The Role of the Evaluator in Drug Court

A drug court evaluator assists the drug court team in developing, capturing, and communicating useful and useable information for key stakeholders and other audiences

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Managing Information and Evaluation

- The key to maintaining a coalition of partners in the Drug Court team is the management of information between team members. The processes that guide the sharing of information require careful planning, attention to confidentiality issues, and diligent effort to keep information current and topical. Information collected may represent operational information, (maintaining current caseload information and case progress) operations management information, (for monitoring resource usage and budget management) and evaluation information, (for monitoring the effectiveness of program outcomes and processes).

- The National Drug Court Institute has developed five core competencies for the Drug Court evaluator.

Competency 1: Get involved in the program during the planning process enabling the effective development of a data collection and evaluation components that collect relevant information critical to the program's survival.

- Promptly recommends offenders to drug court where appropriate
- Assists in executing all participant waivers and contracts
- Advocates for prompt incentives and sanctions in response to client behavior
- Provides up to date information on drug court clients
- Attends and participates in client staffings by providing progress reports, making recommendations, and identifying supervision and ancillary services needed

Competency 2: Become an adjunct to the team, familiar with its policies and procedures, the program process and the inner workings of the program

- Attend court sessions to the extent possible to review program design implementation
- Hold focus groups with participants to the extent possible
- Interview key stakeholders to the extent possible

Competency 3: Utilizes the knowledge and resources of the team to develop a data collection/operating system

- Train team on data collection and operating system

- Maintain data collection and operating system

Competency 4: Ensures that the information system assists the team in monitoring the progress of the participant in the program and enhances the ability of the team to act immediately when there is noncompliance.

- Provide reports to the team based upon information gleaned from the management information system.

Competency 5: The data collection/operational system assist the team in monitoring program protocols and procedures to allow the team to react quickly to program deviations and the development of trends.

- Continuously provides feedback to team on progress toward goals and trends

Frequently Asked Questions

- Why do we maintain data collection?
- To what end (financially) are the statistics needed?
- How do the statistics related to the 10 key components and/or evidence based practices?
- Why is there no consistency among the districts or unification among the courts, similar or not?
- What kind of information do I need to routinely gather for my Drug Court?
- Is there a standard for the development of a Management Information System?
- What reports do I need to generate?
- What information is confidential?
- How do you secure the confidentiality of sensitive information?
- Who does the evaluation of your program? Is that evaluation done independently?
- How do you define success in your Drug Court?
- How long do you keep the information you collect?
- What happens to the information when the Drug Court participant completes or is terminated from the program?