

9.4: Drug Courts

Drug Courts were also developed in the mid-1980s in Dade County Florida. They are unique in the sense that – the courtroom works in a non-adversarial way for a more supportive program. Judges, prosecutors, caseworkers, and program coordinators all work together in a drug court. As with other intermediate sanctions, the use of drug courts flourished in the United States rapidly, to the point that they are now in every state. Currently, there are almost 3500 drug or treatment, or specialty courts operating in the United States. This includes Veterans Courts, Mental Health Courts, DUI Courts, Hybrid Courts, and Juvenile Drug Courts. For a detailed account of these, see the map at the National Drug Court Database: ndcrc.org/database/. For the purposes of assessing Drug Courts, only materials referencing Drug Courts only are addressed.

Drug Court Success

While the results on Drug Courts are mixed, as a whole, they are more favorable than boot camps. They are mixed, largely to how they are assessed. If only talking about the cost savings, versus jail or prison, they are seen as an effective community alternative. If looking at recidivism, it depends if the metric is looking solely at drug charges, any arrests, or persistence models (length of time before arrest). As a whole, the risk of being rearrested for a drug-crime for individuals from drug courts was lower than a comparison group. For a more detailed report, see Fluellen and Trone (2000). Other have demonstrated that graduates of drug court program were half as likely to recidivate (10% vs. 20%).^[1] While more research is still required, drug courts are not seen as ineffective control oriented ISPs or boot camps. For an in-depth review of the overall rating of Drug Courts, which includes over 30 studies of Drug Courts across the United States, see <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/topicdetails.aspx?id=238>.

1. Fluellen, R., & Trone, J. (2000). Do drug courts save jail and prison beds? The Vera Institute.
<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/vera/drugcourts.pdf>

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