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