LESSONS LEARNED FROM 10 YEARS OF THE ASHTABULA COUNTY DRUG COURT PROGRAM

OCTOBER 12, 2018
HISTORY OF DRUG COURTS

Nationwide, more than 80% of crime is fueled by drug and alcohol use.

Just putting people in prison does not work!
Ohio’s prison population in 1974 was 8300, and reached an all time high in 2008 at 51,000.

“We need to punish the offenders we are afraid of and treat the ones we are mad at”
HISTORY OF DRUG COURTS

1989
First Drug Court in the Nation was founded in Miami, Florida in 1989

1995
First Drug Court in Ohio was founded in Hamilton County in 1995

2008
Ashtabula County Court of Common Pleas Drug Court was founded in 2008

now
Ashtabula County has four certified Specialized Docket Courts
WHAT IS A DRUG COURT?

A therapeutically oriented judicial approach to providing court supervision and appropriate treatment to offenders

A collaboration of treatment services, intensive court monitoring of the offender’s progress, and immediate incentives and sanctions based upon the offender’s compliance with court supervision and treatment orders
Ohio currently has 230 certified specialized dockets

93 of these courts are drug courts
The Ten Key Components of Drug Courts

Component #1: Drug Courts integrate alcohol and other drug court treatment services with justice case processing

Ashtabula County’s program consists of participants who enter as a condition of

| Diversion (Intervention in Lieu of Conviction) | Post Conviction (initially ordered to participate as a condition of probation) | Probation Violation or Judicial Release |
Component #2: Using a non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants’ due process rights.

Ashtabula County’s program:

- Prosecutor reviews the application and determines legal eligibility.
- Defense Counsel makes sure that the applicant understands the program’s rules and constitutional rights.
- Participants have the right to have defense counsel attend treatment team meetings, the right to a hearing prior to a jail sanction and the right to a termination hearing.
- Both the prosecutor and defense counsel make recommendations regarding sanctions.
Component #3: Eligible offenders are identified early and promptly and placed in the drug court program

Ashtabula County’s program:

“Eligible Offenders” are identified as “high risk and high needs” based upon a Pre-Sentence Investigation, screening with the Ohio Risk Assessment Tool and a chemical dependence assessment by Lake Area Recovery Center

By local court rule, diversion applicants must apply within 30 days of arraignment. Post conviction applicants must apply no later than the time of the guilty plea. Probation violations are now fast tracked by written waivers of hearings.
Component #4: Drug Courts provide access to continuum of alcohol, drug and other related treatment and rehabilitation services

Ashtabula County’s program:

Each participant receives a treatment plan based upon individual needs; the level of treatment is determined by level of risk of recidivating and the level of substance abuse

Treatment programs include:

Intensive Outpatient and Non Intensive Outpatient

Medically Assisted Treatment

Residential Treatment (Turning Point, N.E.O.C.A.P and R.S.A.T.)

If indicated, a Mental Health Assessment and Treatment
TREATMENT SERVICES, CONT.

Criminal Thinking Group
Relapse Prevention
Thinking for a Change
Trauma Group
Motivational Enhancement
Aggression Replacement Therapy
Seeking Safety
Component #5: Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing

Ashtabula County's program:

Random, frequent and observed

Each participant calls into an automated system everyday to find out if required to submit an urine screen

Each participant is randomly tested a minimum of 2 times per week
Component #6: A coordinated strategy governs drug court responses to participants’ compliance

Ashtabula County’s Program:

Treat Sick Behavior = Treatment Adjustments

Punish Bad Behavior = Sanctions

Reward Good Behavior = Incentives
Component #7: Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant is essential

Ashtabula County’s Program:

Status hearings held every Thursday morning at 9:00 a.m. in the courtroom of Judge Yost
THE TEN KEY COMPONENTS

Component #8: Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness

Ashtabula County’s Program:
Monitoring of Graduates by Drug Court Coordinator
Comprehensive survey of Graduates and Focus Groups
May 2016 Self Assessment
Component #9: Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court planning, implementation and operation

Ashtabula County’s Program:

Training received by the Ohio Supreme Court, the State Specialized Docket Conference and the National Drug Court Institute
Component #10: Forging partnerships among drug courts, public agencies and community based organization generates local support and enhances drug court program

The Advisory Committee consists of 9 members and includes Representatives from:

Job and Family Services
Private Defense Bar
Sheriff’s Department
Samaritan House
Mental Health and Recovery Services Board
Kent State Ashtabula
ACMC
Two community members
Approximately 500 drug court applications have been submitted:

200 were rejected from the program (did not meet legal or clinical criteria, or decided they did not wish to participate)

161 have successfully completed

76 have been unsuccessfully terminated

3 have been neutrally discharged

45 are currently in the program

15 are currently involved in the application and screening process
STATISTICS OF THE ASHTABULA COUNTY FELONY DRUG COURT PROGRAM COVERING 10 YEARS

Primary Drug of Choice:

- Heroin = 46%
- Methamphetamine = 18%
- Prescription Drugs (Opiates) = 7%
- Marijuana = 7%
- Cocaine = 6%
- Alcohol = 5%
- Other (Barbituates/Benzodiazepene/Inhalants) = 1%
- Unknown = 10%
STATISTICS OF THE ASHTABULA COUNTY FELONY DRUG COURT PROGRAM COVERING 10 YEARS

Gender and Race/Ethnic Background:

Men = 60%

Women = 40%  (12 have been pregnant when entering the program or became pregnant during the program, and completed the program with healthy babies)

Caucasian = 91%

African American = 6%

Hispanic = 2%

Bi-Racial or Unknown = 1%
BREAKDOWN OF THE CURRENT 45 PARTICIPANTS

27 Males and 18 Females
44 Caucasian and 1 Bi-Racial
2 are 18 years of age
25 are in their 20’s
15 are in their 30’s
2 are in their 40’s
1 in his 50’s

Drug of Choice:
Heroin = 28
Meth = 14
Prescription Opiates = 1
Cocaine = 1
Xanax (Benzo) = 1
RECIDIVISM RATES OF GRADUATES

Recidivism = any new criminal charge, except traffic

Since 2010, 161 participants have successfully completed the program

Overall, 88 of these participants have had no further contact with the criminal justice system
RECIDIVISM RATES OF GRADUATES

The first two years are the most important!

From 2010 – 2015:
40% of those who completed program re-offended within the first two years
4% re-offended after a two year period
Past 3 years, recidivism rate dropped to 1%
RECIDIVISM ISSUES ADDRESSED IN 2016, AND
SIGNIFICANT ENHANCEMENTS IMPLEMENTED

- Added Mental Health
- Added Medically Assisted Treatment
- Added a phase focused on Maintenance
- Added Trauma Group
RECIDIVISM SINCE 2016
ENHANCEMENTS

2016 – present:
Recidivism rate after the first year is at 25%
Recidivism rate after the second year is at 6%
So far, Recidivism rate after two year is 0%
ALSO IMPROVED RATE OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

2008 – 2015:
52% of those who entered the program successfully completed

2016- Present:
59% of those who entered have successfully completed the program

Also an increase of 7 1/2% in number of participants
MOST RECENT ENHANCEMENTS

Commencement Interviews
Alumni Group
Restorative Justice
More Comprehensive Surveys of Graduates
Focus Groups of Current Participants
WHAT HAVE THE PARTICIPANTS TOLD US?

What works well in Drug Court?

- The Accountability
- Commitment by Team to people in Drug Court
- It’s a “chance giver”, dodging a felony or receiving a second chance to not go to prison
- Introduction to programs that are helpful
WHAT HAVE THE PARTICIPANTS TOLD US?

What can be improved?

• Fairness of sanctions

• Child care during treatment

• Educating families about Drug Court

• More Smart Recovery Meetings and no Sponsors

• Policy regarding medications
Looking Forward to 2019

Discussions about reaching out specifically to our minority groups to speak about the program

Discussions regarding an assessment of the overall felony population of Ashtabula County in order to identify whether everyone receives the same opportunities, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, physical or mental disability, religion or socioeconomic status

Would like the Drug Program to speak to your group? Contact Stephanie Belconis, Drug Court Coordinator at 440-576-9903
DRUG COURT PROGRAM
WRITTEN MATERIALS

Program materials are available on the Ashtabula County Court System webpage under the Court Office tab.
### SPECIAL THANKS TO

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