

Drug Treatment Court Planning Document

Drug Treatment Court (DTC) is a therapeutic court that addresses drug addiction as an underlying cause of criminal activity. Drug Treatment Court takes a collaborative approach to assisting participants in overcoming their drug use, making lifestyle changes resulting in reduced criminal activity and improvements in overall health, family relationships, housing, and employment. Drug Treatment Court teams involve a manager, addiction counsellors, probation officers, nurses, income assistance workers, a dedicated Crown, duty counsel, and a dedicated judge. An accused who wants to become a participant in DTC must enter a guilty plea to some or all of their charges. Sentencing is delayed. They then attend regular programming, are subject to random urine screens to test for drug use, and appear regularly in court to provide progress updates to the Judge. It takes between 12 and 18 months to graduate from DTC. At the end of the program if the participant successfully completes all of the components, the Crown will recommend a community-based disposition which may include a suspended sentence with probation or a conditional sentence.

This document is intended to be used as a starting point or guide for those who are interested in creating a DTC in their community. While there are minimum standards and guidelines that all drug treatment courts in Saskatchewan should meet, there will likely be variation at the local level depending on the partners involved and available resources. This planning document provides an overview of the various steps in the process in starting a DTC and is intended to guide the working of the planning team in developing their new DTC proposal.

Steps in the Process and Things to Consider:

→ Create the **DTC planning team**:

- ✓ Ensure all of the right partners are included in the planning and that team members are in regular communication with the decision-makers in their organization.

The following individuals from the local community should be included in the planning meetings:

- Provincial Court Judge
- Federal and Provincial Prosecutions
- Legal Aid
- Community Corrections (Probation Services)
- Saskatchewan Health Authority – Mental Health and Addictions and other potential addiction treatment providers
- Municipal police and/or R.C.M.P.
- Social Services (Income Assistance)
- First Nations Justice and/or Health

The planning meetings should also include Dawn Anderson, Director of Therapeutic Courts, Court Services, Ministry of Justice. She can be reached by email at dawn.anderson@gov.sk.ca or by phone: (306) 787-8864.

→ **Gather data:**

- ✓ What is the nature of the problem you are trying to solve? What role does addictions play in offending? Why types of offences are being committed?
- ✓ What is the extent of the problem? Sources of data: police data, crime statistics, courts data, probations data, Crown file review, agency referrals.
- ✓ What resources are available in the community, and what is needed.

→ **Program design:**

- ✓ Develop mission, goals, and objectives.
- ✓ Identify the various program components, what will be required of participants?
- ✓ Document your plan, outline the entire process. This will include determining your target group, program eligibility criteria (consider type of charge, seriousness of charge, criminal history, current situation, etc.), entry process, court schedule, appearance requirements and reports, urine screen protocol, evidenced based treatment programs (Moral Reconciliation Therapy and approved Addiction Treatment), culturally appropriate services, requirements/milestones for phase advancement, information sharing, and partner roles and responsibilities. Set requirements for program completion and discontinuation. Identify rewards and sanctions (court response protocol). Determine what program capacity will be.
- ✓ Develop the partner protocols, i.e., community supervision protocol.
- ✓ Gather / create necessary forms and documents.
- ✓ Visit one of the existing drug treatment courts in Saskatchewan.
- ✓ What challenges do you expect and how will you mitigate for them?
- ✓ What will be the oversight roles and responsibilities – how will decisions be made?

→ **Gathering resources:**

- ✓ What resources are already in place, what else is needed and how will you get them?
- ✓ What are the staffing needs? For example, you will need a coordinator or program manager.
- ✓ Are budget submissions for additional resources required?

→ **Training:**

- ✓ What are the training needs?
- ✓ Develop a training plan. This information can also be used for program partner orientation manuals.

→ **Data monitoring and evaluation plans:**

- ✓ How will you know that you are meeting your objectives?
- ✓ How will you measure and demonstrate program success? Develop performance measures.

- ✓ What information do you need to collect and how will you collect it? Who will be responsible for gathering this information?
- ✓ What technology do you need?

Please refer to:

- (1) The *Drug Treatment Court – Overview and Standards* document for more information on target groups, eligibility and the referral process, and program design.
- (2) Guides to Regina Drug Treatment Court and Moose Jaw Drug Treatment Court which contain processes, forms and documents from other drug treatment courts in Saskatchewan.

The Overview and Standards document and Guides are available on request.

While this document is intended to assist you with developing a new DTC in the most efficient and effective way possible, developing and starting a new therapeutic court is still a lengthy process. It is not unusual for it to take 2-3 years, from initial planning to implementation, depending on community readiness and availability of resources. Detailed planning is necessary to ensure proper program design and implementation. Program evaluation is also important to ensure the program was designed and implemented as intended and that the DTC is meeting its intended outcomes.

Therapeutic courts are resource-intensive; throughout the planning process, members of each group or organization should be in regular contact with their head offices so that they are aware of any funding or HR considerations.

All requests for a new drug treatment court will be presented to and reviewed by the provincial Therapeutic Courts Oversight Committee which includes representatives from: the judiciary, Ministry of Justice (Court Services, Prosecutions), Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety (Community Corrections), Ministry of Integrated Justice Services (Victim Services), Legal Aid, Police / RCMP, Ministry of Social Services (Income Assistance), Ministry of Health (Mental Health and Addictions), Saskatchewan Health Authority (Mental Health and Addictions), Public Prosecution Service of Canada, and First Nations Inuit Health (Mental Wellness Programs).