

Good essay about the effectiveness of drug courts

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



The increase in drug related cases calls for strict rehabilitation measures for offenders. The United States judiciary and other countries around the world developed the Drug Courts as a means of providing the necessary help for these offenders. As with all other rehabilitation measures, Drug Courts have failures and successes. In some cases, the Drug Courts are effective as they help to reduce recidivism, yet there are other instances where drug offenders constantly repeat their offences and leave critics to point to the system as a failure. The objective of this paper is to assess and evaluate the Drug Court system based on the arguments of different researchers. Some studies reveal that the cost of the Drug Courts is disproportionate to their success, while other merely analyzes the rate of success and failure in the system. In addition, the paper will show that the use of individually tailored treatment does not necessarily reduce individual drug reliance and the overall rates of recidivism.

The use of Drug Courts will undoubtedly undergo more changes as drug offenders repeatedly defy the court system for different reasons. Based on the explosion of the crack-cocaine in the 1980's, some states implemented a program to deal with the high rate of recidivism the courts. Conversely, this system offers a concentrated, community-based, supervised, treatment, and rehabilitation, for misdemeanor drug defendants. While the program is intensive and workable, there is room for improvement so that there is a reduction in the number of repeat offenders in the Drug Courts. At present, the three authors in the analysis shows that there is room for improvement in the way the Drug Court operates.

The introduction of the Drug Courts in The United States judiciary system

stems from three main concepts. These concepts include the rehabilitation of the participants, the reduction of the use of drugs, and the reduction of recidivism. Arguably, Drug Courts and the treatment programs of the Drug Courts are more effectual than the former incarceration of passive drug offenders. However, the introduction and use of drug courts are successfully combating the financial strain on the United States criminal justice system and the expenditure associated with incarceration. Drug courts are unique court dockets created to attain a decrease in substance abuse and recidivism in passive, substance abusing delinquents. Drugs Courts increase their possibilities for successful treatment or rehabilitation through the initial, constant, and concentrated treatment under judicial restrictions. In addition, Drug Courts offer compulsory episodic drug testing and uses the most suitable rehabilitation services and sanctions for the offenders.

In an article analyzing the success and failure of the Drug Treatment Courts, Caroline Cooper writes that the idea of “ failure” creates a number of problems that are often not applied to interventions among individuals that have other life threatening diseases, (Cooper, 2012, p. 1463). She believes that there are two main perspective of drug treatments as they relate to the Drug Courts. In addition, Cooper points out “ from a criminal justice perspective, an addict’s use of illegal drug is considered as a crime,” (Cooper, 2012, p. 1463), but “ from a medical perspective, this use is reflective of a chronic, relapsing brain disease that requires treatment,” (Cooper, 2012, 1463). Therefore, the Drug Courts serve as a medium to help to these drug offenders to rehabilitate. Cooper believes that the success and failure of the Drug Courts depends on the perspective from which one

analyzes the system. She notes that “ any situation of noncompliance with a court order, statute, or other directive is generally considered a “ failure” and this position would apply to a drug court participant’s use of illegal drugs,” (Cooper, 2012, p. 1463-1463).

Unlike Cooper and Dembo, Mitchell et. al carried out a research on “ Assessing the Effectiveness of Drug Courts on Recidivism.” Within this quasi-experimental research, the authors found a number of factors that suggests that there are weaknesses to the effectiveness of the Drug Courts. Mitchell et. al shares the views that “ the vast majority of adult drug courts evaluations find participants have lower recidivism than non-participants,” (Mitchell et. al, 2012, p. 60). In addition, they postulate that there is an increase in the number of drug courts around the world.

“ Originally, drug courts targeted adult, illicit substance users; yet, in recent years drug courts have been applied to non-traditional populations, namely juvenile illicit substance users and repeat DWI offenders,” Mitchell et. al, 2012, p. 60). A further reading of the article suggests that despite the increase in the popularity of the Drug Courts, there is much ambiguity in the actual effectiveness of their role in reducing recidivism. Mitchell et. al (2012) reveals that there are a number of issues that have not been addressed effectively as the methodology surrounding the reduction in recidivism are weakest among the most methodological evaluations, (p. 60).

In addition, Mitchell et. al looks at the long-term impact of Drug Court participation on recidivism. The issue of which court has the greatest effect is unclear in findings of Mitchell’s report. The authors suggest that prior reviews have not distinguished the effects of the recidivism in juvenile DWI

drug courts from those in the traditional adult courts, (Mitchell et. al, 2012, p. 60). Conversely, the authors “ emphasize that the program requirements for drug courts are often strict and clients are closely monitored for adherence to the demands of the program,” (Mitchell et. al, 2012, p. 61). The concerns of the authors are real as they believe that there are a number of issues that prevent a definite conclusion of the effectiveness of the Drug Courts on recidivism. Nonetheless, the findings revealed “ larger reductions in recidivism in adult drug courts [which] had high graduation rates,” (Mitchell, 2012, p. 60)

Dembo, Mitchell et. al, and Cooper look at the effectiveness of the Drug Courts from different perspectives. Dr. Cooper looks at the ways in which one can classify the success and failures of the Drug Court, and Dembo analyzes Cooper’s findings. Dembo makes recommendations for the ways that Cooper can improve on her analysis of the Drug Court treatment programs.

Arguably, Dembo agrees with Dr. Cooper’s evaluation of the two perspectives from which failure becomes an issue. Dembo finds that there are ways that the article could be improved to help the readers to understand the two perspectives. One could say that Dr. Cooper merely touches the surface of the problem while Mitchell et. al offers an in-depth analysis of the purpose and effect of the Drug Court system.

Of the three articles, Mitchell et. al gives a clearer understanding of the role of the Drug Courts. Dr. Cooper merely touches the tip of the problem, while Dembo provides recommendations for Dr. Cooper’s beliefs. Mitchell et. al provides the reader with the in-depth look at the strict measures that the clients encounter on their way to recovery. In fact, the authors provide a

more concrete analysis as they make constant references to the works of other researchers and uses statistics to solidify their points. One of the most outstanding references is the statistical report of Wilson et. al (2005) that suggests that the synthesized “ finding from fifty-five evaluations of drug courts for adults and juvenile offenders conclude that drug court participants have lower rates of recidivism than the offenders who have no connection to Drug Courts.

In concluding, there is a wide range of treatment plans for Drug offenders in the Drug Courts. The program includes outpatient, residential, and support groups and participants get help with education, housing, transportation, and employment. Nonetheless, there are individuals who repeat the offenses and this helps to justify Mitchell et. al findings that the program holds much promise, but need more experimental evaluations. One could argue that after reading the comprehensive review of Mitchell et. al, there is a growing concern about the effectiveness of the program after the initial success. Nonetheless, there is promise in the use of strict programs that help to reduce the number of drugs related users in the system. In many cases, the drug offenders face a number of negative social factors that help to steer them in the wrong direction. The fact that the judiciary body of the law seeks to provide financial, educational and social assistance to help keep drug offenders straight can never be a burden for the economy.

Conversely, the help that many of these offenders receive seek to eliminate the very factors that cause the problems with drugs. One can conclude that the Dug Court programs are effective as they help to reduce the rate of recidivism. There is no doubt that it costs more to house and feed

incarcerated persons as many of these individuals become a financial burden for decades. With the Drug Courts, drug offenders get the opportunity to make positive changes in their lives as they change and learn how to make a positive contribution to the economy. The truth is that the drug program revolutionizes the way drug users see life and decreases the rate of incarnations and recidivism.

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