

Florida Adult Felony Drug Courts *Evaluation Report*



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**Florida Supreme Court - OSCA
Office of Court Improvement**
500 South Duval Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1900

Submitted by:

NPC Research
Portland, Oregon

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5100 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 575
Portland, OR 97239
(503) 243-2436
www.npcresearch.com

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Submitted By
NPC Research

Research Team

Anna M. Malsch, Ph.D., Outcome & Impact Analyst
Eric L. Einspruch, Ph.D., Outcome & Impact Analyst
Mark S. Waller, B.A., Cost Analyst
Michael W. Finigan, Ph.D., Drug Court Consultant
Juliette R. Mackin, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

For questions about this report or project, please contact Juliette Mackin at
(503) 243-2436 x 114 or mackin@npcresearch.com.

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Informing policy, improving programs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 the offenders and their families. Benefits to society include substantial reductions in crime, resulting in reduced costs to taxpayers and increased public safety.

In 2009, the Florida Supreme Court, Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA), Office of Court Improvement, received a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. This grant included funds for a statewide evaluation of Florida's adult felony drug courts. NPC Research was contracted to perform process, outcome, impact, and cost evaluation. This report provides details about the statewide impact evaluation and summarizes the results of the process, outcome, and cost evaluation reports that were submitted previously to OSCA. The statewide process study included an examination of drug court practices in relation to the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts (NADCP, 1997) and recommendations for enhancements to the program to meet research-based best practices results, and was submitted in a prior statewide report. In addition, each of the five study sites was provided a site-specific process evaluation report. The outcome evaluation included a criminal justice recidivism study comparing criminal history information for drug treatment court participants prior to and after their participation in drug court. Outcomes were examined for up to 24 months after drug treatment court **entry**. Each of the five study sites received a site-level outcome report.

The impact evaluation included a criminal justice recidivism study comparing outcomes for drug treatment court participants to a matched group of offenders who had equivalent criminal histories and demographic characteristics, with arrests in the same counties as the participants, but who did not participate in drug court. Recidivism was examined for up to 24 months after drug treatment court **exit**. In this study, the focus was on felonies and on drug charges (including misdemeanor, felony and DUI offenses). Results are provided for the participants as a whole, and for graduates and non-graduates.

Process Evaluation

10 KEY COMPONENTS ASSESSMENT

Thirty-three adult felony drug court programs completed an online assessment about their program's policies and procedures. The survey responses were compared to best practices based on national research on practices that are associated with greater reductions in recidivism or greater cost savings. Twenty-nine practices were assessed.

The results of the assessment indicate that there are many areas where adult felony drug court programs across Florida are using recommended practices. Over half (15) of the study practices were being used by approximately two thirds (66% or more) of the programs.

Forty-one percent of programs indicated prescription drugs were the most common drug of choice for their participants. Cocaine and marijuana were each the drug of choice for about one in five programs.

All participating programs indicated that they achieve three of the 29 best practices, by having the treatment provider regularly attend drug court appearances and communicate via email with

the court, and requiring participants to pay court fees. On the other hand, very few programs included law enforcement on their teams.

In addition to best practices, there were 21 additional practices that are common among programs nationally and that are suggested. Florida programs had high rates of following these practices, which means these programs are generally aligned with the overall drug court model.

Additional details about the results of the statewide drug court practice assessment can be found in the Study Practices Assessment of Florida Adult Felony Drug Courts report, July 2011.

SITE-LEVEL PROCESS STUDIES

Five counties were selected from the 33 who completed the online assessment, based on their use of best and common drug court practices (use of at least 66% of the best practices and 85% or more of the common practices), diversity in terms of their geographic location, racial/ethnic composition of the participant population, size of the area, and type of program.

These sites include the Duval County Adult Drug Court located in the 4th Judicial Circuit, the Escambia County Adult Drug Court located in the 1st Judicial Circuit, the Lee County Adult Drug Court located in the 20th Judicial Circuit, the Monroe County Adult Drug Court located in the 16th Judicial Circuit, and the Volusia County Adult Drug Court located in the 7th Judicial Circuit.

Each of these programs received a comprehensive process evaluation, including a site visit, interviews of team members, focus groups with participants, and an individual report detailing their alignment with best practices and site specific recommendations.

The sites varied widely in their local successes and challenges, and as such had a range of different recommendations for program improvement. The types of suggestions that were made for more than one of the five programs included adding law enforcement to the team, working to decrease the time from arrest to drug court entry, ensuring training of all team members, working on achieving non-adversarial relationships between all team members, decreasing the reliance on use of jail as a sanction, and reaching out to community partners.

Additional details about program practices, commendations and recommendations can be found in the individual program reports.

Outcome & Impact Evaluation

The purpose of an outcome or impact evaluation is to determine whether the program has improved participant outcomes. In other words, did the program achieve its intended goals for its participants?

The **outcome analyses** were based on a cohort of Florida Adult Felony Drug Court participants from five different programs (in five different counties/jurisdictions) who entered the drug treatment court program from November 2004, through January 2010.¹ The short-term outcomes assessed included graduation rates and what participant characteristics predicted whether or not they successfully complete the program, as well as whether drug treatment court participants reduced their drug use and whether drug treatment court participants were re-arrested less often after *program entry* than before.

¹ Cohorts varied in each county, based on the availability of data.

The **impact analyses** (long-term outcomes) were based on a sub-sample² of Drug Court participants whose program exit date allowed for at least 24 months of time for potential recidivism (based on the timeframe of the available data), and a matched comparison group of offenders eligible for drug treatment court programs in the five counties but who received the traditional court processing. The impact assessed was recidivism for up to 24 months after *drug court treatment exit* (or comparable time frame for the matched comparison group).

SITE-LEVEL OUTCOME STUDIES

The outcomes analyses were based on a cohort of adult drug court participants from each site. These individuals were tracked through administrative data for at least 24 months post program entry. The studies compared arrest rates and the number of offenses in the 24 months prior to program entry to recidivism over 24 months after program entry. In addition, the evaluations examined the graduation rates and effects on substance use for program participants at each of the sites.

Participant Characteristics

Program participant characteristics across the five sites show that the average Florida Adult Felony Drug Court participant is male, white, and in his early 30s. The ranges of race/ethnicity proportions indicate that all programs serve mostly Caucasian participants and some have a higher percentage of African American participants than others. In addition, the ranges in average ages show that programs are working with a mix of younger participants and individuals at a later stage in their lives.

² The sub-sample was a smaller group of participants out of the sample used in the outcome analyses who had at least 24 months post program exit.

Table A. Drug Court Participant Characteristics (five sites)

All drug court participants N = 1,014	Range	Average
Gender (Male)	55%-71%	62%
Race		
White (one site includes Latinos)	65%-94%	81%
Black (one site only used “non-white”)	11%-32%	21%
Hispanic/Latino (2 sites)	1%	1%
American Indian (1 site)	2%	2%
Age at Program Entry	18 – 67 years	31
Average number of all arrests in the 24 months prior to program entry	1.56-3.70	2.74
Average number of arrests with drug charges in the 24 months prior to program entry	0.56-1.23	0.90
Average number of arrests with property charges in the 24 months prior to program entry	0.3-2.4	1.17
Average number of arrests with person charges in the 24 months prior to program entry	0.07-0.31	0.20
Average number of arrests with felony charges in the 24 months prior to program entry	1.12-1.94	1.60

Pre-Post Recidivism

The individual site reports illustrate the number of new arrests and recidivism rates for 2 years after program entry for the Florida Adult Drug Court participants from the five studies in 6 month intervals. Table B shows the recidivism for the last 6 month period, from 18-24 months after program entry, as well as the number of re-arrests in 24 months after program entry.

Table B. Participant Re-Arrest Rates and Numbers of Arrests (five sites)

	Range	Average
Re-Arrest Rates, 18-24 months post entry	11% to 34%	21%
Number of Re-Arrests 0-24 months post entry	1.0-2.9	1.72

Data from the individual reports show that program participants generally had lower recidivism rates and lower numbers of new arrests in the period 24 months after program entry compared to 24 months before participation.

Table C. Participant Arrests 24 Months Post Entry (five sites)

	Number of sites
Significantly fewer arrests after drug court entry compared to before program (all participants)	4 of 5
Graduates had significantly fewer arrests post entry	5 of 5
Non-graduates had significantly fewer arrests post entry	2 of 5
Recidivism rate (percent of participants who are arrested after entry) significantly lower than before program	5 of 5

Program Completion

The graduation rate for three of the five programs in the study was higher than the national average of 50%. Programs ranged in intended length from 12 to 15 months. Participants remained in the programs an average of 12 months (averages at the program level ranged from 8 months to 17 months). Graduates had an average length of stay of 14.5 months, but their individual lengths of stay ranged from 5 months to 4 years. Non-graduates tended to have shorter lengths of stay, ranging from less than 5 months to 10 (average of about 7 months).

Table D. Program Graduation (five sites)

	Range	Average
Graduation Rates	43% to 85%	57%

Substance Use

Results found in the individual reports also showed that overall, outcomes for Florida Adult Felony Drug Court participants were positive for each of the sites in terms of reducing substance use, as measured by re-arrests for drug-related charges. After participation in the program, regardless of whether they graduated, program participants generally³ were re-arrested on drug charges less often than before program participation, also indicating a likely reduction in drug use due to program participation at most sites.

Predictors of Success

The most consistent predictors of graduation were age (4 of the 5 sites), and length of time in the program (4 of the 5 sites). Graduates on average (in those 4 sites) were older, about 34 compared to 29 for the non-graduates. Graduates spent an average of 418 days in the program, compared to 227 for the non-graduates. Other factors that were significantly associated with graduation were having fewer overall prior arrests (2 sites), fewer prior felonies (2 sites), fewer prior property offenses (2 sites), fewer prior drug-related arrests (2 sites), fewer prior crimes against a person (1 site), and being male (1 site).

IMPACT EVALUATION

Recidivism Post Exit

The key question of interest in an impact evaluation of drug courts is the following:

Does participation in drug court reduce the number of re-arrests for those individuals compared to traditional court processing?

YES. Fewer drug court participants were re-arrested after program exit than comparison group members ($p < .05$). For this analysis, drug court participants from all five counties were combined and matched to one statewide comparison group. Fewer drug court participants had felony re-arrests 0-12 months and 12-24 months after program exit (see Figure A). Groups did not differ significantly in drug-related recidivism rates at 0-12 months post program exit, but fewer drug court participants had drug-related arrests 12-24 months after program exit than comparable offenders who did not participate in drug court (see Figure B).

³ In all sites, graduates had significantly fewer drug related arrests after program entry than before. In one of the four sites, non-graduates had more drug charges after program entry than before. In three of the four remaining sites, drug charges were significantly lower for non-graduates, and for the fourth site, the number was lower, though the change was not statistically significant for the non-graduates.

Figure A. The Recidivism Rate Is Significantly Lower for Drug Court Participants (total felonies)

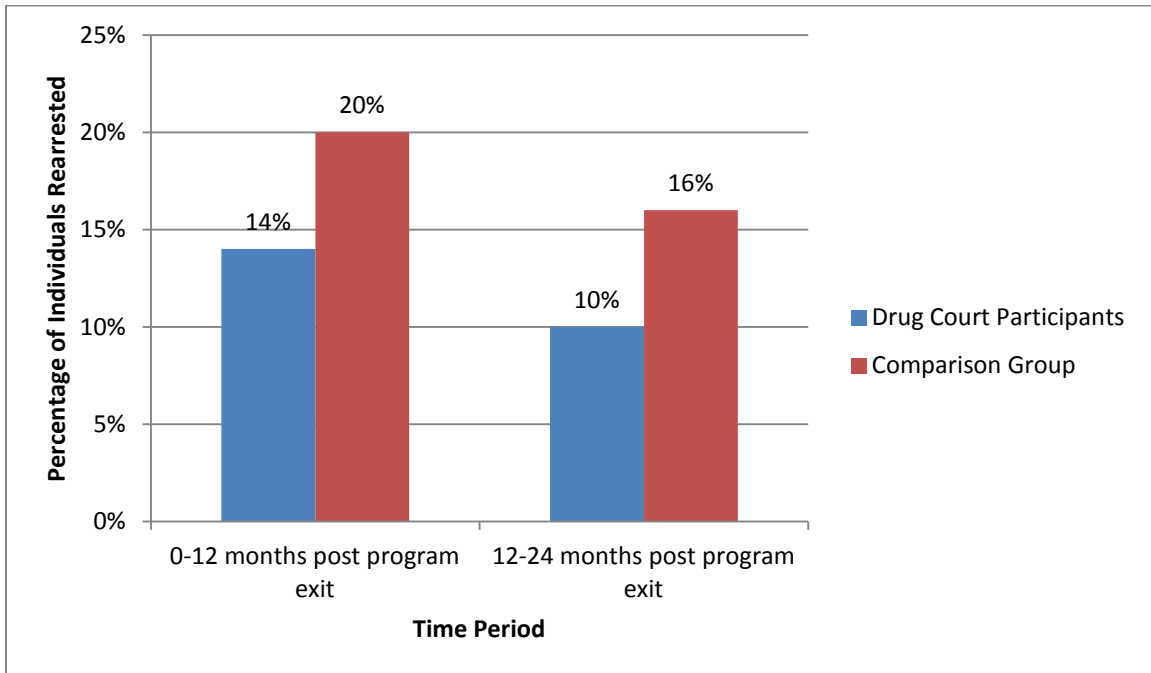
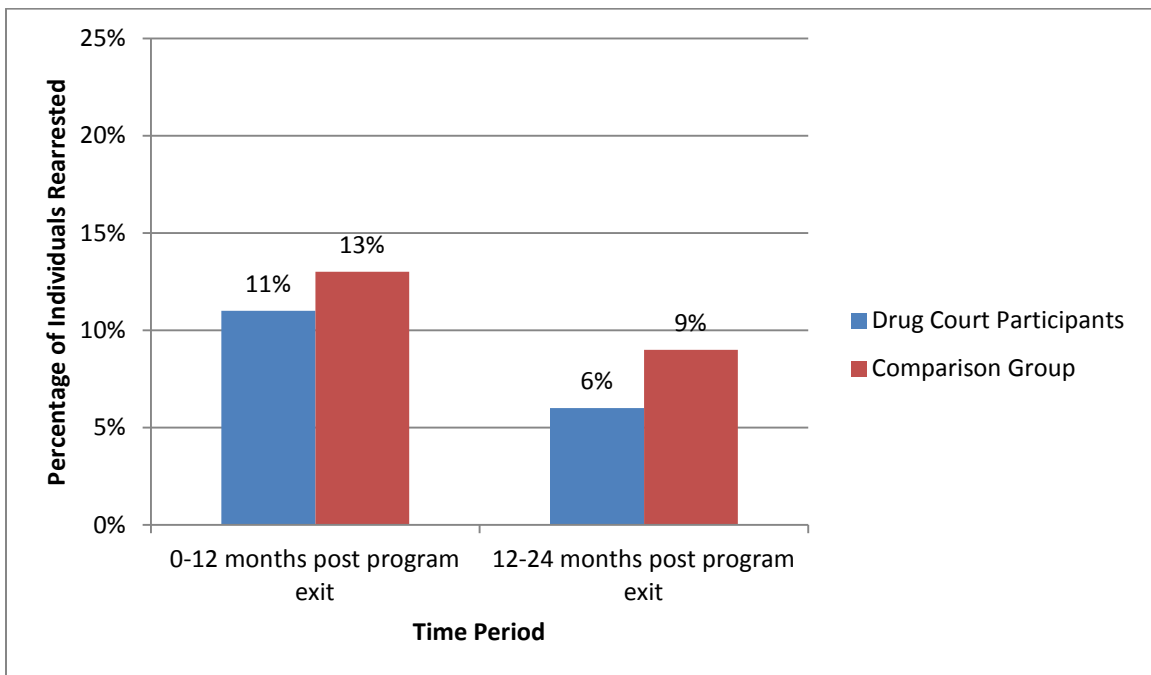


Figure B. The Recidivism Rate Is Significantly Lower for Drug Court Participants (total drug arrests)



Note: $p > .05$ for both of these significant differences.

As a whole, the results of the outcome analysis for the Florida Adult Felony Drug Court programs were positive. Compared to offenders who experienced traditional court processes, the drug court participants (regardless of whether they graduated from the program):

- Had lower felony recidivism rates 0-12 months after program exit (or equivalent)
- Had lower felony recidivism rates 12-24 months after program exit (or equivalent)
- Had lower drug-related recidivism rates 12-24 months after program exit (or equivalent)

Cost Evaluation

The Florida Adult Felony Drug Court cost evaluation was designed to address the following study question: How much do the drug court programs cost?

TRANSACTION AND INSTITUTIONAL COST ANALYSIS

The cost approach utilized by NPC Research is called Transactional and Institutional Cost Analysis (TICA). The TICA approach views an individual's interaction with publicly funded agencies as a set of transactions in which the individual utilizes resources contributed from multiple agencies. Transactions are those points within a system where resources are consumed and/or change hands. In the case of drug courts, when a drug court participant appears in court or has a drug test, resources such as judge time, defense attorney time, court facilities, and urine cups are used. Court appearances and drug tests are transactions. In addition, the TICA approach recognizes that these transactions take place within multiple organizations and institutions that work together to create the program of interest. These organizations and institutions contribute to the cost of each transaction that occurs for program participants. TICA is an intuitively appropriate approach to conducting costs assessment in an environment such as a drug court, which involves complex interactions among multiple taxpayer-funded organizations.

Program Costs

Table E provides the range of costs per participant and the average cost per participant for each drug court transaction, based on program cost results from the five Florida drug court sites included in NPC program cost calculations. The table contains the total cost for each transaction. For example, the cost for drug court appearances is the unit cost per court appearance multiplied by the average number of appearances attended per participant.

Table E. Program Costs per Participant

Transaction	Avg. # of events per participant	Range	Average
Drug Court Appearances	21	\$1,018 - \$4,500	\$2,084
Case Management	367	\$665 - \$2,404	\$1,768
Individual Treatment	22	\$267 - \$2,164	\$1,099
Group Treatment	85	\$177 - \$10,352	\$3,640
UA Drug Testing	100	\$233 - \$1,141	\$651
Jail Sanctions ⁴	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	595	\$5,385 - \$17,156	\$9,242

In summary, the Florida Adult Felony Drug Court programs had an average program cost of **\$9,242** per participant.

⁴ Administrative data on jail sanctions were not available, so jail sanctions were not included in the program cost analysis.

Recommendations

STATEWIDE

- Increase connections with law enforcement.
- Extend the length of drug court programs from 12 to 18 months, particularly if the program is serving high risk/high need offenders.
- Use evaluation and assessment data to make program modifications.
- If feasible (and if they are not served through a mental health court), consider accepting individuals with serious mental health issues.
- Ensure that responses to participant behavior are happening immediately.
- Require that participants have a job, be in school, or have some other legal and sustainable way to support themselves before graduating from the program.

MULTIPLE STUDY SITES

- Data quality for future studies could be improved, at the local program level and through collaboration with other state agencies.
 - Local programs should be encouraged to maintain a core set of data elements, in electronic format, and with consistent definitions, on each participant.
 - Maintain a record in the program data of the arrest that brought the participant to drug court.
 - Separate program sanctions from new arrests, unless they are truly new arrests.

FUTURE STUDIES

- Establish additional system level data sharing agreements between agencies, to facilitate access to (and compilation of) arrest, jail, incarceration, and court data.
- Establish a procedure for allowing access to National Crime Information Center data.
- Work to identify comparison groups that had specific alternate interventions to drug court, such as drug diversion programs or other alternatives to incarceration.

Overall, the Florida drug court programs have been successful in their main goals of reducing drug use and recidivism among its participants and increasing public safety.

BACKGROUND

Drug courts are designed to guide offenders identified as drug-addicted into treatment to reduce drug dependence and improve the quality of life for the offenders and their families. Benefits to society include substantial reductions in crime, resulting in reduced costs to taxpayers and increased public safety.

In the typical drug treatment court program, participants are closely supervised by a judge who is supported by a team of agency representatives operating outside of their traditional roles. The team typically includes a drug treatment court coordinator, case managers, substance abuse treatment providers, prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, law enforcement officers, and parole and probation officers who work together to provide needed services to drug treatment court participants. Prosecuting and defense attorneys modify their traditional adversarial roles to support the treatment and supervision needs of program participants. Drug treatment court programs blend the resources, expertise and interests of a variety of jurisdictions and agencies.

Drug treatment courts have been shown to be effective in reducing criminal recidivism (GAO, 2005), improving the psycho-social functioning of offenders (Kralstein, 2010), and reducing taxpayer costs due to positive outcomes for drug treatment court participants (including fewer re-arrests, less time in jail and less time in prison) (Carey & Finigan, 2004; Carey, Finigan, Waller, Lucas, & Crumpton, 2005). Some drug treatment courts have been shown to cost less to operate than processing offenders through business-as-usual in the court system (Carey & Finigan, 2004; Carey et al., 2005).

In 2009, the Florida Supreme Court, Office of State Courts Administrator, Office of Court Improvement, received a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. This grant included funds for a statewide evaluation of Florida's adult felony drug courts. NPC Research was contracted to perform process, outcome, impact, and cost evaluation. This report provides details about the statewide impact evaluation and summarizes the results of the process, outcome, and cost evaluation reports that were submitted previously.

Located in Portland, Oregon, NPC Research has conducted research and program evaluation for more than 20 years. Its clients have included the Department of Justice (including the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Assistance); the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (CSAP and CSAT in particular); state court administrative offices in Oregon, California, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, and Missouri; the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; and many other local and state government agencies. NPC Research has conducted process, outcome and cost evaluations of drug treatment courts nationally. Having completed more than 125 drug treatment court evaluations (including adult, juvenile, DUI and family treatment drug treatment courts), NPC is one of the most experienced firms in this area of evaluation research.

This document is the evaluation report containing the results from the Florida Adult Felony Drug Court impact evaluation and summary information from site-level process, outcome, and cost analyses. The statewide process study included an examination of drug court practices in relation to the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts (NADCP, 1997) and recommendations for enhancements to the program to meet research-based best practices results, and was submitted in a prior statewide report. In addition, each of the five study sites was provided a site-specific process

evaluation report. The outcome evaluation included a criminal justice recidivism study comparing criminal history information for drug treatment court participants prior to and after their participation in drug court. Outcomes were examined for up to 24 months after drug treatment court entry. The impact study includes a recidivism analysis using the Florida definition of recidivism, which assesses in program recidivism and recidivism in the first and second years post program exit. In this study, the focus was on felonies and on drug charges (including misdemeanor, felony and DUI offenses). Results are provided for the participants as a whole, and for graduates and non-graduates.

SUMMARY OF PROCESS EVALUATION

10 Key Components Assessment

Thirty-three adult felony drug court programs completed an online assessment about their program's policies and procedures. The survey responses were compared to best practices based on national research on practices that are associated with greater reductions in recidivism or greater cost savings. Twenty-nine practices were assessed.

The results of the assessment indicate that there are many areas where adult felony drug court programs across Florida are using recommended practices. Over half (15) of the study practices were being used by approximately two thirds (66% or more) of the programs.

Forty-one percent of programs indicated prescription drugs were the most common drug of choice for their participants. Cocaine and marijuana were each the drug of choice for about one in five programs.

All participating programs indicated that they achieve three of the 29 best practices, by having the treatment provider regularly attend drug court appearances and communicate via email with the court, and requiring participants to pay court fees. On the other hand, very few programs included law enforcement on their teams.

In addition to best practices, there were 21 additional practices that are common among programs nationally and that are suggested. Florida programs had high rates of following these practices, which means these programs are generally aligned with the overall drug court model.

Additional details about the results of the statewide drug court practice assessment can be found in the Study Practices Assessment of Florida Adult Felony Drug Courts report, July 2011.

Site-Level Process Studies

Five counties were selected from the 33 that completed the online assessment, based on their use of best and common drug court practices (use of at least 66% of the best practices and 85% or more of the common practices), diversity in terms of their geographic location, racial/ethnic composition of the participant population, size of the area, and type of program.

These sites include the Duval County Adult Drug Court located in the 4th Judicial Circuit, the Escambia County Adult Drug Court located in the 1st Judicial Circuit, the Lee County Adult Drug Court located in the 20th Judicial Circuit, the Monroe County Adult Drug Court located in the 16th Judicial Circuit, and the Volusia County Adult Drug Court located in the 7th Judicial Circuit.

Each of these programs received a comprehensive process evaluation, including a site visit, interviews of team members, focus groups with participants, and an individual report detailing their alignment with best practices and site specific recommendations.

The sites varied widely in their local successes and challenges, and as such had a range of different recommendations for program improvement. The types of suggestions that were made for more than one of the five programs included adding law enforcement to the team, working to decrease the time from arrest to drug court entry, ensuring training of all team members, working on achieving non-adversarial relationships between all team members, decreasing the reliance on use of jail as a sanction, and reaching out to community partners.

Additional details about program practices, commendations and recommendations can be found in the individual program reports.

SUMMARY OF SITE-LEVEL OUTCOME EVALUATION

The purpose of an outcome or impact evaluation is to determine whether the program has improved participant outcomes. In other words, did the program achieve its intended goals for its participants?

The **outcome analyses** were based on a cohort of Florida Adult Felony Drug Court participants from five different programs (in five different counties/jurisdictions) who entered the drug treatment court program from November 2004, through January 2010.⁵ The short-term outcomes assessed included graduation rates and what participant characteristics predicted whether or not they successfully complete the program, as well as whether drug treatment court participants reduced their drug use and whether drug treatment court participants were re-arrested less often after *program entry* than before.

The outcomes analyses were based on a cohort of adult drug court participants from each site. These individuals were tracked through administrative data for at least 24 months post program entry. The studies compared arrest rates and the number of offenses in the 24 months prior to program entry to recidivism over 24 months after program entry. In addition, the evaluations examined the graduation rates and effects on substance use for program participants at each of the sites.

Participant Characteristics

Program participant characteristics across the five sites show that the average Florida Adult Felony Drug Court participant is male, white, and in his early 30s. The ranges of race/ethnicity proportions indicate that all programs serve mostly Caucasian participants and some have a higher percentage of African American participants than others. In addition, the ranges in average ages show that programs are working with a mix of younger participants and individuals at a later stage in their lives.

Table 1. Drug Court Participant Characteristics (five sites)

All drug court participants N = 1,014	Range	Average
Gender (Male)	55%-71%	62%
Race		
White (one site includes Latinos)	65%-94%	81%
Black (one site only used “non-white”)	11%-32%	21%
Hispanic/Latino (two sites)	1%	1%
American Indian (one site)	2%	2%
Age at Program Entry	18 – 67 years	31
Average number of all arrests in the 24 months prior to program entry	1.56-3.70	2.74

⁵ Cohorts varied in each county, based on the availability of data.

All drug court participants N = 1,014	Range	Average
Average number of arrests with drug charges in the 24 months prior to program entry	0.56-1.23	0.90
Average number of arrests with property charges in the 24 months prior to program entry	0.3-2.4	1.17
Average number of arrests with person charges in the 24 months prior to program entry	0.07-0.31	0.20
Average number of arrests with felony charges in the 24 months prior to program entry	1.12-1.94	1.60

Pre-Post Recidivism

The individual site reports illustrate the number of new arrests and recidivism rates for 2 years after program entry for the Florida Adult Drug Court participants from the five studies in 6 month intervals. Table 2 shows the recidivism for the last 6 month period, from 18-24 months after program entry, as well as the number of re-arrests in 24 months after program entry.

Table 2. Participant Re-Arrest Rates and Numbers of Arrests (five sites)

	Range	Average
Re-Arrest Rates, 18-24 months post entry	11% to 34%	21%
Number of Re-Arrests 0-24 months post entry	1.0-2.9	1.72

Data from the individual reports show that program participants generally had lower recidivism rates and lower numbers of new arrests in the period 24 months after program entry compared to 24 months before participation.

Table 3. Participant Arrests 24 Months Post Entry (five sites)

	Number of sites
Significantly fewer arrests after drug court entry compared to before program (all participants)	4 of 5
Graduates had significantly fewer arrests post entry	5 of 5
Non-graduates had significantly fewer arrests post entry	2 of 5
Recidivism rate (percent of participants who are arrested after entry) significantly lower than before program	5 of 5

Program Completion

The graduation rate for three of the five programs in the study was higher than the national average of 50%. Programs ranged in intended length from 12 to 15 months. Participants remained in the programs an average of 12 months (averages at the program level ranged from 8 months to 17 months). Graduates had an average length of stay of 14.5 months, but their individual lengths of stay ranged from 5 months to 4 years. Non-graduates tended to have shorter lengths of stay, ranging from less than 5 months to 10 (average of about 7 months).

Table 4. Program Graduation (five sites)

	Range	Average
Graduation Rates	43% to 85%	57%

Substance Use

Results found in the individual reports also showed that overall, outcomes for Florida Adult Felony Drug Court participants were positive for each of the sites in terms of reducing substance use, as measured by re-arrests for drug-related charges. After participation in the program, regardless of whether they graduated, program participants generally⁶ were re-arrested on drug charges less often than before program participation, also indicating a likely reduction in drug use due to program participation at most sites.

⁶ In all sites, graduates had significantly fewer drug related arrests after program entry than before. In one of the four sites, non-graduates had more drug charges after program entry than before. In three of the four remaining sites, drug charges were significantly lower for non-graduates, and for the fourth site, the number was lower, though the change was not statistically significant for the non-graduates.

Predictors of Success

The most consistent predictors of graduation were age (four of the 5 sites), and length of time in the program (four of the five sites). Graduates on average (in those four sites) were older, about 34 compared to 29 for the non-graduates. Graduates spent an average of 418 days in the program, compared to 227 for the non-graduates. Other factors that were significantly associated with graduation were having fewer overall prior arrests (two sites), fewer prior felonies (two sites), fewer prior property offenses (two sites), fewer prior drug-related arrests (two sites), fewer prior crimes against a person (one site), and being male (one site).

IMPACT EVALUATION

The purpose of an impact evaluation is to determine whether the program has improved participant outcomes. In other words, did the program achieve its intended goals for its participants, particularly longer term outcomes, including those after program completion? In the case of drug treatment court programs, one of the largest impacts of interest is recidivism. Are program participants avoiding the criminal justice system “revolving door?” How often are participants being re-arrested?

This section of the report includes a description of the research strategy and methods used for studying recidivism, followed by a presentation of the results.

Impact Evaluation Methods

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The criminal justice system outcome that is most commonly used to measure the effectiveness of drug treatment courts is the recidivism of drug treatment court participants after they leave drug treatment court programs. Recidivism is defined in the impact evaluation as any felony, or misdemeanor drug or DUI re-arrest resulting in the filing of a charge for drug court participants during involvement in the drug court program (or equivalent, for the comparison group) and upon exit from the program (or equivalent, for the comparison group). NPC Research identified a sample of participants who entered one of the five study programs from November 2004 through January 2010,⁷ and a matched comparison group of offenders eligible for drug treatment court programs in these counties during the same time period, but who received the traditional court processing. The full sample was used to assess program outcomes (described earlier). A sub-sample of this group was then selected that had at least 24 months of recidivism data post-program exit for all program participants.

The program participants were examined through an existing administrative database for a period of 24 months from the date of drug court exit.

IMPACT STUDY QUESTIONS

The evaluation was designed to address the following study question:

- Does participation in drug court reduce the number of re-arrests for those individuals compared to traditional court processing?

DATA COLLECTION AND SOURCES

Administrative Data

NPC staff members adapted procedures developed in previous drug court evaluation projects for data collection, management, and analysis of the impact data. Once all data were gathered on the study participants, the data were compiled, cleaned and moved into SPSS for statistical analysis. The evaluation team employed univariate and multivariate statistical analyses using SPSS (described in more detail in the data analysis section). The majority of the data necessary for the impact evaluation were gathered from the administrative databases described below and in Table 5.

⁷ Cohorts varied in each county, based on the availability of data.

Table 5. Evaluation Data Sources

Database	Source	Example of variables
<i>Program data</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th Judicial Circuit Adult Drug Court in Duval County • Escambia County Drug Court • Lee County Felony Drug Court • 16th Judicial Circuit Key West Adult Diversion Drug Court in Monroe County • Volusia County Adult Drug Court 	For drug court participants only: Demographics, time spent in drug court, discharge status
<i>Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)</i>	Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)	Incident dates (arrests), charges, sentencing information

The Fourth Judicial Circuit Adult Drug Court Data (Duval County)

NPC Research received two Excel data files from the 4th JCADC. The first contained Adult Drug Court participant names, race, gender, and date of birth for participants in the program from January 1, 1994, to September 30, 2011. The second was a master list of Adult Drug Court participants from 2001 through 2011. It contained participant names, their start and end dates in the program, and their program status (e.g., graduated, active, etc.). The two files were merged so that all pertinent participant information was in one file.

Escambia County Adult Drug Court Data

NPC Research received an Excel data file from the ECADC. The file contained names, race, gender, age at program entry, drug of choice, date of program entry, date of program termination, and program status (e.g., graduated, active, etc.) for participants in the Adult Drug Court from 2006-2011.

Lee County Felony Drug Court Data

NPC Research received an Excel file from the LCFDC. The file contained names, race, ethnicity, gender, date of birth, drug of choice, date of program entry, date of program termination, and program status (e.g., graduated, active, etc.) for participants in the Adult Felony Court from 2006-2011. The Excel file was in a report format, which made it difficult to prepare and manipulate the data for analysis purposes. NPC recommends that the LCFDC capture and prepare their program data in a spreadsheet format.

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Adult Diversion Drug Court of Monroe County Data

NPC Research received an Excel data file from the ADDCMC. The file contained Adult Drug Court participant names, demographics (including race, gender, and date of birth), and admission/discharge dates for participants in the program from May 16, 2005, to September 9, 2011.

The Volusia County Adult Drug Court Data

NPC Research received an Excel data file from the VCADC. The file contained Adult Drug Court participant names, race/ethnic group, gender, and date of birth for participants in the program from January 6, 2009, to October 12, 2011.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)

The FDLE database contains information on demographics and arrests. These data were used to examine participant and comparison group criminal justice recidivism.

SAMPLE SELECTION

As described above, a selection was made of a sample of individuals who had participated in drug treatment court in one of the five study counties. The time period of the sample was the range of entry dates for participants; the time intervals were chosen to allow at least 24 months of follow-up for every participant post drug court exit. This was an intent to treat model. That is, all individuals who entered the program were included in the analysis, regardless of whether they graduated or how long they remained in the program.

Table 6. Study Sample Details

Study site	Time period of sample	Number of drug court participants	Number of graduates	Number of non-graduates
Duval	November 2004-December 2009	228	127	101
Escambia	January 2006-January 2010	99	26	73
Lee	October 2006-January 2010	164	100	64
Monroe	May 2005-January 2010	89	75	14
Volusia	January 2009-January 2010	13	0	13
Total	November 2004-January 2010	593	328	265

Comparison Groups

A comparison group was identified for each county from a list of individuals who were arrested during the same time period as the participant group in the respective county. All individuals were assigned a proxy date for an index arrest based on the median date of index arrest (the arrest that brought participants in to the program) for each respective county. Based on the average length of time between index arrest and program entry and the average length of time in the drug court treatment program, proxy program entry termination dates were assigned to each comparison group member. This list was further refined by excluding individuals with convictions for

violent charges. Each county's participant group was matched with a comparison group based on age, gender, race, and criminal history, including prior felonies, prior drug arrests, and prior person arrests. The five matched participant/comparison groups were combined to comprise the statewide study sample.

DATA ANALYSES

Once information was gathered on the study participants, the data was compiled and cleaned and moved into SPSS for statistical analysis. Analyses were conducted to answer the following question:

- *Does participation in drug court reduce the number of re-arrests for those individuals compared to traditional court processing?*

Crosstabs were run to examine differences in recidivism rate (the percentage of individuals rearrested at least once during the specified time period) for drug court participants and the comparison group during program participation (or equivalent for the comparison group), from 0-12 months post program exit (or equivalent) and 12-24 months post program exit (or equivalent). Chi-square analyses were used to identify any significant differences in re-arrest rates between drug treatment court and comparison group participants.

Impact Evaluation Results

Table 7 provides the demographics for the study sample of drug court participants.

Table 7. Drug Court Participant and Comparison Group Characteristics

	All drug court participants N = 593	Comparison group N = 593
Gender	65% male 35% female	68% male 32% female
Ethnicity		
White	77%	77%
Non-white	23%	23%
Mean Age at Program Entry	32 years	32 years
Range	18 – 66 years	18 – 72 years
Average number of all arrests in the 2 years prior to program entry	2.6	2.1
Average number of arrests with drug charges in the 2 years prior to program entry	.79	.76
Average number of arrests with person charges in the 2 years prior to program entry	.07	.07
Average number of arrests with felony charges in the 2 years prior to program entry ⁸	1.0	1.1

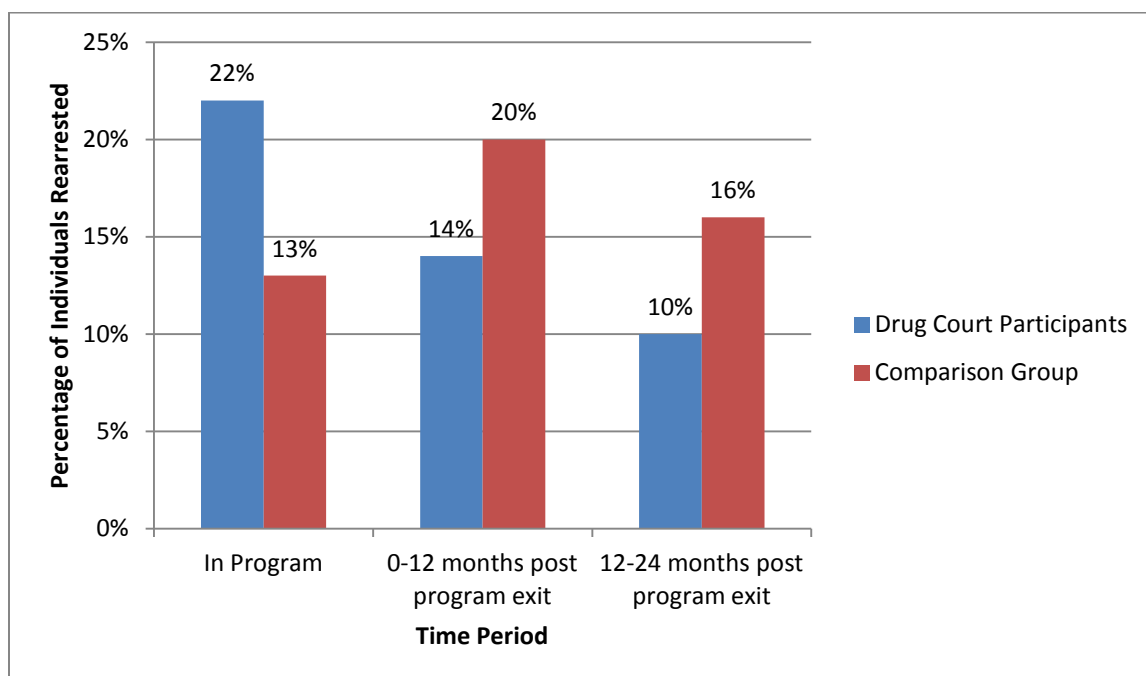
⁸ ($p < .001$)

Recidivism Rates

Does participation in drug court reduce the rate of re-arrest (at least one re-arrest) for those individuals after program participation, compared to traditional court processing?

YES. Fewer drug court participants were re-arrested after program exit than comparison group members ($p < .05$). Figures 1 through 3 illustrate the recidivism rates for in-program, 0-12 months post exit, and 12-24 months post exit, for felony, drug felony, and drug misdemeanor related arrests. Felony recidivism rates were higher for drug court participants during the program (or equivalent),⁹ but were lower for drug court participants after program exit (see Figure 1). Drug recidivism rates did not differ significantly between the groups during the drug court program and 0-12 months post program exit, but were significantly lower for drug court participants 12-24 months post program exit (see Figures 2 and 3). Figures 4 through 6 illustrate the rates when the drug court group is divided into graduates and non-graduates. Recidivism rates for felonies and drug-related arrests were lower for graduates during the program and 0-12 months after program exit. Recidivism rates 12-24 months after program exit were not significantly different between graduates and non-graduates.

Figure 1. Percent of Drug Court Participants and Comparison Group Members Who Were Re-Arrested for a Felony



⁹ The in-program recidivism analyses include some events that were coded as arrests in the Florida Department of Law Enforcement data system, yet, as program staff indicated, were actually program sanctions that had no other way to be recorded. This practice likely artificially inflated the rate of recidivism and may be masking a program impact that was present but is not able to be detected.

Figure 2. Percent of Drug Court Participants and Comparison Group Members Who Were Re-Arrested for a Drug Felony

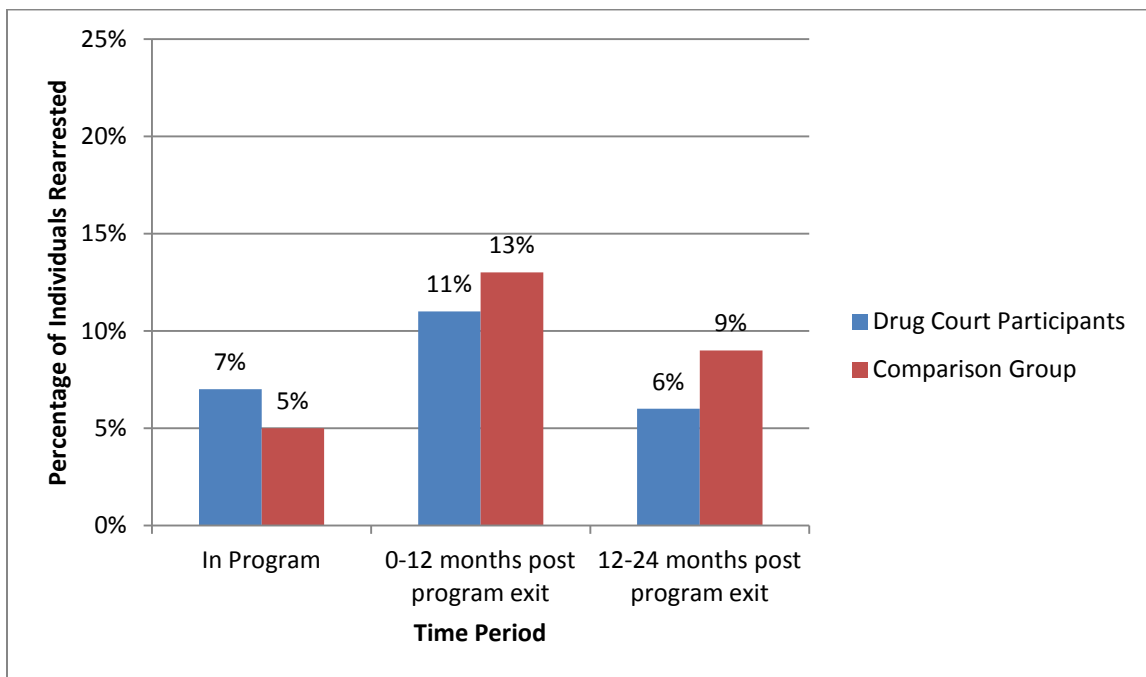


Figure 3. Percent of Drug Court Participants and Comparison Group Members Who Were Re-Arrested for a Drug Misdemeanor

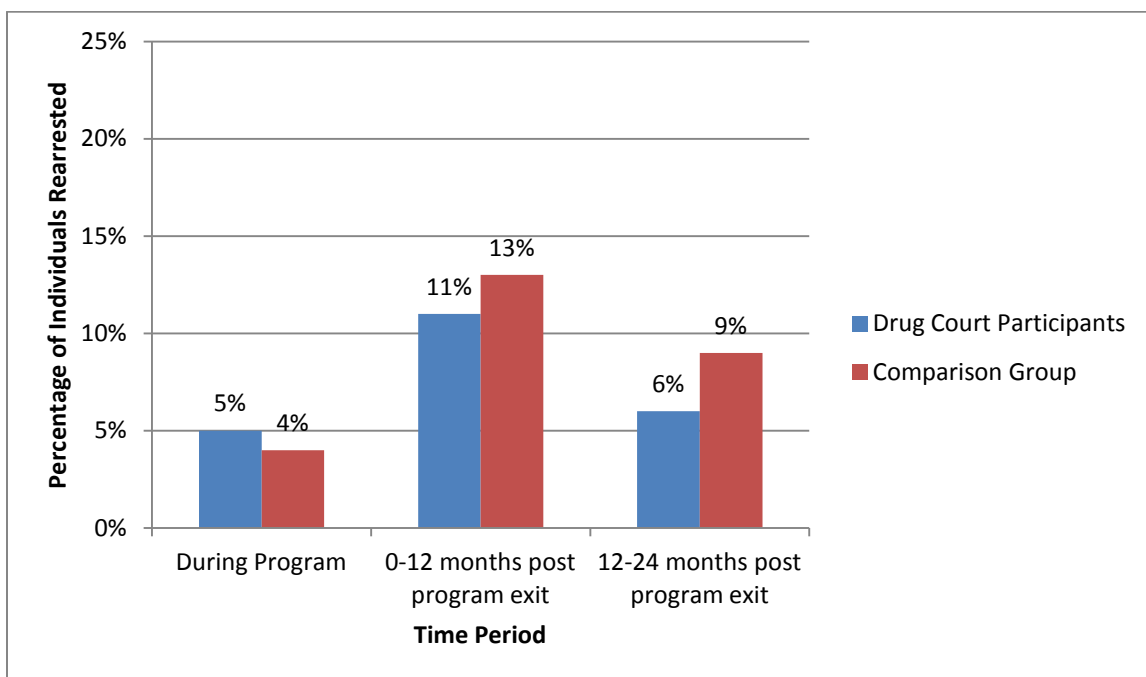


Figure 4. Percent of Drug Court Graduates and Non-Graduates Who Were Re-Arrested for a Felony

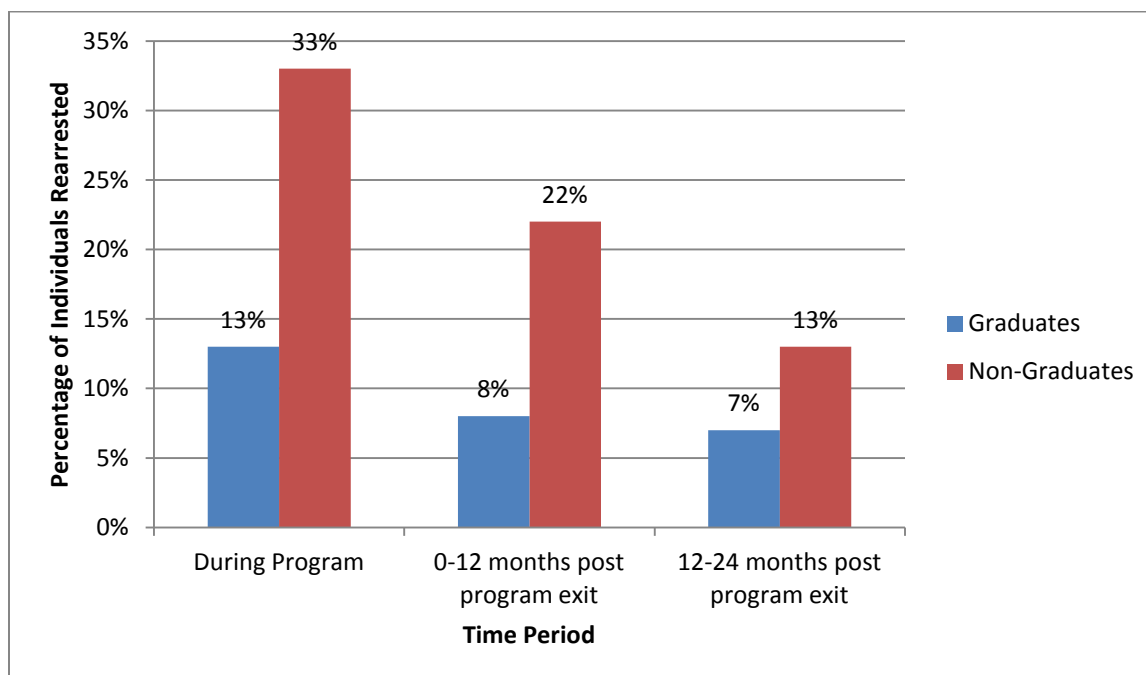


Figure 5. Percent of Drug Court Graduates and Non-Graduates Who Were Re-Arrested for a Drug Felony

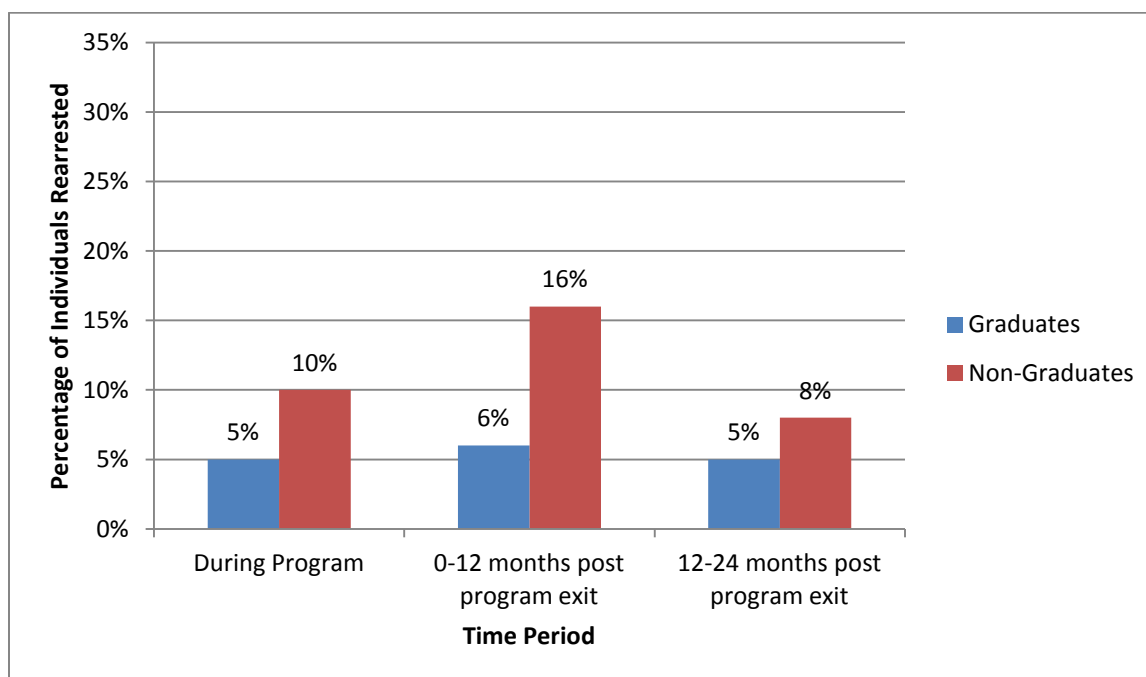
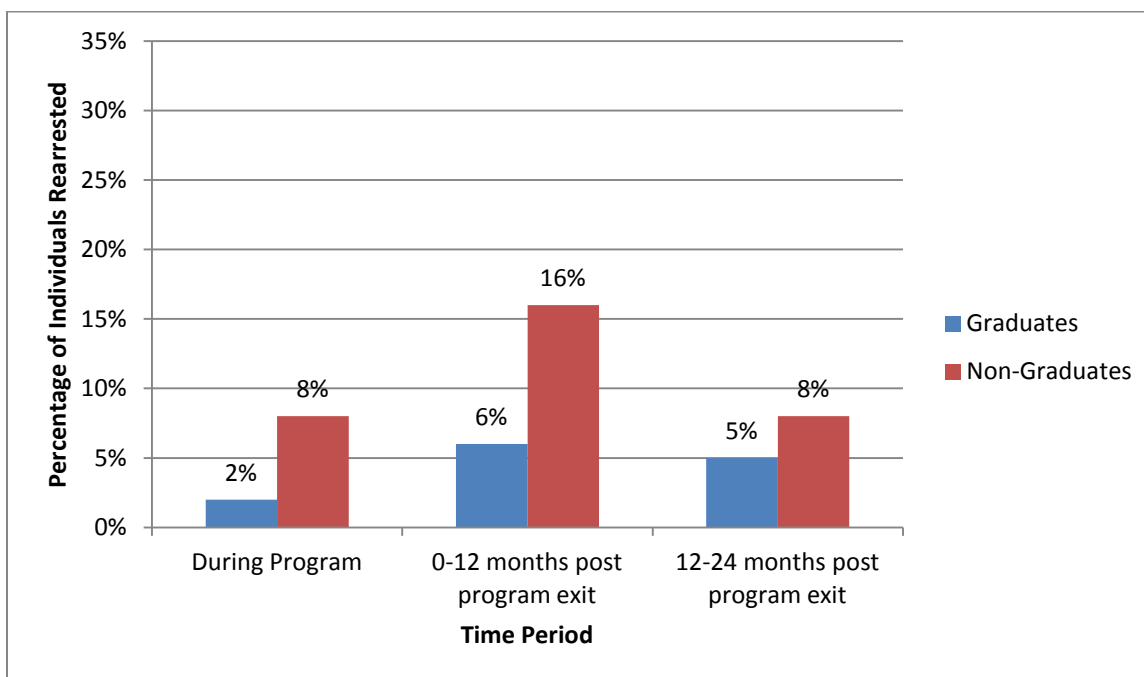


Figure 6. Percent of Drug Court Graduates and Non-Graduates Who Were Re-Arrested for a Drug Misdemeanor



Recidivism: Numbers of Arrests

Although recidivism rates are a commonly used indicator, they do not assess the total number of re-arrests for each group in the specified time period. These data are particularly useful in assessing the total impact on the criminal justice system and its resources. The number is important to know in order to assess cost impacts. For this analysis, we used a general linear model assessing the impact of group membership (drug court participant vs. matched comparison) on 24 month post exit numbers of re-arrests. We used two covariates as controls: prior (24 months before program entry or equivalent) total number of arrests (the two groups did differ on this important variable) and days at risk (not incarcerated) in the 24 month period post program exit (or equivalent for the comparison group).

Does participation in drug court reduce the number of re-arrests for those individuals after program participation, compared to traditional court processing?

YES. Drug court participants had a fewer number of subsequent arrests for the categories: total arrests, felony arrests, drug felony arrests, person arrests and property arrests than comparison group members ($p < .05$).

There has been some question about whether drug treatment court programs, which redirect offenders from incarceration into treatment in the community, endanger the public, or increase or decrease public safety. These findings demonstrate that involvement in the program, regardless of exit status, is associated with a reduction in crime in the long term. This provides evidence consistent with drug court studies nationally, that drug court programs increase public safety above business as usual. The Florida Adult Felony Drug Courts are successfully accomplishing one of their key goals, an increase in public safety.

IMPACT SUMMARY

The impact analyses were based on a cohort of Florida Adult Felony Drug Court participants who entered one of five drug court programs from November 2004–January 2010, and a matched comparison group of offenders eligible for drug court but who received the traditional court process.

The results of the impact analysis for the Florida Adult Felony Drug Courts are positive. Compared to offenders who experienced traditional court processes, the drug court participants (regardless of whether they graduated from the program):

- Had lower felony recidivism rates 0-12 months after program exit (or equivalent)
- Had lower felony recidivism rates 12-24 months after program exit (or equivalent)
- Had lower drug-related recidivism rates 12-24 months after program exit (or equivalent)

Overall, the drug court programs have been successful in their main goals of reducing recidivism among its participants and increasing public safety.

COST EVALUATION RESULTS

Transaction and Institutional Cost Analysis

The cost approach utilized by NPC Research is called Transactional and Institutional Cost Analysis (TICA). The TICA approach views an individual's interaction with publicly funded agencies as a set of transactions in which the individual utilizes resources contributed from multiple agencies. Transactions are those points within a system where resources are consumed and/or change hands. In the case of drug courts, when a drug court participant appears in court or has a drug test, resources such as judge time, defense attorney time, court facilities, and urine cups are used. Court appearances and drug tests are transactions. In addition, the TICA approach recognizes that these transactions take place within multiple organizations and institutions that work together to create the program of interest. These organizations and institutions contribute to the cost of each transaction that occurs for program participants. TICA is an intuitively appropriate approach to conducting costs assessment in an environment such as a drug court, which involves complex interactions among multiple taxpayer-funded organizations.

The TICA approach was used to calculate the costs of each of the transactions that occurred while participants were engaged in the program. Program transactions calculated in these analyses included drug court appearances, case management, individual and group drug treatment sessions, urinalysis (UA) drug tests, and jail sanctions. The costs for this study were calculated to include taxpayer costs only. All cost results provided in this report are based on fiscal year 2012 dollars.

The results from five Florida Adult Felony Drug Court Programs' cost evaluations, conducted in 2011 and 2012, are compiled in the tables below. The ranges and averages are reported for program costs for the five sites. These sites include the Duval County Adult Drug Court located in the 4th Judicial Circuit Adult Drug Court, the Escambia County Adult Drug Court located in the 1st Judicial Circuit, the Lee County Adult Drug Court located in the 20th Judicial Circuit, the Monroe County Adult Drug Court located in the 16th Judicial Circuit, and the Volusia County Adult Drug Court located in the 7th Judicial Circuit.

PROGRAM TRANSACTIONS

A drug court appearance, for the majority of drug courts, is one of the most staff- and resource-intensive program transactions. These appearances typically include representatives from some or all of the following:

- Circuit Court (Judge, Court Clerk, Case Manager, Drug Court Coordinator);
- State Attorney (Assistant State Attorney);
- Public Defender (Assistant Public Defender);
- Department of Corrections (Probation Officer);
- Law Enforcement (Sheriff's Deputy, Police Officer); and
- Treatment agencies (Case Manager, Counselor).

The cost of a ***Drug Court Appearance*** (the time during an appearance in court when a single program participant interacts with the judge) is calculated based on the average amount of court time (in minutes) each participant interacts with the judge during the drug court appearance. This includes the direct costs of each drug court team member present, the time team members spend preparing for the appearance, the agency support costs, and jurisdictional overhead costs. The cost

for a single drug court appearance ranged from \$46.76 to \$148.79 with an average cost of **\$98.60** per participant.

Case Management is based on the amount of staff time dedicated to case management activities during a regular work week and is then translated into a total cost for case management per participant per day (taking staff salaries and benefits, and support and overhead costs into account).¹⁰ The main agencies typically involved in case management are treatment agencies, the Department of Corrections, and the Circuit Court. The daily cost of case management ranged from \$2.11 to \$7.59, with an average cost of **\$4.91**.

Drug Treatment is typically provided by private treatment providers, but sometimes by court staff. Participants usually pay co-pays to treatment providers, often on a sliding scale depending on income, but those payments were not taken into account for this analysis as specific data on payments by individuals in the drug court samples were not available. Individual treatment per participant ranged from \$13.75 per session to \$90.00 per session, with an average of **\$51.50** per session. Group treatment per participant ranged from \$3.37 to \$93.00, with an average of **\$38.42** per person per session. Residential treatment costs were not included in this analysis as administrative data were not available. All rates were provided to NPC by drug court coordinators and/or representatives of the treatment agencies.

Drug Testing is typically performed by the Circuit Court, Department of Corrections, and private treatment providers. Again, participants often pay co-pays on a sliding scale, depending on income, but due to a lack of data on actual payments made by participants in this study those payments were not included in the cost analysis. The cost per UA test ranged from \$1.72 to \$12.16 and averaged **\$6.90** per test. Drug testing costs were obtained from the drug court coordinators and representatives of the drug testing agencies.

Jail Sanctions are provided by the Sheriff's Office or other county detention agency. Jail costs were acquired from representatives of the local Sheriff's Office or from budgetary information found online. The cost of jail ranged from \$49.65 to \$82.61, with an average cost of **\$71.02**. However, due to a lack of administrative data, jail sanctions were not included in the cost analysis.

PROGRAM COSTS

Table 8 provides the range of costs per participant and the average cost per participant for each drug court transaction, based on program cost results from the five Florida drug court sites included in NPC program cost calculations. The table contains the total cost for each transaction. For example, the cost for drug court appearances is the unit cost per court appearance multiplied by the average number of appearances attended per participant.

¹⁰ Case management includes meeting with participants, evaluations, phone calls, referring out for other help, answering questions, reviewing referrals, consulting, making community service connections, assessments, documentation, file maintenance, and residential referrals.

Table 8. Program Costs per Participant

Transaction	Ave. # of events per participant	Range	Average
Drug Court Appearances	21	\$1,018 - \$4,500	\$2,084
Case Management	367	\$665 - \$2,404	\$1,768
Individual Treatment	22	\$267 - \$2,164	\$1,099
Group Treatment	85	\$177 - \$10,352	\$3,640
UA Drug Testing	100	\$233 - \$1,141	\$651
Total	595	\$5,385 - \$17,156	\$9,242

As Table 8 shows, there is a large variation in costs across programs, with an average program cost per participant of \$9,242. The variation in program costs is due to myriad factors including the cost of living in the region and the specific practices performed by the program. For example, programs that follow best practices and perform at least two drug tests per week will be more expensive than programs that test only once per month. The transaction that plays the biggest role in program cost variation is group treatment (with a range of average costs per participant of \$177 to \$10,352). All other transactions are within a fairly narrow range across the five sites.

Program Costs per Agency

Another useful way to examine program costs is by agency. Table 9 shows the range of costs per participant and the average cost per participant *by agency*, based on program cost results from the five Florida adult drug court sites included in NPC program cost calculations.

Table 9. Program Costs per Participant by Agency

Agency	Range	Average
Circuit Court	\$597 – \$3,804	\$2,309
State Attorney	\$46 – \$1,064	\$330
Public Defender	\$96 – \$798	\$510
Department of Corrections ¹¹	\$0 – \$1,755	\$815
Treatment	\$886 – \$13,233	\$5,030
Law Enforcement ¹²	\$0 – \$111	\$12
Clerk of the Court ¹³	\$0– \$809	\$147
Drug Testing Agency ¹⁴	\$0 – \$822	\$89
Total	\$5,385– \$17,156	\$9,242

As Table 9 demonstrates, the agency that contributes by far the largest amount toward the drug court programs is treatment (an average of \$5,030, or 54% of total program costs). Since one of the main goals of drug courts is to get participants into treatment and to stay in treatment, these results show that Florida drug courts are succeeding at this goal. Table 9 shows that the next largest portion of drug court costs accrue to the Circuit Court (an average of \$2,309, or 25% of total program costs), followed by the Department of Corrections (an average of \$815, or 9% of total program costs). The agency with the largest range of program costs is treatment (\$886 to \$13,233 per participant), again due in large part to the large variation in group treatment costs across the five programs.

Program Costs Summary

In sum, the average cost of a drug court program per participant was \$9,242. The largest portion of adult drug court costs is due to individual and group drug treatment (an average of \$4,739, or 51% of total program costs). Drug court appearances (an average of \$2,084, or 23% of total program costs) and case management (an average of \$1,768 or 19%) are also significant program costs. When program costs are evaluated by agency, the largest portion of costs accrues to agencies involved in treatment (an average of \$5,030, or 54% of total program costs).

¹¹ Note that all but one site included Department of Corrections' staff on the drug court team. The site that does not have the DOC on the team is recorded as \$0 program cost.

¹² Only one site included law enforcement on the drug court team.

¹³ Note that two sites have Clerk of the Court costs separated out from Circuit Court costs (as a separate agency).

¹⁴ Note that one site has a separate county drug testing agency, distinct from other sites where drug testing is done by the Department of Corrections, Circuit Court, or treatment agencies.

OUTCOME COSTS

Outcome costs were very difficult to determine because several drug court programs reinstated the prior sentence in the post exit period for those terminated. In addition, the costs of drug treatment were not gathered for the comparison group. The best estimate we can do is by looking at drug court graduates in the post exit era and criminal justice costs only. We find that the graduates save the taxpayer approximately \$4,622 in the 24 months post exit, as opposed to \$3,964 in the program period.

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

Drug courts are complex programs designed to deal with some of the most challenging problems that communities face. Drug treatment courts bring together multiple and traditionally adversarial roles plus stakeholders from different systems with different training, professional language, and approaches. They take on groups of clients that frequently have serious substance abuse treatment needs. Adults with substance abuse issues involved in the criminal justice system must be seen within an ecological context; that is, within the environment that has contributed to their attitudes and behaviors. This environment includes their neighborhoods, families, friends, and formal or informal economies through which they support themselves. The drug treatment court must understand the various social, economic and cultural factors that affect them.

The Florida Adult Felony Drug Courts have been responsive to the community needs and strive to meet the challenges presented by substance dependant individuals. These programs are demonstrating exemplary practices within each of the 10 Key Components, and had positive recidivism outcomes.

Recommendations

There are several areas that emerged as themes in multiples sites or statewide that impact the operations of the drug courts. They are described briefly below along with suggestions for implementing program enhancements.

Statewide:

- Increase connections with law enforcement.
- Extend the length of drug court programs from the current 12 months, on average, to 18 months, particularly if the program is serving high risk/high need offenders.
- Use evaluation and assessment data to make program modifications.
- If feasible (and if they are not served through a mental health court), consider accepting individuals with serious mental health issues.
- Ensure that responses to participant behavior are happening immediately.
- Require that participants have a job, be in school, or have some other legal and sustainable way to support themselves before graduating from the program.

Multiple study sites:

- Data quality could be improved. The state is commended for implementing a statewide drug court database that should help improve the consistency of program data about participants. The data that were accessed for the five-site studies were limited in many ways and future evaluations and ongoing program self-monitoring would be greatly enhanced if programs keep track of key data elements in an electronic format and using consistent definitions and thorough collection and maintenance of information. Information such as participant race, program end dates, drug of choice, urinalysis dates and results, all could contribute greatly to an even better understanding of the success of these programs.
- Maintain a record in the program data of the arrest that brought the participant to drug court. The current evaluation inferred this information based on proximity in time of arrests to

drug court entry. It would be more accurate to use the actual arrest that resulted in drug court eligibility.

- Separate program sanctions from new arrests, unless they are truly new arrests. The post-entry (and in-program) recidivism analyses include some events that were coded as arrests in the Florida Department of Law Enforcement data system, yet, as program staff indicated, were actually program sanctions that had no other way to be recorded. This practice likely artificially inflated the rate of recidivism and may be masking a program impact that was present but is not able to be detected. Some program staff indicated that change was already underway in this area. It would be useful to confirm the process for keeping track of sanction data and ensure that unless they are the result of new arrests, that they are not inappropriately recorded as such. The post-exit recidivism analysis removed at least part of this problem by looking specifically at felony charges and drug-related charges, so this inflation should be minimized in this analysis, and in particular during the post program exit time periods.

Future Studies:

- It would be beneficial for all future evaluation work in Florida related to the criminal justice system to work on establishing additional system level data sharing agreements between agencies, to facilitate the assessment of programs like drug courts. For example, a streamlined process to allow the courts to access law enforcement records would allow more efficient development of appropriate comparison groups. In addition, access to the National Crime Information Center data would greatly improve the ability of some Florida counties to look at the impact of their court procedures, particularly in relation to whether some individuals are mobile across state lines (to see whether people who move in or out of Florida had criminal arrests outside the state either before or after their arrest[s] in Florida).
- Future studies may want to spend the resources necessary to gather comparison groups that had specific alternate interventions to drug court, such as drug diversion programs or other alternatives to incarceration. The current study did not have access to information about dispositions, so the development of a comparison group was based solely on the type and number of arrests, rather than other more detailed information about offenders that could have increased the confidence in the comparability between the drug court and comparison samples.

Conclusion

Although there is variability in recidivism, cost and graduation outcomes, most programs are demonstrating positive impacts on participants, the community, and the criminal justice system. Adult felony drug courts are providing an important service to the state.

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