

# Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Woodbury County, Iowa's Community-Panel Drug Court Program

DWIGHT VICK, *West Texas A&M University*

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper is part of a larger, five-year follow-up study of drug court participants in and the recidivism rates of the Woodbury County Drug Court Program. Drug court programs are a response to cost-effective alternatives to the modern-day correctional program. These new courts combine substance abuse treatment with social services in the criminal justice system. Program evaluations show this new form of criminal justice effectively reduces alcohol- and drug-related crime and recidivism. The key is direct contact with a judge who oversees the client during early recovery, but this can be cost-prohibitive. The county wanted to establish such a program but judges could not allocate the required time for oversight. As a result, they created the first community-based drug court program whereby individual clients work more closely with local volunteers who are trained in addiction and the law. The results show graduation rates equal to or exceeding national averages. The paper has three goals. First it analyses the total cost of the drug court program and compares costs associated with traditional probation. A cross-comparative analysis is conducted of 2002 juvenile and adult drug court graduates and the traditional system. Each group was followed for 30 months post-release. An analysis of their overall costs to the community shows that drug court expenses may be "frontloaded" but the program saved money in the long-term.*

## Introduction

One primary purpose of drug court programs is to create a cost-effective alternative to the traditional penal system. Drug courts combine substance abuse treatment with social programs and traditional criminal justice measures. Clients are expected to obtain and maintain sobriety, complete general education credits or begin college or technical training, obtain stable employment, and meet current financial and social obligations. This program was created over 20 years in Miami-Dade County, Florida from an increase in drug-related arrests, conviction rates, and prison populations and increased incarceration costs, decreased funding for state prisons, local jails and rehabilitative programs (Banks & Gottfredson, 2004; Belenko, 1998a, 1998b; Shanahan, Lancsar, Haas, Lind, Weatherburn & Chen, 2004; Bureau of Justice Assistance [BJA], 2002; Wilhelm & Turner 2002).

Several scholarly journals and government agencies have published articles or monographs on the cost-effectiveness of the drug court program; however, they are limited (Belenko, Fagan, & Dumanovsky, 1994; Belenko, 1998a; 1998b, 2001). While most focused on outcomes, they lack methodological rigor. These reports usually examined one community's drug court program and did not conduct a cross-comparative analysis on the phenomenon; as a result, they do not explain rival hypotheses, statistical analyses, and inconsistencies (Gottfredson,

Kearley, Najaka, & Rocha 2005; Shanahan et al., 2004; Sanford & Arrigo, 2005; BJA, 2002). While these situations prevent generalizability to other drug court programs, it appears that drug courts are effective in reducing alcohol- and drug-related crime and recidivism (Breckenridge, Winfree, Maupin, & Clason, 2000; Shanahan et al., 2004; Spohn, Piper, Martin, & Frenzel, 2001). However, one aspect their courts have in common is employing one judge to work directly with clients. When Woodbury County wanted to establish such a program, the judges could not allocate the required time to oversee it. As a result, they created the world's and America's first community-based drug court program. A judge may sentence someone to the program. However, the individual client works more closely with local volunteers who are trained in addiction and the law. The results show that its graduation rate is equal to or exceeds the national average. This paper is part of a larger, comprehensive five-year follow-up study of drug court participants in and the recidivism rates of the Woodbury County Drug Court Program.

The primary goals of this paper are threefold. First, the paper analyses the total cost of the drug court program and compares costs associated with traditional probation. Second, a cross-comparative analysis is conducted of 2002 juvenile and adult drug court graduates and the traditional system. Each group was followed for 30 months post-release. Third, an analysis of their overall costs to the community shows that drug court

expenses may be “frontloaded” but the program saved money in the long-term.

### **Cost-Effectiveness Analysis and Methods Used In Evaluating The Woodbury County Drug Court Program**

The cost-effectiveness analysis has a two-fold purpose. First it will implement a formula that determines the program’s relevant costs. Secondly, the evaluation covers the period from January to December, 2002. The follow-up study was completed over the next 36 months. In this section, the paper outlines the qualifications for participation and the implementation of the study’s methodology.

#### *Qualifications for Participation and Methodology*

Participants included in the analysis entered drug court or the conventional court system in 2002. The study evaluates cases of persons who fit the following criteria: 1) committed the same crime in the Woodbury County area; 2) entered in and fulfilled all requirements of the drug court program or the conventional court system in 2002; 3) met similar demographic requirements—race, gender, age, and zip code; 4) public information about the client’s legal involvement was available through the Iowa Criminal Information System (ICIS), the state’s publicly accessible criminal justice program; 5) exposure to treatment or 12-step programs; and 6) randomly selected to participate in the study.

Since the project focused on persons involved with the criminal justice system, the researcher made every reasonable effort to protect the vulnerable population. The researcher compiled a list of names of all 2002 graduates and was able to access information about any criminal, civil, or traffic violations that occurred since graduation. This information is publicly available on the ICIS Web site, [http://www.judicial.state.ia.us/online\\_records/](http://www.judicial.state.ia.us/online_records/).

The identity of clients was removed from all documents and the clients’ names were written separately. If identifiers were revealed to the investigators, they signed confidentiality agreements with the State of Iowa that would force them to pay up to \$1000 in fines and spend one year in prison if convicted. Furthermore, the Internal Review Board at West Texas A&M University approved the study along with the National Institutes of Health. Upon receiving permission, former clients were contacted to participate in the study; however, since po-

tential subjects tend to be members of a transient population, efforts to reach them by letter and telephone were largely unsuccessful. To compensate for this limitation, the study was announced at a press conference and covered by area media outlets in July, 2005. Director Gary Niles was interviewed by local radio personalities about the program and its ongoing research during peak listening hours over the following two weeks. These interviews calmed any concerns the community and potential subjects may have had about the project and its subsequent findings. In addition, the researcher made every reasonable effort to protect the anonymity of the participants and uphold legal and ethical standards of the West Texas A&M University, the States of Iowa and Texas, and the National Institutes of Health while accessing follow-up information.

#### *Costs Associated with Effectiveness Measures and Costs*

Using similar calculations used by Shanahan and Lانسار in their cost effectiveness analysis of the New South Wales, Australia, Drug Court Program, the Woodbury County evaluation examines the long-term effectiveness of the program (Shanahan et al.). The Woodbury County program is a complex organization, much like the New South Wales program. Not only does it involve numerous agencies but also provides a four-phase system to assist the clients that involves treatment providers, counselors, probation officers, courts, lawyers, and community members in the program. The cost evaluation follows conventional data collection methods: 1) identify activities and costs; 2) identify financial resources; 3) costs per unit of service; and 4) the value of those resources (Shanahan et al., 2004). The formula used in both the New South Wales Drug Court Program and the Woodbury County program is as follows:

$$\text{Total cost per person} = (\text{average assessment costs}) + (\text{average cost of court appearances} \times \text{number of court appearances}) + (\text{average cost of treatment} \times \text{number of days in treatment}) + (\text{average costs of probation and parole} \times \text{numbers of days}). \quad (\text{Shanahan et al., 2004, p. 10})$$

Total costs for Year 2002 Drug Court clients and the control groups were determined by obtaining the average total cost per individual. This average is obtained by dividing the total costs of each group by the total number of days.

Average costs per client per program = total costs / number of 2002 clients

All costs associated with the exposed and control groups will be subdivided into adult and juvenile costs (see Table 1).

The costs are higher for juvenile offenders than adults because of increased legal and program requirements. Unlike most drug court programs in the United States, both adult and juvenile programs are post-plea agreements in the Woodbury County program; therefore, incarceration costs prior to sentencing and the amount of time served in jail have no budgetary impact on the program.

Furthermore, there are other social costs that impact the budget and evaluation process. Detoxification costs are not a responsibility of drug court because the client has received those services prior to entering the program; therefore, these are not considered to be part of the equation. Both the drug court program, traditional corrections system, and a client's private insurance program pay for assessment and counseling. Costs borne by drug court and the correctional system are only included in the equation. The administrative costs to complete and analyze the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI) are considered a primary job requirement; therefore, it would be considered part of the probation officer's responsibility (SASSI Institute, n.d.). However, assessment and treatment costs differ based upon the individual needs of the clients regardless of their legal status. If a person committed similar crimes after release from either drug court or the traditional justice system, the incurred costs are not paid by the drug court program but by the county's general fund. As a result, it is a societal cost that must be considered in evaluating outcomes but can be difficult to quantify; however, these figures were included in the overall estimates when appropriate.

**Limitations**

As with all drug court programs, there are several limitations that may impact the overall study. First, their assignment to either drug court or the traditional system is based upon the SASSI score. Those persons with higher scores are assigned to drug court. However, a client may be assigned to the traditional program yet required to attend 12-step meetings. It was difficult to formulate a control group because of the impossibility to control for attendance at 12-step meetings. Therefore, the comparison group had no evidence of seeking support; however, the researchers cannot guarantee the clients were immune to any treatment program or support group.

**Table 1.** Resource Allocation of Funds\*

| Category      | Subcategory   |
|---------------|---|
| Court         | Adult and Juvenile Probation Officers and Juvenile Trackers<br>Court Administration Costs and Fines |
| Assessment    | Referral and assessment by officials  |
| Treatment     | Clinical and pharmaceutical treatment—<br>Inpatient, Intensive Outpatient, and Continuing Care      |
| Monitoring    | Urinalysis<br>Ankle Bracelets<br>Patrolling Costs<br>Home Arrest                                    |
| Incarceration | Incarceration Costs for Clients who Fail<br>Drug Court or Traditional<br>Correctional Measures      |

\* Information was collected during onsite observation of court and non-court related activities over the course of three years.

Victims of juvenile crime may be compensated. More likely, juvenile clients are court-ordered to pay damages, retribution, or complete an assigned number of community service hours with an approved agency. Many juvenile clients are not employed more than 20 hours per week. More likely, they are full-time high school students who work part-time jobs or participate in school programs. Their lost wages would not apply because it is not the sole income source for the client. Juvenile court hearings have no associated jury costs; additionally, a witness' financial costs would be limited to those who were victimized by the juvenile and the parent/guardian of the child in question. As a result, lost income due to victim or parental involvement cannot be estimated nor were they included in estimated societal costs. These costs remain at or near zero as all drug court hearings occur between 6:30 and 9:30 p.m. every Wednesday evening.

Even with these limitations, the final results show the overall community investment into drug court saves community funds because it slows the revolving door into jail and forces the participants to become part of society.

## Results

### *Program Costs for Drug Court Participants*

Drug court-related costs include the following areas within the program: court administration, court fees, judge and panelist costs as well as legal expenses. Most drug court-related expenses are administrative. Since Woodbury County's drug court is a post-plea program, police and investigation expenses are indirect costs. The court system bears the same cost per juvenile investigation regardless of the crime or sentence. Other factors such as victim compensation, lost wages, a jury trial and witness time have little, if any, impact on these related expenses.

Initially, Woodbury County's drug court was funded primarily with Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Formula Grant Program (Byrne Grant) and Woodbury County General Fund dollars. Today, they are funded through a line item on the state's budget (Prouty, D., 2002; G. Niles, personal communication, October 20, 2005). These costs include salaries and benefits for 3.5 juvenile probation officers equaling \$202,979.95.<sup>1</sup> Three administrative assistants and the chief administrator of the program receive 20 to 50% of their salaries and benefits from the grant, an amount totaling \$74,778.80. Collectively, they monitor an average of 100 juveniles each year with approximately 25% graduating each year of the program's existence. No court reporter records the minutes of each hearing. They are taped and transcribed while a panel member writes the highlights of each session. A transcriber spends 10 hours weekly typing minutes. The person is paid \$50 per hour, earning \$26,000 annually.

District judges donate the time allocated to drug court proceedings. Two associate juvenile judges can sentence criminals found guilty of drug-related, nonviolent crimes to drug court. Each juvenile judge donates one hour of his or her time to hear, assign, and follow-up with probation officers and clients about one's progress. Their donated time equals \$6,732 annually throughout the program.<sup>2</sup> While exact estimates are not available, lawyers with the Juvenile Justice Center, located in Sioux City, estimated each lawyer spends three hours on average per juvenile case at a cost of \$50 per hour. In 2002, 24 juvenile clients were admitted and completed drug court costing the county \$7,200 in legal fees.<sup>3</sup> Since community members are trained by and serve as voluntary members of the drug court program, their annual donated contributions totaling \$24,360 as in-kind contributions.<sup>4</sup> Dinner is provided by the county to these volunteer judges at each court hearing. Always held in the evenings, the average costs of

dinner for the volunteer community panel judges equals \$218 each meal and served a total of 52 weeks, costing \$11,371.98 annually. These community volunteers save the Woodbury County Drug Court Program \$12,988.02 annually.

While their operation mimics much of the Woodbury County Drug Court Program, the adult drug court probation staff is much smaller. Admitted post-plea into the program, adult drug court participants are monitored more closely than their adult probation counterparts but less than juveniles sentenced to drug court. Two probation officers work directly with adult clients, each earning \$65,879.73 in salary and benefits.<sup>5</sup> While all adult records are maintained within this system, the two adult officers coordinate drug court hearings directly through administrative staff housed within Woodbury County's Juvenile Services Center.

As do their juvenile counterparts, district judges and district associate judges donate the time allocated to drug court proceedings. Their donated time equals \$26,037 annually throughout the program.<sup>6</sup> While exact estimates are not available, lawyers with the Juvenile Justice Center estimated each public defense lawyer spends three hours on average per case at an average cost of \$50 per hour. This same figure was applied to adult clients as well as juveniles. In 2002, 19 adult clients sought court-appointed attorneys. They were admitted and completed drug court costing the county \$5700 in legal fees.<sup>7</sup> Since community panel members hear both juvenile and adult cases, their in-kind contributions are equally shared between both groups.

Adult participants are more likely to be required to pay all court fees and victim compensation, or restitution, to the victims than other juveniles who are sentenced to drug court. Community service hours may be assigned at sentencing, particularly if the client is unemployed at that time. No trial information was available through Adult Probation Services; therefore, no information was available to determine if any adult drug court client went to jury trial. According to the ICIS Web site there is no evidence of any client going to a jury trial and being sentenced to drug court. The clients plead guilty, tested, and were offered the drug court option. The number of community service hours as well as total restitution amounts was not available for either source.

### *Assessment and Treatment*

All persons who are sentenced to drug court will be required to participate in counseling and rehabilitation programs. The requirements vary based upon the client's



level of dependence and substance abuse history, psychological and physical health concerns, and living situation. Their individual needs are determined by a substance abuse therapist, the probation officer, the courts, and the client. Re-evaluation occurs throughout the client's involvement in drug court and may be reported to the courts at any time.

For purposes of this cost-effectiveness study, those persons who were accepted into the drug court program also completed it during the 2002 calendar year. It is the best group to estimate costs for several reasons: 1) the program had existed for two years at this point so major administrative issues had been resolved; 2) associated costs were more easily estimated based upon two years of initial experience and future projections would remain stable; 3) clear communication lines were established between the courts, the administrative staff, and supporting governmental and nonprofit agencies that work with clients; and 4) the courts had precedence which could be utilized in sentencing nonviolent, addicted clients to the drug court program.

During 2002, 24 juveniles were sentenced to and completed drug court. They received substance abuse treatment from a state-approved juvenile substance abuse treatment facility located in the area. While the range of required services and necessary expenses widely varied, the Woodbury County Drug Court Program and the Third Judicial District spent \$7,608.71 per juvenile who entered the program during 2002. The total estimate equals \$182,609.

Nineteen adults received treatment services that were provided through the Woodbury County Drug Court Program and area providers. A large majority of those services were provided by state approved facilities located in the Sioux City area. The range of necessary services varied on a case-by-case basis. However, the range of required services and necessary expenses varied widely from providing a substance abuse evaluation only to in-patient treatment and intensive outpatient services. The Woodbury County Drug Court Program and the Third Judicial District spent a total of \$99,324.41 in 2002, averaging \$5,227.60 per client.

While the average costs per juvenile and adult does not significantly differ, monitoring requirements increase program costs. This is particularly true among juveniles who are enrolled in the program.

### **Monitoring**

Several measures are used to track juveniles involved with the drug court system. Two full-time juve-

nile trackers, who work directly with clients at school and home, each earned \$44,000 in salary and benefits. A local agency is contracted to provide part-time tracking support for other juvenile clients. It is estimated their employees work with 30 juvenile clients and spend four hours weekly at a cost of \$15 per contact hour. This totals an annual cost of \$93,600. School liaison officers, local police officers posted in Sioux City high schools, spend an estimated 20% of their on-the-job time with juveniles assigned to drug court. Investment associated with school liaison officers involved with drug court juveniles is estimated at \$22,329.60 for 2002. Urine samples are collected and sent to laboratories by probation officers to test for the presence of drugs within the client's system. They can occur at random; however, the client is more likely to submit urine samples early into their treatment program. The county pays a local laboratory approximately \$30,000 annually to manage approximately 1154 tests; unfortunately, it is not possible to delineate the number of tests for juveniles and adults.

Other methods include the use of electronic bracelets, home arrest, and neighborhood patrolling costs. The Woodbury County Drug Court paid \$9,125 on such monitoring programs for juveniles. However, different monitoring policies apply for adults in community-based drug court.

Adult drug court clients are provided more autonomy than their juvenile counterparts. Both groups meet at least biweekly with their probation officers and frequent urinalysis throughout their drug court experience. Clients are subject to reasonable search and seizure on their person or property if substance abuse or illegal activity is suspected. However, ankle bracelets and trackers are not provided to or required of adult probationers involved with drug court for financial purposes. Adult clients are either unemployed or underemployed. If an adult is monitored, he or she must reimburse Woodbury County for their expenses which can cost up to \$75 weekly; therefore, costs for ankle bracelets and trackers are too prohibitive for adult clients to pay. This forces adult service to rely heavily upon counseling reports, urinalyses, and client behavior to monitor one's progress through the program.

The total estimated cost equals \$731,159.45 in 2002 dollar values. If this figure is divided among the 43 graduates in 2002, the costs appear to be astronomical, \$17,003. While the program began with very few clients at its conception, the program manages 100 clients each year. This decreases its overall expenditures per client to \$7,311.59. If applied to the total number of clients who

participated in it over its five year history, the cost per client decreases to \$2,894.32 annually (see Table 2).

## Program Costs For Traditional System

### *Administrative and Court Costs*

As mentioned earlier, there are some similarities between the Woodbury County Drug Court Program and its traditional Juvenile Court Services programs. While both programs encounter similar expenses, the traditional system may not detect a drug or alcohol problem among its clientele until a chemical dependency issue arises. Furthermore, the probation officers have a higher caseload thereby preventing them from spending as much time with traditional probationers as their drug court counterparts. This could inhibit a probation officer's ability to discuss a substance abuse problem with a client.

The traditional Juvenile Court Services Program is currently funded with dollars funded with state general fund dollars to the Third Judicial Court District as allocated by the Iowa State Legislature. These costs include salaries and benefits for six juvenile probation officers equaling \$395,278.38.<sup>8</sup> One supervisor and a three-quarter time director earns salaries and benefits equal to \$125,557.23.<sup>9</sup> Four administrative assistants receive 50 to 100% of their salaries and benefits from this funding source, an amount totaling \$122,077.60. While the number of juvenile probationers fluctuates between 240 to 360 persons annually, each probation officer averages 50 offenders annually. The total administrative costs average \$642,913.21 each year over the past five years.

Two associate juvenile judges can sentence criminals found guilty of drug-related, nonviolent crimes to drug court. Each juvenile judge earns \$134,640 annually, including salaries and benefits, for a total cost of \$269,280. Furthermore, each judge supervises one full-time court reporter who earns approximately \$121,920. Since there are no consistent voluntary donations provided directly to the program, the traditional program receives no in-kind support.

As with drug court clients, the Juvenile Justice Center averages three hours per juvenile client and charge the same rate, \$50 per hour, to represent juvenile defenders. Approximately 300 juveniles were represented by counsel each year, costing \$45,000 in general fund dollars to protect the juveniles' legal rights. As a result, the number of youth involved with Juvenile Court Services of Woodbury County, Iowa remains relatively constant. A similar situation exists within adult probation.

Woodbury County's Adult Probation Program operates like similar organizations throughout the country. The client reports to a probation officer and is subject to search, unannounced check-ins at employment sites, etc. All restitution and community service hours must be completed prior to release. They are more responsible for their own actions than their adult drug court counterparts. The ICIS Web site shows no evidence of any client appearing before a jury prior to sentencing to and participating in the traditional probationary program. If an adult were found to present oneself before a jury trial, he or she was not considered for the program or study. The number of community service hours as well as total restitution amounts was not available for either source. Also, there is no evidence if any of the client's attended court or met with one's probation officer during normal working hours and if this impacted their earning potential.

Ten probation officers work directly with adult clients, each earning an average of \$65,879.73 in salary and benefits. While all adult records are maintained within their system, the two adult officers coordinate drug court hearings directly through administrative staff housed within the Juvenile Services Center. Five district judges and two district associate judges are assigned to the courts, costing a total of \$1,078,200 annually in salary and benefits. Each judge has a court reporter who earns the same amount as their juvenile counterparts. Earning \$121,920 in salary and benefits, these seven court reporters collectively earn \$853,440 annually. No in-kind donations are provided to the traditional court system.

As with drug court clients, public defenders work with adult clients. They average three hours per adult client and charge the same rate, \$50 per hour, to represent juvenile defenders. Approximately 300 adults were represented by counsel each year costing \$45,000 in General Fund dollars to protect their legal rights.<sup>10</sup>

### *Assessment and Treatment*

While clients in need of services are never denied them, their problems may be less apparent to a probation officer with a larger caseload. On average, traditional probation officers can see up to 50 clients daily. As a result, the probationer may not receive much attention from the courts during one's probationary period unless another crime is committed. If a client commits a non-violent, substance abuse-related offense that involves drugs and alcohol while on probation or is intoxicated in the probation officer's presence, he or she is asked to complete the SASSI and referred to drug court for assistance. This referral is contingent upon the score a potential client may

**Table 2.** Drug Court Expenditures in 2002

| <b>Accounts</b>                       | <b>Personnel and Supply Requirements</b>  | <b>Cost Per Account</b>      | <b>Total Costs</b>           |            |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Administrative and Court Costs</b> | 3.5 Juvenile Probation Officers   | 202,979.95                   |                              |            |
|                                       | 2 Adult Probation Officers  | 131,759.46                   |                              |            |
|                                       | 3 Administrative Assistants   | 74,778.80                    |                              |            |
|                                       |   | <i>Total Personnel Costs</i> |                              | 409,518.21 |
|                                       | 2 Associate Juvenile Judges   | (6,732)                      |                              |            |
|                                       | 3 District Associate Judges   | (10,098)                     |                              |            |
|                                       | 5 District Judges   | (19,305)                     |                              |            |
|                                       |   | <i>Total Judge Costs</i>     |                              | (36,135)   |
|                                       | Legal Fees in 2002  |                              |                              |            |
|                                       | For Juveniles   | 7,200                        |                              |            |
|                                       | For Adults  | 5,700                        |                              |            |
|                                       |   | <i>Total Legal Fees</i>      |                              | 12,900     |
|                                       |   | 29 Community Panel Judges    | (24,360)                     |            |
|                                       | 52 Meals for Community Panel Judges and Judicial Trainings per year   | 11,371.98                    |                              |            |
|                                       | <i>Total Panel Contributions</i>  |                              | (12,988.02)                  |            |
|                                       | Court reporter/transcriber  | 26,000.00                    |                              |            |
|                                       | Grant writing   | 1,000.00*                    |                              |            |
|                                       | <i>Subtotal</i>   |                              | 373,295.19                   |            |
| <b>Assessment and Treatment Costs</b> | 24 Juveniles at \$7,608.71 per client   | 182,609.00                   |                              |            |
|                                       | 19 Adults at \$5,227.06 per client  | 99,324.41                    |                              |            |
|                                       | <i>Subtotal</i>   |                              | 281,933.41                   |            |
| <b>Monitoring Costs</b>               | Ankle bracelets for juveniles   | 2,281.25                     |                              |            |
|                                       | 2 Trackers at \$44,000 each (20% time)  | 17,600.00                    |                              |            |
|                                       | Contractor for less needy Juvenile Offenders (20% time)   | 18,720.00                    |                              |            |
|                                       | School Liaison Officers at three area high schools (20% time)   | 22,329.60                    |                              |            |
|                                       | Urinalysis costs  | 15,000.00                    |                              |            |
|                                       | <i>Subtotal</i>   |                              | 75,930.85                    |            |
| <b>Total Annual Estimated Costs</b>   |   |                              | <b>731,159.45</b>            |            |
|                                       | Total Estimated Annual Costs divided by 43 Graduates in 2002  | 731,159.45/43                | 17,003 per client            |            |
|                                       | Total Estimated Annual Costs divided by 100 (average number of clients participating in the program annually) | 731,159.45/100               | 7,311.59 per client per year |            |

\* The drug court program retains a local grant writer to assist in researching and writing other grants related to the mission of the current program.

receive. The higher the score, the more likely someone will be given the option to participate in drug court. If the client has a demonstrated dependence or abuse with a mood-altering substance, assessment and treatment costs would be paid for by the drug court program. Otherwise, six to ten probation officers earn the same salary and benefits as their drug court counterparts but manage, on average, 25 additional cases.

### *Monitoring*

Monitoring responsibilities are left to the discretion of the probation officer working within the traditional system. Both traditional and drug court probation officers rely on juvenile trackers; however, they do not clearly document how much time is spent with each type of client. For this study, the trackers estimated they spend approximately 20% of their time working directly with juvenile drug court clients. Even though the courts currently do not document the amount of time each tracker spends with each client, the traditional probation officer has greater responsibility placed upon him or her for tracking their juvenile clients.

Traditional probation officers appear to be more directly involved with and solely responsible for this activity than those officers working with the drug court program. This activity includes tracking school attendance at a traditional setting or at one of the on-site alternative schools. Other methods include the use of electronic bracelets, home arrest, and neighborhood patrolling costs. Unlike adults, juveniles are not responsible for costs associated with electronic or home monitoring. The Woodbury County Juvenile Court Services pays \$9,125 on such programs for those clients who are not part of the drug court program. A similar situation exists for adults who are part of the traditional system.

Traditional probation clients are provided more autonomy than their adult drug court counterparts. While clients do meet on a regular basis with probation officers, the amount of time an officer may spend varies based upon the crime the client committed and the client's risk of violation. As a result, the probation officer may meet infrequently or continuously visit with their clients.

Like their drug court counterparts, traditional probation officers do not require their probationers to use ankle bracelets because they are cost-prohibitive for the client. As a result, adult services rely heavily upon counseling reports, urinalyses, and client behavior to monitor one's progress through the program (see Table 3).

Woodbury County's Adult Probation Department expends its annual funding allocation similarly to their

juvenile counterparts. Both groups have increased administrative and court costs. However, they have no volunteer support provided to the department by community groups as the drug court program provides. There are no trackers in adult probation; however, the agency pays for urinalyses. The client is responsible for payment if he or she claims the results are false-positive. As mentioned previously in this paper, the county contracts with a private provider who completes the tests regardless of the client's participation in drug court or traditional probation (see Table 4).

### *Final Analysis*

In Table 2: Drug Court Expenditures in 2002, juvenile and adult drug court-related costs were combined to determine the average amount spent upon each person in three ways: by the number of annual graduates, the average number of persons involved annually, and the annual costs based upon the number of participants throughout the life of the program. Based upon the number of annual graduates, drug court costs total \$17,003 per person; however, there are approximately 100 participants in the program at any given time. This reduces the annual costs to approximately \$7,311.59 per person. For the life of the program, the cost per person averages \$2,894.32 annually. Table 2, entitled Traditional Probation Costs for Juveniles in 2002, expenditures related to adult clients was separated from juvenile costs. The annual cost per client averages \$4,834.14 per person. Drug court expenditures for juveniles are 2.21 times higher than those who completed the traditional probationary route. This rate remains constant when adult drug court client costs are compared to traditional probationary costs. The analysis in Table 3, Traditional Probation Costs for Adults in 2002, estimates the annual expenditure for 1000 clients to be estimated at \$2,739.09 per client; meanwhile, adult drug court clients expenditures are 3.24 times higher than the county government pays to monitor their more traditional counterparts. This figure is similar to those juveniles who participated in this program. However, there are additional costs associated with drug court that does not apply to traditional probation, i.e. treatment and counseling.

Informally called "front-loading," drug court expenditures are more likely to occur at the client's initial acceptance into the program. Upon reviewing the category, Treatment and Assessment, it is determined that the court is more likely to pay for a client's assessment for his or her addiction beyond the SASSI with local treatment providers. At which point, an individualized treatment



**Table 3.** Traditional Probation Costs for Juveniles in 2002

| Accounts for Traditional Probation    | Personnel and Supply Requirements  | Cost Per Account  | Total Costs                        |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Administrative and Court Costs</b> | 6 Juvenile Probation Officers<br>1 Juvenile Supervisor<br>0.75 Director of Juvenile Services                                       | 395,278.38        |                                    |
|                                       | 4 Administrative Assistants  |                   |                                    |
|                                       | <i>Total Personnel Costs</i>   | <u>125,557.23</u> | <u>122,077.60</u>                  |
| <i>Subtotal</i>                       |  |                   | <u>649,913.60</u>                  |
| <b>Monitoring Costs</b>               | 2 Juveniles Judges   | 262,548.00        |                                    |
|                                       | 2 Court Reporters  | 243,840.00        |                                    |
|                                       | Legal Fees For Juveniles   | 45,000.00         |                                    |
|                                       | Monitoring   | 6,843.75          |                                    |
| <i>Subtotal</i>                       |  |                   | <u>558,231.75</u>                  |
| <b>Monitoring Costs</b>               | 2 Trackers at \$44,000 each<br>(80% time)  | 70,400.00         |                                    |
|                                       | Contractor for less-needy Juvenile<br>Offenders (80% time)   | 74,880.00         |                                    |
|                                       | School Liaison Officers at three area<br>high schools (80% time)   | 89,318.40         |                                    |
|                                       | Urinalysis costs   | 7,500.00          |                                    |
| <i>Subtotal</i>                       |  |                   | <u>249,598.40</u>                  |
| <b>Total Annual Estimated Costs</b>   |  |                   | <u><b>1,450,243.75</b></u>         |
|                                       | Total Estimated Annual Costs Divided<br>by 300, the average number of juve-<br>niles who participate in the traditional<br>system* | 1,450,243.75/300  | 4,834.14<br>per client<br>per year |

\* These figures were based on the 2002-dollar values. Since 300 juveniles are involved with juvenile court annually, the result would be the same for each year in which the drug court program existed.

plan is created. The court's pay for such programs early in the process whereas the traditional probation programs usually do not pay for such programs. If a client is determined to need drug court, he or she would be referred to it and the program would begin the assessment process and accept the financial costs of providing for treatment. Unlike drug court programs, more traditional probation expenditures occur throughout their sentence. The financial "front-loading" technique may result in a higher success rate among clients.

### Conclusion

Woodbury County, Iowa experienced an increase in drug- and alcohol-related crime like many other American communities. It responded by creating a drug court program. Out of necessity, it turned to its citizens to serve as community judges so it would relieve area judges of an increasing case backlog and financial constraints. Citizens created a new form of drug court program that appears to

be equally successful to or exceeds the national average of other drug court programs around the nation. Traditional probation appears to be less expensive in the short-term. However, the long-term investments into drug court far outweigh the short-term financial gains brought through more traditional probation programs. When social costs are added into the equation, it is believed the drug court program pays for itself while the traditional probationary system continues to drain the judiciary's coffers. Even though the community-based approach is still in its in-

fancy, it provides greater insight into the drug court phenomenon that has spread throughout the United States and provides communities an option to hold clients more accountable while saving themselves thousands of dollars in annual incarceration expenses.

---

DWIGHT VICK is an assistant professor of public administration.

### Notes

1. Each probation officer earns a base salary of \$42,000 with an additional 33% to cover the cost of fringe benefits. However, these salaries vary among the four probation officers because of their individual job-related experiences, job performance, and educational level.
2. On average, judges earn \$164.73 per hour. The judge allocates one hour of his or her time each week of the year.
3. Juvenile Justice Center lawyers cost \$50 per hour and allocate, on average three hours of billable time per client. In 2002, they worked with 24 juveniles who participated in the drug court program.
4. In 2002, 29 community judges donated four hours of personal time each month to the program. The average 2002-dollar value given by volunteers nationwide totals \$17.50. While there are persons who earn more than this figure who sit as a community panel, there are a number of persons who are retired and no longer work in their profession. As a result, this is an acceptable dollar average the researcher could use to determine the amount each community drug court judge donates per hour.
5.  $\$65,879.73 \times 2$  probation officers = \$131,759.46 a year.
6. The amount of time allocated by participating district judges and district associate judges was determined by averaging the hourly wage each of the five judges earn and multiplying it by 52 weeks. The formula is  $[(\$174.25 \text{ per hour} \times 1 \text{ hour weekly} \times 52 \text{ weeks}) \times 5 \text{ judges}] + [(\$164.73 \times 1 \text{ hour weekly} \times 52 \text{ weeks}) \times 3 \text{ judges}] = \$1,9305 + \$10,098$ .
7. The average amount of time that was reported by the juvenile center that accepts such cases equals three hours. Each lawyer charges, on average, \$50 per hour and worked with 19 adult clients during the year. The formula was  $(\$50 \times 3 \text{ hours} \times 19 \text{ clients})$ .
8. Average salary and benefits were \$65,879.73 multiplied by the number of probation officers who work in the department.
9. A three-quarter time supervisor and one-full time employee costs equal the costs of one probation officer's annual salary with benefits. The annual salary, including benefits, of the supervisor was multiplied by 0.75.
10. The formula is  $300 \text{ juveniles} \times \$50 \text{ per hour} \times 3 \text{ hours}$ .

**Table 4.** Traditional Probation Costs for Adults in 2002

| <b>Accounts for<br/>Traditional Probation</b> | <b>Personnel and<br/>Supply Requirements</b>   | <b>Cost Per<br/>Account</b> | <b>Total<br/>Costs</b>             |
|---|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Administrative and Court Costs</b>         | 10 Adult Probation Officers  | 658,797.30                  | 784,354.53                         |
|   | 4 Administrative Assistants  | 125,557.23                  |                                    |
|   | <i>Total Personnel Costs</i>   |                             |                                    |
|   | 2 Juveniles Judges   | 1,048,797.00*               | 1,902,237.00                       |
|   | 2 Court Reporters  | 853,440.00                  |                                    |
| <i>Subtotal</i>                               |  |                             |                                    |
|   | Legal Fees Adults  | 45,000.00                   | 52,500.00                          |
|   | Urinalysis costs   | 7,500.00                    |                                    |
| <i>Subtotal</i>                               |  |                             |                                    |
| <b>Total Annual Estimated Costs</b>           |  |                             | <b>2,739,091.53</b>                |
|   | Total Estimated Annual Costs Divided<br>by 1000, the average number of adults<br>participating in the traditional system.† | 2,739,091.53/1500           | 1,826.06<br>per client<br>per year |

\* Since the same seven judges who serve in adult court also sentence persons to drug court, the researcher determined their average annual salaries and deducted the amount of time they donate to the drug court program. This figure is estimated to be \$29,403 and is deducted from the original amount of \$1,078,200.

† Castle, M. Personal Communication. March 25, 2005 and April 2, 2008. These figures were based on the 2002 dollar values. Since traditional probation officers have on average 150 probationers, it is estimated that 1000 persons are listed with the organization at any time.

## References

- Banks, D. & Gottfredson, D. C. (2004). Participation in drug treatment court and time to re-arrest. *Justice Quarterly*, 21, 3.
- Belenko, S., Fagan, J. A. & Dumanovsky, T. (1994). The effects of legal sanctions on recidivism in special drug courts. *Justice System Journal*, 17, 53–81.
- Belenko, S. (1998a). Research on drug courts: A critical review. New York: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.
- Belenko, S. (1998b). Behind bars: Substance abuse and America's prison population. New York: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.
- Belenko, S. (2001). Research on drug courts: A critical review 2001 update. New York: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.
- Breckenridge, J. F., Winfree, L. T., Maupin, J. R. & Clason, D. L. (2000). Drunk drivers, DWI drug court, treatment, and recidivism: Who fails? *Justice Research and Policy*, 2 (1), 87–105.
- Bureau of Justice Assistance. (2002). *Drug court monitoring, evaluation, and management information systems: National scope needs assessment monograph*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved November 29, 2005, from <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/bja/195077.pdf>
- Gottfredson, D. C., Kearley, B. W., Najaka, S. S., & Rocha, C. M. (2005). The Baltimore city drug treatment court: Three-year self-report outcome study. *Evaluation Review*, 29 (1), 42.
- Prouty, D. (2002). Governor's Office on drug control policy. In *Iowa Legislative Fiscal Bureau*. Des Moines: Iowa State Legislature. Retrieved November 30, 2005, from <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/lsadocs/IssReview/2003/IRLRB001.PDF>
- Shanahan, M., Lancsar, E., Haas, M., Lind, B., Weatherburn, D., & Chen, S. (2004). Cost effectiveness analysis of the New South Wales adult drug court program. *Evaluation Review*, 28, 3–27.
- Stanford, J. S., & Arrigo, B. A. (2005). Lifting the cover on drug courts: Evaluation findings and policy concerns. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 49 (3), 239.
- Spohn, C., Piper, R. K., Martin, T., & Frenzel, E. D. (2001). Drug courts and recidivism: The results of an evaluation using two comparison groups and multiple indicators of recidivism. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 31 (1), 149–176.
- Wilhelm, D. F., & Turner, N. R. (2002). Is the budget crisis changing the way we look at sentencing and incarceration? New York: Vera Institute of Justice.