

**RESEARCH UPDATE****REPORTS ON RECENT  
DRUG COURT RESEARCH**

*This issue of the National Drug Court Institute Review synthesizes reports on three studies in the field of drug court research and evaluation, compiled by the authors of those studies: an outcome evaluation for the Dallas County DIVERT Court; an evaluation of Maine's state-wide adult drug treatment court program; and an evaluation of Maine's state-wide juvenile drug treatment court program.*

**ARTICLE SUMMARIES****DALLAS COUNTY  
DIVERT COURT**

[32] This outcome evaluation found arrest rates for graduates at 15.6% as compared with 39.5% for program drop-outs and 48.7% for the comparison group. Less than 90 days in treatment appeared to be an indicator of higher rearrest post-termination.

**MAINE'S STATE-WIDE  
ADULT DRUG  
TREATMENT COURT**

[33] This evaluation of Maine's state-wide adult drug treatment court program found an overall retention rate of 74%;

54.4% of participants have remained drug-free; and participants have improved their employment and attendance in school/vocational programs by 16%.

**MAINE'S STATE-WIDE  
JUVENILE DRUG  
TREATMENT COURT**

[34] This evaluation of Maine's state-wide juvenile drug treatment court program found an overall retention rate of 65%; a recidivism rate of 54%; and a relapse rate of 82% at some point during program participation.

## DALLAS COUNTY DIVERT COURT OUTCOME EVALUATION

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**Methodology:** The outcome evaluation of Dallas County's Drug Court, DIVERT (Dallas Initiative for Diversion and Expedited Rehabilitation and Treatment), examines recidivism rates of program participants compared with a similar group of offenders adjudicated prior to the establishment of DIVERT Court. Local, state, and national crime databases were utilized to ascertain the number of arrests during a specific follow-up period for DIVERT program graduates, for those who dropped out or were dismissed from the program, and for the comparison group. All three groups were followed for a period of twenty-seven months, which includes a twelve month period following the date of graduation or dismissal for DIVERT participants. Groups were also compared specifically on frequency of rearrests related to drug use or possession. Finally, for the DIVERT participants who failed to graduate (dropouts), recidivism was compared across three different groups based on length of stay in the program before dismissal.

**Program:** The DIVERT program was implemented in January 1998 as an alternative for non-violent first time felony drug offenders. Upon arrest, offenders are identified as eligible for inclusion in DIVERT by Dallas County's pre-trial release program, and then further screened to determine if they meet specific criteria. The DIVERT program offers immediate placement into substance abuse treatment and court supervision, often within ten days from the date of arrest. In exchange for compliance with program conditions and successful graduation, the offender is not prosecuted for pending felony charges. Participants must remain in DIVERT for at least twelve months before becoming eligible

for graduation, with some remaining in the program up to eighteen months. The graduates in the present study remained in the program for an average of fifteen months.

**Participants:** Of the 320 offenders admitted to the DIVERT program during the evaluation period (January 1998 through April 2000), 21 opted out, 103 were terminated due to non-compliance or a new charge (dropouts), 77 successfully completed the program (graduates), and 119 were active in the program. The average DIVERT participant (including both dropouts and graduates) is 33.26 years old and has completed 11.6 years of formal education. Subjects are predominantly African-American (52%), male (74%), single (78%), and report no previous treatment episodes (74%). Comparison group subjects share similar demographic profiles.

**[32] Outcomes and Findings: Recidivism:** During the follow-up period, 27.8% of the DIVERT group (including both graduates and dropouts) were rearrested compared with 48.7% of the comparison group. Looking at the three groups separately, graduates of DIVERT had the lowest rearrest percentage (15.6%) compared to program dropouts (39.5%) and comparison subjects (48.7%). *Any* type of arrest was counted as a new offense during the follow-up period. However, in examining rearrests by type, DIVERT graduates still had the lowest rearrest percentage for drug charges (9.1%) compared to that of dropouts (17.3%) and control group subjects (24.4%). **Other:** Recidivism rates were examined specifically among the DIVERT dropouts based on length of stay in the program before termination. Ninety days or less was considered a short length of stay, 91 to 270 days a medium length of stay, and more than 270 days was considered a long treatment stay. Those with 90 days or less in the program before dismissal had a significantly higher rearrest rate post-termination than the other two groups.

## EVALUATION OF MAINE'S STATE-WIDE ADULT DRUG TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM

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**Methodology:** This report is based on the first year of a four year evaluation of Maine's statewide adult drug court system. The primary focus of the assessment is to document the drug court system and report on its status of implementation. The evaluation compares the productivity of Maine's adult drug courts with other drug courts at a similar stage of implementation. As the drug court is in the early stages of operations, many components of the program have not been institutionalized and are thus more amenable for program improvement.

The research team developed and implemented an MIS for case management and evaluation purposes. Much of the information for the first report is based on data obtained from the MIS program – such as characteristics of clients and data elements collected from weekly progress reports. The evaluation describes participants, identifies indicators of program performance across courts, and examines the degree of interagency coordination and integration.

**Program:** Maine is a pioneer, having successfully implemented a coordinated, statewide adult drug court system. Eleven Superior Court Justices and District Court Judges are assigned to seven adult drug courts serving six of Maine's sixteen counties. The six Maine counties that currently have adult drug courts have a combined population of approximately 789,762 people – representing about 62% of the state's population.

Maine's adult drug treatment court is a court supervised, post-guilty plea drug court requiring clients to participate in drug treatment (DSAT) and attend weekly court appearances. Participants are also required to attend 12-step programs and submit to frequent drug and alcohol testing. A local case manager assists each court in screening and conducting background checks, participates in court hearings, and conducts drug tests. Substance abuse treatment services are provided by DSAT certified treatment providers located across the state. The role of treatment is to conduct clinical screenings and assessments and deliver the DSAT treatment regimen to participants.

Planning and implementation began in 2000 using funds derived from Maine's share of the tobacco settlement. Adult drug courts began operating in April 2001. The program has four phases that are designed to take approximately twelve months to complete. Each phase establishes distinct treatment goals and specified minimum time periods for completion.

**Participants:** The first drug court participant was admitted in April 2001. To date, a total of 240 people were referred to Maine's adult drug treatment court program. As of November 30, 2001, a total of 114 people had been admitted to the program, and of this number 84 remain active. With a few regional exceptions, the majority of participants can be characterized as single, white males between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age. Nearly half of the participants statewide were unemployed (47.9%) at admission and the majority of participants have either graduated from high school or earned their GED (63%). The majority (62%) of participants have two or more prior convictions with at least one prior drug or alcohol conviction. Prior contacts with the criminal justice system for 65% of participants began as juveniles. Most participants are polysubstance abusers. Drugs of choice include alcohol (34%); heroin, oxycontin, and other opiates (34%); and marijuana (15%). Many

participants (41.4%) had never received substance abuse treatment services prior to entering the drug court program.

**[33] Preliminary Outcomes and Findings: *Relapse:*** Over half (54.4%) of all participants have remained drug free. ***Retention:*** The overall retention rate statewide is 74%. ***Other:*** Employment and attendance in school/vocational programs improved since enrollment by an overall increase of 16%. Participants estimate that prior to drug court, the costs of their addiction exceeded \$500.00 per week, of which nearly two-thirds was obtained illegally. Participants who were terminated from the program obtained twice as much in illegal funds to support their habit as non-terminated participants.

## **EVALUATION OF MAINE'S STATE-WIDE JUVENILE DRUG TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM**

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**Methodology:** The University of Southern Maine's College of Arts and Sciences was contracted to conduct the evaluation of Maine's juvenile drug treatment court system. The primary focus of this twenty-month evaluation was to document the juvenile drug court system, comparing the productivity of Maine's juvenile drug courts with other juvenile drug courts nationally; examine intermediate outcomes relating to life improvements, relapse, and recidivism; and provide a series of specific recommendations for program improvement. The evaluation describes program participants, identifies the range and types of sanctions and rewards utilized, and examines the degree of interagency coordination and integration. Sources of information include observational data from court site-visits, qualitative data from program participant and key actor interviews, and quantitative data collected from bio-psychosocial evaluations, weekly progress reports and client information obtained from Maine's Department of Corrections, Division of Juvenile Services case files.

**Program:** Maine is one of the few states to successfully have implemented a coordinated, statewide juvenile drug court system. Six juvenile drug courts are currently in operation serving seven of Maine's sixteen counties and 69% of the state's population. The juvenile drug courts system became operational in January 2000. The program is post-plea (but pre-final disposition), providing comprehensive community-based services to both juvenile offenders and their families. The program has four phases that are designed to take

approximately 50 weeks to complete. Each phase establishes distinct treatment goals and specified minimum time periods for completion. In addition to weekly court appearances, participants are required to attend drug treatment as well as meet with their drug court treatment manager. Phase advancement requires that participants have a specified number of consecutive weeks of clean alcohol and drug tests, and no unexcused absences from treatment or court sessions.

**Participants:** Between January 26, 2000, and September 30, 2001, there were a total of 114 juveniles enrolled in the program. Sixty juveniles are currently active and 40 were terminated. As of September 30, 2001, a total of 14 participants graduated from the program. Overall, the majority of participants can be characterized as white males (85%) between 16 and 17 years of age who are attending school (63%). All participants have serious substance abuse problems and their use began around the age of 11. A majority report a history of trauma and physical and sexual abuse. Most (91%) have been suspended from school one or more times. By the age of 14, most participants (71%) had contact with the police. Although participants (86%) have prior juvenile dispositions, only one-third have been convicted of felony juvenile offenses. However, a majority of participants (70%) have not been placed in detention facilities. There are, however, important variations by court location in these characteristics. For example, the percent of participants previously incarcerated at one of the two detention facilities ranges from a low of 7% at one court to a high of 52% at another court.

**[34] Outcomes and Findings:** Over half of the juvenile drug court participants have remained sober for three months or more. Both school attendance and employment have increased significantly. **Retention:** The overall retention rate statewide is 65%, ranging from a low of 52% to a high of 85%. **Recidivism:** 61 participants (54%) recidivated during their participation in the program. Those participants who



did engage in criminal conduct (90%) were also likely to have relapsed. **Relapse:** Most participants (82%) relapsed at some point in the drug court program. **Graduation:** Fourteen participants successfully completed the program and graduated. **Other:** Interviews with 32 participants indicate that rewards and sanctions are perceived as being unfair (55% of those interviewed) and 40% of participants interviewed indicated their use of drugs and/or alcohol was not detected during their participation in the drug court. Integrating multiple sources of data into the research design enabled the research team to identify and validate those policies and practices that required revision so as to further enhance the program.

