

Judges Vote to Meet Before Next Fiscal Session

During the recent meeting of the Drug Court Judges Committee of the Arkansas Judicial Council, the committee decided it should reconvene to examine drug court treatment money usage prior to the next meeting of the Arkansas General Assembly. The Arkansas legislature, which will begin annual sessions next year, will convene on February 8, 2010, for a fiscal session. The drug court judges will meet on Friday, January 29, 2010, at 11:00 a.m. in room 101 of the Justice Building at 625 Marshall Street in Little Rock.

Judges were told by DCC Director David Guntharp that tobacco cessation training was completed for the providers in the state and that money had been transferred to the DCC budget from the Department of Health to pay for drug court treatment. He shared the forms that DCC will use to assure that the appropriate treatment funds are accessed. Mr. Guntharp also informed the judges that some of the DCC counselors will be trained to become trainers in the future for tobacco cessation.

The Committee was further advised that the \$1.5 million transferred from ADH to DCC under the directive of Governor Beebe to restore the balance of the treatment fund to \$3 million was a "one-time deal." This money will not carry-over into FY 2011 which begins in July 2010 and a funding source will have to be legislated to replace this amount for FY 2011. Judges elected to meet again prior to the legislative session to discuss strategies for replacing these funds through the budgeting process beginning February 8, 2010.

All judges that preside over an Arkansas drug court program are welcome to attend meetings of this committee of the Arkansas Judicial Council. Please contact Carol Roddy at AOC if you have any questions.



Florida Uses Stimulus Money to Expand Drug Court Program

One year ago, the state of Florida, suffering from severe state budget shortfalls, was closing drug courts. Today, the state has undertaken a \$20 million effort to expand drug court programs in nine targeted counties in an effort to save the state an estimated \$100+ million in costs associated with prison expansion and incarceration.

Using the money provided through the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program, Florida will divert approximately 2000 drug court participants from prison through their post-adjudicatory drug court program. The state has estimated the cost of treatment of the population to be served to be \$3,500 per participant for a total of \$7 million.

Only 50% of those diverted are expected to successfully complete the drug court program. With an estimated success rate of 80% (Arkansas's rate is 95.3%), Florida still expects to (cont. on page 2)

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save approximately \$95 million, the cost of building a new prison in the state. Annual operational costs for a prison holding 1600 would be an additional \$28 million.

The targeted counties that will receive the additional funds to support the expansion are those who sent the highest portion of non-violent felony offenders to prison. The highest ranked county, Hillsborough, sent 1,224 offenders to prison in FY 2007-2008. Under the program, the project will divert approximately 505 offenders into drug court. In keeping with the requirements of the grant, all monies expended will be accounted for separately through an on-line data reporting system. The project will identify basic data elements during the first month and begin reporting on these immediately. The project also included approximately \$1/2 million for development of an automated data system.

The report prepared by the Florida State Courts System to the Legislative Budget Commission concluded: The targeted offenders diverted from prison into post-adjudicatory drug court will save the State of Florida \$100+ million dollars, enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, restore productive citizens, and save lives.

Benton County Again Successful in Securing Federal Grant Money

The Benton County Adult Drug Court program was recently awarded \$300,000 yearly for up to three years from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to provide enhanced services to drug court participants determined to be the least likely to succeed in the drug court program.

In a statement provided by Kathy Bannister of Benton County, the project is described as being primarily designed to enhance the quality and intensity of the treatment and recovery support services available to participants with the most complex problems. The goal of the enhancement is to improve the outcomes of those with the most severe and complex substance abuse problems thus filling the current gaps in the continuum of care for drug court clients. The project will serve participants with the greatest personal vulnerabilities, problem severity, complexity and chronicity, and fewest natural supports.

Judge Finch told the drug court judges committee that this grant was different from those in the past because it requires an outside evaluator from the UAMS research group in Little Rock. The evaluator will be providing on-site file reviews and analysis of the program outcomes.

SAMHSA awarded only 44 of the 87 applications received during the recent round of announcements. A second round of awards will be announced later this year. Courts interested in pursuing an application for this grant may contact Carol Roddy at the AOC for assistance.



Do We Really Need 10 Key Components? What do recent findings say?

During the recent meeting of the state drug court coordinators in Washington, D.C., researcher Douglas B. Marlowe, JD, Ph.D, posited the questions above. As the drug court movement matures past its twentieth year, new research is being conducted on programs to determine best practices. The ten key components were developed in 1997 by a group convened by the national stakeholders to provide guidance of future development of drug court programs in the country. Some now say these are old, expensive, complicated, stifling, divisive and non-empirical. New research has begun to demonstrate the worthiness of these components to the model.

In his presentation, Dr. Marlowe noted that courts following the team approach and requiring all team members to attend court staffing had twice the percent of outcome improvements than those courts that do "business-as-usual." These percentages were higher for individual team members' attendance at staffings. Court staffings are an important component to a successful drug court program.

In reviewing whether to accept participants with non-drug related charges, the information provided indicates that those courts that accept non-drug charges nearly double their success rate. Furthermore, those that accepted prior violent acts into the drug court program did not have a reduction in their graduation rate.

How important is it to identify eligible participants early in the process? It appears that courts that identify participants in the first 20 days after arrest increase their success rate by twice the amount of those that take longer to get participants in the program.

Another key component is the offering of a continuum of services. Courts providing a phase that focuses on relapse prevention have over three times greater success than those that do not offer such services. Courts that provide a single coordinating treatment agency for all services had a success rate ten times higher than those not providing the holistic approach.

Lastly, the research looked at the interactions between the judge and the participants, particularly the length of time the judge spent on the drug court bench, the frequency of status hearings and the amount of time spent with each participant addressing the court. Generally, the longer the judge has been on the drug court bench, the better the participant outcomes. Judges staying longer than two years had three times the success rate of those with less experience. It appears that frequent status hearings during the first phase of the program (every two weeks) results in higher rates of success. Judges that spend a minimum of three minutes talking to a participant have more than twice the success rate as those that fail to do so.

Dr. Marlowe's talk contained additional information in support of other components. Dr. Marlowe is the current Chief of Science, Policy and Law at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. He has been invited to speak at the 4th Annual Statewide Drug Court Conference next April 8-9, 2010, at the Little Rock Hilton. More information concerning the conference will be forthcoming soon.



The Line is a publication by the Drug Court Division of the Arkansas Administrative Office of the Courts. A copy of this issue can be found at <http://courts.arkansas.gov/drugcourt>. Contributions, comments, and inquiries are welcome. Please submit to: The Line, A.O.C. Justice Building, 625 Marshall, Suite 1100 Little Rock, AR 72201 or by e-mail to: carol.roddey@arkansas.gov. Carol L. Roddy, Editor. 501 682-9400

Russellville Drug Court Team Successfully Lands New Federal Grant

The 5th Judicial Drug Court Treatment Program has been notified by the U.S. Department of Justice that they have been awarded \$132,974 grant to expand drug court services to participants with co-occurring disorders and to victims of domestic violence. The enhancement grant will test whether the provision of such services will increase stability in participants and their families, thus reducing the number of participants unable to complete the program due to continued drug use or additional offenses resulting from violence. The team will also use a portion of the funds for community education and outreach activities.

The Russellville Team plans to provide supplemental mental health services by adding a mental health professional to the drug court team to address the needs of those dually-diagnosed participants. The project will also include the development of a domestic violence program to prevent continued battering in the home. A case manager hired to provide mental health and domestic violence services will serve on the court team to expedite proceedings and to ensure appropriate court action.

Congratulations Judge Sutterfield and the 5th Judicial District Drug Court team on receipt of this award! The receipt of federal grants assures the attendance of the entire team to the next NADCP Annual Meeting. Next year's meeting is set for June 2-5, 2010, in Boston.



5th Judicial District Drug Court Team at Russellville Business Expo

Kayla Beck and Kari Powers, front row, left to right. Glenda Hubbard and Carrie Williams, back row, left to right.