



# Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Best Practices

## A Pathway to Better Outcomes

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About  
Us

A large, dark blue graphic of an upward-pointing arrow, composed of several thick, parallel lines that create a sense of depth and movement.

# Learning Objectives



- Learn the prevalence of substance use disorders within the juvenile justice population
- Identify the seven objectives of the *Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Best Practices* and practice implications
- Learn the importance of following the *JDTC Best Practices*

# Prevalence of Substance Use Disorders



# Adolescent Substance Use General Population



**26.5%** of 12th graders used illicit drugs within the past year. (Monitoring the Future, 2024)

**16.6%** adolescents aged 12 to 17 with a substance use disorder in the past year. (approx. 2 million) (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2023)

**0.5%** adolescents with a substance use disorder that sought treatment. (approx. 9,000) (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2023)

# ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE

**Risk-taking and experimentation may be a part of normal adolescent development**

**Substance use and SUDs can have particularly damaging consequences for the developing adolescent brain**

**Substance use disorder is also a risk factor that increases the likelihood of reoffence if not addressed appropriately**



# Adolescent Substance Use Traditional Juvenile Justice System



**33%**

**of justice-involved youth have a substance use disorder**

*(Journal of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, 2022)*

**60%**

**of youth in juvenile facilities met the DSM-V criteria for a substance use disorder**

*(Drug and Alcohol Use Reported by Youth in Juvenile Facilities, 2008–2018)*



# How Has The Juvenile Justice System Responded?



## JJ-TRIALS Study

**63%** Needing Treatment Initiated Services

**35%** Needing Treatment Engaged In Treatment  
(Approx. 45 Days)

**14%** Needing Treatment Received Continuing Care  
(90+ Days)



# Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Best Practices



# JDTC Best Practices

## Recommended JDTC Goals:

- 1. Reduce substance use**
- 2. Reduce illegal behavior**
- 3. Increase positive outcomes and pro-social activities of youth**

## Slide 11

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**GU0** Hey Paul, not certain if you want to leave this photo up since the guidelines have been take down from our website. - JW

Guest User, 2025-02-27T15:30:30.030

**PB0 0** Removed. Thank you!

Paul Bowen, 2025-02-27T16:06:20.878

# Effectively Addressing Substance Use and Criminogenic Needs

- Commitment to a **UNIFIED GOAL** and practice
- Team roles should be clearly articulated
- School representative
- High-quality regular training
- Engage parents or guardians
- Licensed interpreters for parents or guardians

# Target Population and Entry Process

- Eligibility criteria
  - ✓ Ages 14 y/o +
  - ✓ Moderate to high risk of reoffending
  - ✓ Substance Use Disorder (mild, moderate, or severe)
- Use validated **CRIMINOGENIC RISK** and **CLINICAL** screening and assessment tools GU0
- Divert youth from JDTC who are not moderate to high risk or do not have a substance use disorder.

## Slide 13

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**GU0** Do you have examples of these tools for people to choose from? - JW

Guest User, 2025-02-27T15:31:14.344

**PB0 0** Yes, we have examples of these tools. We have a more in-depth presentation that provides additional guidance on the use of these tools. Due to the limited amount of time (usually 1 hr) we don't dive too deep into this discussion. Please let me know if you want me to share our handout that provides examples of these tools.

Thanks!

Paul Bowen, 2025-02-27T16:24:19.542

## Engage the Full JDTC Team and Follow Procedures Fairly

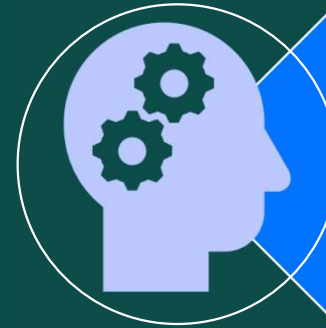
- **WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH PARENTS AND GUARDIANS**
- Judges should act in a nonjudgmental and procedurally fair manner
- Consistent when applying program requirements
- JDTC team should meet weekly to review progress



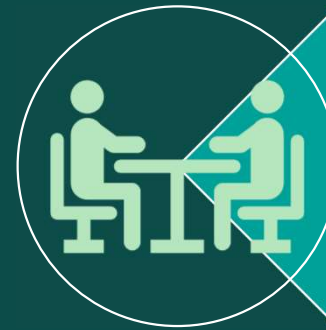


## Large Group Discussion

How can juvenile treatment court teams take a more active role in family engagement efforts?



THINK



PAIR



SHARE

## Conduct Needs Assessments that Inform Individualized Case Plans

- Needs assessments should include information on:
  - ✓ Use of alcohol or other drugs
  - ✓ Criminogenic needs
  - ✓ Mental health needs
  - ✓ History of abuse or other traumatic experiences
  - ✓ Parental drug use, parental mental health needs, and parenting skills
- **CASE MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT PLANS SHOULD BE INDIVIDUALIZED**

# Effective Contingency Management and Case Management

- Incentives should equal or exceed sanctions
- **INDIVIDUALIZE INCENTIVES & SANCTIONS TO SUPPORT BEHAVIOR CHANGE**
- Fees/detention should be considered after other sanctions
- Focus less on violations than on addressing needs
- Address willful violations with graduated sanctions
- Respond to a reoccurrence by addressing needs

# Evidence-Based Substance Use Treatment and Prosocial Connections

- Continuum of Care
- Effective treatment modalities
- Fidelity to the programmatic models
- **ADDRESS THE RISKS/NEEDS IDENTIFIED AS PRIORITIES IN THE YOUTH'S CASE PLAN**
- Prosocial skills

## Monitor and Track Program to Ensure The Team is Reaching its Goals

- Ensure fair treatment for all participants
- Terminate services only as a last resort
- **COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA** related to recidivism, graduation, termination, duration of involvement, treatment progress, educational success, incentives/sanctions, etc.

# Group Discussion



**How Does Your Program Define Success  
and How Do You Measure That Success?**

# Importance of Following Best Practices





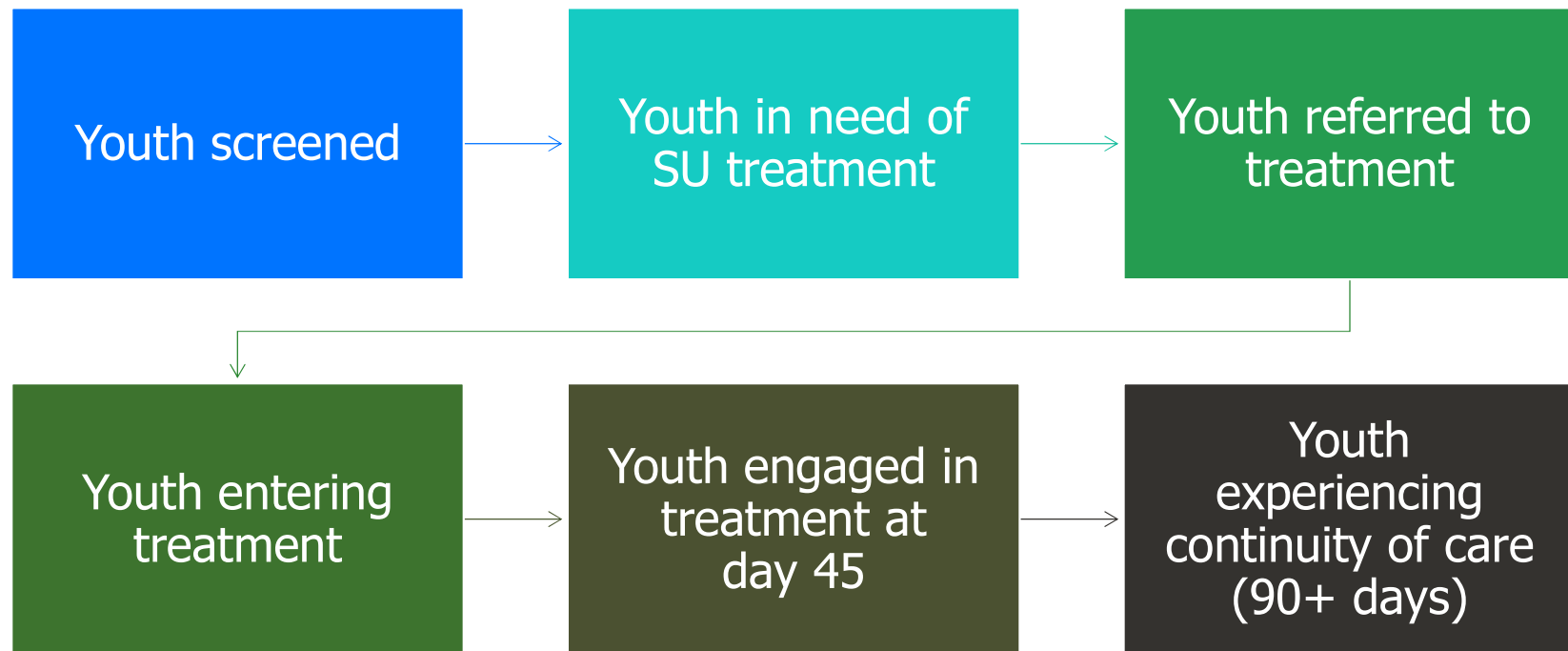
# JDTCs Compared to Traditional Probation

- JDTCs that follow best practices are more efficient at:
  - ✓ Reducing cannabis use
  - ✓ Decreasing other mental health symptoms
  - ✓ Reducing rearrest (even when working with higher-risk youth)
- Lower-risk youth do better in Traditional Probation
- Research shows that JDTCs that do NOT follow best practices can produce worse outcomes for youth than traditional probation.



# JDTCs Focus on Engagement and Retention in Treatment Services

Track the number of >>>>>



# Focus on Families and Significant Others



Family therapy can lead to better outcomes –

>> identify opportunities to enhance treatment approaches in your community



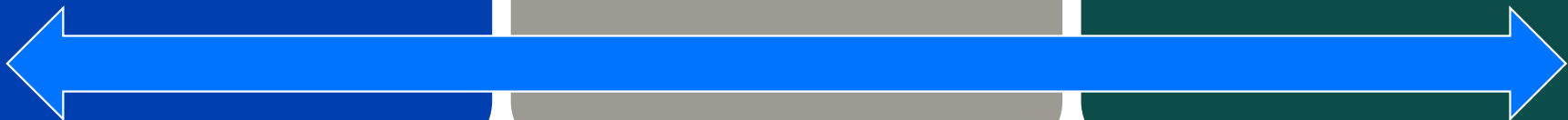
Family navigators can help families navigate complex systems –

>> consider adding this role to the JDTC team



Significant adults or mentors can be a key predictor of success for youth –

>> identify these significant adults early in the JDTC process



# Summary and Questions



- Because the best practice statements are research-informed, some areas will not be addressed until future research is complete.
- If you have questions about a particular practice that your court supports, but was not reflected, here, please feel free to speak to a faculty member about your question/concern.
- TTA providers will share research and practice updates as they become available.

# Practice Implications



- Assess your current practices via a review of your current policies and procedures
- Collect and analyze data
- What best practices does the team follow closely and do well?
- What best practices need to be addressed/implemented?
- Who can lead this effort?
- Timeline for changes?

# Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Resources



## Training and Technical Assistance

Submit your request for training and technical assistance.

## Join the JDTC Listserv

Connect with the JDTC community, share ideas, and access support.

## Tune-In-Tuesday Webinar Series

Tune-In-Tuesdays will occur each quarter and will provide JDTC team members with practical tools to address common challenges in JDTC programs.

## Interactive JDTC Map



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**Thank  
You** 

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