

# Polishing Your Program: How to Assess and Implement Best Practices in Your Drug Court

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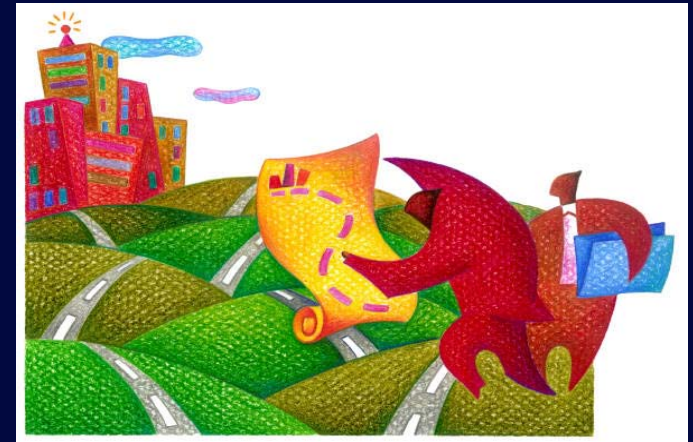


OFFICE OF COURT IMPROVEMENT

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Nashville, TN*

# Overview

- Introduce panel
- Use of best practices
- Assessment strategies
- Implementation strategies
- Use of research to improve programs
- Practical ideals and tools



# Research-based best and promising practices



- Research includes 101 drug courts around the nation (detailed process studies/10 KC)
- 69 included recidivism and cost evaluations
- In total, this study included 32,719 individuals (16,317 drug court participants and 16,402 comparison group members).

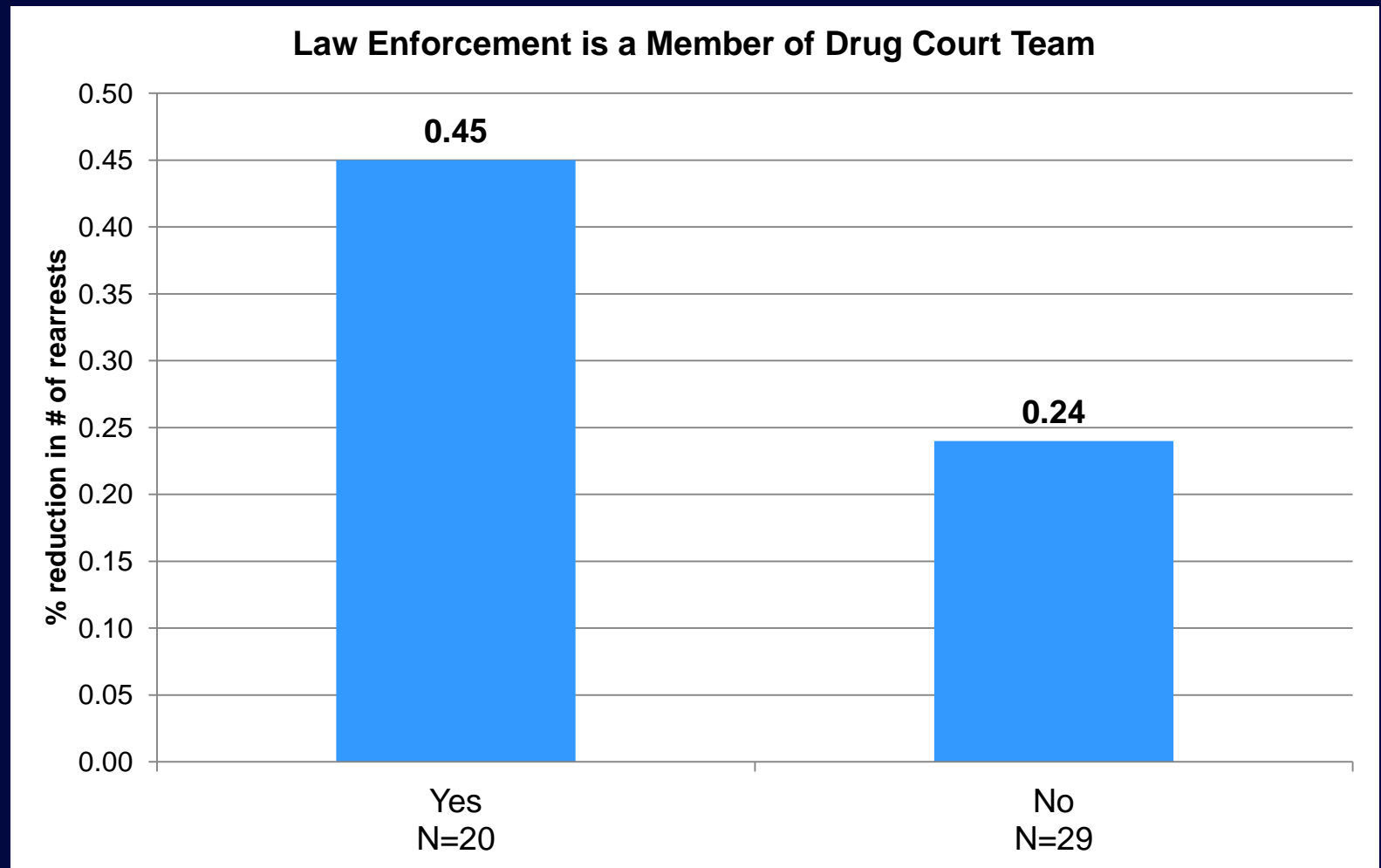
# Research

- Trying to make the 10KC understandable in a much more specific way – through specific practices
- What are the best drug courts doing?

Found over 50 practices that were related to significantly lower recidivism or lower costs or both

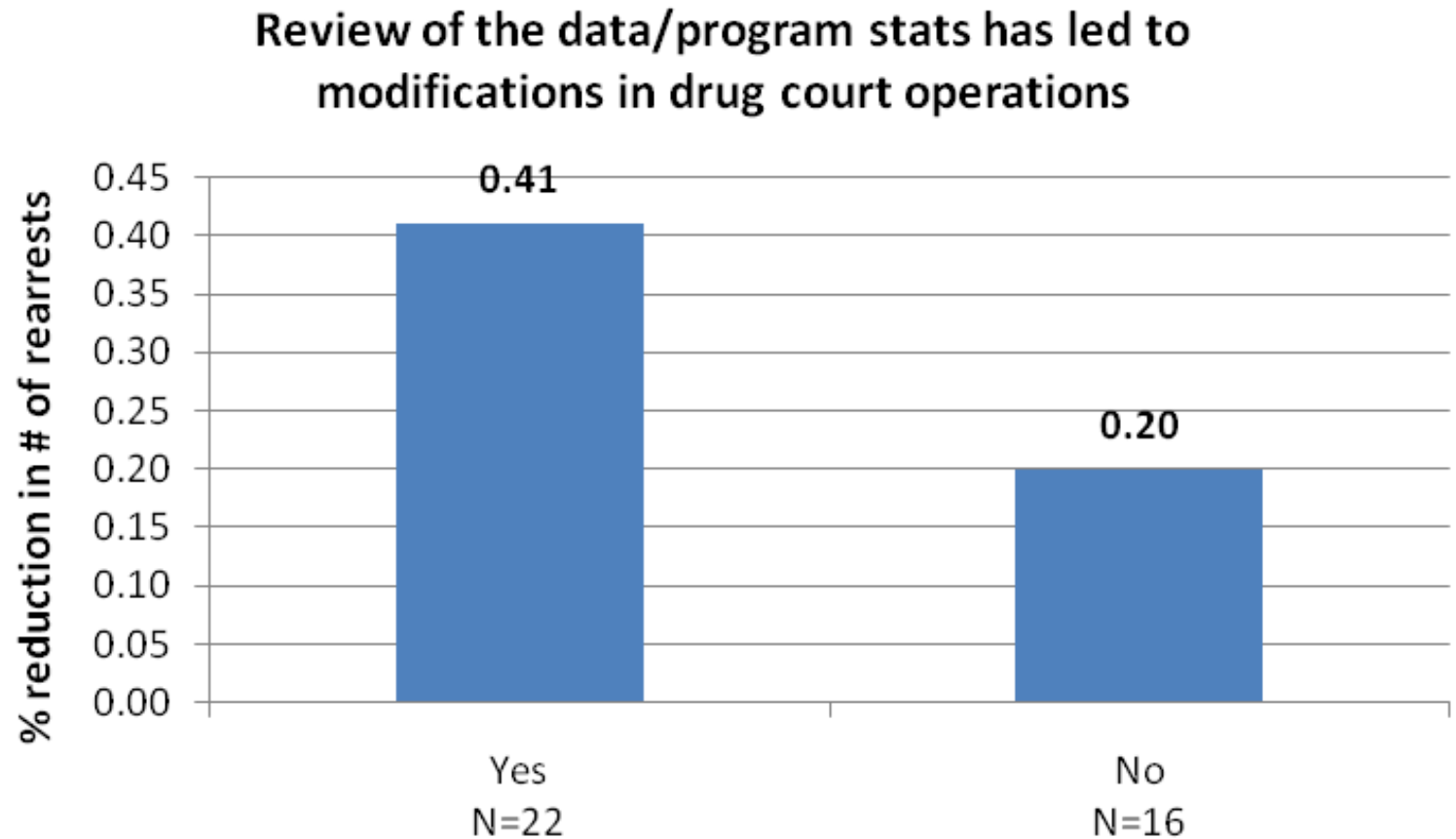


**Example: Drug courts where law enforcement is a member of the drug court team had 88% greater reductions in recidivism**



**Note: Difference is significant at  $p < .05$**

**Example: Drug courts where review of the data and/or program statistics led to modifications in program operations had 105% greater reductions in recidivism**



Note: Difference is significant at  $p < .05$



# Example 1: Assess program practices



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4. When was your drug court program implemented?

Month (mm)

Year (yyyy)

5. Please give us your estimate of the average amount of months it takes for drug court participants to complete the program:

Months

6. Are your drug court participants (check all that apply):

	Yes	No
Pre-plea?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Post-plea/pre-conviction?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Post-conviction (e.g., referred from probation)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please specify other category:

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# Online program assessment

- SurveyMonkey form with questions about drug court program practices
- NPC staff downloads and analyzes or sends results to reviewer
- Reviewer maps results to best practices
- Usually used in conjunction with other information gathering (calls, site visit, etc.)
- Feedback provided to program

# Benefits of approach

- ✦ Program receives feedback for quality improvement
- ✦ Tool is readily available
- ✦ Inexpensive
- ✦ Doesn't take much time to use
- ✦ Quick results

# Example 2: Assess statewide program status



# Compile assessments across programs, select top performers

- All adult programs were asked to complete the online assessment
- State and evaluator agreed on top 29 practices to focus on
- Identified top programs to conduct full process, outcome, and cost studies
- Determined which best practices were most commonly achieved and where TA was needed



# Benefits of approach

- ✦ Consistent across a set of programs
- ✦ Provides information about aggregate areas of success and difficulty
- ✦ Points to areas where training and technical assistance are needed
- ✦ Identifies areas that may need policy or state level change
- ✦ Provides opportunity to identify mentor programs in certain areas

# Example 3: Implement best practices statewide





# Peer review process

- Used best practice research to establish state guidelines and standards
- Developed process and materials to help peer reviewers assess programs
- Starting implementation; will revise as needed
- Will provide training and technical assistance to programs



# Benefits of approach

- ✦ Peer review materials can also be used as self-assessment
- ✦ Use of peers is low cost
- ✦ Provides learning opportunities for both peers and assessed programs
- ✦ Guidance document provides direction for changes

# Other resources and approaches

- Materials on Web sites
- Online trainings
- Expert technical support - email, phone, in person
- Site visits



# Lessons learned

- Talking about best practices and local practices leads to changes
  - Creates awareness, educates
  - Helps create shared understanding across team members
  - Helps identify inconsistent local practices



# Lessons learned

- Helps identify mismatches between local and best practices
- Important to translate research findings into clear steps for programs to take

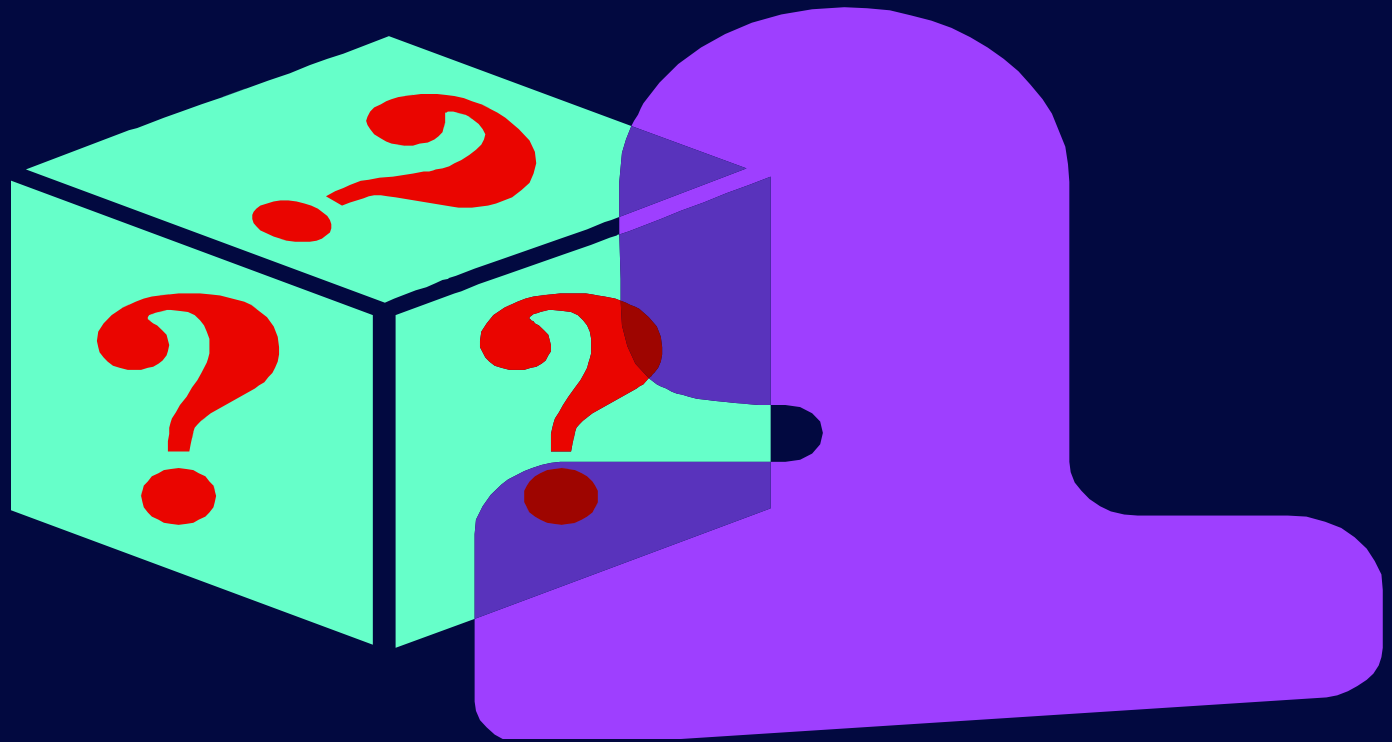


# Discussion





# Questions?



# Coming up

*Best Practices article in Drug Court Review 2012*

*Presentation and handout on our Web site at*

[www.npcresearch.com](http://www.npcresearch.com)

*Look under “What’s New” or  
“Publications and Resources”*



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