



Florida Association of Drug Court Professionals Newsletter

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Dear FADCP Members:

Happy Summertime! I hope you are finding some fun ways to stay cool and enjoy your summer!

We had a terrific turnout for our Drug Court Month Networking Session! Thank you to all the hardworking drug court practitioners who took time from their busy schedules to join us and share their pandemic drug court experiences. In fact, every breakout group reported back that it was great to speak with other professionals and compare notes. We also got to learn innovative ideas that came from the pandemic. We are looking to repeat the experience some time in the early Fall.

A special thank you to our facilitators: Judge Michele Towbin-Singer, Assistant State Attorney Coral Messina, Problem-Solving Courts Director Teri Hamlyn, Department of Corrections Supervisor Tammy Marcus, Treatment Professional and FADCP Board Member Stephanie Coberly, and FADCP Board Member Eve Janocko who led the Assistant Public Defenders. The sessions would not have been as productive without your extremely valuable help.

Soon you should be receiving membership applications for FADCP. There are individual, organizational, and corporate memberships available. We hope you join us.

Not only do we hope to see new members join our ranks, but we are also excited about new leadership for FADCP. So, if you have an interest in serving on the board or becoming an officer, please don't be shy about it.

Ultimately, we hope to revive our in-person conferences where you truly get to share your drug court experiences, learn the latest innovations, and reenergize. Until then, OSCA has some wonderful trainings in store. So be on the look out for those opportunities.

Keep up the good work! You do make a difference!

Sincerely,

FADCP Acting Chair



“BABY TALK”

*By: The Honorable Hope Bristol
Seventeenth Judicial Circuit*

Baby Court, Early Childhood Court, Safe Baby Court Team these are just some of the names of one of Florida’s successful problem-solving courts. You may hear these titles and wonder, “What’s that all about? Are there baby’s crawling around in court-rooms?” In many circuits, that answer is YES!

ECC is a problem-solving court initiative focused on systematically improving how the courts, child welfare agencies, and local community partners work together, expedite services and improve child welfare outcomes for infants and toddlers and their families. Florida’s Early Childhood Courts began in 2014 as the primary initiative of Florida’s Dependency Court Improvement Panel with just a few sites. We now have twenty-seven sites in the state.

The purpose was to model these problem-solving courts around the National Zero to Three Model of their “safe baby court teams.” These programs address families in the Dependency Court who have children under the age of five. Extensive wrap around services are provided to these families to address their trauma, heal the parent/child relationship, and stop the intergenerational cycle of maltreatment. The key parenting intervention, Child-Parent Psychotherapy is not the traditional parenting class, but a powerful evidence-based intervention where the parent and child are actually working together with the clinician to heal their trauma.

ECC programs work with parents who have had their children removed in part due to mental health issues, domestic violence, and drugs. In fact, the single largest age group of children coming into the child welfare system during the opioid epidemic is children from newborns to three years of age.

These courts use a child-centered, team-based approach. Stakeholders include the Department of Children and Families, Guardian ad Litem Program, Child Protection Teams, attorneys, service providers, therapists and most importantly parents. The Community Coordinator facilitates regular, strength-based family team meetings before court. The hearings are conducted in a non-adversarial way to reduce any additional trauma caused by being in court. The children are expected to be present. Caseworkers and attorneys have received training in trauma and are expected to look at these cases through a “trauma lens”. Additional trainings are made available so that all stakeholders have an understanding of the importance of healthy attachment and early brain development as well as the effects of toxic stress.

When I preside over my ECC docket, the status hearings are more like conversations rather than a court proceeding. I like to start with the parents instead of hearing from the case worker. I’ve found that when we start with a positive, it can set a better tone for the whole status hearing even if hard decisions need to be made. I encourage the parents to interact with their children during the hearing as I’ve created a trauma informed courtroom with a reading corner where children and parents are encouraged to take home books and stuffed animals.

In 2019, the Florida Supreme Court adopted the Early Childhood Court Best Practice Standards that was drafted by the Dependency Court Improvement Panel. These standards include a number of core components including judicial leadership, a community coordinator, more frequent court hearings, and evidence-based therapies. Parents have more frequent visits with their children to aid in the bonding process.

In July 2020, the Florida Legislature recognized the important work of Florida’s ECC programs and created Florida Statue 39.01304 addressing ECC programs statewide.

Timely permanency has been a tremendous positive outcome of this program. The Office of Court Improvement has been keeping data on our ECC cases statewide. Based on their analysis, children in ECC attained permanency through reunification with their parents 8.5 months faster than children who were not involved in an ECC program. There is favorable data with other permanency goals as well. When we are talking about babies, this can be a majority of their little lives.

So if you see some little ones scooting by you to get into a courtroom or hear some baby talk down the hall, chances are you have an ECC program in your circuit. Drop on in and see where the magic happens!



“The Transformation”

*By: Magistrate Rudy Morel
Seventeenth Judicial Circuit*

Many of our participants experience remarkable transformations during our Drug Court Program. One of the more notable was of a young woman whose initial appearances for status hearings were combative and replete with foul and accusatory language. This participant had a high risk history of polysubstance abuse and was extremely resistant. She acted as if she had been hijacked to participate in the program. She railed against her mother. One of the team members sadly commented that he was afraid that she may not have much time left. Something in her eyes, however, and from her soul, seemed to be crying out for help.

With the drug court team's patience and encouragement, she eventually opened up about her recent loss of a close friend to an overdose, and generally admitted to a history of long standing substance abuse and trauma. A mental health referral and intensive substance abuse treatment was ordered. After appropriate psychiatric medication, MAT, and effective and individualized substance abuse therapy was offered, this young woman started to appear for hearings with a dramatically different affect and outlook to life. Treatment helped her with job placement and she was receiving individualized treatment that addressed her past trauma. Her relationship with her mother, who showed up at hearings with her, improved dramatically.

I believe this story typifies what a treatment/problem solving program does in our drug court. A specialized and multidisciplinary approach is essential in many of the high risk situations in order to effectively address the underlying and life threatening substance abuse disorder. This young woman has embraced recovery and continues to succeed in life through her hard work and dedication, and in so doing, inspires other program participants as well as her drug court team, to persevere.

“FADCP’s May 2021 Networking Session—A Huge Success”

*By Melanie G. May
Fourth District Court of Appeal*



May 27th marked the rebirth of FADCP as it hosted a Networking Session for Florida’s Drug Court Professionals. Our surprise guest was none other than Florida’s former Director of Drug Control, Ret. Colonel James McDonough. It was only fitting that he set the tone for the session as his leadership during the late 90’s and early 2000’s provided for the growth and success of Florida’s drug courts. This was truly a golden age for Florida’s drug control strategy. He welcomed the drug court professionals, thanked them for their dedication and service, and encouraged all of us to keep up the good work.

Participants were then magically moved to breakout groups by profession to share experiences, lessons learned, innovations devised, and obstacles overcome. The prosecutors group, led by Assistant State Attorney Coral Messina, thought to take a picture of their breakout group (shown above). Following the networking sessions, the facilitators proved reports, which were then converted to a compiled report by subject matter and by profession. In this way, Florida’s drug court professionals collectively shared the information imparted during these breakout sessions.

CERTIFICATION UPDATE

*By Judge Melanie G. May
Fourth District Court of Appeal*



As most of you know, the Certification Subcommittee of the Supreme Court Steering Committee on Problem-Solving Courts has been working over the last three years to create a certification system. That work continues!

We are currently awaiting the approval of the proposed certification plan considered by the Florida Supreme Court on April 20, 2021. Once the plan is approved, we can set a schedule for certification applications. In the meantime, we are working on producing a webinar to bring you more information about the proposed plan. More news to follow!

FEEDBACK AND LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Let us know how FADCP can be of help to you. Your ideas and suggestions are important to us so that your membership is valuable to you.

Our ultimate goal is to return to the day of annual conferences where top national presenters appear and provide you with the latest and greatest information on how to be successful in your problem-solving courts.



FADCP leadership consists of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Past-Chair, and two at-large members of the Executive Committee. It is ably assisted by up to twenty-five board members. We strive to have representation from all professions and areas of the State.

If you are interested in serving as a board member or as a member of the Executive Committee, please let us know. The board meets telephonically as needed. The Executive Committee meets in August and February and more often as needed. Please feel free to self-nominate or nominate someone you think should serve in a leadership capacity. We will be accepting nominations in Early November after the close of our membership drive.

“This is How We Do It”

*By: Judge Ashenafi-Richardson
Second Judicial Circuit*

May is traditionally National Drug Court Month. Across the nation problem-solving courts find innovative ways to celebrate the miracles that happen in them everyday. This May, the Second Judicial Circuit recognized Drug Court Awareness Month by celebrating the many individuals who had successfully completed Drug Court and were living better lives because of it.

The Leon County Adult Felony Drug Court program has provided amazing care and treatment since its inception in 1993, especially when working through the challenges recently brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program has a team of individuals who are all dedicated to the success of the participants in the program. The team includes: Leon County Judge Nina Ashenafi-Richardson; Judicial Assistant Blanca Delgado-Chavez; Assistant State Attorney Owen McCaul; Assistant Public Defender Edrene Johnson; Pre-trial Officer Robin Staton; Case Manager Jawanza Pipkin; Department of Corrections Probation Officer Laneka Williams; A Life Recovery Center, Eric Martin and Earl Lee; and Anchor Treatment Center, Surina Pillay-Alvarado and Michelle Brantley. Together, the team works collaboratively to make personalized treatment recommendations and develop program policies and procedures.

The Florida Bar recognized the efforts of Leon County’s Drug Court program to pivot quickly and stay open while so many shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby keeping participants on the path to graduation. A-Life and Anchor quickly implemented social distancing measures, safe drug testing environments and zoom to continue individual and group counseling services. As a result of these herculean efforts, new participants were able to come into the program and existing members were able to successfully graduate and have the felony removed from their record. Club 25, a local civic organization, gifted the drug court treatment program pre-purchased gift cards to give each graduate as a show of support!

The Florida Bar and Tallahassee Democrat also recently recognized the efforts of team member Owen McCaul for his 23-years of dedicated time and service to treatment court, and his recent selection as the first alum to Chair the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind Board of Trustees. His tireless work ethic and experience have contributed significantly to the program’s success.

During this Drug Court Awareness Month, our community is well-served by the dedicated leadership of Judge Nina Ashenafi-Richardson and the Adult Felony Drug Court Team, who will continue to provide the services and care needed to help restore the lives of each participant in their effort for a second chance and new beginning.

And That’s The Way We Do It in the Second Judicial Circuit.

“Cel-e-brate, Cel-e-brate”

*By: Drug Court Coordinator Jackson Mack
Fifteenth Judicial Circuit*

The Drug Court Month celebration in the 15th Judicial Circuit was extra special this year, as they also celebrated the 20-year anniversary of Drug Court in Palm Beach County! Judge Charles Burton welcomed guests and participants to a graduation ceremony, featuring speakers and a proclamation from the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners.

Nearly 2,000 participants have successfully graduated from Drug Court in the 15th Judicial Circuit since 2001. Drug Court has changed our community and has saved lives. The Drug Court team did a great job continuing our mission throughout the pandemic, keeping our participants engaged and motivated even during such difficult times.

We thank all who joined us virtually as we celebrated National Drug Court Month!



Pictured from left to right: APD Sheldon Graves, Drug Court Manager Jackson Mack, Program Specialist Wesley Andre, Judge Charles Burton, ASA Bryan Poulton, Program Specialist Sheree Carter, Officer Lisa Collie

“Reflections from One of Florida's Drug Court Pioneers”

*By: Judge Ruth Becker-Painter
Sixteenth Judicial Circuit*



As I reflect on my 30 plus years on the bench since my election on September 4, 1990, I am so grateful that I was allowed to serve as an Acting Circuit Court Judge to preside over adult drug court in Marathon starting in 1995. I attended several seminars in Florida and graduated from the National Drug Court College at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. One of the most interesting points I learned was that while production of some pleasure chemicals in the brain were suppressed by chronic substance abuse, such was not the case for endorphins. This fact sparked my interest in starting an exercise program as a component of my participants recovery.

My husband and I were avid runners. We lead our group to the old 7 Mile Bridge where they were checked in by the DOC court officers and required to move! Some ventured to try a jog, some road a bike, but most walked. We continued the practice for many years, until construction began to repair the old bridge, and some personal issues interfered.

I was invited over the years to speak about my exercise program at several NADCP conferences around the country, usually in conjunction with an expert nutritionist. We had a contest in court to select a design for T shirts, resulting in the Judge Becker's Chain Breakers logo. The shirts were a sought-after commodity at conferences.

Several participants contacted me over the years to update me on their running activities. One story is particularly memorable. A young woman had been in and out of drug court, the last time as a member of the Jail In-house Program (JIP). When she was released after completing the program, she spent her canteen money on drugs and nearly over-dosed. She was rescued by her sister and moved to North Carolina. She wrote to me and sent pictures of herself and her sister at various local runs. I think it was about four years ago that I was running the annual 7 Mile Bridge Run. As we waited in the dark in the staging area before start time, who should I be standing next to but Darlene and her sister. She came to visit me at the courthouse the next week before heading home.

I have to say sadly there have been tragedies as well. One of my young women had also been in and out of drug court, including more than one pass through JIP. After her last graduation from JIP, she came to drug court on a Friday morning. After court she approached the bench. I could tell something was very wrong. She asked if she could send me flowers. I told her no, but certainly I would welcome a card from her. She had a very upsetting grin on her angelic face. The next Tuesday, she was scheduled to be in court to ask for a modification of her probation. When I called the case, the felony prosecutor asked to approach and gave me the heartbreaking news that she had died from an overdose. A second JIP graduate died in similar circumstances last year. There has been a horrible increase in the sale and use of heroin and fentanyl in more recent times.

As I near my retirement on July 30, 2021, I think it is most fitting that my last session will be Drug Court. It has been an incredible privilege to have served in this capacity and shared the joys and the sorrows of the journeys with my drug court people.

Sincerely,

Ruth Becker-Painter



The FADCP general membership meeting will not take place this year due to the court system's travel restrictions.

National Association of Drug Court Professionals

[NADCP 2021 Annual Conference](#)

NADCP's 28th Annual Drug Court Training Conference

Location: National Harbor, MD

Dates: August 15-18, 2021

NADCP provides training to over 6,000 treatment court professionals annually at its national conference – the largest training conference in the nation addressing substance abuse and mental health disorders in the justice system. RISE21 is specifically tailored to enhance the skills, leadership, and training of the treatment court team with approximately 180 cutting-edge sessions, opportunities to connect and learn from colleagues around the world. You will come away educated and energized! RISE21 offers courses for the new practitioner and team members who have been in the field for years. The sessions will be a blend of providing what to watch for now and in the future and practical ways to implement these concerns at a minimal cost. The focus will be on the highest risk areas given how stretched our resources are.



UPCOMING WEBINARS FOR ADULT DRUG COURTS

The OSCA has scheduled the following webinars on the topics you asked for through a Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant to provide training and technical assistance to Florida's adult drug courts on the Florida Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards. Relevant webinars are also being offered through the Florida Courts Opioid and Stimulant Initiative. Please take advantage of these educational opportunities!

- July 30 from 12:30-2:00 p.m. ET – Lived Experience Success Stories: Participants in Treatment & Recovery
- August 3 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. ET – When Sanctions (and Incentives) Don't Work: Responding to Addiction Driven Non-Compliance
- August 9 from 12:00-1:15 p.m. ET – Tall Cop – “High in Plain Sight”
- August 30 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. ET – Know Your Role: What You Do and What You Share
- September 3 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. ET – New Drug Threats: Latest on Stimulants & Opioids Crisis
- September 17 from 12:30-2:00 p.m. ET – Risk and Need: Implementing Multiple Tracks in Your Treatment Court Program
- September 24 from 12:30-2:00 p.m. ET – Latest Developments in Substance Use & Justice Setting Work
- September 30 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. ET – Developing Effective Treatment Plans for Persons with Co-occurring Disorders
- October 29 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. ET – Evaluation 101 for Non-Researcher Team Members: What to Collect and How to Use it for Self-Review

PLEASE ACCESS WEBINAR INFORMATION AT THE LINK BELOW

<https://www.flcourts.org/Resources-Services/Court-Improvement/Problem-Solving-Courts/Upcoming-Events>

FADCP SNIPPETS



FADCP MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

August 2021

WE WANT YOU!



We welcome Judge Rice and her team in Tampa, who have already joined the FADCP for 2021-22! We will send out FADCP membership information in mid-August for the 2021-22 cycle. Membership applications should be submitted in September so that we can close out the roster in October.

We look forward to having you join or renew your FADCP membership. We encourage drug court team members to become FADCP members. The FADCP value your input as we look forward to supporting you and your problem-solving courts. Your membership supports our statewide association - - the voice of Florida's problem-solving courts.

Drug Court and Other Problem-Solving Court Happenings and Resources

The Office of the State Courts Administrator is working to revamp its Problem-Solving Court related websites. Check out the latest information at the links below:

Problem-Solving Court Website:
[Problem-Solving Courts Resources](#)

Florida Courts Opioid and Stimulant Initiative (FCOSI):
[Opioid and Stimulant Initiative](#)

Visit the [FADCP Website](#) for more information on initiatives and training opportunities.