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# An Evaluation of Federal Support Court in Connecticut

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# INTRODUCTION



Federal  
Incarcerated and  
Probation  
Populations



Drug & Alcohol  
involved inmates  
and probationers



Recidivism of  
released and  
supervised offenders



Purpose of this  
evaluation

# LITERATURE REVIEW



Prior Drug Court and  
Federal Specialty Court  
Research



Prior Probation and Parole  
Supervision Research

# CURRENT EVALUATION



Federal Support Courts in  
Connecticut



## Research Questions

Target Population

Stakeholders

Intended Services

Outcomes

# RESEARCH DESIGN



Service Record  
Data



Observational Data



Survey of  
Participants



Survey of  
Stakeholders

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS



Is the intended target population being reached?



Are the intended stakeholders/personnel in place and engaged?



Are the intended services being provided?



Are anticipated outcomes being achieved?

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

## ▶ Is the intended target population being reached?

- ▶ PACTS Data: Support Court targets individuals at a heightened risk for recidivism and substance use/abuse (i.e., medium and high risk participants).
- ▶ Participants generally present:
  - ▶ long history of substance use
  - ▶ established criminal history (drug-related and felony convictions)
  - ▶ multiple drugs of choice
  - ▶ history of treatment prior to participation in Support Court
- ▶ Average of about 25 Support Court participants per calendar year
- ▶ Approximately 50% success rate (graduation/successful discharge)

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

- ▶ Are the intended stakeholders/personnel in place and engaged?
  - ▶ Observational & Survey Data from Participants & Treatment Team Members
    - ▶ Consistency in Process and Engagement
    - ▶ Communication and Collaboration
    - ▶ Individualized Treatment Orientation
    - ▶ Procedural Justice and Participant/Stakeholder Satisfaction
    - ▶ Use of Data and Assessment Tools (possible area for improvement)



# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

- ▶ Are the intended services being provided?
  - ▶ Majority of Support Court participants involved in outpatient treatment (61.2%); 10% involved in inpatient treatment and 16% in self-help treatment.
  - ▶ About a quarter (23%) receiving mental health treatment; 11% received therapy within the past year. Half (50%) presented no evidence of a mental health condition; about a quarter (23.9%) had a history of mental health problems, but not active.
  - ▶ Favorable perceptions about drug and alcohol treatment
  - ▶ Participant perceptions on educational, employment, and housing assistance somewhat less favorable

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

- ▶ Are anticipated outcomes being achieved?
  - ▶ Participant perceptions pertaining to sobriety, remaining drug-free, and social/life skills suggested the program has made a positive impact on these outcomes. Participants also reported positive effect on family views about the criminal justice system.
  - ▶ PACTS data revealed participant housing stability and employment status significantly improved while participants were in the program.
  - ▶ Drug test data indicated participants on average completed 17 drug tests while in Support Court, with an average of 2.5 positive tests.
    - ▶ Low proportion of positive drug tests (14%) both during Support Court and after participating in Support Court (12%).

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

- ▶ Are anticipated outcomes being achieved?
  - ▶ Pre-trial Support Court participants received significantly shorter sentences of incarceration, as compared to post-conviction participants.
  - ▶ Pre-trial participants received significantly shorter terms of supervised release or probation supervision.
  - ▶ Pre-trial participants exhibited a significantly lower proportion of positive drug tests compared to post-conviction participants.

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

## ▶ Comparative Recidivism Analysis

- ▶ Based on 182 Support Court participants and 232 individuals in a comparison group. During post-conviction supervision, Support Court participants:
  - ▶ Were significantly less likely to be arrested (34% versus 45%;  $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Were significantly less likely to fail a drug test (41% versus 53%;  $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Were significantly more likely to be revoked (19% versus 12%;  $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Latter finding due to Support Court participants being significantly more likely to be revoked for technical violations (10% versus 3%;  $p < .05$ )

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

## ▶ Comparative Recidivism Analysis

- ▶ Initial results not take into account pre-existing differences between the groups, aside from Support Court participation. **Based on examination of demographic and legal variables, Support Court participants:**
  - ▶ Were significantly less likely to be male (80% versus 96%;  $p < .001$ )
  - ▶ Were significantly more likely to be Caucasian Non-Hispanic (30% versus 17%;  $p < .01$ )
  - ▶ Were significantly less likely to be single (60% versus 70%;  $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Were significantly more likely to have experienced prior hard drug use (i.e., something more than alcohol or marijuana use; 82% versus 68%;  $p < .001$ )
  - ▶ Had a significantly lower average number of prior arrests (5.42 versus 6.66;  $p < .01$ )
  - ▶ Had a significantly lower average minimum recommended prison sentence based on federal sentencing guidelines (75.75 versus 87.92;  $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Had a significantly lower average minimum recommended time on supervised release based on federal sentencing guidelines (35.22 versus 40.89;  $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Had a significantly lower average total offense level based on federal sentencing guidelines (20.69 versus 23.30;  $p < .001$ )
  - ▶ Had a significantly lower average composite score for prior criminal patterns and violence (1.29 versus 2.05;  $p < .001$ )

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

## ▶ Comparative Recidivism Analysis

- ▶ Using a propensity score matching process, 116 Support Court participants were closely matched with 116 comparison group members.
- ▶ Two groups statistically equivalent in their propensity scores (i.e., the probability of being in Support Court), along with the other demographic and legal variables used to predict Support Court group membership.

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

## ▶ Comparative Recidivism Analysis

- ▶ Based on the 116 Support Court participants and 116 comparison group members, during the post-conviction supervision period, **the Support Court participants:**
  - ▶ Were insignificantly more likely to be revoked (22% versus 13%;  $p = .082$ ), primarily due to being insignificantly more likely to be revoked on technical violations (13% versus 5%;  $p = .109$ ).
  - ▶ Were significantly less likely to fail a drug test (42% versus 56%;  $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Were significantly less likely to be arrested (33% versus 47%;  $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Further analyses of arrest data indicated Support Court participants experienced significantly longer times to arrest, as compared to non-participants ( $p < .01$ ).

# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

- ▶ **Comparative Recidivism Analysis**
- ▶ Based on the matched group of 232 individuals:
  - ▶ **Unsuccessful Support Court participants** were significantly more likely to be revoked compared to non-Support Court group members ( $p < .01$ )
  - ▶ **Successful Support Court participants** were significantly less likely to fail a drug test compared to non-Support Court group members ( $p < .01$ )
  - ▶ **Successful Support Court participants** were significantly less likely to be arrested compared to non-Support Court group members ( $p < .01$ )



# ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

## ▶ Comparative Recidivism Analysis

- ▶ Final set of analyses utilized original group of 414 individuals (182 Support Court participants and 232 comparison group members). **While statistically controlling for propensity scores, Support Court participants:**
  - ▶ Were significantly more likely to be revoked ( $p < .01$ )
  - ▶ Were significantly less likely to fail a drug test ( $p < .05$ )
  - ▶ Were insignificantly less likely to be arrested ( $p = .240$ )
  - ▶ Experienced longer times to arrest, as compared to non-participants. This finding approached statistical significance ( $p = .07$ ).

# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ **Available target population and program size**
- ▶ **Use of data and evidence-based programs and practices**
- ▶ **Participant perceptions of treatment versus perceptions of housing, education, and employment**
- ▶ **Frequency of drug testing and drug test results**
- ▶ **Data and findings on program completion and recidivism**