

Drug Treatment Courts

The Key Issues

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Drug Abuse

- a social, health, economic and criminal justice problem
- global in nature

Why Should Justice Be Involved in Treatment?

- Experience has shown that treatment alone is not able to effectively deal with certain types of offenders
- The marriage of the justice and treatment communities can better deal with drug abuse by criminal offenders than either treatment or the courts alone.

What Are Drug Treatment Courts (DTCs)?

- Courts specifically designed to supervise cases of drug dependent offenders who have agreed to accept treatment for their substance abuse.
- They force the offender to deal with and accept responsibility for his or her addictions.
- They combine the traditional processes of the justice system with the treatment community

Do Drug Treatment Courts Work?

- Evaluations in various jurisdictions show DTCs are more effective in reducing ongoing drug dependency and criminal behavior
- cost effective compared with prison
- not a ‘soft option’ ...close monitoring

Are DTCs the solution for all addicts?

- Offender must volunteer
- not appropriate if seriously mentally ill
- program works best if offender commits crimes to support their drug dependency
- court works best for offenders who are motivated to stop using

DRUG TREATMENT COURT FUNDAMENTALS

THE 13 PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL DRUG TREATMENT COURT

1. Marriage of Treatment Services with the Court

- The collaboration of both systems is superior to each working alone
- the team approach
- immediate treatment and ongoing judicial supervision

2. Non-adversarial Approach to Decisions

- All team members meet in a pre-court meeting prior to court to discuss each offender
- decisions are usually reached by consensus
- judge, who is a member of the team, has the final say but rarely disagrees with the group decision

3. Eligible Offenders are Identified Early

- Immediately after arrest the decision is made whether an applicant is eligible for DTC
- decision on eligibility should include public safety and appropriateness for treatment
- treatment should commence ASAP

4. Treatment Services

- Treatment should include a range of services
- community resources should be accessed

5. Urine Testing

- Random and regular urine testing is essential to ensure compliance
- should be seen as only one part of a comprehensive strategy by the DTC
- Compliance is objectively monitored by frequent substance abuse testing

6. Incentives and Sanctions

- A range of graduated incentives and sanctions should be developed
- Sanctions should be swift and certain but flexible if needed

7. Ongoing Judicial Supervision

- Ongoing judicial oversight is essential
- face to face interaction with each DTC participant is critical
- pre-court discussion among the judge and each DTC member is vital
- judge is the ultimate decision maker

8 Evaluation

- Evaluation procedures should be part of the program
- both process and impact evaluations are important
- a comparison group should be designed to assist in evaluating program outcomes

9 Interdisciplinary Training

- DTC members must be trained to work as a team
- the judge's ability to interact with other team members and listen are critical
- development of multi-disciplinary approach takes time and patience
- Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes success

10. Partnerships with the Community

- Resources for the DTC may be found in the community
- Garnering community support will help ensure the viability of the Court and make it more effective
- Partnerships among courts, treatment programmers, public agencies & community organizations, generates support

11. The importance of Case Management

- Offenders must obtain access to health care, stable housing and secure jobs and/or be retrained
- case managers must be assigned to each offender to assist them in reintegrating into the community
- Social support is necessary to achieve social reintegration

12. Program Must be Flexible

- treatment must be responsive to the needs of the offenders
- E.g.. if women offenders with children are entering program the DTC must adapt and secure stable housing

13.Planning for After -care

- Post treatment and after-care services should be established in order to enhance long term programme effects.