



Washington Drug Courts Work for participants, their families, and our communities

Drug Courts Use Evidence-Based Best Practices To:

- **Reduce Crime**
- **Transform Lives**
- **Strengthen Families & Communities**
- **Prevent Foster Care & Parental Incarceration**
- **Produce a Return on Investment 100% of the Time**

WA drug courts primarily serve individuals charged with felony level property, drug, and other non-violent crimes committed to finance or further substance use (vehicle theft, burglary, identity theft, etc.). The model is based on 30 years of research about how to effectively break the cycle of substance use and related crime.

Drug court participants receive support, resources, treatment, structure, and accountability. They are diverted from incarceration and make positive life changes that benefit the whole community. Participants become good neighbors, valued employees, present parents, positive role models, and skilled mentors for others seeking recovery.

Reduced Recidivism

3 years after starting treatment in a Washington Drug Court:

- 88% of participants have no new felonies.
- 77% have no new crimes at any level (including misdemeanor).

This represents all participants, not just graduates!

Drug courts break an established crime cycle: 79% of participants had prior felonies and 96% had prior convictions at some level - an average of 5 prior felonies and 9 prior misdemeanors. (Washington State DSHS)

Increased Employment

18-months after starting treatment in a Washington Drug Court, participants had a 231% increase in employment and a 191% increase in earnings. (All participants, not just graduates!) (Washington State DSHS)

In addition to addressing substance use, drug courts focus on helping participants obtain employment, education or training, housing, and healthy relationships to sustain recovery.

Cost Savings

Washington invests in drug courts through the Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA), created in 2002 with agreement between law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, and courts with strong bipartisan support. This investment is paid back immediately through savings resulting from avoided prison days and crime reductions.

Drug Courts produce a **return on investment 100% of the time** per WSIPP analysis. (WSIPP Inventory of Programs for Adult Corrections)

An analysis of drug court participants in Washington State found significant reductions in crime for drug court participants create a **net benefit for taxpayers of \$22,000 per participant, or a \$4 return on every \$1 invested.** (*Washington State DSHS*)

Additional costs often avoided through drug court participation not included in these analyses: emergency room visits, foster care, healthcare and special education services for drug and alcohol affected infants/children, long-term reliance on food assistance, Medicaid insurance, and other public benefits, crisis response services related to overdose and suicide, and civil court processes for evictions, protection orders, and involuntary commitments.

Evidence-Based

Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) classifies drug courts as evidence-based programs for reducing crime. This classification is based on WSIPP's meta-analysis that reviewed rigorous studies of approximately 30,000 drug court participants, including Washington State participants. WSIPP found drug court participation resulted in statistically significant crime reductions beyond what could reasonably occur by chance. While other interventions are also helpful, drug courts were found to have a larger effect on recidivism than other criminal legal interventions studied including police diversion and outpatient treatment in the community without the structure of drug court. (*WSIPP Inventory of Programs for Adult Corrections*)

Significant research addresses which individuals are best served by drug courts versus less intensive interventions. Those at "high risk" to re-offend who frequently have multiple prior felonies and failed attempts at treatment require the structure and accountability of a drug court to succeed. Washington drug courts support success for individuals with the most significant challenges including severe substance use disorder and frequently, co-occurring mental health disorders, homelessness, unemployment, and significant criminal histories.

For more information

Contact WSADCP/WADC at office@wsadcp.org or 360-627-0376

Review The Evidence for Washington State Drug Courts: wsadcp.org/home-2/outcomes

Data doesn't fully capture the powerful human impact of drug court participation. We invite you to hear directly from your constituents and their families about their personal stories and the far-reaching benefits. Ask WSADCP/WADC how to attend a drug court graduation or observe a calendar in your district.

Visit the Washington State Therapeutic Court Alumni Association (WSTCAA) facebook page for stories and photos from across the state: wsadcp.org/alumni



Therapeutic court graduates from across Washington state gather in Olympia on May 4, 2024 for the first in-person meeting of the Washington State Therapeutic Court Alumni Association.
