

The Travis County Family Drug Treatment Court

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March 12, 2010**

Why Start a Family Drug Treatment Court?

A comprehensive study of four Model Family Drug Courts demonstrated that:

- Children:
 - Spent **less time in out-of-home care** than comparison children and spent a greater percentage of their case **in their parents' care**.
 - Significantly **more likely to be reunified**
- Parents:
 - Higher rates of treatment completion.
 - Significantly **more likely to be reunified**

Where else are there Drug Courts?

- **Across the US**
 - We have studied Model Family Drug Courts in:
 - Omaha, NE
 - San Diego, CA
 - Miami, FL
 - Suffolk County, NY
 - Reno, NV
 - Many other Family Drug Courts elsewhere
- **In Texas**
 - Family Drug Courts in El Paso, Bexar County, Harris County, Tarrant County
- **In Travis Cty** - We have Other Drug Cts, not Family Drug Courts
 - Criminal and Juvenile Drug Courts

Family Drug Treatment Court Goals and Philosophy

- To provide **intense supervision** to families affected by parental substance abuse
- **Special collaboration** of the court, child welfare, community and treatment providers
- To foster **emotional support** for and **accountability** of parents
- Immediate and effective **rewards and consequences**

Funding - Two Grants

- Parenting In Recovery (PIR) - Federal Grant
 - \$2.5 million over 5 years
- CJD Grant (awarded through Governor's Office) –
 - \$100,000 over one year

The Family Drug Court Team

The Judge

The Court Coordinator

The Assistant District Attorney

Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans
Services

Child Protective Services (TDFPS)

Attorneys for Parents

Court Appointed Special Advocates

Austin Recovery

Family Connections

Foundation Communities

Casey Family Programs

Goals for Children

- Promote safe, secure, permanent homes in a timely fashion:
 - Keep Kids out of Foster Care and Speed Reunification for kids in out-of-home care. (Note: PIR Grant requires a Focus on Relative Placements. Most often cases involve Court Ordered Services and Parents take young children to treatment with them.)
- Developmental needs met through evaluation and appropriate intervention

Structure of the Family Drug Treatment Court

- Staffing every Thursday from 8am-9am
- Hearings every Thursday at 9am (participants attend based on their need for supervision and phase in program)

Phase Structure

- Treatment- Phase 1
- Family Focus- Phase 2
- Becoming Independent- Phase 3
- Happy, Joyous, and Free- Phase 4
- Commencement

Incentives or Rewards in Drug Court

- Research-based: **Affirmation & Motivation Works!!**
- Praise in courtroom by the judge and team
- Applause of encouragement
- Silver bracelets for participants and charms added for advancing in each phase
- Forgiveness for mistakes—next right step
- “Treasure Chest”

Incentives/ Rewards (cont'd)

- Fewer court appearances
- Random drug testing—1 to 2 times per week
- Permission to leave hearing early
- Increased Visitation
- Certificates for phase advancement and cards signed by team members

Sanctions or Consequences in Drug Court

- Increased Drug Testing or Court appearances
- Increased NA/AA/CA meetings per week
- Write essay or apology letter
- Community Service
- Observation of termination trial

Sanctions or Consequences (cont'd)

- Regression to previous phase
- Increased time in current phase
- Jail time
- Removal from Drug Court

Who Do We Serve?

- 33% have had their parental rights terminated to an older child (not part of the current lawsuit)
- 62% have given birth to a drug positive infant or the mother tested positive at the time of the birth
- 69% have been abusing drugs for more than 5 years
- 84% have a history of homelessness

Services Provided to the Children

- Early Childhood Intervention assessment and services if assessment deems necessary
- Individual and Family Therapy
- Parenting Coaching
- Medical and Dental Care
- Intensive supervision and monitoring that allows for the children to be placed and bond with their parents

How are we doing?

- 5 babies have been born negative for all substances to mothers while they were in the program or after they left the program
- 5 mothers have successfully graduated from the Family Drug Treatment Court Program

Additional Information on Participants in the Program

- 29% have been reunified with their child(ren) while in the program and have not had a subsequent removal
- 27% have been able to keep their child(ren) with them due to the program's intervention and have not had the child(ren) removed while in the program
- **1 participant has obtained a GED while in the program**
- 71% have successfully completed inpatient treatment

What Does This Mean?

- Participants are becoming functional members of our society.
- Families are staying together.
- Parents are learning how to provide safe and healthy homes for their children.
- The cycle of addiction and birth of drug positive infants ceases.
- Fewer children are in foster care.
- Cost savings to the State and County for services.

Resources for Additional Information

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

www.samhsa.gov

National Center on Substance Abuse and
Child Welfare

www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

www.nida.nih.gov

National Association of Drug Court Professionals

<http://www.nadcp.org/>

National Council of Juvenile and
Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)

<http://www.ncjfcj.org/>

Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

www.zerotothree.org

THANK YOU!

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