



# Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

# News

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## May is National Drug Court Month

For immediate release

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – This May is National Drug Court Month, which marks the recognition of the work and achievements of drug courts nationwide. National Drug Court Month is coordinated by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP). This year, treatment courts throughout the nation are celebrating with the theme “Criminal Justice Reform in Action.”

There are 2,966 treatment courts in operation in all 50 states, plus US territories, successfully treating close to 150,000 substance-addicted individuals each year. Since 1989, these courts have saved more than 1.4 million lives and billions of tax dollars.

“Drug courts and other treatment courts are the most successful programs for seriously addicted individuals in our nation’s history and represent true criminal justice reform in action,” said NADCP CEO Carson Fox. “Drug courts and other treatment courts restore lives, reunite families, and make communities safer, all while saving money for taxpayers. Instead of punishment, these programs provide life-saving treatment to those who need it most.”

Drug Courts are a judicially supervised court docket that reduce correctional costs, enhance community safety, and improve public welfare. In these programs, seriously addicted individuals remain in treatment for long periods of time while under close supervision. Court participants must meet obligations to themselves, their families, and society.

To ensure accountability, they are regularly and randomly tested for substance use, required to appear frequently in court so a judge can review their progress, rewarded for meeting goals, and sanctioned for not meeting clearly stated obligations.

Research continues to show that treatment courts work better than jail or prison, better than probation, and better than treatment alone.

Treatment courts are this nation’s most effective strategy to reduce recidivism among substance addicted, nonviolent offenders with criminal histories. Nationally, 75 percent of individuals who complete such programs are not re-arrested. These courts save up to \$13,000 for every individual they serve and return as much as \$27 for every \$1 invested.

In West Virginia, there now are 27 adult drug court programs serving 45 counties. Four additional drug courts are planned to cover the Third (Doddridge, Pleasants, Ritchie Counties), Fourteenth (Braxton, Clay, Gilmer, and Webster Counties), Twenty-First (Grant, Mineral, and Tucker Counties), and Thirtieth (Mingo County) Judicial Circuits. There are 15

operational juvenile drug courts serving 20 counties: Berkeley, Boone, Brooke, Hancock, Harrison, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mercer, Monongalia, Ohio, Pleasants, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Wayne, Wirt, and Wood.

As of April 4, 2016:

- 869 participants had graduated from adult drug courts in West Virginia, a graduation rate of 40 percent.
- There were 467 active clients in West Virginia adult drug courts.
- 494 participants had graduated from West Virginia's juvenile drug courts, a graduation rate of 51 percent.
- There were 209 active juvenile drug court cases.

The recidivism rate for adult drug court graduates over two years is 9.4 percent in West Virginia. The one-year, post-graduate recidivism rate is 1.88 percent. That compares to a nearly 80 percent recidivism rate for incarcerated drug offenders.

The average annual cost to serve an adult drug court participant is \$7,100, compared to an annual incarceration cost of \$17,611 in jail or \$28,369 in prison.

The recidivism rate for West Virginia juvenile drug court graduates is 14.6 percent, compared to a 55.1 percent rate for youths in traditional juvenile probation programs.

For FY 2012-13, the average cost to serve each graduating youth was \$6,900, compared to \$96,000 per person in a Division of Juvenile Services facility, \$44,000 per person in a residential group facility, or \$99,000 per person in a hospital treatment facility.

West Virginia adult and juvenile drug courts are open only to non-violent offenders whose underlying crimes are linked to substance abuse. Referrals are made by judicial officers, law enforcement, probation officers, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. Juveniles also can be referred by school personnel, parents, and child protective services/youth workers.

Both adult and juvenile drug court programs have multiple phases and minimum lengths. Both require intensive supervision; frequent, random, and observed drug testing; counseling sessions, regular meetings with probation officers; appropriate sanctions and incentives; and other rehabilitative services. Juvenile drug courts also involve family participation and promote self-sufficiency.

West Virginia's first adult drug court was established in the Northern Panhandle in 2005. The Supreme Court's first juvenile drug court was established in Cabell County in 2007. In 2009 and 2011 respectively, the West Virginia Legislature enacted legislation which codified adult and juvenile drug courts in West Virginia under the administration, control and responsibility of the Supreme Court.

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