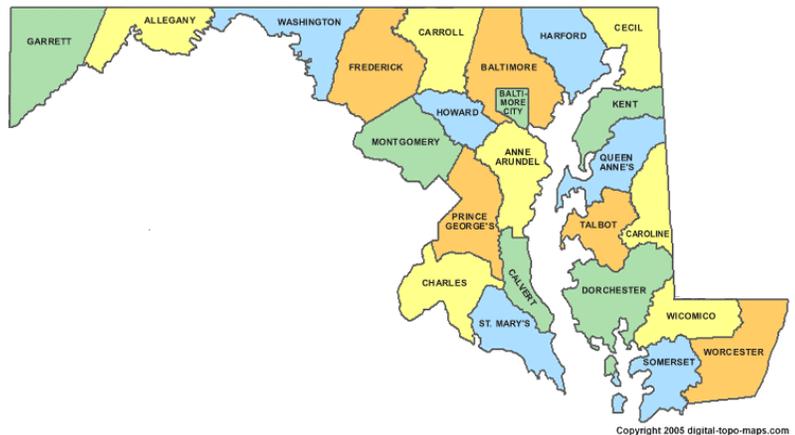


# Maryland Drug Treatment Courts

## *Interim Report of the Effectiveness of Juvenile Drug Courts*



*Submitted to:*

**Drug Treatment Court Commission  
of Maryland  
Annapolis, Maryland**

*Submitted by:*

**NPC Research  
Portland, Oregon**

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# **Maryland Drug Treatment Courts: Interim Report of the Effectiveness of Juvenile Drug Courts**

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**February 2006**



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

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Juvenile Drug Courts:

- A juvenile justice intervention strategy that provides intensive community-based supervision and treatment to high-risk juvenile offenders
- Serve a population of youth with multiple and complicated needs, including substance abuse treatment, family counseling and support, and educational assistance.

**The program is a blessing.  
Other places don't have the  
option. It straightens my life  
out. It got me clean.**

*Juvenile drug court participant*

### Best Practices:

Maryland juvenile drug courts incorporate many principles and practices demonstrated in research to be effective at decreasing juvenile delinquency and adolescent substance use:

- Comprehensive treatment planning
- Judicial supervision
- Family engagement
- Community partnerships
- Cognitive-behavioral, strength-based approach to service delivery

### Policy Choices:

- Drug courts are a service within a continuum of care options that falls between traditional probation and non-secure residential placement

- Cost analysis of drug courts and youth centers clearly illustrates the cost savings of attempting to serve this population of youth in the community when possible
- Drug courts offer specialized intensive services that can have huge payoffs in terms of future quality of life for participants, their families, and their communities

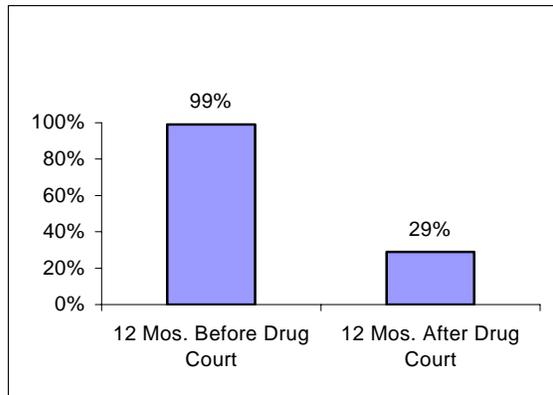
### Preliminary Outcomes:

- There was a 71% reduction in the number of juvenile drug court participants in Maryland with new convictions in the year after drug court, compared to the year prior to drug court
- There was a 75% reduction in the rate of chronic offenders (youth with 3 or more new convictions) in the year after drug court, compared to the year prior to drug court
- Reductions in juvenile crime save the judicial system money and increase public safety

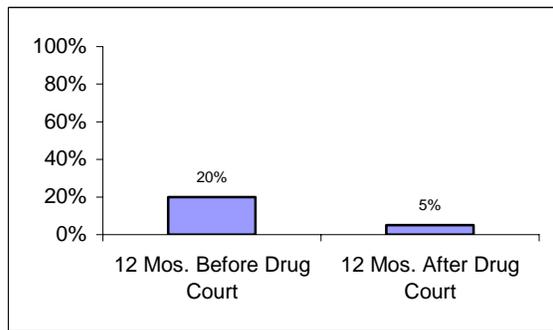
**At first the kids stay clean and  
sober because of court, but  
later they do it because they  
want to.**

*Parent of juvenile drug court  
participant*

### Percent of Juveniles with Adjudicated Charges



### Percent of Chronic Offenders



### Cost Analysis:

Drug courts provide cost-effective intensive treatment and supervision in a community-based setting — rather than relying on the next step in the continuum of services, namely residential placements.

**A lot of the kids who end up in drug court come from horrendous homes and a lot are struggling with grief issues, where they've lost one or more parents (to death, drugs, incarceration). The kids in families who are really struggling and in distress, those are the ones that end up in drug court.**

*Juvenile drug court team member*

	Juvenile Drug Court	Youth Centers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based</li> <li>• Intensive supervision</li> <li>• Alcohol/drug treatment</li> <li>• Ages 11-20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-secure residential</li> <li>• Ages 14-20</li> <li>• Alcohol/drug treatment</li> <li>• Education services provided</li> <li>• Food/housing provided</li> </ul>
Cost per day	\$48.96	\$226.93
Avg. number of days in program	285.5	192.1
Cost per youth	\$13,901.00	\$43,593.25

## INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts (“AOC”) and the Drug Treatment Court Commission of Maryland (“DTCC”) engaged NPC Research (NPC) of Portland, Oregon, to provide a variety of program evaluation services. The work that NPC’s analysts are performing includes process, outcome, and cost-benefit analyses of juvenile and adult drug treatment courts located in ten of Maryland’s counties.

To support the Maryland Judiciary’s dialogue with the Maryland General Assembly concerning preparation of the FY 2007 budget, the leadership of the AOC and DTCC asked NPC to prepare an interim report of the effectiveness of Maryland’s juvenile drug treatment courts. Although the studies of juvenile drug courts are still in progress, based on early findings, NPC can offer the interim analysis included in this report.

The information in this interim report includes the following:

- A description of the characteristics of juvenile drug court programs and the problems that they are designed to address.

- A discussion of the practices incorporated in Maryland’s juvenile drug court programs as compared with research-based best practices for juvenile substance abuse and criminal justice interventions.
- A comparison of the criminal justice system experience of a statewide sample of youth before and after their participation in Maryland’s juvenile drug courts.
- A comparison of the estimated program costs for juvenile drug court participants with those of individuals who participate in another intervention for similar juvenile offenders operated by DJS.

Again, this report should be read as a product of NPC’s early findings regarding the effectiveness of Maryland’s juvenile drug courts. However, it should be noted that what is reported here is consistent with findings from National research conducted by NPC and other research organizations, specifically that juvenile drug courts are valuable interventions in local juvenile justice systems.

## WHAT IS A JUVENILE DRUG COURT?

**J**uvenile drug courts are intensive treatment programs established within, and supervised by, juvenile courts to provide specialized services for eligible drug-involved youth and their families. Cases are assigned to a juvenile drug court docket based on criteria set by local officials to carry out the goals of the drug court program. Juvenile drug courts provide 1) intensive and continuous judicial supervision over delinquency cases that involve substance-abusing juveniles

and 2) supervised delivery of an array of support services necessary to address the problems that contribute to juvenile involvement in the justice system. Juvenile drug courts are currently operational in Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Caroline County, Dorchester County, Harford County, Prince George's County, Montgomery County, St. Mary's County, Talbot County, and Worcester County.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gap Analysis Report (2004). Maryland Department of Juvenile Services.

## WHAT ARE JUVENILE DRUG COURTS RESPONDING TO?

The juvenile drug court approach is a distinct intervention strategy available to the juvenile justice system to assess, treat, and supervise youth who are involved in drugs and delinquency. The following information describes the scope of the interrelated problems of juvenile substance use and

**We had one kid who was at [program] for a year—took him about a year for his brain to re-circuit from all the ecstasy he had been using. When he came back a year later, he was superb, but he chose to start the drug court program from Phase 1 and do the whole year all over again. He went through with flying colors, ultimately graduated, and he owns his own business today and is doing pretty good. I'm real proud of him.**

*Juvenile drug court  
team member*

juvenile crime, and why innovative and intensive treatment options such as juvenile drug courts are necessary to create behavioral change in these youth, in an effort to improve the health of local communities and to protect public safety.

### Adolescent Drug Use

About one third of 10<sup>th</sup> graders report using substances. Alcohol use is considered a “gateway” to other substances, as well as linked to poor school outcomes and involvement with negative peers. While

substance use contributes to other problems for youth, it can also represent a way that some youth deal with challenging life circumstances, including abuse, family conflict, and mental health issues.

The following data illustrate the extent to which youth are using alcohol and drugs, both in the United States in general and in Maryland in particular. Note that the percentages of Maryland adolescents reporting substance use are very consistent with the percentages reported throughout the U.S.

#### U.S.<sup>2</sup>

- 35% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed used alcohol in the last 30 days
- 16% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed used marijuana in the last 30 days

#### State of Maryland<sup>3</sup>

- 31% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed used alcohol in the last 30 days
- 16% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed used marijuana in the last 30 days

### Educational Needs

Adolescents who are doing well in life are engaged and successful in school. Schools offer opportunities for youth to develop positive interests and future goals, gain recognition and reinforcement, learn skills crucial to success as an adult, and stay busy — all under the su-

<sup>2</sup> Monitoring the Future National Results on Adolescent Drug Use. Overview of Key Findings, 2004. Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., Bachman, J.G., and Schulenberg, J.E. The University of Michigan Institute for Social Research. National Institute on Drug Abuse, Bethesda, MD.

<sup>3</sup> 2004 Maryland Adolescent Survey. Maryland State Department of Education-Division of Student and School Services, October 2005.

pervision of positive adults throughout the day. Research has found that youth who are not engaged or successful in school are at increased risk of juvenile delinquency.

**I quit drinking. [My counselor] convinced me. He showed me that things only go wrong when I drink**  
*Juvenile drug court participant*

The following statistics illustrate the challenge Maryland faces in keeping youth in school or other productive activities, an important factor in preventing delinquency:

#### **State of Maryland<sup>4</sup>**

- 7% of teenagers in the state are not attending school or working (rank 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation)
- 21% of high school students missed more than 20 days of school during the year.

#### **Juvenile Crime**

Public safety and healthy communities are a concern to everyone. The juvenile justice system provides intervention, services, and accountability for young people who commit crimes, with the goal of making changes in youth behavior before they reach adulthood.

The following data illustrate the scope of juvenile delinquency nationally and in Maryland.<sup>5</sup> Note that the arrest rate for Maryland youth is slightly higher than the national average, and the violent crime rate is almost double the national rate.

#### **U.S.**

- In 2002, in the U.S., close to 7% of youth ages 10 to 17 years were arrested. About 4% of these arrests were for violent offenses.

#### **State of Maryland**

- In 2002, over 7% of youth in Maryland ages 10 to 17 were arrested, with almost 7% of those arrests for violent offenses.

**If I wasn't in drug court, I'd have probably already dropped out of school.**  
*Juvenile drug court participant*

<sup>4</sup> 2004 Kids Count *Fact Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being*. (2004). Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. Specifically, data for “teens not attending school or working.”

<sup>5</sup> 2002 FBI Arrest Statistics. From [http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/ezaucr/asp/ucr\\_display.asp](http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/ezaucr/asp/ucr_display.asp)

## ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

**R**esearch on adolescent development and individual and organizational change provides information about strategies that can effectively address the problems of adolescent substance use and juvenile delinquency. While the research on juvenile drug courts is still in the early stages, studies of interventions in adult drug courts and in juvenile justice settings more broadly inform us about effective practices. The NPC research team assessed the status of two juvenile drug courts in Maryland, by comparing the treatment model and implementation of the programs with these best practices.<sup>6</sup>

### Best Practices

#### COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENT PLANNING

Participants receive extensive (multiple) assessments, which inform selection for entry, treatment planning, and identification of resource needs outside of the program, in an effort to support the goal of providing individualized programming. Drug courts also provide participants with education, employment and mental health related support, addressing risk factors in a wide range of social settings. Often, a majority of these services are provided in-house, increasing the chances that participants will receive the help needed in a timely manner.

<sup>6</sup> Observations are drawn from the process evaluation of Baltimore City, MD, and Harford County, MD, juvenile drug court key stakeholders (currently underway).

#### JUDICIAL INVOLVEMENT AND SUPERVISION IN A COHESIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT

Participants receive on-going, positive support from multiple authority figures, including the drug court judge, which can have a significant impact on self-esteem/self-efficacy and subsequent behaviors. This support occurs within a cohesive drug court team environment, comprised of dedicated members who

**My daughter did inpatient [treatment]. She did fine there, but when she got out, it didn't work. The inpatient program didn't have the community piece. Drug court works for her. It gives the kids skills they missed while doing drugs. My daughter kept saying she wanted to be independent but she didn't have the skills to be independent.**

*Parent of juvenile drug court participant*

share a strong commitment to program participants. This group strives to maintain open, non-defensive communication among members, with the overarching program goal (i.e., reducing youth drug use and criminality) always in mind. Further, while there is a strong emphasis in the program on accountability and personal responsibility from participants,

this is also expected of team members, who are seen as models for youth participating in the program.

### **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Programs emphasize the critical need for parental commitment and accountability (e.g., requiring parents to attend court sessions with their child, ordering substance abusing parents to seek treatment), and provide support for families through needed service referrals. Since the length of time in the program is generally 1 year to 18 months, programs have ample time to address participant and family needs, decreasing the possibility of future “failure” (i.e., new arrests) after the youth leaves the program.

### **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE PLANNING**

Programs have a strong connection with community services, as a result of solid relationships built over time. Positive relationships with outside agencies allow for ongoing collaboration, in a continuing effort to explore and identify new ways to systematically improve program delivery. Often, drug court team members serve on community/state agency program committees, which can result in increasing drug court visibility and enhancing collaborative relationships.

### **COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL APPROACH AND FOCUS ON STRENGTHS**

Drug courts use cognitive behavioral-based programming<sup>7</sup> as a major treatment

modality, in addition to offering mandatory process and educational groups, and individual counseling support. This comprehensive intervention strategy supports the programs’ overarching goal to provide participants with “therapeutic justice,” building on participant youth’s strengths, rather than imposing a singularly punitive response to past negative behaviors. Any consequences that *are* imposed are selected to be appropriate to the violation, increasing in severity if violations continue to accumulate, often immediate, and clearly connected to “negative” behaviors.

### **Policy Choices**

Juvenile drug courts serve youth who have multiple risk factors for continued delinquency, including criminal histories and involvement in substance use. These youth often experience lack of engagement with school or other productive activities, are involved with delinquent peers, and struggle with difficult family situations. Juvenile justice systems need to make policy and funding decisions about how best to serve high need youth, to provide interventions using best practices that will result in positive youth and community outcomes. Systems are challenged to serve youth in the least restrictive settings possible, provide community-based treatment whenever feasible, and maintain and enhance a youth’s natural support system. These strategies are most cost-effective and have the greatest chance of success.

By offering more frequent supervision, systems of immediate sanctions and rewards, and community-based coordinated

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the Baltimore City juvenile drug court uses a therapeutic model with both cognitive (addressing thought patterns and reasoning skills) and behavioral (addressing choices and accountability for youths’ actions) components in

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its “Moral Reconciliation Therapy” program. (Little, G. L. (2005). "Meta-Analysis of Moral Reconciliation Therapy(r): Recidivism Results From Probation and Parole Implementations." *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment Review* 14:14-16.

services, juvenile drug courts provide one intervention option in a continuum of juvenile justice services. Juvenile drug courts are generally more intensive than traditional informal and formal probation options, and less costly than residential, out-of-home placements. The comprehensive package of services offered through juvenile drug courts provides

jurisdictions with an alternative to residential programs.

The following sections of this report describe outcome and cost analyses illustrating the effectiveness of juvenile drug courts for high-risk offenders and a comparison of the cost of drug courts with a next step in the continuum of juvenile services in Maryland, non-secure residential programs (Youth Centers).

## PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES

### Objective

One of the aims of this interim report is to determine if the Maryland statewide juvenile drug court system as a whole is generating positive outcomes for participating juveniles. To make this determination, NPC obtained a dataset of juvenile drug court participants through the cooperation of the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). This dataset provided records of all formal adjudicated<sup>8</sup> charges that juvenile drug court participants accrued both before and after their experience in drug court.

### Sample Criteria

NPC selected a sample of juveniles who were placed in the Maryland juvenile drug court system between 2001 and 2004, and released prior to December 15, 2004, in order to ensure that at least one year of outcomes were available after the participants' release. A small number of juveniles who repeated drug court during this time frame were excluded and will be examined separately in our next report. Juveniles who were aged 17 or older at their release from drug court were also excluded because their subsequent charges would likely occur in the adult system rather than appearing in this juvenile dataset.

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<sup>8</sup> Adjudicated charges are formal charges appended to a client's criminal record after court processing. Charges that are adjudicated are ones where the allegations against a youth are found to be true. Adjudicated charges may differ from the original charges in both number and type, as some allegations may be dismissed, found to be untrue, or plead to lesser charges.

### Description of the Juvenile Drug Court Participants

NPC examined the records of 153 juvenile drug court participants aged 17 and younger throughout the state Maryland. Approximately 62% were males and 38% were females. The majority of the juveniles were white (71%) with the largest minority being African American (28%). On average, juveniles were about 15 years old and had two adjudicated charges on their records when they were placed in juvenile drug court.

**We've had a lot of kids who have ... gone on to do good things, like starting their own businesses, joining the military, going to college. That's one of the most rewarding things, when you have kids coming back just to say, "Hi, things are going well."**

*Juvenile drug court participant*

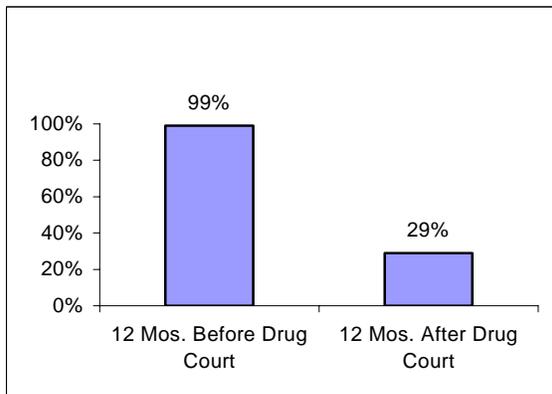
### Comparing Outcomes One Year Before and One Year After Drug Court

In the year prior to their placement in drug court, 99% of the juveniles had adjudicated charges on their records. This finding indicates that drug courts are selecting and admitting juveniles who are already in the juvenile justice system and are more likely to have future encounters with law enforcement. However, in the

year following their release from drug court, only 29% of these juveniles had any adjudicated charges added to their records. This result means that 70% of the juveniles had no adjudicated charges added to their records in the year after their release.

Overall, this sample of 153 juveniles were responsible for 317 adjudicated charges in the year prior to drug court entry but only 70 adjudicated charges in the year following drug court. This finding represents a reduction of 247 adjudicated charges to be processed by DJS and a 77% reduction in re-offending. In fact, juveniles who do not receive appropriate intervention would be expected to offend at a greater rate over time, so this estimate may be a conservative one.

**Figure 1. Percent of Juveniles with Adjudicated Charges**



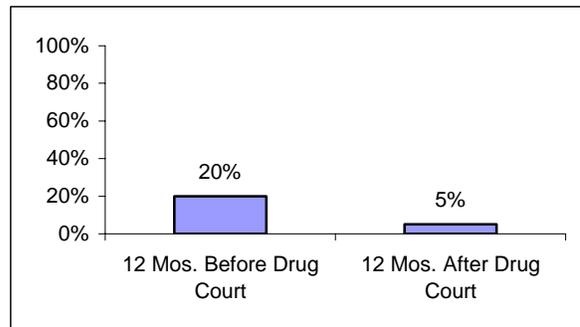
### Chronic Offenders

Chronic offenders in this report are youth with 3 or more adjudicated criminal offenses within a 12-month period<sup>9</sup>. In the

<sup>9</sup> Definitions of “chronic” offending vary. There is no national standard and no statewide definition used in Maryland. The definition used here is a conservative one that includes youth who create

year prior to drug court, 20% of the sample could be classified as chronic offenders. In the year prior to drug court, these offenders had an average of five adjudicated charges on their records. This average illustrates that juvenile drug courts in Maryland are serving youth with substantial criminal histories who, without intensive intervention, are very likely to re-offend.<sup>10</sup> In the year after drug court, most offenders had no new adjudicated charges added to their record. Less than 5% of the juveniles were chronic offenders in the year following drug court release. This finding translates to a 75% reduction in chronic offenders.

**Figure 2. Percent of Chronic Offenders**



### Outcomes Summary

Analysis of the adjudicated charges for youth found that the statewide system is creating positive outcomes for juvenile offenders. Participation in juvenile drug court is associated with a decrease in juvenile crime – *even for chronic offenders*

the most system and community impact by their repeated delinquent activities.

<sup>10</sup> Krisberg, B., & Howell, J. C. (1999). The impact of the juvenile justice system and prospects for graduated sanctions in a comprehensive strategy. In Loeber, R., & Farrington, D. P. (Eds.), *Serious and violent juvenile offenders. Risk factors and successful interventions*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 348-9.

*who have the highest risk of re-offending.* After juvenile drug court, there was a 75% reduction in the number of juveniles who could be categorized as chronic offenders. The reduction in crime is a boost

to public safety and represents a savings in statewide resources that would have otherwise been used on processing these juveniles.

## COST DISCUSSION

Juvenile drug courts are intensive interventions designed to address multi-faceted challenges that at-risk youth are facing. As such, this alternative intervention strategy includes the coordination of multiple professionals with different areas of expertise, intensive case management/supervision, and frequent judicial reviews. Though this level of staff time represents a substantial cost, research in adult drug courts demonstrates that, due to decreased future system impacts (less frequent re-offending, for example), this investment frequently results in substantial savings in the future. In addition, drug courts provide cost-effective intensive treatment and supervision in a community-based setting rather than relying on the next step in the continuum of services, namely residential placements. In an effort to better understand the policy and budgetary implications of treatment choices and cost impacts of services along the continuum of care for juvenile offenders, NPC presents an analysis in this section of the cost of juvenile drug courts compared to residential services.

### Overview

NPC's evaluation services engagement with the AOC and DTCC calls for cost-benefit analyses of the Baltimore City, Harford County, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County and St. Mary's County Juvenile Drug Courts. These studies will involve application of NPC's *transactional and institutional cost analysis ("TICA") approach* to cost-benefit analysis.

Generally, in applying TICA to drug treatment courts, NPC's analysts compare the public service costs associated

with drug court program participants to the costs of similar individuals who do not participate in drug court. The analysis includes costs incurred by public criminal justice, treatment and other systems, both during the program and during a follow-up period after the program. NPC is in the process of collecting information to conduct complete cost-benefit analyses of the Baltimore City and Harford County juvenile drug courts and will have these analyses completed in Spring 2006.

In order to provide preliminary cost information for this interim report, NPC has undertaken an alternative cost analysis approach. It is designed to assist the General Assembly as it considers choices in the application of budgetary resources in Maryland's juvenile justice system. The cost analysis involves a comparison between the estimated total cost per participant in juvenile drug court programs and that of DJS Youth Centers that provide services similar to those provided by juvenile drug court programs. Youth in DJS Youth Centers are of similar age as juvenile drug court youth and have similar treatment needs.

### Cost Analysis

Based on information that appears in the DJS FY 2006 operating budget, NPC estimates that the current average cost for individuals assigned to one of the Department's Youth Centers is **\$226.93 per day**. This amount includes estimates for all DJS support costs and the State of Maryland's overhead costs associated with these facilities. According to DJS, in 2004, the average length of stay (ALOS) for individuals in its Youth Centers was **192.1 days**. If this amount is used as an estimate of current experience, the total

estimated cost per individual per period of residency in a Maryland Youth Center is currently **\$43,593.25**.

Using information that NPC has acquired from primary sources regarding the operating profile of the Harford County Juvenile Drug Court, an estimated cost per day per program participant has been calculated. Including all resource commitments made by the Maryland Judiciary, DJS, Maryland Office of Public Defender, Harford County State’s Attorney’s Office, Harford County Health Department and Harford County Community Services Department (These resource

commitments to the Harford County Juvenile Drug Court include those supported by intergovernmental grant funding.). NPC Research estimates that the cost per day for each individual participant in the Harford County Juvenile Drug Court program is **\$48.96**. If this amount is used as a program cost estimator for the statewide sample of juvenile drug court participants, based on an average length of program participation of **285.5 days**, the current average cost per individual per juvenile drug court experience is **\$13,901.00**.

**Table 1. Comparison of Juvenile Drug Courts and Youth Centers**

	<b>Juvenile Drug Court</b>	<b>Youth Centers</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based</li> <li>• Intensive supervision</li> <li>• Alcohol/drug treatment</li> <li>• Ages 11-20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-secure residential</li> <li>• Ages 14-20</li> <li>• Alcohol/drug treatment</li> <li>• Education services provided</li> <li>• Food/housing provided</li> </ul>
Cost per day	\$48.96	\$226.93
Avg. number of days in program	285.5	192.1
Cost per youth	\$13,901.00	\$43,593.25

## SUMMARY

**J**uvenile drug court is a juvenile justice intervention strategy that provides intensive community-based supervision and treatment to high-risk juvenile offenders. These programs serve a population of youth with a complex combination of needs, including substance abuse treatment, family counseling and support, and educational assistance. Juvenile drug courts incorporate many principles and practices demonstrated in research to be effective at decreasing juvenile delinquency and adolescent substance use, including comprehensive treatment planning, judicial supervision, family engagement, community partnerships and a cognitive-behavioral, strengths-based approach to service delivery.

Preliminary pre-post analysis of juvenile drug court participants in Maryland illus-

trate substantial reductions in new adjudicated charges, as well as significant reductions in the proportion of youth categorized as chronic offenders (i.e., those youth creating the most serious system and community impacts in terms of cost and public safety). Drug courts are a policy choice and a service within a continuum of care options that falls between traditional probation and non-secure residential placement.

Cost analysis of juvenile drug courts and youth centers clearly illustrates the cost savings of working with this population in the community whenever possible. Juvenile drug courts offer specialized intensive services that can result in huge payoffs in terms of future quality of life for participants, their families, and their communities.

**Graduation is a wonderful thing because sometimes we're dealing with adolescents who have never completed anything, whether it be school or...but to see some of the kids and the smiles on their faces. The parents/guardians or families are also present at the graduation and the judge does a very good job personalizing things, he does that all along. It's a real important part, the fact that they get through that and get to come up and walk in front of people.**

*Juvenile drug court team member*

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