# Back to the Future: Best Practices in Drug Courts

Presented by:
Cary Heck, Ph.D.

*National Association of Drug Court Professionals*

Developed by:
Douglas B. Marlowe, J.D., Ph.D.
Shannon M. Carey, Ph.D.

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## Meta-Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Number of Drug Courts</th>
<th>Crime Reduced on Avg. by . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilson et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Campbell Collaborative</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>14% to 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latimer et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Canada Dept. of Justice</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaffer (2006)</td>
<td>University of Nevada</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowenkamp et al. (2005)</td>
<td>University of Cincinnati</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aos et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Washington State Inst. for Public Policy</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cost Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>No. Drug Courts</th>
<th>Avg. Benefit Per $1 Invested</th>
<th>Avg. Cost Saving Per Client</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loman (2004)</td>
<td>1 (St. Louis)</td>
<td>$2.80 to $6.32</td>
<td>$2,615 to $7,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finigan et al. (2007)</td>
<td>1 (Portland, OR)</td>
<td>$2.63</td>
<td>$11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey et al. (2006)</td>
<td>9 (California)</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>$6,744 to $12,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnoski &amp; Aos (2003)</td>
<td>5 (Washington St.)</td>
<td>$1.74</td>
<td>$2,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aos et al. (2006)</td>
<td>National Data</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$4,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhati et al. (2008)</td>
<td>National Data</td>
<td>$2.21</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variable Effects

Most drug courts work (78%)

(Wilson et al., 2006; Lowenkamp et al., 2005; Shaffer, 2006)
Some don’t work
16%
6%
78%
Decrease crime
No effect on crime
Increase crime
Increase crime
Decrease crime
No effect on crime
Increase crime
78%
6%
16%
Variable Effects
(Wilson et al., 2006; Lowenkamp et al., 2005; Shaffer, 2006)

Let’s do the math:
2,559 drug courts (as of 12/31/10)
x .06
= 154 harmful drug courts!
another 409 ineffective drug courts
Variable Effects
(Wilson et al., 2006; Lowenkamp et al., 2005; Shaffer, 2006)
Best Practices Research


* www.npcresearch.com

Best Practices Research

Practices Presented Show Either:

- Significant reductions in recidivism
- Significant increases in cost savings
- or both
Key Component #1

“Realization of these [rehabilitation] goals requires a team approach, including cooperation and collaboration of the judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, probation authorities, other corrections personnel, law enforcement, pretrial services agencies, TASC programs, evaluators, an array of local service providers, and the greater community.”

Team Involvement

- Does it matter if the treatment provider attends court sessions?
- Is it important for the attorneys to attend team meetings (“staffings”)?
Drug Courts That Required a Treatment Representative at Status Hearings had Twice the Reduction in Recidivism

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.10

A Representative from Treatment Attends Court Hearings

- Yes: 38% reduction in # of rearrests (N=57)
- No: 19% reduction in # of rearrests (N=10)

Drug Courts That Expected Defense Counsel to Attend Team Meetings Had Twice the Cost Savings

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05

The defense attorney attends drug court team meetings (staffings)

- Yes: 0.29% increase in cost savings (N=59)
- No: 0.15% increase in cost savings (N=11)
Drug Courts That Expected the Prosecutor to Attend Team Meetings Had More Than Twice the Cost Savings

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual
Drug Courts That Included Law Enforcement on the Team Had Nearly Twice the Reduction in Recidivism

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05

Drug Courts That Required All Team Members to Attend Staffings Had Twice the Cost Savings

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05

Note 2: “Team Members” = Judge, Both Attorneys, Treatment Provider, Coordinator
Key Component #3

“Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the drug court program.”

Eligibility Criteria

Does allowing non-drug charges (e.g., violence) threaten public safety?
**Drug Courts That Accepted Participants With Non-Drug Charges Had Nearly Twice the Savings**

![Bar Chart]

**Program Accepts Participants with Non-Drug Charges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Improvement in Outcome Costs*</th>
<th>Yes (N=4)</th>
<th>No (N=12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual

**Note 1:** Difference is significant at p<.05

**Note 2:** Non-drug charges include property, prostitution, violence, etc.

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**Drug Courts That Accepted Participants With Prior Violence Had No Differences in Cost Savings**

![Bar Chart]

**Program Accepts Participants with Prior Violence Charges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Improvement in Outcome Costs*</th>
<th>Yes (N=4)</th>
<th>No (N=12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual

**Note:** Difference is NOT significant
Prompt Treatment

- Is it really important to get participants into the program quickly? And what is quickly?

Drug Courts In Which Participants Entered the Program Within 20 Days of Arrest Had Twice the Cost Savings

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05

Drug Court Expects Participants to Enter Within 20 Days of Arrest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (N=5)</th>
<th>29%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No (N=7)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05
How many participants can you treat effectively?

Drug Courts With Less than 125 Active Participants Had Greater Reductions in Recidivism

Program caseload (number of active participants) is less than 125

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% reduction in # of rearrests</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05
Drug Courts With Less than 125 Active Participants Had Greater Reductions in Recidivism

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05.

Key Component #4

*Drug courts provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.*
Effective Treatment

• Is it better to have a single treatment agency or to have multiple treatment options?

• How important is relapse prevention?

Drug Courts That Used One or Two Primary Treatment Agencies Had Greater Reductions in Recidivism

Fewer treatment providers is related to greater reductions in recidivism

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05
Drug Courts That Included a Phase Focusing on Relapse Prevention Had Over 3 Times Greater Savings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug Court Has a Phase That Focuses on Relapse Prevention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes N=9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No N=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05

Key Component #7

"Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant is essential. " 
The Judge

- How often should participants appear before the judge?
- How long should the judge stay on the drug court bench? Is longevity better or is it better to rotate regularly?

Drug Courts That Held Status Hearings Every 2 Weeks During Phase 1 Had More Than 2 Times Greater Cost Savings

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05
Different judges had different impacts on recidivism

The Longer the Judge Spent on the Drug Court Bench, the Better the Client Outcomes

Different judges had different impacts on recidivism
Judges did better their second time
The Longer the Judge Spent on the Drug Court Bench, the Better the Client Outcomes

- Different judges had different impacts on recidivism
- Judges did better their second time

Drug Courts That Have Judges Stay Longer Than Two Years Had 3 Times Greater Cost Savings

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05
Judges Who Spent at Least 3 Minutes Talking to Each Participant in Court Had Substantially Greater Cost Savings

Judge spends an average of 3 minutes or greater per participant during status review hearings

- **Yes** (N=23): 0.43
- **No** (N=12): 0.17

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05
Key Component #5

“Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.”

Drug Testing

- How frequently should participants be tested?
- How quickly should results be available to the team?
- How long should participants be clean before graduation?
Drug Courts That Performed Drug Testing Two or More Times Per Week Had Greater Cost Savings

In the first phase of drug court, drug tests are collected at least two times per week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% increase in cost savings</th>
<th>Yes (N=53)</th>
<th>No (N=12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.15 (Trend)

Drug Courts That Received Drug Test Results Within 48 Hours Had Greater Cost Savings

Drug test results are back in 48 hours or less

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% increase in cost savings</th>
<th>Yes (N=21)</th>
<th>No (N=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05
Key Component #6

“Drug courts establish a coordinated strategy, including a continuum of responses, to continuing drug use and other noncompliant behavior . . . Responses to or sanctions for noncompliance might include . . . escalating periods of jail confinement”

Sanction and Incentive Guidelines and Prompt Responses

- Do your guidelines on team responses to client behavior really need to be in writing?
- How important are swift responses?
- How much jail is effective?
Drug Courts That Had Written Rules for Team Responses Had Greater Cost Savings

Note 1: Difference is significant at $p<.15$ (Trend)

Drug Courts That Imposed Sanctions Immediately After Non-compliant Behavior Had Twice the Cost Savings

Note 1: Difference is significant at $p<.05$
Drug Courts That Tend to Impose Jail Sanctions Longer Than 6 Days Had Higher Recidivism

Key Component #9

“Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court planning, implementation, and operations.”
Training

• How important is formal training for team members?
• Who should be trained?
• When should team members get trained?

Drug Courts That Provided Formal Training for All Team Members Had 5 Times Greater Savings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Improvement in Outcome Costs*</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>N=7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05
Drug Courts That Received Training Prior to Implementation Had 15 Times Greater Cost Savings

Drug Court Team had Training Prior to Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Improvement in Outcome Costs*</th>
<th>Yes (N=5)</th>
<th>No (N=4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual

Note: Difference is significant at $p<.05$

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Key Component #8

“Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness.”
Monitoring and Evaluation

• Does it matter whether data are kept in paper files or in a database?

• Does keeping program stats make a difference?

• Do you really need an evaluation? What do you get out of it?

Drug Courts That Used Paper Files Rather Than Electronic Databases Had Less Savings

Program Continues to Use Paper Files for Some Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Improvement in Outcome Costs*</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=8</td>
<td>N=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Percent improvement in outcome costs" refers to the percent savings for drug court compared to business-as-usual

Note: Difference is significant at p<.05
Drug Courts That Used the Results of Program Evaluations to Modify Their Operations Had Twice the Cost Savings

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05

Drug Courts That Reviewed Their Data and Implemented Modifications Had More than Twice the Cost Savings

Note 1: Difference is significant at p<.05
Key Component #10

“Forging partnerships among drug courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances drug court program effectiveness.”

Community Partnerships

• How important are partnerships in the community for your drug court?
Drug Courts That Had Formal Partnerships with Community Organizations Had More than Twice the Savings

![Bar graph showing percentage improvement in outcome costs for drug courts with and without formal partnerships in the community.]

Note: Difference is significant as a trend at p<.15

Recipes for Failure

- Water down the intervention
  - Drop essential elements
  - Accept imitations

"It’s not scalable"

“We’re just like a drug court"
Recipes for Failure

• Change course with new populations
  - "It won’t work here"
  - "My clients are different"

Recipes for Failure

• Stepped Care
  - Start with less and ratchet up if you need to
  - "It’s more economical"
  - "It’s less burdensome on clients"
Recipes for Failure

- Target the wrong people
  - 1st-time offenders
  - Low risk and low needs

Recipe for Success

- Send us the high-value cases
- Fidelity to the 10 Key Components until proven otherwise!
- Ongoing judicial authority
- Inter-agency team approach
- Get it right the first time