THE IMPACT OF DRUG COURTS ON CRIME

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Drug Courts: A Review

- Established in Miami, Florida, in 1989
- Combine the justice system, treatment, and supervision
- Use evidence-based interventions
- Have grown to over 2200 programs, plus another 1000 programs using the drug court model
- Have demonstrated success including dramatic reductions in recidivism and cost savings
Drug Court: The Process

- Mary is arrested for shoplifting
- The officer who arrested Mary suspects she may have a drug problem
- The officer recommends to the prosecutor that Mary be considered for drug court
- The prosecutor and defense attorney review Mary’s case using the program’s eligibility guidelines

Considerations in Mary’s Case

- Mary was arrested for a property crime, so the victim (the store where she shoplifted) may be due restitution for the shoplifting
- Mary is manic depressive
- Mary has four prior convictions for shoplifting, so an additional conviction may mean a lengthy prison sentence
- Mary is addicted to methamphetamine
How will Mary’s Case be Handled if She Chooses Drug Court?

- Diversion
- Post-Plea, Probation
- Post-Plea, Deferred Sentence
- Depends on the jurisdiction, her criminal record, the prosecutor

After Referral

- After consulting with her attorney, Mary accepts the prosecutor’s offer for drug court
- Mary is sent for a clinical assessment
- Mary assesses as addicted
- Mary immediately begins treatment at the level of care indicated by her assessment
- Mary reports to the next drug court session and appears before the judge for further orientation
After Referral

- Mary’s case manager sees her regularly, assisting her with her schedule of mental health treatment and drug treatment.
- Mary’s case manager, in cooperation with her treatment providers and the rest of the drug court team, review her case.
- Mary has a case plan designed specifically for her, including (once she is able) job training and or obtaining a high school diploma.

Supervision

- Mary drops urine screens each week.
- Every urine drop is random and observed.
- Test results are processed as soon as possible.
- The drug court team, including Mary’s attorney, receive the results.
- In case of a positive test, Mary can insist on a confirmation.
Court

Before each court session, the drug court team reviews Mary’s progress and makes recommendations to the drug court judge.

Recommendations can include incentives or sanctions to motivate Mary to succeed.

Incentives and Sanctions

Incentives may include small tokens, such as ‘chips’ recognizing clean time or applause or special recognition from the judge or a variety of other options.

Sanctions may include community service, short periods of incarceration, or a variety of other options.
To Successfully Complete

- Mary must remain in the drug court for at least one year
- Mary must pay restitution (if applicable)
- Mary must have a period of clean time
- Mary must complete a long-term recovery plan

Upon Mary’s Success

- Mary’s charge may be dropped
- If she pled guilty, she may have her period of probation reduced
- She has achieved a long period of sobriety
- She has a connection to a recovery community and a long-term recovery plan
- Her chances for returning to the criminal justice system have significantly diminished
How Successful Will Mary be?

- Four independent meta-analyses have concluded that drug courts significantly reduce crime rates an average of approximately 7 to 14 percentage points.
- In some evaluations the effects on crime were as high as 35 percentage points.
- (see *Painting the Current Picture* included in your materials)

How Will Mary´s Success Further Benefit Her Community?

- Mary´s success will save her community money.
  - Several economic analyses of drug courts demonstrate dramatic cost savings, including:
    - In California, costs of each client of about $3000 with a savings each of $11,000.
    - In Multnomah County (Portland, Oregon), savings of $6744 per client, and $12,218 when victimization included.
- (see *Painting the Current Picture*)
Plus...

- Mary may pay restitution to her victim
- Mary may complete high school and receive job training
- Mary may learn parenting skills (if applicable)

Resources