreational activities (especially activities available after school and more pro-social activities involving the program team), opportunities for mentoring, and creative/individualized incentives that are tied

to participants' specific interests and talents.

- Continue outreach to community agencies and organizations with the goal of building and maintaining relationships/connections that will help to support the program and increase sustainability.
- Exploring possible solutions for those team members whose workload or schedules prevent their full attendance at court sessions and team meetings.
- In identifying/selecting new team members, bring in individuals who are genuinely interested in drug court and willing to make a commitment to the program.
- Ensure that staff and agency partners are trained in strength-based philosophy and practices, including strength-based assessment and service planning.
- Make sure that all program staff and providers are trained to be culturally responsive to participants and their families.
- In addition to investigating formal cross-training opportunities or requirements, the team may want to dedicate meeting time for members to share about their work (e.g., have each agency rotate presenting about their role quarterly at a team or policy meeting).
- Identify an individual who could serve as a back-up judge/master, in the event that the need for a substitute judge/master arises and, once identified, assist that person in getting to know the program (including all team members), and in learning the drug court process.
- Until the program has fully implemented the SMART data system, treatment providers should provide a hard copy summary of each participant's treatment status/progress at team meetings to the coordinator and/or Master.
- Look at the screening and referral process of participants to the program and create ways to increase capacity, including continuing to be flexible about eligibility requirements, reviewing the referral process to ensure all eligible youth are being identified, and reviewing the decision-making process regarding determining appropriateness for the program.
- Use incentives and rewards liberally to balance needed sanctions and to reinforce a positive, strength-based program climate.
- Make sure that the use of rewards is consistent and that it communicates clearly with participants/families why an incentive/reward is being provided, especially if the reinforcements are individualized.
- While follow-up with former drug court participants may occur informally, it would be beneficial to implement a structured and consistent mechanism and time to connect with all graduates.
- During the initial assessment process, include time for youth and parents/guardians to be interviewed separately as well as together, to increase the likelihood of that the interviewer collects accurate/complete information.



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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, re-wards/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 <http://www.npcresearch.com/materials.php> (see Drug Court Materials section).



**APPENDIX B: RESULTS SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT AND  
PARENT/GUARDIAN INTERVIEWS**





## Summary of Participant and Parent/Guardian Interviews

As described in the methodology section of this report, NPC conducted interviews with participants and parents/guardians in the offices of the Calvert County Juvenile Drug Treatment Court in July 2008. Active participants and program graduates, and their parents/guardians, were invited to talk about the drug court program in small group settings. Two current drug court participants attended the first group; two parents/guardians of current and former participants attended the second group. These interviews provided the participants and parents/guardians with an opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions regarding the drug court process.

The topics discussed during the interviews included what the participants liked about the drug court program, what they disliked, general feedback about the program (including program staff), why they decided to participate, barriers to program success, and suggestions to improve the program.

### Participant Interview

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

- I liked the outings and the things that we do as a group sometimes. That can be fun because we get to socialize with our friends and stuff.
- It kept me out of jail. I would rather be doing this than be in jail.
- My mom feels that not having a record after all of this makes it worth it to complete. I guess I agree with her.
- I feel that some of the structure has helped me. Because I have to worry about the curfew and everything, I am more careful about how I use my time.

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

- The amount of time that we have to spend coming to court is way too much!
- I think the curfew is too strict and we have to give too many urine tests.
- I feel like there are way too many rules in my life. It is just too much control in this program
- I'll tell you what I really don't like. They will call you and tell you that they are on the way to give you a urine test. They don't give you any notice or anything. I have been on my way somewhere and have to change my whole plan. That is not right.
- I don't think it is always fair the way they decide who gets an incentive. I have seen kids do good and they get nothing. Then somebody else, who might not be doing that great, gets an incentive.

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

- The Probation Officer, Mr. Rhinehart, is very fair and he is very motivating. He says things to us to encourage us. He does not talk down to us or anything.
- I think Ms. Denise, the Addictions Counselor has been most helpful to me. I have heard some other kids say that she has helped them as well.
- I guess they are okay. I mean, nobody treats me bad or nothing. They are okay.

*Why they decided to participate in Drug Court*

- Because my record will be expunged permanently. No doubt, that makes it worth it.
- I came here instead of going to long term rehab. I thought this was a better choice for me.
- My family thought it was best for me to come to Drug Court. I did not have a whole lot of say.
- I was not sure if it would be a good thing or not, but I ended up coming anyway. My dad helped me to think about what was best.

*Obstacles to successfully completing the Drug Court Program*

- The length of time of the whole Drug Court process, from Phase 1 to the end is too long. The length of time itself is an obstacle. You feel like you will never finish, so sometimes you get discouraged.
- My friends may say they have obstacles, but not me.

*Suggestions to improve the Drug Court Program*

- I would only have the kids come to court once per month at the beginning and it should get less than that if you are doing well.
- The whole program should be shorter. I don't know exactly how long, but shorter than what it is now.
- The curfews should be extended. That time is really for little kids. They should understand that we are teenagers and we need some freedom no matter what we did.

*What educational support and linkages in the community have been provided?*

*How had Drug Court helped you with school?*

- None. I haven't heard anybody else talk about that either.
- None for me either.
- I am doing better in school but it is not because they did anything to help me.

*What is the Drug Court session like?*

- It is okay. They talk okay to us and everything. But I do not like the fact that I have to stay and listen to everyone else's case once I am finished. That is so not fair.
- I do not like that either. We should be able to leave when we are done.
- My dad says he does get to see how they treat all of the different kids.

*Why do you think there is a Drug Court?*

- I guess to help kids to stop using drugs and doing crimes.
- So that they can manage us since we got caught. So that they can keep a close look on if we are doing what we are suppose to.

*What is the hardest part of Drug Court?*

- The program has its ups and downs. It seems to have more downs than ups. I mean that there is more that we have to do and are monitored on. As opposed to them really giving us anything or us really seeing the benefit.
- Staying in the program so long is very hard. It is hard having someone controlling your life and telling you what to do every minute for such a long time.
- I could do without the curfew. I wish they just had some type of home visit check occasionally instead of us having to have an early curfew everyday.

*How do your family and friends feel about Drug Court?*

- My family is glad that I am in Drug Court.
- My mom has mixed feelings about me being in Drug Court.

*What are your own individual goals in the program?*

- Well they helped me to get motivated to start looking for a job. So I want to keep my job and I guess stay on track overall. My Probation Officer drove me around to get job applications.
- I want to finish the program and keep going to school.
- Sometimes it feels good when you know your family is glad you are on the right track. I want to keep things on the up and up.

*What do you remember about what was presented to you about the program prior to accepting admission to the program?*

- They told me and my mom about the program, what I had to do and everything. But I do not think I knew how intense it really would be though.
- Yes. (The program coordinator) told me and my dad about the program. I do not remember everything that he said now though.

*Were you made aware of your other non-Drug Court options before they made the decision to go into the Drug Court Program?*

- Yea, because I had the choice to go to rehab and I did not want to do that.
- Yes, because I could have gone to a juvenile facility and I did not want to go there.

*Were you surprised by any program rules/requirements which (upon looking back) were not presented as a part of the pre-entry discussion?*

- Well, not really surprised. It is just way more intense than I thought it would be.
- Yes. The amount of appointments and evaluations and stuff is more than I think we were told about.

## Parent/Guardian Interviews

*What are your responsibilities related to drug court and how were you made aware of these responsibilities? What does the court ask of you as the parent/guardian?*

- It is my responsibility to make sure that my [son/daughter] is doing what [he/she] is suppose to be doing. You know, to make sure [he/she] complies with the rules of the Drug Court.
- To make sure that my child is here and is attempting to follow the rules of the program. I have to make sure that my child follows the curfew and I also see it as my role to help my child manage his feelings. Sometimes, that is the hard part. I have shared that piece with the Coordinator and Probation Officer and I don't feel like I get support in that area. Managing my child's feelings and emotions can be tough.
- It is my responsibility to get my [son/daughter] to all of the appointments, not just court but all of the treatment and health department appointments. And any where else that they tell [him/her] to go. That part is hard, with having to work and everything. All of this has a negative effect on our work schedules too.
- I feel that it is my role to try and keep [him/her] on the right track. Sometimes I feel like the court does not support them enough. They need to recognize when they are making progress more. Sometimes my [son/daughter] takes two steps forward, but the court doesn't notice and only focuses in on something that [he/she] is not doing right.

*What do you feel are the main goals Drug Court Program? What is the purpose of the Drug Court?*

- If your child has done wrong by the law, it gives them the opportunity to do the right thing and get their lives on the right track.
- To get help for their drug problem and to hopefully get them to stop using drugs and alcohol all together.
- The fact that their criminal records will be eliminated really helps them with their futures. However, I feel that children really don't recognize the benefit of that part.
- I hope my [son/daughter] learns the benefit of a drug free life and continues to make better decisions.
- To help my child stay drug free and understand the negative impact of drugs and alcohol.
- I think children need to experience good and bad consequences, which is what the Drug Court gives them. I feel that a few harder consequences may be good for my [son/daughter]. I think a harder consequence at the very beginning may have been good for my [son/daughter]. You have to remember, that only about 10% of kids get caught and there are 90% who do not. If the 10% were scared a little harder, they may be more inclined to change their lives.

*How is your child different now compared to when he/she first started the program?*

- [He/She] is taking more responsibility for [himself/herself] and [his/her] actions. I am not sure how permanent that will be though.

- Now that my [son/daughter] is [age], I am not sure if [he/she] really realizes that the consequence of [his/her] actions can be much more serious. I don't think [he/she] quite gets that. I am not sure how [he/she] has really changed because [he/she] is up and down with [his/her] behavior and progress. I guess [he/she] is a little more accountable.
- My [son/daughter] seems to benefit from knowing that there is something hanging over [his/her] head that could have a negative impact if [he/she] is not compliant.
- I am hoping that my [son/daughter] learns from this experience. I think [he/she] is beginning to get it.

*What does Drug Court (staff) do that you feel is most helpful for your child? What is the best part of Drug Court?*

- The Probation Officer has been most helpful. He seems to direct my [son/daughter] down the right pathways. My [son/daughter] really relates to him and seems to have a good relationship with him. That is very important. The child needs to connect with someone here. The problem is I don't know that they really connect with anyone else.
- I agree, the Probation Officer is really good with the kids. He seems invested in what they do and my [son/daughter] responds pretty well to him.
- I can also say that along with the Probation Officer, the treatment staff appear to work pretty well with my [son/daughter]. Actually, my [son/daughter] even developed a relationship with one of the Police Officers.
- I feel that some of the staff are not competent and should not be able to make some of the decisions that they are able to make. These people should have the proper experience and training to provide some of the services that the kids need.
- I have witnessed some really negative things about the State's Attorney. He made negative remarks about the program, right in the courtroom.
- Sometimes there is conflict about the kid's curfew compliance between the Coordinator and Probation Officer.

*What is the worst part of the Drug Court Program?*

- I don't think the initial evaluation was really handled properly. I was in the room with my [son/daughter] the whole time. That means I was not able to give thoughts that I wanted to share without my [son/daughter] being in the room. That meant that I could not be thorough and paint a true picture of everything about my [son/daughter].
- I agree with that, the evaluation done on my child was not a true reflection of [him/her].
- There are far too many appointments to juggle. My wife and I have to take turns taking off from work trying to manage everything.
- Sometimes you get conflicting information. One staff member tells you one thing and you get something different from another.
- The staff needs to be more supportive and to recognize the little steps in progress that the kids make. The negative is emphasized far more than the progress.

*What could the program (staff) do that would help you and your family better support your child? What would you change?*

- I think that the program should not be voluntary. It should be mandatory for kids with certain drug charges. I don't like the fact that they can make the decision to not be in the program if they want to.
- The Magistrate should definitely be more supportive of the efforts that these kids make.
- The progress that our kids make should be recognized and publicly acknowledged more. That would give my child something to look forward to and help keep [him/her] motivated.

*What do you remember about what was presented to you about the program prior to accepting admission to the program?*

- The Coordinator explained all that was involved in the Drug Court Program. He explained the requirements of the Drug Court. Like all of the different aspects, like treatment, drug testing, being monitored by Probation and the court appearances. My [son/daughter] originally said no to the program. [He/she] thought it was going to be too rigorous. [He/she] later changed his mind. I think all juveniles with these types of crimes should go into Drug Court and should not have a choice.
- The requirements of the program were explained to me. The Coordinator also explained the levels of the addiction treatment and how treatment was an important part of the Drug Court Process.

*Were you made aware of your other non-Drug Court options before they made the decision to go into the Drug Court Program?*

- Yes, The Coordinator definitely did let us know all of our options.
- Yes, the Coordinator told us.

*Were you surprised by any program rules/requirements which (upon looking back) were not presented as a part of the pre-entry discussion?*

- No. The program has gone pretty much as the Coordinator explained it. I do like the fact that the program has incentives and rewards. They should be used more. I do like that the team consults with me about appropriate times to offer incentives.
- I agree with that, the program has pretty much gone as I expected and as it was explained. I just want to reiterate that the Magistrate needs to respond to the progress that these kids make. My child has sometimes gotten so discouraged that [he/she] wanted to drop out. This was directly because [his/her] progress was not recognized.