

## Section I Adult Drug Court Standards

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

- 1.1. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 15-1-15, each drug court shall establish an accountability court team to create a work plan for the court. The work plan shall “address the operational, coordination, resource, information management, and evaluation needs” of the court, and shall include all policies and practices related to implementing the standards set forth in this document.
- 1.2. The drug court team should include, at a minimum, the following representatives: judge, public defender, prosecutor, program coordinator, POST-certified law enforcement, and certified treatment provider/substance abuse professional. The program coordinator should be a dedicated employee, independent of treatment staff.
- 1.3. The drug court team shall collaboratively develop, review, and agree upon all aspects of drug court operations (mission, goals, eligibility criteria, operating procedures, performance measures, orientation, drug testing, program structure guidelines) prior to commencement of program operations.
- 1.4. This plan is executed in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between all parties and updated annually as necessary.
- 1.5. Each of these elements shall be compiled in writing in the form of a Policies and Procedures Manual which is reviewed annually and updated as necessary.
- 1.6. The goals of adult drug court programs in Georgia shall be abstinence from alcohol and other illicit drugs and promotion of law-abiding behavior in the interest of public safety.
- 1.7. All members of the drug court team are expected to attend and participate in a minimum of two formal staffings per month.
- 1.8. Members of the drug court team are expected to attend all drug court sessions.
- 1.9. The drug court shall adopt standardized, evidence-based treatments to ensure the quality and effectiveness of services. Refer to the Adult Drug Court Treatment Standards (see Section II) for a list of suggested curricula.
- 1.10. Drug courts should provide for a continuum of services through partnership with a primary treatment provider(s) to deliver treatment, coordinate other ancillary services, and make referrals as necessary.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.11. The court shall maintain ongoing communication with the treatment provider. The treatment provider should regularly and systematically provide the court with written reports on participant progress; a reporting schedule shall be agreed upon by the drug court team and put in writing as part of the court’s operating procedures. Reports should be provided on a weekly basis and within 24 hours as significant events occur. Significant events include but are not limited to the following: death; unexplained absence of a participant from a residence or treatment program; physical, sexual, or verbal abuse of a participant by staff or other clients; staff negligence; fire, theft, destruction, or other loss of property; complaints from a participant or his/her family; requests for information from the press, attorneys, or government officials outside of those connected to the court; and participant behavior requiring attention of staff not usually involved in his/her care.
- 1.12. Participants shall have contact with case management personnel (drug court staff or treatment representative) at least once per week during the first twelve months of treatment to review status of treatment and progress. Thereafter, participant contact shall be determined based on need.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ideally, treatment providers should be limited to no more than two.

## **2. Using a non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights.**

- 2.1. Prosecution and defense counsel shall both be members of the drug court team and shall participate in the design, implementation, and enforcement of the program's screening, eligibility, and case-processing policies and procedures.
- 2.2. The prosecutor and defense counsel shall work to create a sense of stability, cooperation, and collaboration in pursuit of the program's goals.
- 2.3. The prosecution shall: review cases and determine whether a defendant is eligible for the drug court program; file all required legal documents such as contracts/written agreements, waiver of rights, sanction orders, and termination orders; participate in and enforce a consistent and formal system of sanctions in response to positive drug tests and other participant noncompliance; agree that a positive drug test or open court admission of drug use will not result in the filing of additional drug charges based on that admission; and make decisions regarding the participant's continued enrollment in the program based on progress and response to treatment rather than on legal aspects of the case, with the exception of additional criminal behavior.
- 2.4. The defense counsel shall: review the arrest warrant, affidavits, charging document, and other relevant information, and review all program documents (i.e., waivers, written agreements); advise the defendant as to the nature and purpose of the drug court, the rules governing participation, the merits of the program, the consequences of failing to abide by the rules, and how participation or non-participation will affect his/her interests; provide a list of and explain all of the rights that the defendant will temporarily or permanently relinquish<sup>2</sup>; advise the participants on alternative options, including all legal and treatment alternatives outside of the drug court program; discuss with the defendant the long-term benefits of sobriety; explain that the prosecution has agreed that admission to drug use in open court will not lead to additional charges, and therefore encourage truthfulness with the judge and treatment staff; and inform the participant that they will be expected to take an active role in court sessions, including speaking directly to the judge as opposed to doing so through an attorney.
- 2.5. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 15-1-15, drug courts may accept offenders with non-drug charges.
- 2.6. For any participant whose charges include a property crime, the court must comply with the requirements and provisions set forth in the Crime Victim's Bill of Rights (O.C.G.A. §17-17-1, et seq.).
- 2.7. All participants shall receive a participant handbook upon accepting the terms of participation and entering the program. Receipt of handbook shall be acknowledged through a signed form with an executed copy placed in the court file maintained locally.
- 2.8. Each drug court shall develop and use a form, or adopt the model created by the Council of Accountability Court Judges, to document that each participant has received counsel from an attorney prior to admittance to a drug court, including the receipt of the local participant agreement with an executed copy placed in the official court file maintained locally.
- 2.9. The decision to participate in a drug court shall be made solely by the eligible participant. There shall be no coerced participation in a drug court, such as by giving eligible offenders the choice between an onerous disposition and participation in the program.
- 2.10. The decision to participate in a drug court shall not be influenced by offering a dispositional alternative more grueling or demanding to eligible offenders than that which is offered in cases where drug court participation is not an option.

- 2.11. The judge, on the record, must apprise a participant of all due process rights, rights being waived, any process for reasserting those rights, and program expectations.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.12. Terminations from drug court require notice, a hearing on the record, and a fair procedure. Not covered by this requirement is when a participant self-terminates and this situation does not require any type of pre-termination hearing.
- 2.13. The consequences of termination from a drug court should be comparable to those sustained in other similar cases before the presiding judge. The sentence shall be reasonable and not excessively punitive solely based on termination from drug court.
- 2.14. Termination hearings conducted for drug court participants shall include all due process rights afforded to any offender serving a probated sentence under the supervision of the Georgia Department of Community Supervision.
- 2.15. In jurisdictions where the drug court judge will also sit as the judge performing a termination hearing, this situation needs to be communicated to offenders in writing at the time where program participation is being considered.

---

<sup>2</sup> Each right that will be temporarily or permanently relinquished as a condition of participation in drug court shall be distinguished and explained separately to ensure the defendant fully understands the rights being waived.

### **3. Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed into the drug court program.**

- 3.1. Participant eligibility requirements/criteria (verified through legal and clinical screening) shall be developed and agreed upon by all members of the drug court team and formally included in writing as part of the program's policies and procedures.
- 3.2. Eligibility should be defined by objective criteria to ensure clinical and legal suitability for the program.
- 3.3. Courts may admit eligible participants pre-plea, post-plea, or operate under a hybrid model.
- 3.4. Program eligibility determination shall include the review of the potential participant's criminal history, legal requirements, and clinical appropriateness, including the administration of a risk and needs assessment.
- 3.5. The target population for drug courts is offenders assessed as moderate to high-risk for rearrest and with moderate-to-high treatment needs. Criminogenic risk shall be assessed utilizing a standardized, evidence-based tool approved by the Council of Accountability Court Judges.<sup>3</sup> The assessment shall be conducted prior to program entry to ensure the program is targeting appropriate participants.
- 3.6. Members of the drug court team and other designated court or criminal justice officials shall screen cases for eligibility and identify potential drug court participants. Program eligibility requirements should be shared regularly with stakeholders including other judges in the jurisdiction, court personnel, members of the local bar association, the Department of Community Supervision, and local law enforcement.
- 3.7. Participants being considered for a drug court shall be promptly advised about the program, including the requirements, scope, and potential benefits and effects on their case.
- 3.8. Participants should begin treatment as soon as possible; preferably, no more than 30 days should pass between a participant being determined eligible for the program and commencement of treatment services.
- 3.9. Assessment for substance use disorder shall be conducted by appropriately trained and qualified professional staff, using standardized assessment tools. Refer to the Adult Drug Court Treatment Standards for a list of recommended clinical assessment tools.
- 3.10. Drug courts shall, at each certification cycle, maintain an appropriate caseload to effectively serve all participants according to these standards. Specifically, at such time as a court has been in operation for five years, all felony adult accountability courts in the circuit shall cumulatively serve at least 22% of the eligible population based on the most recent approved research data for that circuit. Courts that are currently five years old or older must be in compliance with this standard by the court's next certification cycle.
- 3.11. Individuals who have historically experienced sustained discrimination or reduced social opportunities because of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental disability, age, national origin, marital or parental status, religion, or socioeconomic status shall receive the same opportunities as other individuals to participate and succeed in the drug court.

---

<sup>3</sup> The current approved tool is the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI). Use of another tool must be approved by the Council of Accountability Court Judges prior to implementation.

#### **4. Drug courts provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.**

- 4.1. A drug court shall require a minimum 18 months of supervision and treatment for felony offenders to be considered as a drug court.
- 4.2. Felony programs should last a minimum of 18 months and should not exceed 24 months. Exceptions to the 24-month maximum may be made based on participant progress following a 24-month evaluation and assessment, to be followed up every four months thereafter and not to exceed a total program length of 36 months. A formal report of each assessment following 24 months shall be added to the participant's file to justify extension of the program.
- 4.3. The length of drug court participation should not extend beyond the maximum period of incarceration or probation a defendant could have received if found guilty in a more traditional court process. In addition, program duration should vary depending on a defendant's program progress. Program completion should be tied to adherence to the participant's court-ordered conditions and the strength of his/ her connection to community treatment.
- 4.4. Drug court programs should be structured into a series of phases. The final phase may be categorized as "aftercare/continuing care." Phases and phase movement should have defined criteria that are maintained in writing and reviewed with participants.
- 4.5. Drug court programs shall offer a comprehensive range of core alcohol and drug treatment services. These services include:
  - Group counseling
  - Individual counseling
  - Drug testing
- 4.6. Drug court programs should ideally offer:
  - Family counseling
  - Assessment and treatment for trauma
  - Gender specific group counseling
  - Domestic violence screening
  - Health screening
  - Assessment and counseling for co-occurring mental health issues
- 4.7. Ancillary services are available to meet the needs of participants. These services may include but are not limited to:
  - Employment counseling and assistance
  - Educational component
  - Medical and dental care
  - Transportation
  - Housing
  - Mentoring and alumni groups
- 4.8. Case management plans shall be individualized for each participant based on the results of the initial assessment. Ongoing assessment shall be provided according to a program schedule, and treatment plans should be modified or adjusted based on results.

- 4.9. Treatment shall include standardized, evidence-based practices (see Section II, Adult Drug Court Treatment Standards) and other practices recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Evidence-Based Practices Resources Center. All treatment providers must be appropriately licensed and certified to administer those curricula and services. Similarly, they must be appropriately licensed and certified to administer any clinical services to any accountability court participant. The court should keep a copy of treatment provider licensure and certification on file.
- 4.10. Treatment providers shall maintain a calendar that outlines the dates and times that group treatment sessions and individual counseling sessions take place. The treatment provider shall provide this calendar to the court and the Council of Accountability Court Judges upon request.
- 4.11. Treatment providers shall maintain individualized treatment plans with appropriate dosage hours as determined by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM).
- 4.12. A set of quality controls/review process shall be in place to ensure accountability of the treatment provider. Court staff may, from time to time, observe evidence-based group treatment sessions. Additionally, group counseling sessions are subject to fidelity monitoring by the Council of Accountability Court Judges with adequate notice to the drug court team.
- 4.13. Programs shall not exclude any participant solely on the basis of his or her use of a prescribed addiction or psychotropic medication. Programs shall consider these services for participants where clinically appropriate and available.

**5. Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.**

- 5.1. Participants shall be administered a randomized drug test a minimum of twice per week until the final phase of the program. A standardized system of drug testing shall continue until completion of the program.
- 5.2. Participants shall be subject to drug testing on weekends and holidays due to the likelihood of use during these times, and to ensure substances with shorter testing windows are detected.
- 5.3. Drug testing shall be administered to each participant on a randomized basis, using a formal system of randomization. Participants should be given a minimum window of notice to report for drug testing, ideally, no more than eight hours prior to testing.
- 5.4. All drug courts shall utilize urinalysis as the primary method of drug testing; a variety of alternative methods may be used to supplement urinalysis, including breath, hair, sweat, and saliva testing and electronic monitoring.
- 5.5. All drug testing shall be directly observed by an authorized, same sex member of the drug court team, a licensed/certified medical professional, or other approved official of the same sex.
- 5.6. Drug tests should be analyzed as soon as practicable. Results of all drug tests should be available to the court and action should be taken as soon as practicable, ideally within 48 hours of receiving the results.
- 5.7. In the event a single urine sample tests positive for more than one prohibited substance, the results shall be considered as a single positive drug test.
- 5.8. A minimum of 90 days negative drug testing shall be required prior to a participant being deemed eligible for graduation from the program.
- 5.9. Each drug court shall establish a method for participants to dispute the results of positive drug tests through either gas chromatography-mass spectrometry, liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry, or some other equivalent protocol.
- 5.10. Creatinine violations and drug tests scheduled and missed without a valid excuse as determined by the presiding judge shall be considered as a positive drug test.
- 5.11. Each drug court shall maintain the drug testing procedures in a policy and procedure manual. The drug testing procedure should include the steps taken to ensure proper chain of custody of all specimen throughout the testing and confirmation process.
- 5.12. Drug testing procedures should be included in the participant handbook and reviewed with participants upon entering the program. Participants should be made aware of the possible consequences of using substances including alcohol and other non-illicit substances.

**6. A coordinated strategy governs drug court responses to participants' compliance.**

- 6.1. A drug court shall have a formal system of swift and certain sanctions, including a system for reporting noncompliance, established in writing and included in the court's policies and procedures.
- 6.2. A drug court shall have a formal system of rewards and incentives for positive behavior.
- 6.3. The formal system of sanctions and rewards shall be organized on a gradually escalating scale and applied in a consistent and appropriate manner to match a participant's level of compliance.
- 6.4. Courts shall implement a system for a minimum level of field supervision for each participant based on their respective level of risk. Field supervision may include unannounced visits to home or workplace and curfew checks. The level of field supervision may be adjusted throughout the program based on participant progress and any reassessment process.
- 6.5. Regular and frequent communication between all members of the drug court team shall provide for immediate and swift responses to all incidents of non-compliance, including positive drug tests. Sanctions should be imposed immediately following noncompliance.
- 6.6. There shall be no indefinite time periods for sanctions, including those sanctions involving incarceration or detention.
- 6.7. Incarceration or detention should only be considered as the last option in the most serious cases of non-compliance. Incarceration sanctions should ideally be less than 3-5 days. Where possible, participants should continue receiving treatment while incarcerated.
- 6.8. Participants shall be subject to progressive positive drug test sanctions prior to being considered for termination, unless there are other acts of non-compliance affecting this decision.
- 6.9. Program infractions, including relapse, should result in a review of the participant's treatment plan and modification as needed.



**7. Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant is essential.**

- 7.1. A dedicated superior court judge or senior superior court judge must preside over an individual felony drug court program and should be committed to serving in this role for at least two years.
- 7.2. A judge of the superior court must preside over a felony drug court program; provided, however, that a judge from another class of court may be the presiding judge of a felony drug court program if that judge is specially designated as such by the chief judge of the judicial circuit superior court in which the court operates and is approved for such by the Council of Accountability Court Judges.
- 7.3. The presiding judge may authorize assistance from other judges, including senior judges and judges from other classes of court, on a time-limited basis when the presiding judge is unable to conduct court.
- 7.4. The judge shall attend and participate in all pre-court staffings, sessions, and/or meetings.
- 7.5. A regular schedule of status hearings shall be used to monitor participant progress.
- 7.6. There shall be a minimum of two status hearings per month in the first phase of felony drug court programs and, dependent on participant needs, this minimum schedule may continue through additional phases.
- 7.7. Frequency of status hearings may vary based on participant needs and benefits, as well as judicial resources. Status hearings shall be held no less than once per month during the last phase of the program.
- 7.8. Status review shall be conducted with each participant on an individual basis to optimize program effectiveness, group reviews should be avoided unless necessary based on an emergency basis.<sup>4</sup>
- 7.9. The judge, to the extent possible, should strive to spend an average of three minutes or greater with each participant during status review.
- 7.10. The judge and team shall minimize discussion of protected health information, and otherwise private information, in an open court setting, even where a participant has executed a HIPAA waiver.

---

<sup>4</sup> Insufficient time based on program census does not constitute an emergency.

**8. Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness.**

- 8.1. Participant progress, success, and satisfaction should be monitored on a regular basis through the use of surveys and participant feedback, most importantly at the program entry point and graduation.
- 8.2. Participant data shall be monitored and analyzed on a regular basis (as set forth in a formal schedule) to determine the effectiveness of the program.
- 8.3. Courts should track significant changes in program policies, to include the change that was made and the date the change went into effect, to monitor the effectiveness of those changes, and to inform future changes in policy and practice.
- 8.4. A process and outcomes evaluation should be conducted by an independent evaluator within three years of implementation of a drug court program, and in regular intervals as necessary, appropriate, and/or feasible for the program thereafter.
- 8.5. Feedback from participant surveys, review of participant data, and findings from evaluations should be used to make any necessary modifications to program operations, procedures, and practices.
- 8.6. Data needed for program monitoring and management should be easily obtainable and maintained in useful formats for regular review by program management.
- 8.7. Courts shall use a case management system approved by the Council of Accountability Court Judges, in the interest of formal and systematic data collection. Data shall be provided at least quarterly and in a format prescribed by the Council of Accountability Court Judges.
- 8.8. Courts shall collect, at a minimum, a mandatory set of performance measures determined by the Council of Accountability Court Judges. The minimum performance measures to be collected shall include: recidivism (re-arrests and reconvictions), number of moderate- and high-risk participants, drug testing results, drug testing failures (including substances), number of days of continuous sobriety, units of service (e.g. number of court sessions, number of treatment sessions attended), employment, successful participant completion of the program (graduations), and unsuccessful participant completion of the program (e.g. terminations, administrative discharges). The court should develop a process to collect recidivism data following participant graduation.

**9. Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court planning, implementation, and operations.**

- 9.1. Drug court programs shall have a formal policy on staff training requirements and continuing education including formal orientation and training for new team members.
- 9.2. All members of a drug court team shall receive training through the National Drug Court Institute.
- 9.3. Completion of the National Drug Court Planning Initiative shall be required prior to implementation in order to attain certification.
- 9.4. Existing programs, with all core team members present, shall attend tune-up or refresher training every three to five years.,
- 9.5. All core team members shall attend the Council of Accountability Court Judges annual training conference every other year. The National Association of Drug Court Professionals annual training conference can substitute the CACJ conference. However, the team must attend the CACJ annual training conference the following year.
- 9.6. Drug court judges and staff should participate in ongoing continuing education as it is available through professional organizations [Institute of Continuing Judicial Education (ICJE), NADCP, Georgia Council of Court Administrators (GCCA), etc.].
- 9.7. New accountability court judges and coordinators shall attend formal orientation and training administered by the Council of Accountability Court Judges offered annually.
- 9.8. Drug court staff should participate in ongoing cultural competency training on an annual basis.

**10. Forging partnerships among drug courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances drug court program effectiveness.**

- 10.1. A local steering committee consisting of representatives from the court, community organizations, law enforcement, treatment providers, health providers, social service agencies, and the faith community should meet on a quarterly basis to provide policy guidance, fundraising assistance, and feedback to the drug court program.
- 10.2. Drug courts should consider forming an independent 501(c)(3) organization for fundraising and administration of the steering committee.
- 10.3. Drug courts should actively engage in forming partnerships and building relationships between the court and various community partners. This may be achieved through facilitation of forums, informational sessions, public outreach, and other ways of marketing.

## **Section II**

### **Adult Drug Court Treatment Standards**

#### **1. Screening**

- 1.1. Legal: Drug court programs shall work with an interdisciplinary team to ensure systematic, early identification, and early engagement of a target population.
- 1.2. Clinical: Drug courts shall enroll participants who meet diagnostic criteria for a Substance- Related Disorder(s) and whose needs can be met by the program. A brief mental health should occur. Recommended tools:
  - Texas Christian University, Substance Abuse II (TCUDS)
  - Addiction Severity Index-Drug Use Subscale (ASI-Drug)
  - Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory-2 (SASSI-2)
  - Brief Jail Mental Health Screen, National GAINS Center

#### **2. Assessment**

- 2.1. Drug courts shall employ an assessment tool that captures offenders' risk of recidivism and treatment needs. This should also include a short assessment for mental health needs. Recommended tools:
  - Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LSCMI)
  - Correctional Offender Management and Profiling Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS)
- 2.2. Appropriate assessment instruments are actuarial tools that have been validated on a targeted population, are scientifically proven to determine a person's risk to recidivate, and to identify criminal risk factors that, when properly addressed, can reduce that person's likelihood of committing future criminal behavior.
- 2.3. The assessment tool should also be suitable for use as a repeat measure. Programs should re-administer the tool as a measure of program effectiveness and offender progress.

#### **3. Level of Treatment**

- 3.1. Drug courts shall offer an appropriate level of treatment for the target population. Recommended tools:
  - ASAM Patient Placement Criteria for the Treatment of Substance-Related Disorders (PPC-2R)
- 3.2. Drug courts will match participant risk of recidivism and needs with an appropriate level of treatment and supervision. Ideal length of a program is 18-24 months.

#### **4. Addiction Treatment Interventions**

- 4.1. Drug courts will use a manualized curriculum and structured [e.g. Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)] approach to treating addiction. Curricula shall be delivered with fidelity to the model including use of handbooks and homework, and must be administered by appropriately certified, trained, and licensed treatment providers. Recommended tools:
  - Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions for Substance Abuse (CBI-SA)
  - Thinking for a Change (T4C)
  - Prime for Life
  - Prime Solutions
- 4.2. Aftercare services are an important part of relapse prevention. Aftercare is lower in intensity and follows higher-intensity programming.

## **5. Recidivism/Criminality Treatment Interventions**

- 5.1. Drug courts shall incorporate programming that addresses criminogenic risk factors: those offender characteristics that are related to risk of recidivism. Curricula shall be delivered with fidelity to the model including use of handbooks and homework, and must be administered by appropriately certified, trained, and licensed treatment providers. Suggested tools:
  - Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)
  - Thinking for a Change (T4C)
- 5.2. Criminal risk factors are those characteristics and behaviors that affect a person's risk for committing future crimes and include, but are not limited to, antisocial behavior, antisocial personality, criminal thinking, criminal associates, substance abuse, difficulties with impulsivity and problem-solving, underemployment, or unemployment.

## **6. Treatment/Case Management Planning**

- 6.1. Drug courts shall use treatment/case management planning that follows an assessment and systematically addresses core risk factors associated with relapse and recidivism.
- 6.2. Treatment and case management planning should be an ongoing process and occur in conjunction with one another.

## **7. Case Management Systems**

- 7.1. Drug courts will employ a case management system that captures critical court and treatment data and decisions that affect participants. The data management approach will promote the integration of court and treatment strategies, enhance treatment and case management planning and compliance tracking, and produce meaningful program management and outcome data. Measures of treatment services delivered and attended by participants should be captured.

## **8. Oversight and Evaluation**

- 8.1. Drug courts are responsible for oversight of all program components. Regular monitoring of judicial status hearings, treatment, and case management services should occur.
- 8.2. Meetings with and surveys of participants to assess program strengths and areas for improvement increase legitimacy of the process and lead to improved outcomes.