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RUTLAND COUNTY (VERMONT) ADULT DRUG COURT FACT SHEET

What are drug treatment courts?

The purpose of drug courts is to guide offenders identified as drug-addicted into treatment under intensive judicial supervision that will reduce drug dependence, improve the quality of life for them and their families and reduce recidivism.

In 2002, under Act 128 the Vermont legislature established a pilot project to create drug court initiatives and begin implementing drug courts in 3 Vermont counties: Rutland, Chittenden, and Bennington. By 2007, at the sunset of Act 128, drug courts in Vermont were up and running on their own. Currently, in Vermont, there are three operational Adult Drug Courts, one Family Treatment Court and one Mental Health Court.

The Rutland County Adult Drug Court (RCADC) began its operations in January 2004 with the support of a federal grant. In early 2008, NPC Research ("NPC"), under contract with the Supreme Court of Vermont, Office of the Court Administrator, began a process, outcome and cost study of the Rutland County Adult Drug Court program (RCADC). The goals of this project were to evaluate the effectiveness of the RCADC in reducing recidivism, to determine the cost-benefits of drug court participation and to evaluate the RCADC processes.

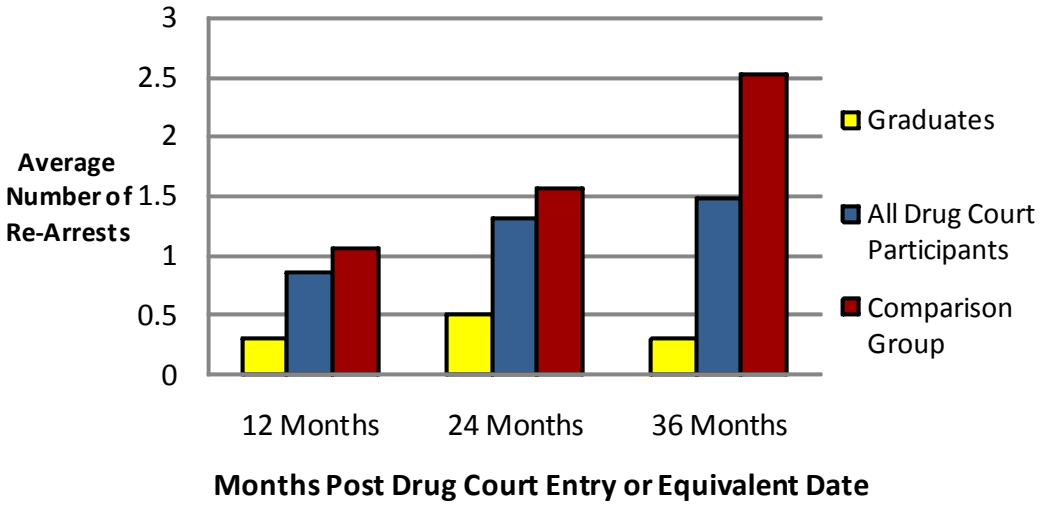
There are two key policy questions that are of interest to program practitioners, researchers and policymakers about drug treatment courts. A recent evaluation (completed in January 2009) of the Rutland County Adult Drug Court (RCADC) provided answers to the following two questions.

1. Do drug treatment courts reduce recidivism?

Yes. The RCADC program participants were significantly less likely to be re-arrested than offenders who were eligible for the program but did not participate.

Figure 1 shows that after 3 years, RCADC participants were re-arrested almost half as often as comparison group members who were eligible for drug court but did not attend. Graduates have the lowest number of re-arrests at every time point.

Figure 1. Average Number of Re-Arrests per Person Over 36 Months



In addition, compared to offenders who experienced traditional court processes, the RCADC participants (regardless of whether they graduated from the program):

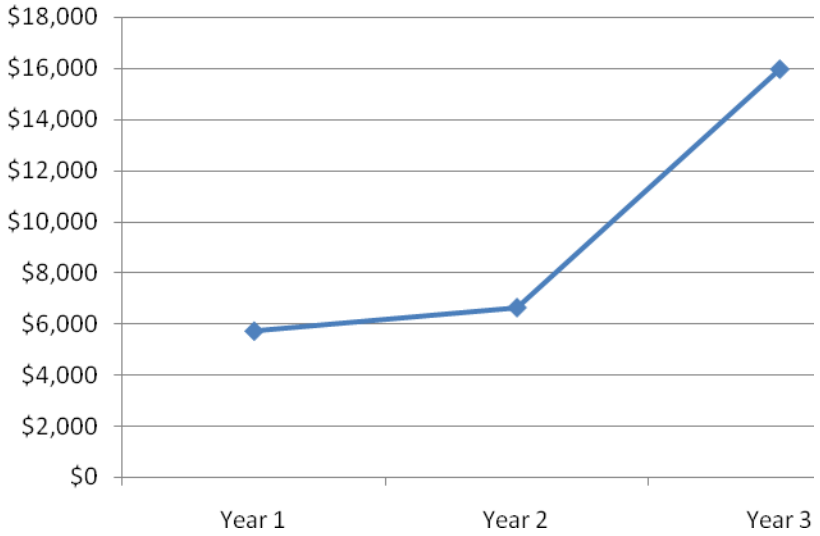
- Had three times fewer drug charges in the 3 years after drug court entry
- Had three-times fewer violent charges in the 3 years after drug court entry
- Had nearly half as many re-arrests 3 years from program entry

2. Do drug treatment courts result in cost savings to the taxpayer?

Yes. Due to positive outcomes for drug court participants (including fewer re-arrests, less probation time and fewer new court cases), there were substantial cost savings for to RCADC participants.

Figure 2 displays a graph of the cost savings (the difference between the drug court participants and the comparison group) over the 3 years post-drug court entry. While there is a savings of just under $6000 in the first year after entry, the savings grow substantially between Year 2 and Year 3 going from just under $7000 in Year 2 to nearly **$16,000** in savings per participant by Year 3.

Figure 2. Cost Savings per Drug Court Participant for 3 Years Post-Drug Court Entry



These cost savings are those that have accrued in just the three years since program entry. Many of these savings are due to positive outcomes while the participant is still in the program, so savings are already being generated from the time of entry into the program.

Overall, the RCADC program had:

- A 3 year criminal justice system cost savings of **$15,977 per participant** including victimization costs
- Criminal justice system costs that were 59% less during program participation compared to non-drug court participants during a similar time period
- A projected 150% return on its investment after 5 years (a 1:1.5 cost benefit ratio)
- A projected 300% return on its investment after 10 years (a 1:3 cost benefit ratio)

In sum, the Rutland County Adult Drug Court was successful in decreasing participant drug abuse, reducing participant recidivism and producing cost savings for the taxpayer.