

# Problem-Solving Courts

## *After 15 Years: The Road so Far and the Path Ahead*

Idaho's first two drug courts were established in 1998 to stop the revolving door of justice for offenders with substance abuse issues. Since then, the drug court model has expanded to address a variety of identified needs of offenders and to meet the need in the community to reduce recidivism, and save taxpayer dollars. After 15 years of operation, Idaho now has 67 problem-solving courts, operating under adopted Statewide Standards and Guidelines.

### ***As of July, 2013***

#### ***Idaho Has 67 Problem-solving Courts***

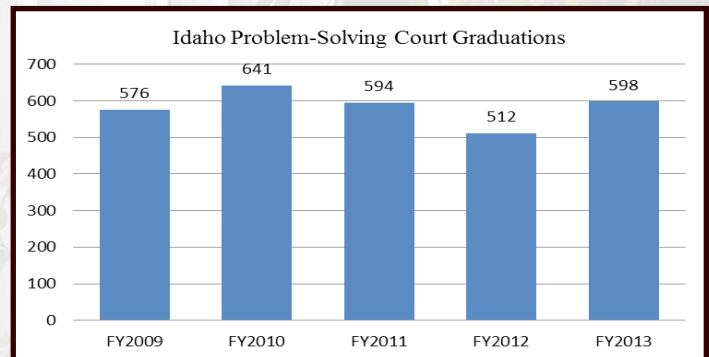
- 26 Felony Drug Courts
- 11 Adult Mental Health Courts
- 1 Juvenile Mental Health Court
- 9 Misdemeanor/DUI Courts
- 5 DUI Courts
- 8 Juvenile Drug Courts
- 4 Child Protection Drug Courts
- 3 Veterans Courts

#### ***An Important Milestone for Problem-Solving Courts***

Not only have drug and mental health courts served over 12,039 offenders, *there have now been over 5,000 graduates* since 1998, with 598 graduates in FY2013 and 5,345 graduates overall, of which, (62 %) were felony offenders. If not for this critical sentencing alternative for district court judges, these offenders would have been sentenced to the penitentiary.

#### ***Veteran's Treatment Courts Gain Momentum***

Men and women who serve their country and return from combat service may experience issues with mental health, substance use disorders, and/or post-traumatic stress disorder, combined with criminal justice involvement. Sixty Idaho veterans participated in a Veteran's Treatment Court in FY2013, for a total of 94 veterans served since the courts started in FY2012. The creative partnerships these courts have established with four regional Veterans Administration Medical Centers and the Idaho Division of Veterans Services has significantly expanded the crucial resources necessary for these veterans to restore their lives and regain their honor.



#### ***Court Management of Substance Abuse Treatment Funds***

The Supreme Court received an appropriation of \$5.1 million for FY2013 for substance use disorder treatment for problem-solving courts. Additionally, the Statewide Drug Court and Mental Health Court Coordinating Committee approved a treatment reimbursement plan that will reduce administrative overhead and achieve a stable treatment reimbursement system. Problem-solving courts will utilize an electronic health record system in collaboration with treatment providers that will allow for real time billing, effective case management and accurate data collection. This information will allow problem-solving courts to increase efficiency and manage quality improvement efforts.



### **Protecting Precious Resources: Success with Juveniles and Families**

Juvenile drug and mental health courts and child protection drug courts seek to engage families to end the cycle of intergenerational trauma and antisocial attitudes, restore families and build productive individuals. Idaho's four child protection drug courts served 76 parents last year in Lewiston, Twin Falls, Pocatello and Idaho Falls. A total of 201 juveniles participated and 43 graduated from Idaho's seven juvenile drug courts. The pilot juvenile mental health court, with sessions in Idaho Falls and Rexburg saw 16 graduates in FY2013. Many of these youth would otherwise be committed to the Department of Juvenile Corrections at an average annual cost of \$73,704 per year.

### **Over 300 drug-free Births for Idaho Problem-Solving Courts!**

Eighteen babies were born to clean and sober women in our drug and mental health courts this year, bringing the total to 301 drug free births, since the beginning of Idaho's problem-solving courts. A baby born drug free to a female participant is estimated to save taxpayers nearly one million dollars in lifetime costs and escapes many learning and behavioral challenges throughout their life.

### **One Veteran's Story**

*"I am 37 years old. I grew up in a tough home and had a lot of responsibility taking care of my two younger sisters. I couldn't wait to get away after graduation and I worked hard to make a good life for myself. In 2002, I joined the Army, got married, and had my first daughter. I served eight years in the Army Infantry division, with almost three of those years deployed in Iraq.*

*Like many veterans, I thought I could handle my experiences in Iraq and that reaching out for help was a sign of weakness. So instead, I reached for the bottle. It wasn't until I was in far too deep with both my addiction and the law (felony DUI) that I realized something was very wrong. I was no longer a part of my children's lives and I was homeless. I entered Veterans Treatment Court in October 2011. Although I was working the program, I still had many reservations about it. But through the treatment program, I learned more about my addiction, my PTSD, my anxiety and depression. I gained a new understanding of myself and I knew things had to change!*

*I got serious about my life, my treatment, my family, and my future. I found a new AA sponsor who has guided me as I work to better understand myself and my disease. I started attending church and found that piece of myself I'd been missing and trying unsuccessfully to fill. I am now winning the trust and hearts of my children back. As I grow, I know I must also give back to the programs that have given me my life again. I intend to sponsor young veterans in hopes that I might help them avoid many of the costly and painful situations I have endured. I feel I must also go back to school. This is another step forward, another step closer in my journey of becoming a respectable, contributing member of society.*

*For the first time in years, I have goals and the attitude to achieve them. Through the Veterans Treatment Court, I have gained tools to better deal with life and make responsible, productive decisions in difficult situations. I am working toward a career that would not only provide financially for my family but more importantly, show my children that although people make mistakes, they can always change through hard work and dedication."*

