

**Department of
Community Correction**



**Arkansas Drug Courts –
Offender Perceptions of Drug Courts 2005**

Background on Arkansas Drug Courts and the Client Assessment Tool and Methodology

Since the first drug court was established in Florida in 1989, numerous government agencies and other researchers have studied the components, savings, and outcomes from drug court operations across the nation. National research shows that participants in drug court treatment programs have lower re-arrests and re-convictions than comparison groups, and lower recidivism rates while in the programs. Furthermore, all programs have reported a positive net savings from reductions in recidivism and avoided costs to potential victims, weighed against the costs of staffing drug courts. Recognizing the potential financial savings and social benefits of drug courts, Arkansas expanded from one (1) drug court in 1994 to 28 at the end of the 2005 fiscal year.

To determine the offender's perceptions of the effectiveness and impact of drug court activities, the Department of Community Correction (DCC) developed an offender survey (See Appendix 1 for sample data collection tool.) During the summer of 2005 DCC staff from the research and program evaluation section visited the 28 drug court programs to distribute and collect data from drug court program participants.

To ensure offender confidentiality, surveys were distributed and collected during a group session by research staff whenever logistically possible. DCC research staff made an announcement at the beginning of the meeting that all responses would be confidential and no identifying information was solicited from the offender that could result in direct identification of their responses. Research staff offered to assist any offender who needed help with the responses and to answer any questions which arose during the completion of the survey instrument. If multiple groups were being held at a site over time which made distribution of the instrument by research staff logistically impossible, drug court program staff were asked to find an individual not associated with the drug court to distribute and collect the information to ensure confidential responses.

Client Assessment Tool and Methodology

Because the survey was distributed to active offenders in the program, it did not attempt to collect input from offenders that had completed the program. At a couple of sites, drug court program staff requested permission to mail the survey instrument to a drug court graduate. In these cases, research staff requested that return envelopes be provided to the offender that directed the correspondence directly to the research staff. However, there were very few (5) clearly identified graduates who completed and returned the survey instrument. Likewise, offenders who had been dismissed from the programs were not surveyed concerning their perceptions of the court and its effectiveness or impact.

Because the survey instruments were distributed at group meetings and because it would have been possible for active participating drug court program participants to miss a group meeting (either excused or unexcused), there is not a 100% response rate from the survey from all courts. During the survey period, the drug courts reported an aggregate of 988 to 1,147 participants. The overall survey response was 536 (excluding the 5 graduates) for an overall response rate of between 54% to 47% depending on each courts active caseload at the time of the data collection.

Client Assessment Caveats

Two critical factors should be kept in mind when reviewing this information. First, the responses are from clients participating in a court operated program. Reasons for individual program participation varies between clients and responses to questions will probably vary over time, depending upon the success or program hurdles each individual participant faced at the time the survey was completed.

Second, and maybe more importantly, there could be a range of explanations regarding responses to any set group of questions. For example, table 8 provides data regarding the educational level of a program participant and information on a participants receipt, reading and understanding of the drug court program handbook (page 9). Regardless of the educational level of the program participant, there were participants who did not understand the handbook. Initially, staff thought this could be an indication of a program participants literacy and reading comprehension. However, drug court program staff also reported two factors that could influence the responses. First, program managers pointed out that some drug courts are evolving and changing and that the program handbook might distributed at the time of enrollment was not an accurate reflection of current program operations. The second factor reported by program managers involved the physiological impact of drugs on the thinking ability of addicts and heavy drug users. Given the offenders in the program generally had a long and intensive history of drug abuse, general thinking skills may be impaired and rendered comprehension by the offender difficult.

Client Demographics – Race and Gender Distribution

Table 1
Respondent Demographics
Gender and Race

	Male	Female	Total
Asian	0	1 (100%)	1
Black	68 (77%)	20 (23%)	88
Caucasian	246 (59%)	171 (41%)	417
Hispanic	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	10
Mexican	5 (100%)	0	5
Native American	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	6
Other	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	10
Missing	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	4
Total	342	199	541

Client Demographics – Offenders Age at the Time of Survey

Table 2
Respondent Age at Time of Survey
Descriptive Statistics

Minimum Age	18
Maximum Age	68
Mean Age (Average)	31.73
Median	30
Mode (most frequent)	23

Client Demographics – Program Status at the Time of Survey

Table 3
Number and Percent of Respondents
by Program Status

	Number of Clients	Percent
Phase I	199	36.8%
Phase II	131	24.2%
Phase III	116	21.4%
Other (e.g., Aftercare or Phase IV)	84	15.5%
Graduated	5	0.9%
Missing/No Response	6	1.1%

Offender Reported Treatment History Before Drug Court

Table 4
Respondent Outpatient Treatment History

	Number	Percent
Offender Never Received Help	298	55.1%
Offender Joined a Self-help Group such as AA or NA but did not Receive other Treatment	104	12.2%
Offender Received Help from a Licensed or Certified Substance Abuse Counselor through a Community Based Program	111	20.5%
No Response	28	5.8%

Table 5
Respondent Inpatient Treatment History

	Number	Percent
Did not receive inpatient treatment	313	57.9%
Received 30 days of residential treatment at least one time	58	10.7
Received between 30 and 90 days of residential treatment at least one time	10	1.8
Received between 90 days and 1 year of treatment at least one time	16	2.8
Received over one year of residential treatment	5	0.9%
No Response/Missing	139	25.7

Where Offenders Sought Help

Table 6
Respondent's with No History of Inpatient Treatment

	Number	Percent
Total number of offenders who did not receive inpatient treatment = 313		
-Never received outpatient treatment	205	65.5%
- Joined a self-help group (AA/NA)	58	18.5%
- Received Community Base Treatment from Licensed Substance Abuse Counselor	45	14.4%
- No response	5	1.6%

Table 7
Respondent's History of Treatment Attempts
By Type of Treatment

	Never received outpatient treatment	Joined a self-help group	Received community based services	No response	Total
Did not receive inpatient treatment	205	58	45	5	313
Received 30 days of residential treatment at least one time	18	10	27	3	58
Received between 30 and 90 days of residential treatment at least one time	2	4	3	1	10
Received between 90 days and 1 year of treatment at least one time	4	5	7	0	16
Received over one year of residential treatment	4	1	0	0	5
No Response/Missing	65	26	29	19	139
Total	298	104	111	28	541

Offender Education Levels and the Drug Court Handbook

Table 8
 Respondent's Reported Education Level and
 Receipt, Reading and Understanding of the
 Drug Court Participation Handbook

	Offender's Reported Education Level	Offender <u>Received</u> Handbook	Offender <u>Read</u> Handbook	Offender <u>Understood</u> Handbook	
				Yes	Most of It
Did not Complete High School	141	125	113	56	28
GED	38	34	31	20	5
High School Graduate	197	175	170	85	28
Some College	132	110	104	60	29
College Graduate or Post Graduate	28	23	22	12	3
No Response	7	4	3	1	1

Offender Perception of Effectiveness of Drug Court Program Components

Table 10
 Effectiveness of Drug Court Program Components
 Percent of Respondent's by Effectiveness and Component

	Very Effective	Mostly Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective	No Response
Intense Supervision	35.7%	46.6%	12.0%	3.9%	1.8%
Provision of Counseling and Group Therapy	37.2%	42.7%	15.0%	4.3%	0.7%
Random Drug Testing	25.7%	61.7%	9.1%	3.0%	0.6%
Interactions with the Judge	32.7%	52.9%	9.8%	4.1%	0.6%
Penalties	25.7%	59.1%	10.4%	3.9%	0.9%
Rewards	29.4%	38.3%	8.7%	8.7%	1.7%

Offenders Perception of Barriers in the Drug Court

Table 11
 Drug Court Program Participation Barriers
 Percent by Type of Barrier and Amount of Impact

	Very Much a Problem	A Big Problem	Somewhat a Problem	Not a Problem	No Response
Had to take time off work or school	78 (14.4%)	117 (21.6%)	171 (31.6%)	168 (31.1%)	7 (1.3%)
Transportation was not dependable	32 (5.9%)	46 (8.5%)	113 (20.9%)	342 (63.2)	8 (1.5%)
Offender thinks they need a different type of treatment	12 (2.2%)	15 (2.8%)	50 (9.2%)	453 (83.7%)	11 (2.0%)
Family and friends continue to do drugs	23 (4.3%)	35 (6.5%)	109 (20.1)	366 (67.7)	8 (1.5%)

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Barriers: Had to Miss Work or School

Table 12
 Drug Court Program Participation Barriers: Work or School
 Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	A Big Problem	Very Much a Problem	Somewhat a Problem	Not a Problem	No Response or Missing
Phase I	27.6	16.1	26.6	27.1	1.5
Phase II	16.8	14.5	38.9	27.5	2.3
Phase III	17.2	16.4	37.1	29.3	0.0
Phase IV or Aftercare	21.4	9.5	26.2	42.9	0.0
Graduated	0.0	0.0	80.0	20.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	33.3	0.0	16.7	33.3	16.7

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Barriers: Transportation was not Dependable

Table 13

Drug Court Program Participation Barriers: Transportation
Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	A Big Problem	Very Much a Problem	Somewhat a Problem	Not a Problem	No Response or Missing
Phase I	11.5	8.0	18.6	60.3	2.0
Phase II	0.8	6.9	20.6	69.5	2.3
Phase III	12.9	4.3	24.1	58.6	0.0
Phase IV or Aftercare	9.5	2.4	19.0	69.0	0.0
Graduated	0.0	0.0	60.0	40.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	0.0	0.0	33.3	50.0	16.7

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Barriers: Need a Different Type of Treatment

Table 14

Drug Court Program Participation Barriers: Need for Different Treatment
Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	A Big Problem	Very Much a Problem	Somewhat a Problem	Not a Problem	No Response or Missing
Phase I	4.5	3.5	14.1	75.9	2.0
Phase II	0.8	1.5	6.9	88.5	2.3
Phase III	0.9	3.5	5.2	91.4	1.7
Phase IV or Aftercare	3.6	0.9	8.3	85.7	0.0
Graduated	0.0	0.0	.0	80.0	20.0
No Response or Missing	16.7	0.0	0.0	66.7	16.7

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Barriers: Family or Friends Still Doing Drugs/Alcohol

Table 15

Drug Court Program Participation Barriers: Continued Drug Use by Family or Friends
Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	A Big Problem	Very Much a Problem	Somewhat a Problem	Not a Problem	No Response or Missing
Phase I	6.0	5.0	25.6	61.3	2.0
Phase II	3.8	3.1	16.8	74.0	2.3
Phase III	11.2	5.2	20.0	62.9	0.0
Phase IV or Aftercare	3.6	3.6	14.3	78.6	0.0
Graduated	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	33.3	0.0	0.0	50.0	16.7

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Effectiveness of Random Drug Testing

Table 16
 Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness: Random Drug Testing
 Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	Most Effective	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Missing
Phase I	54.3	29.6	12.1	4.0	0.0
Phase II	65.6	22.9	6.9	3.1	1.5
Phase III	63.8	29.3	6.0	0.9	0.0
Phase IV or Aftercare	71.4	16.7	8.3	3.6	0.0
Graduated	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	50.0	16.7	16.7	0.0	16.7

Offender Perception of Success in Achieving and Maintaining Sobriety

Table 17
 Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness in Sobriety Efforts
 Number of Offenders by Amount of Impact

	Most Effective	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective	No Response
How successful have you been in <i><u>achieving</u></i> sobriety	357	125	50	3	6
How successful have you been in <i><u>maintaining</u></i> sobriety	348	139	47	3	4

Offender Perception of Benefits from Participation in Drug Courts

Table 18
Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness
Number of Offenders and Percent by Amount of Impact

	Total True	Mostly True	Mostly False	Totally False	No Response
Affected Physical Health	310 (57.3%)	176 (32.5%)	18 (3.3%)	32 (5.9%)	5 (0.9%)
Strengthened Relationships in the Family	321 (59.3%)	163 (30.1%)	26 (4.8%)	25 (4.6%)	6 (1.1%)
Helped Change Past Destructive Behavior	341 (63.0%)	159 (29.4%)	18 (3.3%)	16 (3.0%)	7 (1.3%)
Benefited Mental Health	302 (55.8%)	169 (31.2%)	37 (6.8%)	26 (4.8%)	7 (1.3%)
Employment	265 (49.0%)	128 (23.7%)	26 (4.8%)	66 (12.2)	19 (3.5%)

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Effectiveness of Intense Supervision by Parole Officer

Table 19
 Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness: Intensive Supervision
 Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	Most Effective	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Missing
Phase I	43.2	36.2	16.6	2.0	2.0
Phase II	45.8	35.1	11.5	4.6	3.1
Phase III	42.2	39.7	10.3	6.0	1.7
Phase IV or Aftercare	59.5	31.0	4.8	4.8	0.0
Graduated	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	50.0	33.3	16.7	0.0	0.0

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Effectiveness of Individual and Group Counseling

Table 20

Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness: Counseling and Therapy
Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	Most Effective	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Missing
Phase I	38.7	39.2	16.6	5.0	0.5
Phase II	44.3	38.2	13.7	2.3	1.5
Phase III	44.0	34.5	19.8	1.7	0.0
Phase IV or Aftercare	47.6	34.5	9.5	8.3	0.0
Graduated	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	16.7	33.3	16.7	16.7	16.7

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Effectiveness of Random Drug Testing

Table 21
 Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness: Random Drug Testing
 Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	Most Effective	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Missing
Phase I	54.3	29.6	12.1	4.0	0.0
Phase II	65.6	22.9	6.9	3.1	1.5
Phase III	63.8	29.3	6.0	0.9	0.0
Phase IV or Aftercare	71.4	16.7	8.3	3.6	0.0
Graduated	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	50.0	16.7	16.7	0.0	16.7

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Effectiveness of the Participation of the Drug Court Judge

Table 22

Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness: Judicial Involvement
Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	Most Effective	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Missing
Phase I	46.7	34.7	12.6	6.0	0.0
Phase II	57.3	33.6	6.9	0.8	1.5
Phase III	52.6	36.2	8.6	2.6	0.0
Phase IV or Aftercare	57.1	26.2	9.5	6.0	1.2
Graduated	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	83.3	0.0	0.0	16.7	0.0

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Effectiveness of Penalties for Non-compliance

Table 23

Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness: Penalties for Non-compliance
Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	Most Effective	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Missing
Phase I	57.3	25.1	10.6	6.5	0.5
Phase II	60.3	25.2	9.2	3.1	2.3
Phase III	60.3	25.0	12.1	2.6	0.0
Phase IV or Aftercare	59.5	29.8	9.5	1.2	0.0
Graduated	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	66.7	16.7	0.0	0.0	16.7

Differences of Offender Perceptions According to the Offenders Participation Phase

Effectiveness of Rewards for Compliance

Table 24

Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness: Rewards for Compliance
Percent by Amount of Impact and Participant's Program Phase

	Most Effective	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Missing
Phase I	40.7	26.1	20.6	10.6	2.0
Phase II	40.5	34.4	19.1	4.6	1.5
Phase III	31.0	32.8	24.1	10.3	1.7
Phase IV or Aftercare	38.1	25.0	28.6	8.3	0.0
Graduated	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
No Response or Missing	33.3	33.3	0.0	16.7	16.7

Offenders Reported Impact of Drug Court Participation on Employment Status

Table 25

Drug Court Program Participation Effectiveness: Employment
 Number of Offenders by Employment Status at Start of Program
 and Subsequent Change in Employment Status

	Employed Full Time	Employed Part Time	Not Employed	No Response or Missing	Total
Employment Status at Start of Program	240	69	336	7	541
No Change – Still Employed	102	20	2	1	125
No Change – Still Unemployed	41	1	61	0	103
Change in Status – No Longer Working	13	7	11	0	31
Change in Status – Now Working Full Time	54	33	112	1	200
Change in Status – Now Working Part Time	12	8	30	0	50
No Response or Missing	18	0	9	5	32

Offender Reported Hourly Wages Prior to Drug Court Participation

Table 26
Descriptive Statistics of Hourly Wages by Employment Status and Sex

	Reported Working Full Time		Reported Working Part Time	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number of Offenders Reporting	181	88	31	23
Average Hourly Wage	\$11.29	\$8.45	\$9.01	\$9.46
Median Hourly Wage	\$9.00	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$7.00
Mode (Most Frequent Hourly Wage)	\$7.00	\$6.00	\$7.00	\$5.50
Minimum Reported Hourly Wage	\$2.13	\$2.13	\$5.15	2.13
Maximum Reported Hourly Wage	\$100.00	\$40.00	\$40.00	\$30.00

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