

Drug Courts in Florida

Frequently Asked Questions and Quick Facts

Prepared by the Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator, Office of Court Improvement

What is Drug Court?

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

How many Drug Courts are in operation?

In 1989, Miami-Dade County, Florida established the first drug court. Currently, there are 108 drug courts in operation statewide, including:

- 50 adult felony drug courts
- 6 adult misdemeanor drug courts
- 25 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), more than 2,450 drug courts are operational in every state and U.S. territory. Countries such as England, Australia, Canada, and South America have implemented drug courts.

How are Drug Courts funded?

No two drug courts in Florida are funded the same. Currently, there is no dedicated funding stream for drug courts in Florida; therefore programs rely on various sources of funding to support program operation, including federal state, and local resources. Additionally, most

drug courts require participants to contribute toward the cost of treatment and drug testing.

Are Drug Courts effective?

Yes. 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 criminal justice strategies.

NADCP has recently reported that five independent meta-analyses 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.

According to a March 2009 report released by the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, offenders who successfully complete post-adjudicatory drug courts in Florida are 80% less likely to go to prison than the matched comparison group

over the three-year follow up period studied.

Are Drug Courts cost effective?

Yes. Drug courts have proven to be highly cost effective. Recent cost benefit studies have concluded that drug courts save on average \$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.

Why are Drug Courts needed?

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. Statistics in Florida show that over 60% of persons arrested are either under the influence of, or have committed the crime to gain access to, drugs and alcohol. ¹ Substance abuse causes or contributes to seven out of ten cases of child maltreatment. ² Drug courts provide better public safety, restore individuals and families, and save lives. Individuals who graduate from the drug court are clean and sober, employed, productive members of our communities.

Florida Drug Court Quick Facts

- Drug courts are referred to as the “crown jewel” of Florida’s Drug Control Strategy in reducing substance abuse by 50%.
- There were over 10,000 admissions into Florida’s drug courts in 2008.
- In 2008, there were over 100 drug free babies born to women participants while in the drug court.

- The average annual treatment cost per drug court participant ranges from \$2,500 to \$4,000 with participants contributing a substantial amount of this expense. ³ In comparison, the average annual cost of a prison bed is \$21,809. ⁴
- The average rate of drug court retention (successful completion of the drug court requirements) is 67% statewide.

For more information on drug courts in Florida, visit www.flcourts.org and click on Drug Court Program or contact the Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator, Office of Court Improvement at 850/414-1507.

¹ National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. April 2003. *2000 Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring: Annual Report.*

² The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). January 1999. *No Safe Haven: Children of Substance Abusing Parents.*

³ Florida Supreme Court Task Force on Treatment-Based Drug Courts. July 2004. *Report on Florida's Drug Courts.*

⁴ Information obtained by the Florida Department of Corrections for FY 2008-2009.