

Editorial: A Matter of Perspective

Dear Readers:

Perspective can be defined as an evaluation of a situation or facts, using one's point of view. Until recently, my perspective regarding my state and drug courts was limited.



I am ashamed to say this, but in my years of living, I had failed to see all of the areas of this beautiful state. That may not seem to be a big deal but I was born and raised in Arkansas. I graduated high school in Arkansas. I attended college in Arkansas, twice. My family lives here and I have always worked in state. You get the idea. So in my years of living in the natural state, there were entire areas of the state that I had never seen. My perspective regarding Arkansas has been limited to the few areas that I have vacationed and my home town area. My limited scope has grown in me an urge to broaden my horizons through travel, seeing all that I can. When I began working at the AOC, I was excited about the prospect of experiencing new places.

I am proud to say that I have now been to almost every area of the state as I travel to different drug courts observing them in action. My perspective has grown as well. Not only in regards to appreciating my home state, but towards drug courts. Arkansas truly has some vast and varied landscape. I have found myself enjoying the thick forested mountain areas, the lush green and lake views of the river valley and the vast soybean and rice fields while weaving through the delta region.

Just as my perspective and appreciation for the natural beauty of this state has expanded and grown, so has my appreciation for each of you that work with our drug court programs. As I began my visits, I had the belief that I would see major differences in our programs due to the varied levels of resources and unique personalities of communities. I have found however, more commonalities exist than discrepancies between courts.

These commonalities are a strength for our drug courts as a whole. Whether you are part of a post, pre or hybrid adjudication court. Whether you have five or fifty participants, the ten key components are the foundational elements that each of you utilize in your programs. I have witnessed our judges and teams work towards common goals of providing tools to change behaviors, providing support and encouragement. Our drug courts still brainstorm to meet challenges, appreciate resources and seek to improve upon themselves.

It is a fact that working within a drug court can be difficult. We fight apathy and frustration as we juggle the realities of budget shortfalls and limited resources against program needs and staff support. Keeping the "big picture" perspective can be a struggle.

Seeing our courts from a broadened viewpoint at a state level has renewed my belief that drug courts can change lives. I see court reviews not from the perspective of a single court, but from the view of many courts, with hundreds of participants; I see hundreds of participants who are making progress in their recovery. These participants far outweigh the number who fail. I see dozens of people who are proud of the successes they have achieved through graduation, each with a personal story of struggle and growth.

This wider perspective gives me encouragement. I hope that it encourages you as well. We *are* making a difference in our communities and we *are* impacting lives. Sometimes, it is all about perspective and seeing not only the impact of your own program, but the combined impact of many programs. After all, perspective, from one person's particular point of view, can always be expanded.

— Kari E. Powers, Editor

2011 State Drug Court Conference



Conference attendees gather for the day's training

The Administrative Office of the Courts, the Arkansas Department of Community Correction and The Arkansas Drug Court Professionals Association joined together to provide training to drug courts at the 5th Annual Statewide Drug Court Conference. The conference was held in Fort Smith on April 7th- 8th.

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve themselves."

— Anne Frank

SAVE THE DATE!

6TH ANNUAL STATE DRUG COURT CONFERENCE

APRIL 5TH- 6TH, 2012

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

The conference featured local and out-of-state speakers with expertise in problem solving courts. The Honorable Gary Arnold, Benton Circuit Judge,

presented an update and overview of corrections in Arkansas, including a review and discussion of Act 570.



Judge Gary Arnold presents an update and review on corrections in Arkansas

Honorable John Creuzot of the Dallas County, Texas Criminal District Court and Honorable Rose Reyna, State District Judge at Hidalgo, Texas both presented training

on evidence-based sentencing impact on improving public safety and reducing recidivism. Janiece Siegerist presented a wonderfully humorous training on team building that ended the first day of training on an upbeat feel.

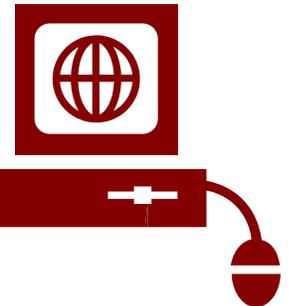


Judge Creuzot Dallas county,

The second day of training brought attendees together for their "One-Minute Innovations", sharing new projects and achievements from each drug court. A panel discussion followed facilitated by stakeholders among the drug court community that involved sharing on emerging and current criminal justice topics.

The overall feedback from the conference has been positive. We are already making plans for 2012. Watch for updates!

Webinar Review



A new online resource tool for drug courts is available through *Research 2 Practice*. The website is a partnership with the NDCI and NADCP to conduct research, publish results, provide resources, tools and training to drug court practitioners.

Recently, the website held a free webinar titled, "Who Should Go to Drug Court?" The training addresses whether every drug-involved offender should go to drug court, whether serious offenders should go to drug court, should participant selection be determined by odds of success and who should go to drug court. The webinar explains the current stance that higher-risk, addicted individuals including those with prior felony convictions and violent crime convictions can be successful in drug court programs. The webinar recording and accompanying power point presentation can be accessed at:

<http://research2practice.org/projects/population/index.html>

The Public Safety Improvement Act: Impacts on Drug Courts

Act 570, a corrections reform bill, was passed during the

2011 legislative session and signed into law by Governor Beebe in March. The legislation amends several sections of the code that affect the criminal justice system and state drug court programs. Spon-

sors of the legislation cite the law's ability to strengthen probation and parole with more effective utilization of community supervision. The law is intended to hold offenders accountable by using evidence-based practices. These practices may result in a reduction of recidivism. The law also requires designated agencies such as the Department of Community Corrections, to collect data and implement performance measures. The law mandates the Administrative Office of the Courts to develop a uniform set of eligibility criteria and performance measures for new and existing drug courts. The AOC will be required to publish annual performance reports using information and performance measures developed.

Another significant change will allow offenders with a "violent crime" (as defined within the statute) in their criminal history to be eligible for consideration for drug court participation. Additional changes within the law call for drug courts to target their programs to higher-risk offenders as participants. Other changes include identifying addicts versus abusers and implementing specific treatment protocols for each, as well as defining a drug court's success as a reduction in recidivism.

These adjustments to the methodology of drug courts are consistent with the current research conducted through the National Drug Court Institute and the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.



State Capitol Building
Little Rock

Local Drug Court News

May 16, 2011 to May 20, 2011 was National Drug Court Week. Both Judge Phil-hours' drug court at Paragould and Judge Williams' court at Malvern held graduation ceremonies in May in support of the national proclamation.



The Malvern drug court graduation was featured in a story for the *Malvern Daily Record* newspaper. One of the graduates referred to his time in drug court saying, "It's been a struggle all the time. It's been tough, but my friends, and support I've had in this program, it's made it easier. Just stay in this program and do it right. Don't mess up. It's simple. You just do it right, and that's it. The Drug Court staff is the best staff you could ever have."

Judge Williams addressed the graduates during the ceremony stating, "It is hard to do what you're doing. I know that. It's a fight every day. And to stay clean and sober is a difficult thing for you to have to do. I am very proud. And I really mean that. All you in Drug Court know that. I really do care about what happens to your life. When I watch you get over here and sit in this box, I have nothing but pride for what you've done in your life....Because the only one who can do this is you."

Would you like to see your drug court featured in the Local Drug Court News section? Contact *The Line* and we will share your story!!

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Remember to submit an application in order to receive grant funds for your drug court program. To request applications, email:

kari.powers@arkansas.gov

Mail applications to:

Kari Powers

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**We're on the
web!!
[http://
courts.arkansas
.gov](http://courts.arkansas.gov)**

The Line

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A copy of this issue can
be found at:

[http://
courts.arkansas.gov](http://courts.arkansas.gov)

Access to Recovery funds may be available to your drug court program. For more information and to register for an

informational training on June 21st, contact:

Mary Jo Lewno at : lewnomaryjo@uams.edu

Do you have news you want to share about your drug court?

Do you have an idea for a newsletter story?

Contributions, comments and inquiries are welcome. Please submit to:

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Kari E. Powers, Editor