
INTRODUCTION

The Editorial Board is pleased to present the second issue of volume four of the *Drug Court Review* (Volume IV, 2). This issue of Volume IV takes a look at three important areas to the drug court field: the crucial role of the judge as a “Key Component” of drug court, the critical elements of methodologically sound impact evaluations of drug courts, and the use of ballot initiatives in pursuit of “legalization” in several states. Each of these areas represents a critical issue to the drug court field, and each issue has an impact on drug courts throughout the United States.

These issues, and the information we are able to uncover about them, are important to the continued development and evolution of the drug court model.

In this issue:

- ◆ Douglas B. Marlowe, J.D., Ph.D., David S. Festinger, Ph.D., and Patricia A. Lee, M.S., discuss the results of the first scientifically rigorous studies to determine whether the judge is, in fact, a “key component” of drug court. The authors’ findings indicate that “high-risk” clients with specific characteristics performed substantially better in drug court when they were required to attend frequent status hearings before the judge. In contrast, “low-risk” offenders who did not have said characteristics performed better under monitoring by their treatment case managers and were not required to attend routine hearings.
- ◆ Charles Michael Johnson and Shana Wallace detail the critical elements necessary for building methodologically sound impact evaluations—evaluations that will aid drug courts in demonstrating their effectiveness. These critical elements include: a comparison group similar to that of the participants; the

collection and analysis of critical data at several points during and post program; and the involvement of an experienced evaluator.

- ◆ Kelly Lieupo and Susan P. Weinstein examine three proponents of legalization as well as the Drug Policy Alliance and the Campaign for New Drug Policies, organizations designed to further the agenda of legalization through the introduction of ballot initiatives and propositions in states across the country. This commentary also delves into initiatives and propositions that have passed in states such as Arizona and California, as well as those that were introduced and were either defeated or withdrawn from the ballot in other states.
- ◆ Finally, this issue of the *Review* concludes with a “Research Update” on two recent drug court research evaluations, compiled from the executive summaries of those evaluations themselves.

THE DRUG COURT REVIEW

Published semi-annually, the *Review*'s goal is to keep the drug court practitioner abreast of important new developments in the drug court field. Drug courts demand a great deal of time and energy of the practitioner. There is little opportunity to read lengthy evaluations or keep up with important research in the field. Yet, our ability to marshal scientific and research information and "argue the facts" can be critical to a program's success and ultimate survival.

The *Review* builds a bridge between law, science and clinical communities, providing a common tool to all. A headnote and subject indexing system allows access to evaluation outcomes, scientific analysis and research on drug court related areas. Scientific jargon and legalese are interpreted for the practitioner into a common language.

Although the *Review*'s emphasis is on scholarship and scientific research, it also provides commentary from experts in the drug court and related fields on important issues to drug court practitioners.

THE NATIONAL DRUG COURT INSTITUTE

The *Drug Court Review* is a project of the National Drug Court Institute. NDCI was established under the auspices of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and with the support of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Executive Office of the President, and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice.

The National Drug Court Institute's mission is to promote education, research and scholarship to the drug court field and other court-based intervention programs.

Historically, education and training in the drug court field have only been available at regional workshops and the annual national conference; analysis and scholarship were largely limited to anecdotes and personal accounts.

That situation has changed. Evaluations exist on dozens of drug court programs. Scholars and researchers have begun to apply the rigors of scientific review and analysis to the drug court model. The level of experience and expertise necessary to support an institute now exist.

Since its creation in December 1997, NDCI has launched a comprehensive practitioner training series for judges, prosecutors, public defenders, court coordinators, treatment providers, and community supervision officers; developed a research division responsible for developing a scientific research agenda and publication dissemination strategy for the field, as well as developing a series of evaluation workshops; and published a monograph series on relevant issues to drug court institutionalization and expansion.

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