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BEST PRACTICES

Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Lessons from Problem-Solving Courts



BJA

Bureau of
Justice Assistance

Written by

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2007

This publication was supported by Grant No. 2005-PP-CX-K0008 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view and opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent official positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following people, who provided support and advice during the writing of this report: Greg Berman, Carol Fisler, A. Elizabeth Griffith, Heather Jefferis, Julius Lang, Wendy Lindley, Preeti P. Menon, Kim Norris, Carolyn Turgeon, and Chris Watler.

Lessons from Problem-Solving Courts

Introduction

In the short history of problem-solving courts, practitioners' understanding of them has evolved. Initially, they were thought of as separate entities. Drug courts occupied one universe. Domestic violence courts another. Community courts a third, and so on.

Although the different kinds courts sometimes relied on overlapping resources, they more often than not had separate calendars, staffs, and service providers. Each type of court also developed its own tenets. Drug courts, for example, had *Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components* (U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance 2004). Community courts had *Community Court Principles: A Guide for Practitioners* (Feinblatt and Berman 2000). And the Council of State Government outlined the principles of mental health courts in *Essential Elements of a Mental Health Court* (2005). Some categories of problem-solving courts also developed their own networks of support, including, most notably, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, which has played a significant role in the development of drug courts.

But starting in the late 1990s, things began to change. Even as practitioners continued to open separate problem-solving courts, they also began to emphasize the courts' similarities. The emergence of the term "problem-solving courts" itself was a product of this trend. It was New York State Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye who gave national prominence to the term in a 1999 column in *Newsweek* when she explained that drug treatment courts, community courts, and domestic violence courts shared three important principles: a belief that courts can and should play a role in trying to solve the problems that are fueling caseloads; a belief that outcomes—not just process and precedent—matter; and a recognition that the coercive power of courts can change people's behavior.

In 2000, the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators gave a joint seal of approval to the term "problem-solving courts," and, even more significantly, they called for "the broad integration over the next decade of the principles and methods employed in the problem-solving courts into the administration of justice." The American Bar Association passed a similar resolution in 2002.

Since then, literature has begun to emerge focusing on the general value of "problem-solving principles" (see Figure 1) and ways these principles can be transferred to traditional courts. The general thrust of the literature is that the future of

Figure 1:

Problem-Solving Principles

Literature has begun to emerge focusing on the general value of “problem-solving principles” and ways these principles can be transferred to traditional courts. According to “Principles of Problem-Solving Justice” (Wolf 2007), the six principles of problem-solving justice are:

Enhanced Information

Better staff training (about complex issues like domestic violence and drug addiction) combined with better information (about litigants, victims, and the community context of crime) can help improve the decision making of judges, attorneys, and other justice officials. High-quality information—gathered with the assistance of technology and shared in accordance with confidentiality laws—can help practitioners make more nuanced decisions about both treatment needs and the risks individual defendants pose to public safety, ensuring that offenders receive an appropriate level of supervision and services.

Community Engagement

Citizens and neighborhood groups have an important role to play in helping the justice system identify, prioritize, and solve local problems. Actively engaging citizens helps improve public trust in justice. Greater trust, in turn, helps people feel safer, fosters law-abiding behavior, and makes members of the public more willing to cooperate in the pursuit of justice (as witnesses, jury members, etc.).

Collaboration

Justice system leaders are uniquely positioned to engage a diverse range of people, government agencies, and community organizations in collaborative efforts to improve public safety. By bringing together justice players (e.g., judges, prosecutors, attorneys, probation officers, court managers) and reaching out

to potential stakeholders beyond the courthouse (e.g., social service providers, victims groups, schools), justice agencies improve inter-agency communication, encourage greater trust between citizens and government, and foster new responses—including new diversion and sentencing options, when appropriate—to problems.

Individualized Justice

Using valid evidence-based risk and needs assessment instruments, the justice system can link offenders to individually tailored community-based services (e.g., job training, drug treatment, safety planning, mental health counseling) where appropriate. In doing so (and by treating defendants with dignity and respect), the justice system can help reduce recidivism, improve community safety, and enhance confidence in justice. Links to services can also aid victims, improving their safety and helping to restore their lives.

Accountability

The justice system can send the message that all criminal behavior—even low-level quality-of-life crime—has an impact on community safety and has consequences. By insisting on regular and rigorous compliance monitoring—and clear consequences for non-compliance—the justice system can improve the accountability of offenders. It can also improve the accountability of service providers by requiring regular reports on their work with participants.

Outcomes

The active and ongoing collection and analysis of data—measuring outcomes and process, costs and benefits—are crucial tools for evaluating the effectiveness of operations and encouraging continuous improvement. Public dissemination of this information can be a valuable symbol of public accountability.

problem solving may involve both specialized courts and the broad application of problem-solving principles in “regular” courts. (For a discussion of integrating problem-solving principles into traditional courtrooms, see Farole et al 2007.) David B. Wexler and Bruce J. Winick have gone so far as to speculate that problem-solving courts may actually be “a transitional stage” in the development of “an overall judicial system attuned to problem solving” (2003).

This is not to say there isn't value in continuing to have problem-solving courts that specialize in certain areas. The point is only that many practitioners have begun to recognize that there are also advantages to breaking down the conceptual and in some cases practical barriers that separate specialized courts from each other and that separate the world of problem-solving from traditional courts.

At a minimum, these practitioners argue, problem-solving courts of one type can learn from the experience of problem-solving courts of another type. And traditional courts, they maintain, can also benefit from this kind of cross-court sharing. For example, in many cases, a reentry court doesn't have to create an intake or assessment form from scratch but can adapt a version used by drug courts. In doing so, the reentry court conserves resources while benefiting from the experience of drug courts, which have had years to hone their tools. Similarly, a traditional court interested in implementing a community service component as a sanction might use procedures successfully implemented by a community court as a guide.

The breaking down of barriers, of course, can extend further. Rather than simply sharing ideas, courts (both problem-solving and traditional) can also share resources. An example of this is being developed in Orange County, California, where many of the county's problem-solving courts are being consolidated in a single building. The consolidated location will allow them to share an on-site clinic, which is slated to contain intake and assessment staff, case managers, health and psychological services, job training, benefits assistance, and other services as needed.

These ideas—of breaking down barriers among the various problem-solving courts as well as between problem-solving and traditional courts—are beginning to look attractive to large jurisdictions that already have a host of problem-solving courts as well as to smaller jurisdictions that might find it hard to sustain individual problem-solving courts but nonetheless want to reap the benefits of problem solving.

Nine Strategies

This report offers nine practical strategies to encourage the sharing of information and resources among courts. These strategies are designed for those interested in starting a single-subject court (e.g., drug court, mental health court, etc.), those interested in merging problem-solving functions (e.g., combining the assessment functions of a drug court and a mental health court), and those hoping to incorporate problem-solving principles into traditional courtrooms.

1. See What's Out There

Before practitioners can begin to eliminate barriers, improve communication, or share resources, they need to educate themselves about the courts already in existence in their communities.

And it's not enough simply to know that specialized problem-solving courts are there. Practitioners need to learn how the courts work, including their admission criteria, protocols, and resources. Only with this information can staff decide where and how to build bridges.

Staff in a traditional court, for example, might be able to build a relationship with staff in a drug court and thereby gain knowledge and tools about how to handle drug-addicted clients. A judge in a traditional courtroom might also be able to transfer cases directly to a drug court—or other problem-solving court—once he or she is certain about admission criteria.

2. Think “Problem” not “Court”

One thing that drug courts, community courts, mental health courts, and other problem-solving courts have in common is a focus on a problem—the types of problems that bring offenders into court. These problems include drug abuse, mental illness, and homelessness.

And yet while planners of problem-solving courts have created calendars that fall under clear categories like “drugs” or “domestic violence,” the reality is that the litigants themselves can rarely be categorized so neatly. For instance, while mental health courts focus primarily on mental illness, many of their participants are also addicted to drugs. This means that to effectively address the problem of mental illness, these courts also need to address substance abuse issues. The same is true of drug courts: often their participants are coping with mental health issues separate from their addiction.

A way to approach this reality is to think in terms of the problems confronting each litigant and learn from the experts. Thus, instead of practitioners in mental health courts focusing exclusively on the experience of other mental health courts to establish best practices for those with co-occurring disorders (participants who have both mental illness and substance abuse issues), they should also turn to their peers in the substance abuse field.

The purposes of “cross-pollinating” in this way are multiple: to share information and strategies, to share resources, and to collaborate in creating (or advocating for the creation of) new resources. Since, for example, programs for dually diagnosed offenders are often scarce, a team consisting of representatives from both a drug court and a mental health court might be in the best situation to encourage and help shape the creation of services for this difficult population.

Practitioners in Clackamas County, Oregon, have been able to create just such a synergy. With permanent housing for drug treatment court graduates in short supply, a collaboration of the county's seven different treatment courts worked with the local housing committee of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development

and two local non-profit agencies to create a staffed, permanent six-unit housing facility for female participants with children.

3. Place Principles over Particulars

The specific issues addressed by problem-solving courts vary widely. A community court, for example, focuses on low-level quality-of-life crimes while a sex offender management court focuses on serious felonies. But if one looks at these very different courts' guiding principles, common themes emerge. Both courts apply a collaborative, team approach. Both seek to provide justice players with more thorough and up-to-date information. Both seek to monitor offenders rigorously and respond quickly to violations.

Despite their surface differences, there is the potential for learning and collaboration across problem-solving courts. Planners of sex offender management courts could, for example, develop an information technology system based on a model successfully deployed by a community court or structure their team meetings based on a re-entry court. Mental health courts can borrow case management techniques from drug courts. A traditional court that links offenders with treatment or requires community service can learn strategies for compliance monitoring from domestic violence courts. The examples of possible learning and potential "cross-pollination" opportunities go on and on.

4. Consider Sharing Resources

It has always been a truism of problem-solving justice that collaboration lets practitioners do more with less. Many problem-solving courts have collaborated with community-based partners to create on-site services. In many scenarios, independent agencies provide staff for intake, case management, counseling, medical check-ups, or benefits assistance.

Problem-solving courts can take this concept further by collaborating with each other. While drug courts and domestic violence courts deal with distinctly different issues, they nonetheless have overlapping needs, including intake, case management, and benefits assistance. Of course, a drug court directs its services to the offender while domestic violence courts focus a significant portion of their energy on providing assistance to victims. Still, the types of assistance—related to housing, government benefits, or job training—might be identical. So, too, is the need for service coordination, even if the types of services being coordinated vary greatly among clients. Therefore, using the same staff to work with multiple populations often makes sense.

The judiciary in Orange County, California, is seeking to do this on a large scale by placing many of their problem-solving courts and various ancillary agencies and services in a single building. Drug court, mental health court, and homeless court will share staff for intake, assessment, case management, probation, and health-related services. A psychiatrist, a social worker, an employment specialist, and a representative from the Veterans Administration will all be part of the team, as will legal rep-

resentation for the indigent who can assist clients with non-criminal legal issues relating to things like housing and child support.

The facility, which planners are calling a “community court,” will also handle two other populations: what planners call high utilizers (people who are at risk of arrest, such as panhandlers, and can benefit from the multitude of services offered) and those who are already in the criminal justice system, such as probation violators.

One purpose of consolidating several of the county’s problem-solving courts—or “collaborative justice courts,” as they’re called in California—in a single location is “to improve the communication between all the agencies that sometimes tend to work a little bit at cross purposes,” explained Judge Wendy Lindley, who presides over all the collaborative justice courts in Orange County.

“Sometimes a number of agencies are trying to do the same thing with a client but have different referral sources that they’re sending them to and it doesn’t seem to be very effective,” according to Lindley. It has been easy to attract partners because everyone feels that by combining clients of the multiple specialized courts in a single location, everyone will get “more bang for their buck,” Lindley said. “People want to be a part of this. They used to say we don’t have money to staff your drug court, but this they want to staff. It’s been as easy a sell as I’ve encountered in 12 years of collaborative court business. People are seeing that they’ll do a more efficient job with more clients.”

Short of combining all problem-solving courts in a single location, jurisdictions might consider establishing a joint clinic in a convenient location. Or they might consider following the model of Bronx Community Solutions, a project based in the centralized criminal courthouse in New York City that offers services—including monitored social services and community restitution options—to all 40-plus criminal courtrooms in the Bronx. In this way, judges who preside over traditional courtrooms have access to the same sanctions, links to social services, and rigorous monitoring that are offered in a drug, mental health, or community court. Essentially, Bronx Community Solutions, rather than being a specialized problem-solving court, is an example of the New York State Court system’s attempt to integrate problem-solving principles into the fabric of a traditional courthouse.

If an entire justice center (along the lines of Orange County’s effort) is too ambitious or a clearinghouse of problem-solving resources (similar to Bronx Community Solutions) is impractical, courts might consider a simpler option: co-authoring a comprehensive guide to local resources. Such a guide could be printed and distributed to both problem-solving and traditional courts or made available online. An on-line directory has the added advantage that it can be updated easily.

5. Share Strategies Among Peers

Much of the literature about problem-solving courts focuses on the role of the judge. This is because judges play a pivotal role in problem-solving courts. Key Component Number 7 of drug courts, for example, states: “Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant is essential.” Similarly, the key principles of domestic violence

courts emphasize that judicial monitoring is a basic ingredient of the model, explaining that “domestic violence courts seek to take advantage of the coercive and symbolic authority of judges” (Aldrich and Mazur 2003).

The point is that across the spectrum of problem-solving courts, judges play similar roles by using the stature of their position to encourage offender compliance, support collaboration among stakeholders, and move the focus of the court beyond “process” to include “outcome” as well. To achieve these goals, judges in the various problem-solving courts use similar strategies (such as holding frequent status hearings and speaking directly to defendants).

Judges—whether they preside over a specialized problem-solving court or want to apply some of the principles of problem solving in a traditional setting—can therefore learn from each other. Judges in mental health courts, for example, can learn from the research into the role of judges in drug courts, which has found that judicial status hearings can be effective in improving outcomes, that supportive statements by judges to offenders result in fewer subsequent positive drug tests, and that changing the presiding judge mid-treatment can adversely affect compliance (Cissner and Rempel 2007).

And it's not just judges who share a common role across the spectrum of problem-solving courts. Clerks, project directors, case managers, victim advocates, attorneys, and service providers can all learn from their counterparts in problem-solving settings.

6. Nurture Support at the Top

System-wide policies can encourage collaboration across models of problem-solving courts. For instance, rather than merely issue guidelines or statements of support for drug courts or domestic violence courts, jurisdictions (at local, county, and state levels) can address issues that cut across the models. Casey and Hewitt call upon court systems to “consider an explicit policy framework for the court as a whole to clarify the appropriateness of judges and court staff engaging proactively with service issues, while establishing guidelines and limits on those interactions” (2001).

In New York State, the support of the state's two top judges—Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye and Chief Administrative Judge Jonathan Lippman—has been crucial to the development of problem-solving courts. After Kaye called for the establishment of drug courts and domestic violence courts across the state, she appointed Judge Judy Harris Kluger to oversee the development of over 200 problem-solving courts. In addition to drug courts and criminal domestic violence courts, Kluger's office has fostered the creation of integrated domestic violence, community, mental health, and sex offender management courts. The office provides a nexus where knowledge among problem-solving courts is shared not only among the specialized courts themselves but with more traditional areas of the judiciary. In fact, Kluger's office has sponsored workshops to educate judges in traditional courtrooms about the principles of problem-solving justice.

7. Identify “Boundary Spanners”

A key tool for nurturing communication among different types of problem-solving courts is a “boundary spanner.” This is a person who is conversant in the language of two worlds.

A typical boundary spanner is Heather Jefferis, a drug court coordinator in Clackamas County, Oregon. While Jefferis’ main responsibility is to serve as the coordinator of the county’s adult drug court, she also works with the part-time coordinators of the county’s six other problem-solving courts, including a family treatment court, juvenile treatment court, mental health court, drunken driving court, and domestic violence diversion program. This places her in a unique position to know how all the courts operate and to coordinate resources among them. For example, women in adult drug court sometimes need gender-specific therapy groups. Because the county’s family drug treatment court clientele is 80 percent women, Jefferis worked with the provider to gain access to that court’s programming, allowing female clients in adult drug court to participate in the family treatment court’s therapy groups.

In addition, as needs emerge, the participants are often transferred from one court to another or enrolled in two courts at once. To facilitate this kind of coordinated case management, and also to share strategies and best practices, Jefferis convenes regular meetings of all the courts’ coordinators.

It is worth noting that many jurisdictions—and even entire states—have created positions like Jefferis’ that combine oversight of multiple varieties of problem-solving courts. In Idaho, for example, the title of statewide “drug court coordinator” was changed in 2006 to “drug court and mental health court coordinator.” The same year, Indiana’s statewide drug court coordinator became the statewide “problem-solving court administrator.” In Connecticut, the statewide drug court coordinator is also responsible for the implementation and maintenance of eight domestic violence dockets and two community courts.

8. Create a Committee Reflecting Multiple Problem-Solving Disciplines

Some jurisdictions—both local and statewide—have established committees that bring together representatives from various types of problem-solving courts. On a local level, such a committee can share strategies and resources as well as information about potential partners and specific providers. For instance, if a drug court has had a negative experience with a local provider, other problem-solving courts that use the same provider can benefit from the knowledge.

On a statewide level, a multidisciplinary committee can exchange information, advocate for problem solving, lobby for resources, support research, promote best practices, and establish standards. In Indiana, the Problem-Solving Courts Committee supports the activities of drug courts, reentry courts, and the state’s other problem-solving initiatives.

9. Foster Joint Training Opportunities

Training is crucial for the successful implementation of problem-solving strategies. Court and criminal justice staff need to learn best practices—including the latest research into problem-solving justice and the latest science about the problems (i.e., drug addiction, mental illness, etc.) that their courts confront. The same is true of social service providers: they need to review the latest research as well as learn about court operations and expectations.

Since there are many areas of overlap among problem-solving courts, it makes sense for practitioners from different fields to consider co-sponsoring trainings. Issues like judicial monitoring, case management, coordinating relationships with community-based programs, and evaluating program performance are relevant across the board.

If co-sponsorship is impractical, event organizers can at least invite practitioners from other problem-solving courts to their trainings.

Obstacles

The point of building bridges among the various types of specialized problem-solving courts is not to eliminate distinctions among them. Each population served by a problem-solving court—from drug addict to domestic abuser—presents unique challenges and requires unique approaches. To disregard this important fact would be to ignore a key principle of problem solving: that justice needs to be individualized according to the specific needs of offenders, victims, and communities.

The simple truth is that strategies that work in one setting are sometimes inappropriate in another. Sanctions common in a drug court, for example, are often poorly suited to a mental health court. And domestic violence courts stand apart from many problem-solving courts because of their emphasis on enhancing victim safety by monitoring and appropriately punishing offenders rather than trying to rehabilitate them. Domestic violence dockets may also be shaped by different legislative mandates and law enforcement practices.

In many situations, however, sharing strategies or resources is desirable. As a coordinator of problem-solving courts in Fulton County, Georgia, put it, the various types of problem-solving courts can “either cooperate and support each other or ... be in direct competition for scarce resources” (Drug Court Clearinghouse 2007).

Still, this doesn't mean that building bridges is easy. The potential obstacles are many. Grants or government contracts might not allow programs to share staff. Limitations of infrastructure, confidentiality rules, and politics can also pose obstacles. Even in a jurisdiction seeking to integrate problem-solving principles throughout its system, it would be unrealistic to expect that every courtroom can or should participate, or that there will be enough resources to address the problems of every potential participant.

In deference to this reality, it's best to think of sharing knowledge and resources as a goal to consider and, in appropriate situations, strive for, rather than a concrete end that always can or needs to be realized.

Conclusion

While the various types of problem-solving courts emerged separately, practitioners today recognize that most are bound by a set of shared principles. Those principles include reliance on more accurate and up-to-date information, community engagement, collaboration, individualized responses to offending, and increased accountability through the use of rigorous compliance monitoring.

It remains to be seen whether the future of problem solving lies in integrating problem-solving principles into traditional judicial settings or with cultivating a growing menu of specialized courts. In the Bronx, the criminal courthouse is experimenting with integrating problem-solving principles in its more than 40 courtrooms. In contrast, Clackamas County encourages collaboration among its seven problem-solving courts while maintaining the various courts' separate identities. Adult Drug Court Coordinator Heather Jefferis says the county's problem-solving courts seem to function best as separate—but cooperative—entities. Most of the county's programs serve 50 or less participants at a time. "It keeps the size manageable so judges can have individual relationships with the clients, and it also matches the capacity of our providers. Besides, each population is clinically different and has different needs," Jefferis said.

The bottom line is that whether or not problem-solving courts in a specific jurisdiction retain distinct identities, merge with each other, or are eventually absorbed into mainstream operations, practitioners who work in or outside problem-solving courts can support each other by sharing knowledge and resources.

The strategies proposed in this report are intended to help them do just that. By opening the lines of communication and breaking down barriers, these practical steps will hopefully help practitioners deepen their understanding of problem solving, expand their resources, and further the goals that lie at the heart of the problem-solving movement: better outcomes for victims, offenders, the criminal justice system, and the communities the justice system serves.

**Appendix:
Expert Advice**

There are numerous places practitioners can turn to for information about problem solving. Here are a few of the more well known sources.

American Probation and Parole Association

<http://www.appa-net.org/>

The Association focuses on “issues relevant to the field of community-based corrections.” Its site details its mission, organization, technical assistance, and research projects, and also offers a list of publications and other resources.

American Prosecutors Research Institute – National Center for Community Prosecution

http://www.ndaa-apri.org/apri/programs/community_pros/cp_home.html

The National District Attorneys Association founded the American Prosecutors Research Institute in 1984 as a non-profit research and program development resource for prosecutors at all levels of government. Since then, APRI has become a vital resource and national clearinghouse for information on the prosecutorial function. Its National Center for Community Prosecution hosts conferences, provides technical assistance, conducts research, and offers extensive resources to prosecutors in the form of publications, newsletters, videos, and hands-on support. Its web site offers an Ask the Experts section that allows readers to pose questions to a panel of community prosecution experts.

American University Drug Court Clearinghouse

<http://spa.american.edu/justice/drugcourts.php>

The Drug Court Clearinghouse Project serves as a national clearinghouse for drug court information and activity, disseminating sample operational materials developed by drug courts. The project also compiles and continually updates information on national drug court activity and emerging issues, and maintains an extensive reference collection of drug court materials.

Bureau of Justice Assistance

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/>

The Bureau of Justice Assistance, a component of the Office of Justice Programs, provides leadership and assistance in support of local criminal justice strategies to achieve safe communities. The Bureau of Justice Assistance’s drug court program provides financial and technical assistance, training, and programmatic guidance and leadership.

Center for Court Innovation

<http://www.courtinnovation.org>

Founded as a public/private partnership between the New York State Unified Court System and the Fund for the City of New York, the Center for Court Innovation is a non-profit think tank that helps courts and criminal justice agencies aid victims,

reduce crime, and improve public trust in justice. The Center combines action and reflection to spark problem-solving innovation both locally and nationally. The Center offers technical assistance to jurisdictions seeking to expand the use of problem-solving techniques—visit our website for more details.

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment

<http://csat.samhsa.gov/>

The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was created in October 1992 with a congressional mandate to expand the availability of effective treatment and recovery services for alcohol and drug problems. Its site includes a quick FAQ on finding effective alcohol and drug addiction treatment; a list of its programs, guides, and publications; and information on funding opportunities offered through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Drug Court Technology Resource Center

<http://www.drugcourtech.org/>

The Drug Court Technology Resource Center is an online forum offering tools and information for drug court practitioners who are creating computer applications for their courts. The Resource Center sponsors two related web sites: Drug Court Technology, which provides technical staff and planners with an overview of how technology can improve drug courts, and Drug Court MIS, which provides technical staff with detailed project planning tools and sample documents. Both sites are accessible from the Center home page.

Mental Health Courts Program, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Council of State Governments

<http://consensusproject.org/mhcourts/>

The Bureau of Justice Assistance administers this program in coordination with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, funding projects that mobilize communities to improve the way that adult and juvenile offenders with mental illnesses are treated. The program's goal is to improve clients' social functioning through stable employment, housing, treatment, and support services—thereby decreasing client contact with the criminal justice system. The site offers grant information and additional mental health court resources.

National Association of Drug Court Professionals

<http://www.nadcp.org/>

Founded in 1994, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals is the principle organization of professionals involved in the development and implementation of treatment-oriented drug courts. Among other things, its site details its technical assistance activities, hosts a job bank, and offers general information on drug courts and drug court research.

National Center for State Courts

<http://www.ncsconline.org>

The National Center for State Courts conducts research on court operations and best practices, as well as providing consulting and education services to courts nationwide. Its website includes a Problem-Solving Courts Resource Center (under Research) that features a research library and a directory of U.S. problem-solving courts.

National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse

<http://www.casacolumbia.org>

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse includes a policy research and analysis division with research publications on new trends and interventions concerning substance abuse and treatment.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

<http://www.ncjfcj.org>

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges provides technical assistance and research to help courts, judges, and staff address juvenile and family-related issues. The Council's research arm, the National Center for Juvenile Justice (<http://www.ncjj.org>), is the country's only non-profit research organization concentrating solely on the juvenile justice system and the prevention of juvenile delinquency and child abuse and neglect.

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

<http://www.ncjrs.gov>

The National Criminal Justice Reference Service is a federally funded resource that offers justice and substance abuse information to support research, policy, and program development models. The website houses final reports and documents from most research projects funded by the U.S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/>

The National Institute of Justice is the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

The National Institute of Mental Health is the lead U.S. federal agency for research on mental and behavioral disorders. Its site has information on mental illnesses, grants, and funding sources for researchers, clinical trials, its outreach program, and an extensive library of publications and other educational resources to help people with mental disorders, the general public, health care practitioners, and researchers gain a better understanding of mental illnesses.

National Legal Aid & Defender Association – Ten Tenets of Fair and Effective Problem-Solving Courts

http://www.nlada.org/DMS/Documents/1019501190.93/document_info

This National Legal Aid & Defender Association page contains the guidelines developed by the American Council of Chief Defenders to increase both the fairness and the effectiveness of problem-solving courts while addressing concerns regarding the defense role within them.

Office of Justice Programs – Reentry

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/>

This comprehensive government site includes numerous resources, FAQs, links, and publications, as well as information about the Office of Justice Programs' Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, which provides funding to communities for developing, implementing, enhancing, and evaluating reentry strategies.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has been charged by Congress to tackle the challenges that juveniles in crisis pose to the nation. On its site, a long list of topics and subtopics cover areas like child protection, corrections/detention, courts, delinquency prevention, gender/race/ethnicity, and more.

Office on Violence Against Women

<http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw>

The Office on Violence Against Women manages the U.S. Department of Justice's legal and policy responses to violence against women, and funds a wide range of criminal justice initiatives and research.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<http://www.samhsa.gov/>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was established by an act of Congress in 1992 to focus attention, programs, and funding on improving the lives of people with or at risk for mental and substance abuse disorders. In addition to information about mental illnesses and drug abuse—including research reports, surveys, and statistics listings—this government site contains funding information and program descriptions.

Urban Institute

<http://www.urban.org>

The Urban Institute is a non-profit nonpartisan policy research and educational organization established to examine the social, economic, and governance problems

facing the U.S. Its site provides facts and findings on a sampling of programs and topics of particular relevance to policymakers and researchers, and contains numerous publications. A section on crime and justice includes research on crime and prisoners, courts and policing, juvenile justice, and other related topics.

Vera Institute of Justice

<http://www.vera.org>

The Vera Institute of Justice, located in New York City, develops and implements demonstration projects designed to improve the quality of the justice in the United States and elsewhere. In addition, Vera's research department conducts research and evaluation projects on a wide range of justice system innovations.

Violence Against Women Online Resources

<http://www.vaw.umn.edu/>

This site—a cooperative project of the Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, and Minnesota Center Against Violence & Abuse within the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota—provides up-to-date information on interventions to stop violence against women. Users can browse documents regarding domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, child custody and protection, and batterers intervention programs.

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Center for Court Innovation

The winner of an Innovations in American Government Award from the Ford Foundation and Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, the Center for Court Innovation is a unique public-private partnership that promotes new thinking about how courts and criminal justice agencies can aid victims, change the behavior of offenders, and strengthen communities.

In New York, the Center functions as the state court system's independent research and development arm, creating demonstration projects that test new approaches to problems that have resisted conventional solutions. The Center's problem-solving courts include the nation's first community court (Midtown Community Court), as well as drug courts, domestic violence courts, youth courts, mental health courts, and others.

Beyond New York, the Center disseminates the lessons learned from its experiments, helping courts across the country and the world launch their own problem-solving innovations. The Center contributes to the international conversation about justice through a variety of written products, including books, journal articles and white papers like this one. The Center also provides hands-on technical assistance, advising court and criminal justice planners across the globe. Current areas of interest include problem-solving justice, community prosecution, court technology, drug treatment courts, domestic violence courts, mental health courts, and research/evaluation.

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