



DRUG COURTS PROGRAM OFFICE



About the Drug Courts Program Office

The Drug Courts Program Office (DCPO), under the authority of the Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), was established in 1995 to implement and support Title I, Subchapter XII–J of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (the Crime Act), as amended, 42 U.S.C. 3796 ii et seq.

This law authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to States, State courts, local courts, units of local government, and Indian tribal governments for the development and establishment of drug courts. By enacting the Crime Act, Congress joined local communities in acknowledging the possibilities of drug courts to rehabilitate offenders, hold offenders accountable for their actions, and reduce recidivism by intervening soon after arrest to place offenders in treatment programs.

Drug Courts Defined

In 1989, troubled by the devastating impact of drugs and drug-related crime on their neighborhoods and the criminal justice system, several communities began experimenting with an approach to dealing with low-level drug offenses that significantly changed the way the court system worked. Local coalitions of judges, prosecutors, attorneys, substance abuse treatment professionals, probation officers, community-based service organizations, law enforcement officials, and others began using the coercive power of the court to force abstinence from drugs and alter behavior of substance-abusing offenders. This new approach integrated substance abuse treatment, sanctions, and incentives with case processing to place nonviolent drug-involved defendants in judicially supervised rehabilitation programs. The traditional criminal justice system rarely provided substance abuse treatment to defendants in any systematic way and, in many cases, provided little or no threat of sanctions for continued drug use. The new approach provided an effective alternative to traditional methods of dealing with the devastating impact of drugs and drug-related crime and a way to eliminate the revolving-door syndrome of substance abuse cycling in and out of the criminal justice system.

In 1998, Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse provided the first major academic review

and analysis of drug courts and concluded "that drug courts provide closer, more comprehensive supervision and much more frequent drug testing and monitoring during the program than other forms of community supervision. More importantly, drug use and criminal behavior are substantially reduced while offenders are participating in drug court."

Grant Program

The Drug Court Grant Program is a competitive, discretionary grant program designed to help communities plan, implement, or enhance drug courts. From 1995 to 2000, more than 275 adult, driving under the influence (DUI), family, juvenile, or tribal drug courts became operational with support from DCPO.

The Drug Court Grant Program assists jurisdictions in establishing nonadversarial programs that provide

- ◆ Early identification, referral, and screening.
- ◆ Intensive, continuous judicial supervision.
- ◆ Frequent, random drug testing.
- ◆ Coordinated, comprehensive, and appropriate substance abuse treatment services, as well as a full array of ancillary services.
- ◆ Regular status hearings at which the supervising judicial official reviews the progress of each participating defendant.
- ◆ Appropriate and specific responses to a defendant's compliance or noncompliance with drug court program requirements.
- ◆ Ongoing criminal justice supervision through pretrial, probation, or other release programs using monitoring, tracking, and case management.

Training and Technical Assistance Program

Drug courts represent a fundamental change in the way courts do business and in the way courts address substance-abusing

offenders. This fundamental change requires a significant effort on the part of criminal justice and treatment professionals to step outside traditional practices and procedures to achieve a non-adversarial, problemsolving approach to treating the substance-abusing offender.

To facilitate this fundamental change, DCPO supports training and technical assistance to promote and support best practices in the development, implementation, evaluation, and institutionalization of drug courts. DCPO enters into partnerships with qualified and experienced organizations that have expertise in the following areas:

- ◆ Team building, goal setting, and action planning.
- ◆ Substance abuse treatment and collateral services.
- ◆ Cultural competency.
- ◆ Court systems and case processing.
- ◆ Evaluation.
- ◆ Automated management information systems.
- ◆ Drug testing.
- ◆ Case management.
- ◆ Juvenile drug courts.
- ◆ Tribal drug courts.
- ◆ DUI drug courts.

Resources

The following Drug Courts Program Office publications can be obtained free from NCJRS by calling 1-800-851-3420.

- ◆ *Drug Court Monitoring, Evaluation, and Management Information Systems*. June 1998. NCJ 171138.
- ◆ *Drug Courts: The Key Components*. 1997. NCJ 165478.

- ◆ *Drug Testing in a Drug Court Environment: Common Issues to Address*. May 2000. NCJ 181103.
- ◆ *Guideline for Drug Courts on Screening and Assessment*. June 1998. NCJ 171143.
- ◆ *Healing to Wellness Courts: A Preliminary Overview of Tribal Drug Courts*. July 1999. NCJ 178907.
- ◆ *The Interrelationship Between the Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs*. August 1999. NCJ 171139.
- ◆ *Juvenile and Family Drug Courts: An Overview*. June 1998 (Revised 1999). NCJ 171139.
- ◆ *Juvenile and Family Drug Courts: Profile of Program Characteristics and Implementation Issues*. June 1998. NCJ 171142.
- ◆ *Looking at a Decade of Drug Courts*. 1998. NCJ 171140.
- ◆ *Practical Guide for Applying Federal Confidentiality Laws to Drug Court Operations*. June 1999. NCJ 176977.
- ◆ *Treatment Services in Adult Drug Courts: Report on the 1999 National Drug Courts Treatment Survey—Executive Summary*. May 2000. NCJ 182293.

For Further Information

For more information about DCPO's grant program or training and technical assistance program, contact:

Drug Courts Program Office

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