

Lettie Prell
Director of Research

Curt Smith
Executive Assistant to the Director



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Drug Court Evaluation Documents Program's Success

The Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning (CJJP) recently released its study of Iowa's six adult drug courts, all of which are administered by community corrections agencies. Making heavy use of DOC's ICON data base, CJJP examined completion rates, recidivism and substance abuse treatment. CJJP also compared drug court results with those of a group of offenders who were screened and declined or were rejected by drug court in 2003 (referred) and a sample of offenders starting probation in 2003 (probationers). CJJP tracked the offenders for approximately three years.

Among CJJP's findings were the following:

1. Appeared to work better for males, whites, methamphetamine users, those without earlier arrests, or prior prison admissions.
2. The Judge model had higher graduation rates compared to the Panel model on a variety of demographic, substance abuse, and criminal history measures.
3. The Judge model had the lowest recidivism rates of all groups examined (Panel model, referred and probationer groups) and had recidivism rates nearing that of program graduates.
4. Cost comparisons show the total average cost per participant in the Judge model was higher than the Panel model, referred, and probationer groups, with higher substance abuse treatment and drug court costs.
5. A cost comparison by discharge type and model shows dramatic cost differences between program successes and failures regardless of model. Cost differences between failures and graduates in both models ranged from \$25,000.00-\$36,000.00 more for failures.
6. Some caution is warranted with regard to findings presented by individual court as the numbers in some cases were extremely small. In addition, it should be noted that many differences exist across courts in the amount of resources, time involved in program, and type of participant served.

While CJJP found different outcomes between the Panel and Judge models, it noted, "It appears that the guiding philosophy and personalities of the panelists, judges and team members may be more salient variables than the model itself in characterizing the courts and affecting client outcomes."

This study will be used to help Corrections in our ongoing efforts to improve offender programming. The full report can be found at <http://www.state.ia.us/dhr/cjpp/publications/fy10.htm>