

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY DRUG COURT

An Overview

THE TEAM: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

The Northampton County Drug Court Team consists of:

- Judge
- County Division of Drug and Alcohol
- County Division of Mental Health
- County Adult Probation
- County Public Defenders' Office
- Area Outpatient Service Providers (evaluation, rehabilitation, and support)
- Ancillary Supports (County Prison Officials, County Department of Children, Youth and Families)

THE PROBLEM SOLVING COURT PHILOSOPHY: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

- Addresses the root of an offender's criminogenic behavior
- Prospective: focused on individual outcomes rather than the crime
- Less adversarial than traditional courts
- Collaborative team approach
- Community-based
- Treatment driven

THE WORK OF THE DRUG AND MENTAL HEALTH COURT TEAMS

- Evaluating candidates and admissions determination
- Monitoring participant progress through information obtained by contacts with service providers, the Probation Department, Drug & Alcohol and Mental Health case management
- Identifying resources to meet the treatment and ancillary needs of participants
- Encouraging participants' development and exercise of positive coping mechanisms and daily living skills by the application of incentives
- Determining the need for and applying sanctions to deter participants' unhealthy behavior
- Educating the community at large about the drug epidemic and mental illness, and the work of the Courts
- To raise awareness and support and to reduce stigma

THE BENEFITS OF DRUG COURT

To participants:

- Participants are working, going to school, raising their children, and working on their recovery in their communities, where the skills they learn are immediately applicable to their everyday lives.

To participating offices and agencies:

- The Court and human service providers have gained a greater understanding of the systems and resources that each has in place, and where there was previously no collaboration between the different entities, Drug Court has brought us together to provide better opportunities and outcomes for those involved in the criminal justice system.

To the community:

The community realizes a direct and indirect cost savings by a reduction in the actual costs of incarceration and the return of people to the community to work and raise their families.

PROGRAM TRACKS

Track One:

- Post-conviction court open to eligible parole and probation violators as an alternative to incarceration
- A probationary sentence that includes completion of Drug Court is imposed, no incarceration
- 4-phase program designed to last 18 to 24 months

Track Two:

- Direct sentence program open to eligible offenders at time of sentencing through TCAP

DRUG COURT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Individuals 18 years of age or older who:

Reside in Northampton County;

Have committed a Felony 3, Misdemeanor 1 or Misdemeanor 2 offense and have not less than 12 months sentencing exposure;

Have a qualifying substance use disorder;

Have no mental illness that would interfere with treatment and supervision;

Have no convictions for murder, manslaughter, felony sex offenses, violent felony offenses, violent offenses committed with a firearm, or unresolved out-of-county charges.

SCREENING PROCESS

Step 1: Application Review (including demographic information, addiction history, criminal history, military history – if any)

Step 2: Drug and Alcohol Evaluation

Step 3: Review of Any Supervision History

Step 4: Team Discussion

Step 5: (optional) Applicant observation of Reinforcement Hearing, appearance before court

Step 6: Team Decision

PROGRAM FEATURES: SUPERVISION

Phase One:

- Electronic monitoring
- Curfew
- Weekly Reinforcement Hearings
- Weekly contact with SPO
- Drug testing twice per week

Phase Two:

- Weekly contact with SPO
- Weekly Reinforcement Hearings
- Drug testing twice per week

Phase Three:

- Weekly contact with SPO
- Bi-weekly Reinforcement Hearings
- Drug testing twice per week

Phase Four:

- Bi-weekly contact with SPO
- Monthly Reinforcement Hearings
- Drug testing twice per week

PROGRAM FEATURES: PARTICIPANT PROGRESS

Phase One:

- Obtain daily self-help meetings
- Obtain temporary sponsor
- Obtain stable, sober housing
- 30 consecutive days sober in community

Phase Two:

- Attend self-help meetings as directed
- Select sponsor and home group
- Obtain employment or enroll in school (FT/PT combined)
- 60 consecutive days sober in community
- Begin paying costs and fines

Phase Three:

- Attend self-help meetings as directed
- Maintain work/school
- Maintain/obtain independent sober housing
- 90 consecutive days sober in community
- Continue paying costs and fines

Phase Four:

- Attend self-help meetings as directed
- Maintain work/school
- Maintain housing
- Obtain GED (if applicable and not previously obtained)
- Pay off or continue making consistent payments on costs and fines

PHASE ADVANCEMENT AND GRADUATION

Phase Advancement Requirements:

- Complete a Phase Advancement Application identifying progress, barriers to progress and needs
- Write and read an essay in open court on a designated recovery topic
- Have met all the requirements of the phase

Graduation Requirements:

- Successfully complete all recommended treatment
- Attain a minimum of 9 months' sobriety in the community
- Maintain gainful, consistent employment, or vocational or academic program
- Maintain clean, sober, stable home
- Complete payment of costs and fines or have payment plan in place
- Present Graduation Project in Court

THE BENEFITS OF DRUG COURT

Reduction in Recidivism Rates

According to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals:

- The 1-year recidivism rate for Drug Court graduates is only 16%, and the 2-year rate is only 27%
- By comparison, the national recidivism rate among imprisoned drug users is 60-80% nationwide

Better Individual and Community Outcomes

- Drug Court participants are six times more likely than others to succeed in drug treatment

Reduction in Costs to the County

- Based on the prison's current per diem and an average six month sentence for a level 2-4 offender, Drug Court results in a savings of \$17,906.40 per participant
- Drug Court has saved approximately 4,138 prison days, resulting in an estimated cost savings of \$423,386.88
- Criminal Division has collected over \$17,813.15 on all cases under the supervision of the Drug Court