



Drug Court Best Practices

Practices Related to Significant Reductions in Recidivism and Higher Cost Savings

What interests many individuals is the bottom line: what practices reduce recidivism and save money? This list contains drug court practices from NPC Research studies that are related to significant reductions in recidivism, significant increases in cost savings or both. A total of 69 drug courts were included in this analysis. This handout and related presentations and reports can be found at www.npcresearch.com under or “Publications and Resources”

Key Component #1: Drug courts integrate alcohol and other drug treatment services with justice system case processing

- 1.1 Law enforcement (e.g., police, sheriff) is a member of the drug court team
- 1.2 Judge, both attorneys, treatment, program coordinator, and probation attend staffings
- 1.3 The defense attorney attends drug court team meetings (staffings)
- 1.4 A representative from treatment attends drug court team meetings (staffings)
- 1.5 Coordinator attends drug court team meetings (staffings)
- 1.6 Law enforcement attends drug court team meetings (staffings)
- 1.7 Judge, attorneys, treatment, probation, and coordinator attend court sessions (status review hearings)
- 1.8 A representative from treatment attends court sessions (status review hearings)
- 1.9 Law enforcement attends court sessions (status review hearings)
- 1.10 Treatment communicates with court via email

Key Component #2: Using a non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants’ due process rights

- 2.1 A prosecuting attorney is part of the drug court team
- 2.2 A defense attorney is part of the drug court team
- 2.3 Attorneys on the drug court team attend staffing meetings and court sessions

Key Component #3: Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the drug court program.

- 3.1 The time between arrest and program entry is 50 days or less
- 3.2 Program caseload (number of individuals actually participating at any one time) is less than 125
- 3.3 The drug court allows non-drug charges
- 3.4 The drug court accepts offenders with serious mental health issues (except for those who are



unable to understand program requirements)
Key Component #4: Drug courts provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug and other treatment and rehabilitation services
4.1 The drug court works with two or fewer treatment agencies
4.2 The drug court has guidelines on the frequency of individual treatment sessions that a participant must receive
4.3 The drug court offers gender specific services
4.4 The drug court offers mental health treatment
4.5 The drug court offers parenting classes
4.6 The drug court offers family/domestic relations counseling
4.7 The drug court offers residential treatment
4.8 The drug court offers health care
4.9 The drug court offers dental care
4.10 The drug court offers anger management classes
4.11 The drug court provides relapse prevention services for all participants
4.12 Program allows participants who are taking legally prescribed psychotropic or addiction medication
4.13 The minimum length of the drug court program is 12 months or more
Key Component #5: Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing
5.1 Drug test results are back in 2 days or less
5.2 Drug tests are collected at least two times per week in the first phase of drug court.
5.3 Participants are expected to have greater than 90 days clean (negative drug tests) before graduation
Key Component #6: A coordinated strategy governs drug court responses to participants' compliance
6.1 Sanctions are imposed immediately after non-compliant behavior (e.g., other team members can impose some sanctions outside of court hearings, or drug court will impose sanctions in advance of a client's regularly scheduled court hearing)
6.2 Team members are given a copy of the guidelines for sanctions
6.3 In order to graduate participants must have a job or be in school
6.4 In order to graduate participants must have a sober housing environment
6.5 In order to graduate participants must have pay all court-ordered fines and fees (e.g., fines, restitution)



6.6	Participants are required to pay court fees
6.7	The drug court reports that the typical length of jail sanctions is 6 consecutive days or less
6.8	The drug court retains participants with new possession charges (new possession charges do not automatically prompt termination)
Key Component #7: Ongoing judicial interaction with each participant is essential	
7.1	Participants have status review sessions every 2 weeks, or once per week, in the first phase
7.2	Judge spends an average of 3 minutes or greater per participant during status review hearings
7.3	The judge's term is indefinite or at least two full years
7.4	The judge was assigned to drug court on a voluntary basis
7.5	In the final phase of drug court, the clients appear before the judge in court at least once per month
Key Component #8: Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness	
8.1	The results of program evaluations have led to modifications in drug court operations
8.2	Review of program data and/or regular reporting of program statistics has led to modifications in drug court operations
8.3	The drug court maintains data that are critical to monitoring and evaluation in an electronic database (rather than paper files).
Key Component #9: Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court planning, implementation, and operations	
9.1	All new hires to the drug court complete a formal training or orientation
9.2	All members of the drug court team are provided with training in the drug court model
Key Component #10: Forging partnerships among drug courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances drug court program effectiveness	
10.1	The drug court has an advisory committee that includes community members