

The Challenges and Opportunities to Save Families Using the Drug Court Model

Dependency Drug Treatment Courts
Beyond the Bench
December 15th, 2011
San Francisco

The Three Take Aways:

- Importance of collaboration between court, community based organizations and government agencies- **we are all serving the same children and families**
- Turning crisis into opportunity
- The influence of judicial leadership

Family Wellness Court Success

- As of March 2011, we have served 189 families, which is just 9 families shy of the new projection over a three-year time period.
- We have returned custody to at least one parent for 75% of families!
- Some improvement in time to assessment, with 75% accessing within 30 days.
- 88% Children seen for developmental assessments with follow up services
- Documented success of time in tx and completion of tx

**NRC 4 Tribes
Philosophy-**

Children are sacred and entitled to be cherished in a safe and nurturing environment with strong family, community and cultural connections. Their happiness and well-being includes nourishment of mind, body and spirit in order to fulfill their dreams throughout their journey toward becoming a healthy Elder.



Realignment of Thinking.....

- If we insist that **families and children** meet the needs of the institutions then we are telling folks that we value our institutions.
- If we insist that the **institutions** meet the needs of our families and children then we are telling folks that we value children and families.

**Collaboration as a State of Mind to Transformation and Sustainability
Child Welfare Courts Require A Different Approach-**

The work is complex –

- From pre-petition services to parent engagement and mobilization of resources
- A range of professional levels—from policy makers to front line staff.

Why is Dependency Court Different than Criminal Drug Court Model?

- ASFA Timelines
- Substance Abuse Treatment Resources
- Mental Health Overlap
- Family Violence Issues and Child Safety
- Treating a family
- Interest in long term fix significant

The 10 Principles As Applied to Families and Children Drug Courts

- *Key Component #1 **Revision:***
- *Family Drug Courts must closely partner with the jurisdiction's alcohol and drug treatment agency in order to share confidential background information that is generally not available from one discipline to the other and partner in an integrative model which allows for cross training and cross assessments.*

Key Component #2 Re-visioned

Using a nonadversarial approach, attorneys for parents, the state and the child promote child safety while first keeping the child at home with the parent in treatment and if unable to keep the child with the parent, they work together to get the child home at the earliest possible time while setting up services to preserve the parent/child bond and at the same time protecting each party's due process rights.

Key Component #3 Revision:

- All parents who have come to the attention of the Child Welfare Court System primarily due to substance abuse shall be directed into the Family Treatment Court model on the first day of court.

Key Component #4 Revision:

- Family Drug Courts provide access to a continuum of family centered and trauma informed resources including alcohol, drugs and other related treatment rehabilitation services as well as mental health, family violence and other family centered services.

Key Component #5 Revision:

- A drug and alcohol free lifestyle is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing and *court reviews* to make sure that the parent is also in compliance with their substance abuse focused child welfare case plan.

Key Component #6 *Revision:*

- It is critical that the court team work together to develop a coordinated response to a parent's compliance with the case plan and the treatment mandates.

Key Component #7 *Revision:*

- Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant is essential with a judge who is well trained on trauma informed treatment modalities and makes at least a three year commitment to stay in the Family Drug Court assignment.

Key Component #8 *Revision:*

- Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and tracks reentry rates into foster care, reasons for reentry if any, and commitment to problem solving and self correction of systems in order to reduce family instability.

Key Component #9 *Revision:*

- Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court planning, implementation and operations and promotes team building for better services to the parent and child.

Key Component #10 *Revision:*

- Forging partnerships with criminal drug courts, public agencies, and community based organizations generates local, statewide and federal support which guarantees the sustainability of the collaboration and leads to structural changes that improve systems and service delivery to child welfare court families.

Obstacles and Challenges

- Turn Over of Staff and Leadership
- Civil Service Rules that prevent people from staying in their positions when there are layoffs and people get "bumped"
- Budget cuts & reminders to policy makers
- Timelines
- Chronicity of social issues presented
- Attitude is Everything!

Principles that have worked in Santa Clara County to form the collaborative?

***A Clear and Elevating Goal
(Vision)***

If you don't know where you're going ...

Any path will get you there.



Results-Driven Structure

**Unified Commitment
Team Spirit-**

- A unified commitment can also be characterized by a belief among team members that they are a part of something special and that they are sharing something that is very important with other people. As such, a unified commitment can evoke strong emotions among those involved, as well as an unusual sense of connectedness among individuals from different agencies and disciplines.

Collaborative Climate

“Quality is impossible if people are afraid to discover and tell the truth”

W. Edwards Deming
Father of the Quality Improvement Movement

Collaborative Courts

FWC and Systems Change

- Stakeholder Interviews to assess political will
- Sustainability Planning
- Grant Seeking
- Legislative solutions
- SIP and CIP priorities



Examples of Success:

- 100 vouchers awarded
- Dental Association
- City of San Jose
- Treatment beds and faith-based communities
- Mental Health Access
- Child Centered F5



Standards of Excellence



External Support and Recognition



■ Principle
Leadership
