

The TASC Connection



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Letter from TASC President	2
Resources	3
Travis County COVID19	4

TASC 2021 Conference – Updates & Deadlines

Mark your calendars for the 2021 conference, April 12-14 hosted by the Omni Hotel in Corpus Christi. Please keep reviewing the monthly newsletter for updates!

Important Dates:

- Stipend applications open September 11th
- Declaration for Candidacy for executive committee positions and other open positions open October 1st



Check the TASC website conference page for additional information!

<http://www.tasctx.org/conference.html>

Specialty Court Legislative Update

During the 2019 legislative session, TASC vigorously advocated for increased, sustainable funding for specialty courts in view of the decline in state funding to 2013 levels. TASC membership successfully rallied support for House Bill 1243, a landmark “charge-for-harm” statute that allocated 1% of Mixed Beverage Tax collections for deposit into a “County Specialty Court Account”, and although HB 1243 overwhelming passed in the House, it regrettably failed to reach a Senate vote on the final day of the 86th Legislature due to political circumstances unrelated to the merits of the bill or specialty courts. Instead, the passage of Senate Bill 346 became the only legislation impacting our courts’ funding. SB 346 rescinded the \$60 drug court fee imposed in certain alcohol and drug convictions and instead, mandated that 16.2602% of misdemeanor and 23.8095% of felony court cost collections by local governments be retained in a “County Specialty Court Account”. While SB 346 is a step in the right direction, court cost collections are always an underperforming revenue source and the net impact of SB 346 will obviously be dependent on a jurisdiction’s case load, collection rates and number of courts sharing in the collection.

In preparation for the 87th Legislature, please help your TASC Board finalize a 2021 Legislative Agenda by taking the following action:

1. Inform your TASC Director of the impact of SB 346 funding legislation by reporting Drug Court fee collections in 2019 from Jan 1st to August 31st, 2019, pursuant to the old law and “County Specialty Court Account” deposits in 2020 from Jan 1st to August 31st, 2020, pursuant to SB 346.
2. Insist that your Team invite Legislators to observe specialty court sessions and/or a graduation ceremony in 2020 and begin the conversation about the decline in state funding and the need for alternatives to the current mechanism of underperforming court cost collections.
3. Inform your TASC Director of your “conversation” with Legislators and specifically, identify any Senator or Representative receptive to author or co-sponsor legislation supportive of sustainable funding for specialty courts.
4. Inform your TASC Director of any other policy position pertaining to specialty courts that you would like voiced by TASC such as drug legislation, mandatory educational certification, and equalization of grant funding.

Please let us hear from you as soon and as often as possible!

A Word from our TASC President Hank Judin

Hello my friends,



As we trudge the happy road to destiny in this time of pandemic crisis and diversity self- reflection, I have thought several times about writing to my friends, colleagues, and troopers in the specialty courts of Texas to comfort and enlighten. We all need help to get through this crazy time in one piece. Many life changing theories and thoughts flowed from my soul. Then, I would stop my C. S. Lewis moment and slowly float back to reality and promise to reach out to you guys tomorrow with something very profound.

Today the epiphany occurred. As I often do, I attended the noon meeting of Preston Group AA in Dallas. Twenty or thirty recovering alcoholics in masks gathered for the Thursday Step Study meeting. A curve ball was thrown. Today, the chair of the meeting decided to have a veteran member discuss the First Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous. One reads "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on AA unity"

Several times I have thought the public and private schools of the world should make the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous mandatory reading. As someone mentioned today in the meeting, "no one is fighting anyone in this organization."

What really hit me today is the personal recovery of all our participants depends upon the common welfare of each and every specialty court individually and collectively as an organization. If we do not unite during this difficult time, we risk the collapse of many life-saving courts.

As we approach the beginning of the next state legislative session, I can assure you that it will be a rock fight to fund each and everyone's special interest. This organization needs your help to insure our participants' recovery is not thrown under the bus. We must unite in the common welfare of specialty courts and the Texas Association of Specialty Courts.

How us ask? A simple start is all we ask today. Contact the TASC director of the region in which your court operates and assist them in collecting the financial and operative data of your court. We can then properly present to the legislators the critical need for continued funding of specialty courts.

Let's put our hearts into the common welfare of specialty courts, knowing that personal recovery of all our participants depend upon it.

Thanks my friends,

Hank

Mission:
The Texas Association of Specialty Court Courts (TASC) builds and strengthens Texas specialty courts through collaboration, advocacy and education.

Bi-Monthly Newsletters!!

Although we have moved to Bi-Monthly Newsletters, we still want to hear from you! Send us what your court programs are doing in this time of pandemic and decreased resources. Please send your submissions to Kimberly Duran at Kimberly.Duran@dallascounty.org





The Collin County jail has a jail program that is specific for veterans. This program acts as an Intermediate Sanction Facility (ISF) for people on probation. The program has been very successful for those who attend, although (of course) has had to reinvent itself during the times of COVID.

The VALOR program is now accepting veterans from across the state, they do not have to be in a veterans court to go to the program. For any questions contact Erin McGann

Justice Involved Veterans Coordinator
Texas Veterans Commission
512-815-7906- cell
512-463-0770- fax

Be sure to download the links below for slides to SAMHSA's Leveraging Teleservices in Drug Courts to Improve Treatment Access Parts I & II

<https://emma-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/w2ccb/b2261098f2982012e8f837787248ff72/Teleservices1-508.pdf>

<https://emma-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/w2ccb/24b9c8032528140143dfdc06afedf4d1/Teleservices2-508.pdf>

GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation The GAINS Center focuses on expanding access to services for people with mental and/or substance use disorders who come into contact with the adult criminal justice system.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/gains-center>

Join the private Facebook group for treatment courts as a forum for specialty court professionals to "celebrate each other's successes; discuss relevant issues; tap into the wisdom of the group; share and troubleshoot; and most importantly, improve ways to motivate our clients to engage in recovery."

You can join this Facebook group by following this link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TreatmentCourt/>

Check out the National Drug Court Resource Center's Newly Designed Website, including COVID19 Resources

<https://ndcrc.org/>

OCA is sharing a guide for families dealing with a family member in treatment for drug addiction.

Addiction Policy Forum launched a national initiative to help families navigate the complexities of addiction and find treatment for a loved one. The project includes a free 100-page resource workbook, "[Navigating Addiction and Treatment: A Guide for Families](#)," a national awareness campaign; and [online resources](#) to help families.

Texas Association of Specialty Courts
 Attention: Amber Gregory
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 Sam Houston State University
 Huntsville, Texas 77341-2296

Email: agregory@shsu.edu
 Phone: (936)294-3916



We're on the Web!
<http://www.tasctx.org>
Check us out on Facebook!

Travis County Family Drug Treatment Court’s Response to COVID19

In Travis County, remote hearings began as early as Friday, March 13, 2020. We had no idea the extent of the changes we were about to embark upon and we wanted to assure we found a way to continue working with the parents and children involved with our Travis County Family Drug Treatment Court—Parenting In Recovery program. This Court is presided over by Judge Aurora Martinez Jones and has been growing consistently over the last few years. The administrative team, including the Drug Court Coordinator, Amber Middleton, the Drug Court Services Manager, Michelle Kimbrough, and the Prevention and Intervention Manager, Brook Son, met with the Judge to come up with a plan on transitioning this specialty court into a remote setting.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Travis County Parenting In Recovery program committed to continue serving parents with programming, court hearings, and support services as similarly as possible to how the program functioned prior to the pandemic. One of the first approaches was to immediately communicate with the parents in the program to give guidance on how to maintain contact with the Drug Court Team, which services they should continue to attend, and how transitions in drug testing would occur. Ultimately, the immediate communication from the program provided reassurance that the program would continue and the parents would still receive support. This has been a key factor in some of the success experienced during the transition to Remote Drug Court.

As the Parenting In Recovery program completes the first week in September we have the following outcomes to report since April 2, 2020 (when the program officially began occurring remotely):

Travis County Family Drug Treatment Court—Parenting In Recovery (Outcomes During Remote Program, since 4/2/20)

# of Participant Hearings	814
# of Phase Advancements	43
# of Graduations from the Program	8
# of Relapses	7
# of Unsuccessful Discharges from the Program	4
# of New Admissions to the Program	25

The Travis County Family Drug Treatment Court—Parenting In Recovery program currently has 44 parents in the program and has experienced a height of participation during the pandemic at 48 parents in the program. There have been various challenges from little to no access to drug testing labs to concerns our partner treatment facility may close its doors. Through all of these challenges we have worked harder and more closely together with our community to continue doing our best to support the children and parents in our program. We are grateful for our entire team’s dedication to the program and to the parents and alumni in the program who also support and encourage each other through these difficult times. We know isolation is a common trigger for individuals with a Substance Use Disorder and messaging and practices that support the notion we are still together though we are physically apart has been the crux of sustaining active recovery for the parents in our program.