

Treatment Courts



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Treatment courts are an evidence-based program to support Idahoans in the justice system who are at risk of recidivism and in need of behavioral health services. Done effectively, they reduce criminal behavior in our communities, address treatment needs, provide accountability, and help Idaho avoid costs associated with incarceration.

Courts may be focused on substance abuse, mental health or veterans' issues; in each, a judge leads a team of attorneys, coordinators, treatment providers, probation officers, law enforcement and others focused on each participant's case.

Participants are assessed for their risk to continue criminal behavior and areas to address through counseling, frequent drug testing, employment and education. The team monitors their progress through close supervision and status hearings.

If successful, participants can graduate and restore their relationships and lives.

REDUCING RECIDIVISM

Of the numerous studies of treatment courts, national researchers have found that drug courts reduce recidivism on average between 10% to 15%. Evaluations of adult felony drug courts, DUI courts, and mental health courts in Idaho produced similar findings.

In FY2021, there were 68 treatment courts covering 38 of Idaho's 44 counties. These courts served 1,388 individuals, with 605 participants graduating.

RESPONSES TO COVID-19

Idaho treatment courts found innovative methods for maintaining effective operations in the pandemic. Group and individual counselling services became available online within weeks of the virus' arrival. Hearings and court staff meetings were held over video. Participants began checking in with their coordinators and probation officers through video, texts and pictures rather than strictly in person. Drug testing, a core function of treatment courts, required additional creativity: mouth swab kits were dropped off at participants' homes and observations were collected over video chat. Even the format of graduation ceremonies was adjusted to include outdoor events in local parks or in some cases, events held virtually.

SUPPORTING LOCAL COURTS

This year saw a new support and education plan implemented to assist Idaho's seven judicial districts with their treatment courts. Local courts were offered site visits and best-practice reviews of their processes, and the Administrative Office of the Courts arranged peer-to-peer interactions to allow treatment courts to share ideas. Virtual trainings covered topics such as DUI-related issues and medications for addiction treatment; the former was a partnership with the Idaho Transportation Department. Resources were shared broadly with Idaho treatment court stakeholders to keep them apprised of educational events.

For more information about Idaho treatment courts, visit: annualreport.isc.idaho.gov

