

Accountability Courts Statewide Report

Fiscal Year 2020



Council of Accountability Court Judges of Georgia

March 5, 2021



Council of Accountability Court Judges

Chief Judge Kathlene F. Gosselin
Executive Committee Chair
Northeastern Judicial Circuit

Taylor Jones
Executive Director

Dear Readers:

The Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ) is statutorily mandated to annually collect program performance data for all accountability court divisions. These data provide a high-level review of accountability court performance statewide, highlight areas of need, and allow CACJ to better provide technical assistance. While the data collected for this report are consistent with what has been collected in the past, fiscal year 2020 presented unique challenges.

On March 14, 2020, Chief Justice Harold Melton issued an order calling for a Statewide Judicial Emergency due to COVID-19. This Statewide Judicial Emergency was extended through the end of FY20 (June 30, 2020), and beyond.

Pursuant to this order, Georgia's courts were permitted to continue essential functions necessary to protect the health, safety, and liberty of our state's citizens, but all non-essential court functions were postponed and/or cancelled to prevent the infection of court employees and general public attending court.

In light of the Statewide Judicial Emergency and the need to protect public health above any other concern, accountability court divisions were forced to make significant changes to their procedures. To that end, CACJ shared guidelines and suggestions for developing protocols and procedures, and requested each division prepare their own pandemic policy and submit for review.

Many accountability court operations were impacted, including but not limited to: a pivot to telehealth and virtual treatment, changes in delivery method of drug testing, virtual staffing and status hearings, virtual case management, and restricted sanction and incentive delivery. Processes for accepting new participants were reportedly delayed indefinitely or significantly postponed.

Throughout 2020, courts showed resiliency in the face of adversity. Despite significant challenges, all courts continued to maintain a level of service to participants and their families. Given the timeline of the Statewide Judicial Emergency due to COVID-19, the data presented in this report should be considered within the context of the changes in operations mentioned above. Most notably, the number of participants served and drug tests performed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathlene F. Gosselin".

Chief Judge Kathlene Gosselin, Northeastern Judicial Circuit
Chair, Executive Committee, Council of Accountability Court Judges

AT THE END OF FISCAL YEAR
2020, THERE WERE **166**
CERTIFIED, ACTIVE
ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS:

53 Adult Felony Drug Courts
2,826 Participants

35 Mental Health Courts
866 Participants

24 DUI Courts
1,108 Participants

20 Veterans Courts
281 Participants

21 Family Treatment Courts
376 Participants

13 Juvenile Courts
132 Participants



Executive Summary

Georgia's accountability courts provide an evidence-based and cost-saving alternative to incarceration. In Fiscal Year 2020 (FY 2020), participants in Council of Accountability Court Judges's (CACJ) certified programs engaged in individualized treatment plans that demonstrably impacted their lives¹.

In FY 2020, accountability courts continued to admit and provide treatment to participants even in the middle of a pandemic. Programs utilized virtual platforms and telehealth services for a continuum of care. Frequent drug testing, including the substitution of alternatives to urine analysis in light of the public health concerns, helped participants maintain sobriety. Program staff reported increased frequency in communication with participants as well as creative ways to keep participants connected. At the state level, CACJ and Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) staff engaged in significant data integrity efforts that resulted in more accurate and complete statewide data. Improved data collection practices are ongoing.

These data should be interpreted within the context of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and data integrity efforts.

Participant Characteristics

Average age at admission

37 years old

Income level

80% earning less than \$25,000 yearly

Unemployment level

49% Unemployed at Entry

Education

80% High School Diploma/GED or Less

Gender

67% Male

Acceptance type

57% Post-adjudication/27% Pre-adjudication
(DUI Court participants are 100% post-adjudication)

Risk level

82% Moderate or High Risk to Recidivate

Mental health diagnosis/Diagnostic impression

72% Substance Abuse Disorder

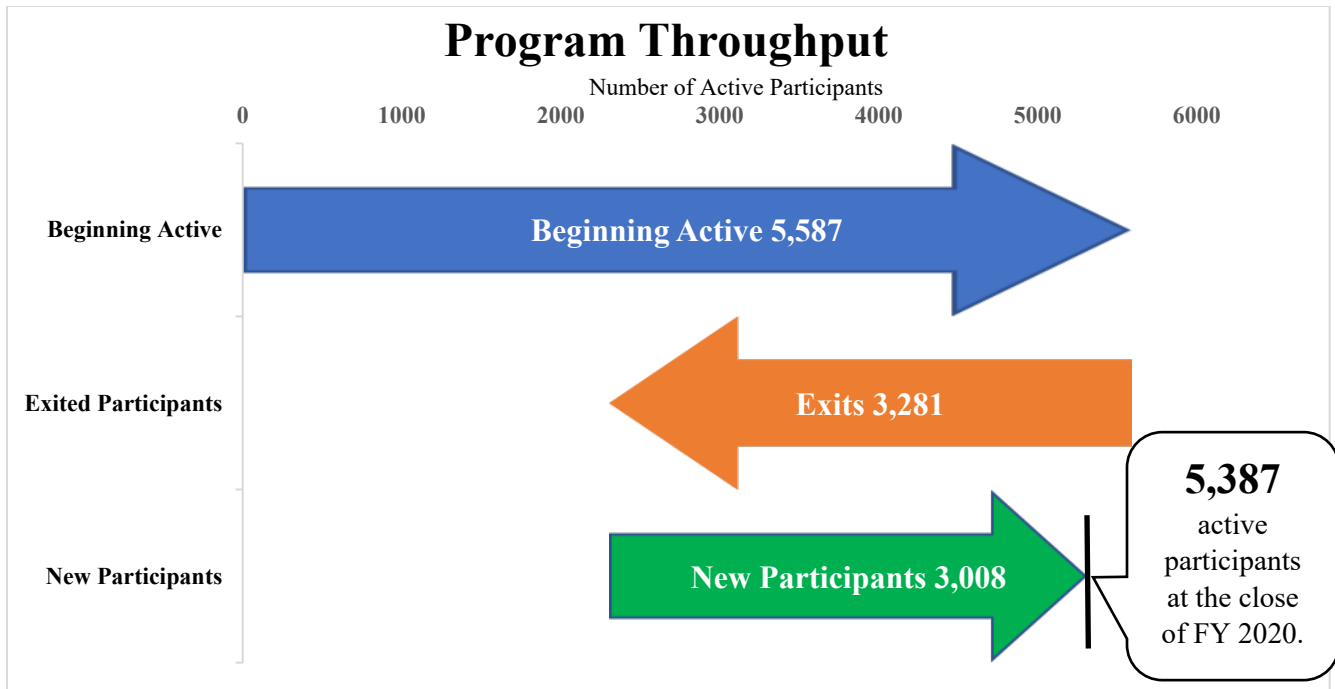
Race

67% White

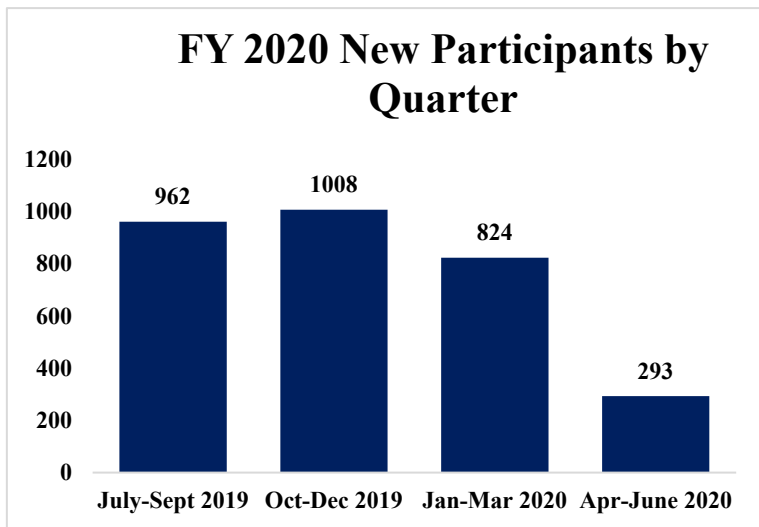
Drug testing

93.8% Negative Test Rate

1. The analysis and conclusions contained in this document are accurate as of the date retrieved and may not match previous or future publications due to additional reports and/or corrections to previous reporting.

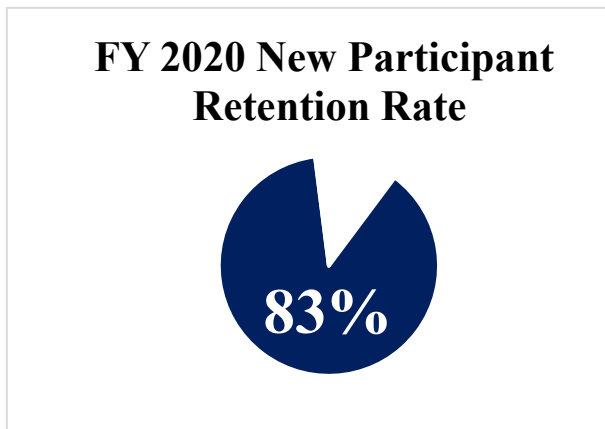


8,668 participants served throughout FY 2020 including new, active, and exited participants.



Accountability court programs added new participants in each quarter of FY 2020, even during the pandemic.

The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent emergency orders slowed participant intakes.



The retention rate of **83%** takes into account active participants, graduated participants, and participants who completed the program compared to participants who were terminated or discharged.

Drug Testing Promotes Sobriety

587,961

Total Drug Tests Administered
7% fewer drug tests reported than previous year.

27,877

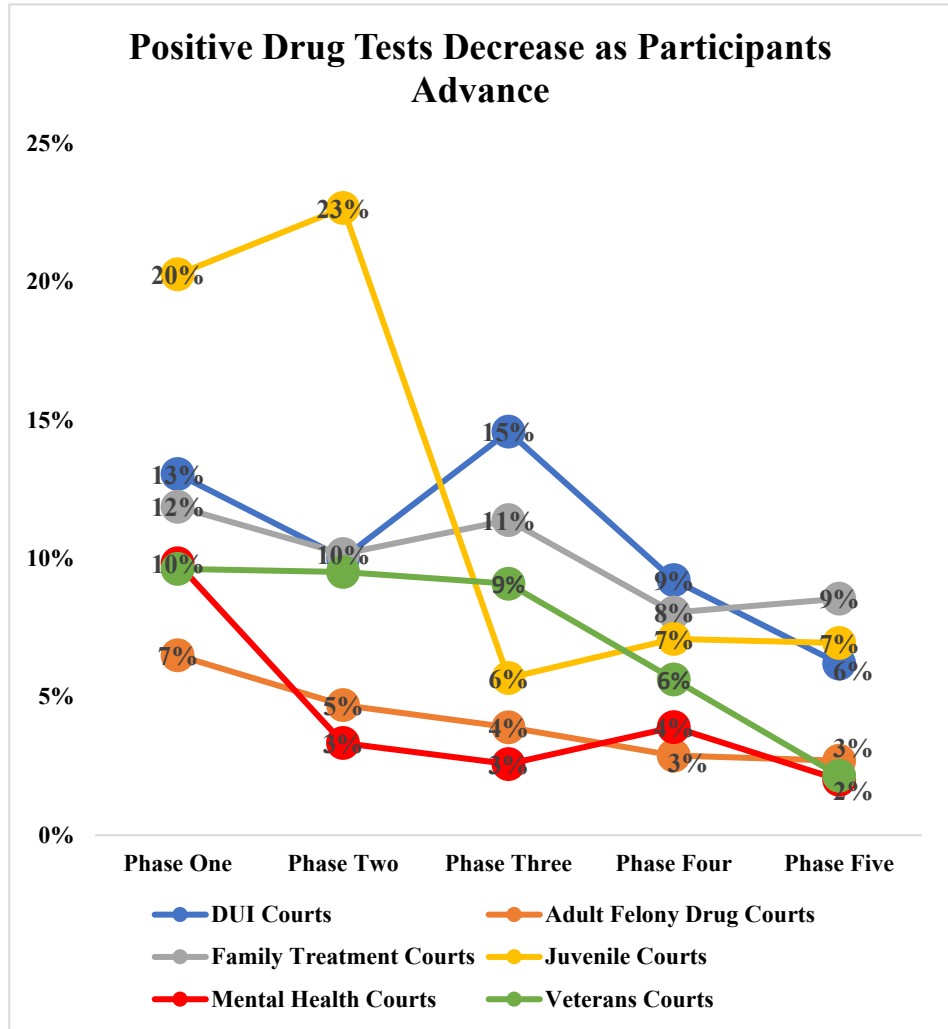
Positive Drug Tests

93.8%

Negative Test Rate

Higher percentage of negative drug tests than previous year.

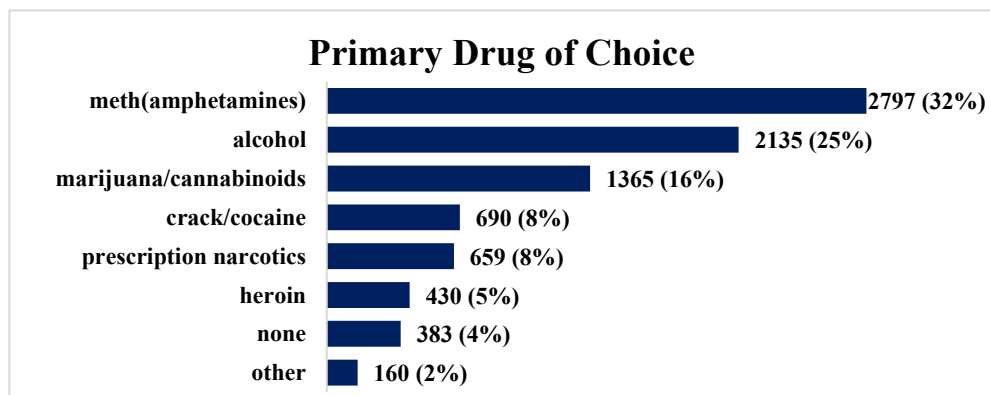
Total failed drug test percentage was highest among phase one participants but was progressively lower with participants advancing through each phase.



Drug of Choice

The most frequently reported primary drug of choice for FY 2020 was amphetamines/meth-amphetamines, followed by alcohol and marijuana.

In DUI courts, alcohol was the most commonly reported primary drug of choice.



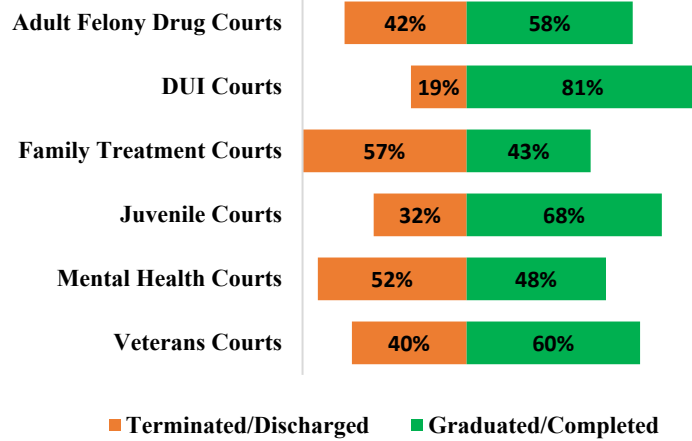
Participant Outcomes

Across all program types, 61% of the participants that exited in FY2020 were graduates.

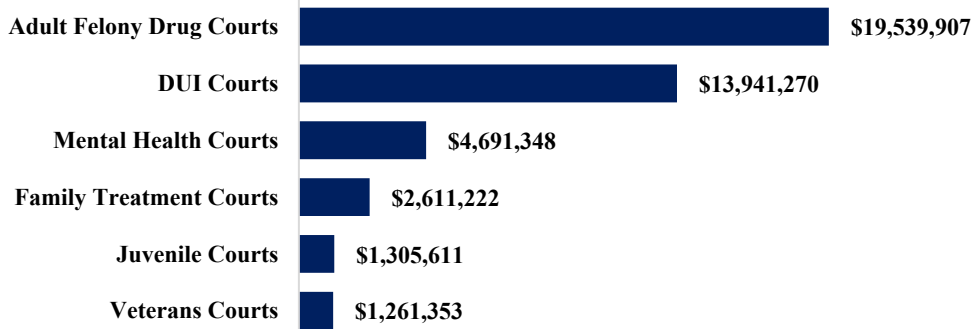
Combined FY 2020 Exit Statuses:

1,959 Graduated
66 Completed
230 Discharged
1,055 Terminated

FY 2020 Exits by Program Type



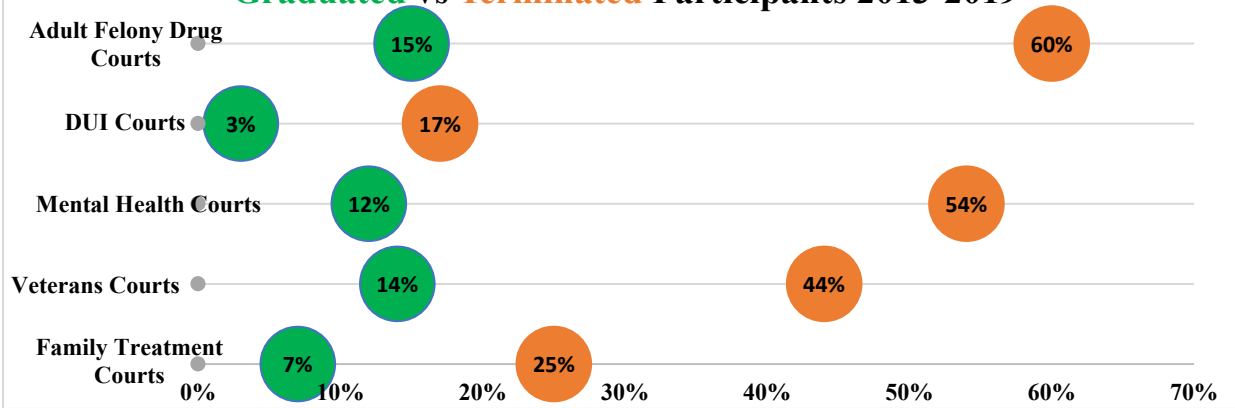
FY 2020 Savings by Court Type



Each graduate produces \$22,129 in economic impact to the state (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, 2018). FY 2020 graduates netted estimated total economic benefits of \$43.35 Million.

Additionally, program graduates were significantly less likely to commit new felony offenses in the months following graduation (Applied Research Services, Inc., 2020).

Reduced Recidivism Rate for Felony Offenses Graduated vs Terminated Participants 2013-2019



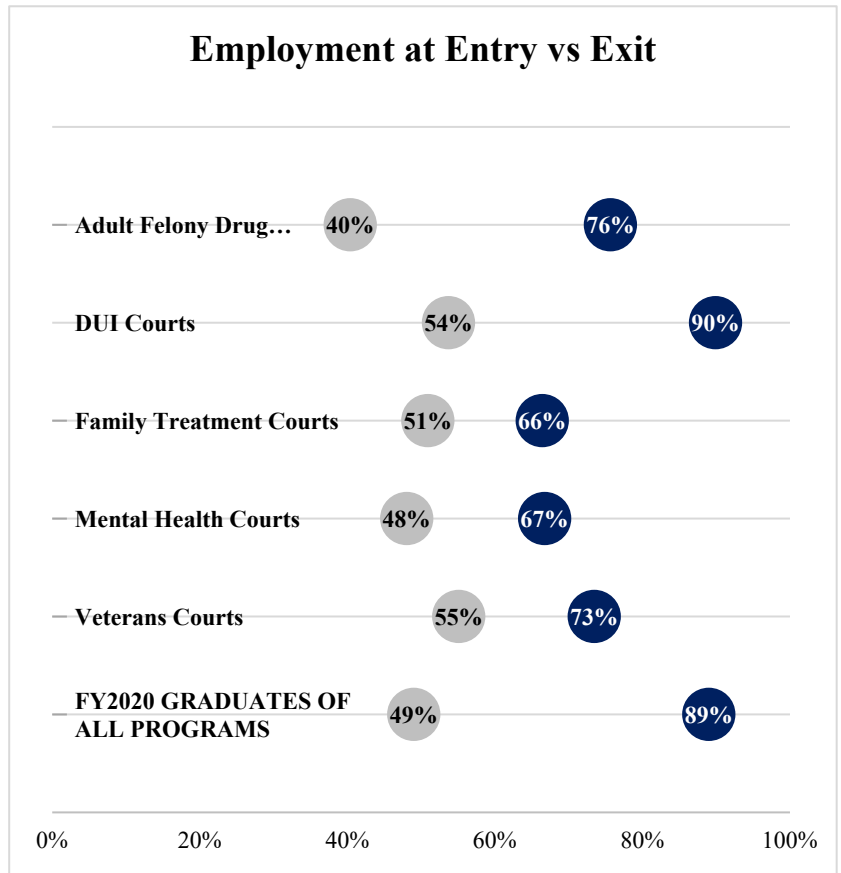
Recidivism data collected between years 2013-2019. Quarters 3 and 4 of FY 2020 not represented in this data set.

Employment at Graduation

Employment at graduation is a key objective of program participation and a data element that is statutorily mandated for reporting.

Participants who **exited** an accountability court program in FY 2020 were more likely to be employed than when they **entered** the program.

Excluding juvenile courts, 74% of all participants who exited an accountability court program in FY 2020, and 89% of the participants who graduated, were employed, in training, or on disability. This includes all exit types regardless of program completion. Only 49% of these participants were reported to be employed at entry.



Court Type	Median Income at Entry	Median Income at Exit
DUI Courts	No Income	\$20,000-\$24,999
Adult Felony Drug Courts	No Income	\$15,000-\$19,999
Veterans Courts	No Income	\$15,000-\$19,999
Family Treatment Courts	Under \$999	\$10,000-\$14,999
Mental Health Courts	No Income	\$5,000-\$9,999

Income at Graduation

Participants who exited an accountability court program in FY 2020 were earning more money compared to the earnings reported at entry. Most participants reported no income at entry

73 Families Reunified



Families reunified in FY 2020 will benefit from increased stability and better economic prospects.

358 Drug-Free Babies Born



Each additional baby born drug free saves an average of \$63,200 in delivery and medical costs.

References

- Applied Research Services, Inc. (2020, October). *Recidivism Analysis report by accountability court type*. Retrieved from <https://cacj.georgia.gov/data-research/recidivism-reports>
- Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia. (2018, July). *The estimated economic impacts and benefits of accountability court programs in Georgia*. Retrieved from <https://cacj.georgia.gov/economic-impact-study>