

Drug Court History and Quick Facts

A "drug court" is a process by which substance abusers entering the court system are placed into treatment and proactively monitored by the judge and a team of justice-system and treatment professionals; it employs effective random drug-testing and graduated sanctions and incentives. Most drug courts are 12-18 month programs.

In 1989, Miami-Dade County, Florida established the first drug court. As of February 2010, there are 105 drug courts in operation statewide, including:

- 47 adult felony drug courts
- 5 adult misdemeanor drug courts
- 26 juvenile drug courts
- 1 juvenile re-entry drug court
- 22 family dependency drug courts
- 4 DUI drug courts

According to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), there are over 2,300 operational drug courts nationwide in every state and U.S. territory. Countries such as England, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, Brazil, and Chile have implemented drug courts.

Drug courts are effective. In February 2005, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued its third comprehensive report on the effects of adult criminal drug courts. The report confirmed that drug courts significantly reduce crime, provide better treatment outcomes, and produce better cost benefits than other justice strategies.

In addition, the NADCP has recently reported that five independent meta-analyses have concluded that adult drug courts significantly reduce crime by 8-26%. Well-administered drug courts were found to reduce crime rates as much as 35%.

Drug court graduates have significantly reduced recidivism rates, enhancing public safety. Findings from the 2003 National Institute of Justice study of 2,000 graduates from 100 drug courts across the country, including 10 programs from Florida, reveal a 16.4% recidivism rate after one year compared to 43.5% of those cases handled in a traditional method. The recidivism rate increased to 27.5% after two years compared to 58.6% of cases handled traditionally.

Drug courts have proven to be highly cost effective. Recent cost benefit studies have concluded that drug courts save \$3,000 - \$12,000 per client. On average, every \$1.00 spent on drug courts was estimated to result in a cost savings of \$1.74 to \$6.32 per participant.

Drug courts have demonstrated that they are more effective than the traditional process of handling drug-involved offenders. They represent a coordinated approach to addressing cases involving substance abuse, the root cause for most cases entering the court system. Drug courts provide for better public safety, restore individuals and families, and save lives. Individuals who graduate from the drug court are clean and sober, employed, and productive members of our communities.