

POARCH BAND OF CREEK INDIANS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians began their Drug Court in 1998 with federal funding from the U.S. Department of Justice. The Drug Court is a mature drug court today and at the time of evaluation had admitted 28 participants (two participants twice) with alcohol and drug-related offenses for treatment. Fifteen of the participants graduated, eight were terminated, and five were current participants. Recidivism measured by post-program alcohol or drug-related offenses is relatively low (32%). There is no statistically significant relationship between completion status and recidivism; graduates are as likely to reoffend as terminated participants. However, graduates appear to be slower to reoffend than terminated participants. More than a third of the participants have gone 2 or more years with no known recidivism.

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians' Drug Court has many strengths that outweigh the weaknesses in the program. They have a strong Drug Court team that has been open to trying new ways of doing things to improve the operation of the Drug Court. A review of the key components of the Drug Court shows the strengths are:

- Tolerance and respect for other team members' opinions,
- Core team stability,
- Compassionate and caring team,
- Decision to terminate participant done with due consideration,
- Participants drawn from several sources,
- Team members know potential participants,
- Cultural program integrated into Drug Court,
- Treatment as structure in participants' lives,
- Intensive monitoring during Phase I,

- Combined roles of counselor and probation officer,
- Recognition of phase advancement,
- Judge as team player,
- Judge's good relationship with participants,
- Case files well organized and well kept,
- Team attendance at national trainings during planning stage,
- Team attendance at national conferences to stay abreast,
- Mentor court to other tribes,
- Tribal council support, and
- Law enforcement integral part of team.

Yet, there is room for improvement. Further improvement and institutionalization of the Drug Court primarily lies in improving the integration of treatment and forming a steering committee including tribal and community leaders to extend the ownership of the Drug Court to the community. That way the Drug Court is something the community is doing rather than something the tribal court is doing.

The weaknesses in the program are:

- Poor communication between treatment providers and team,
- Staff meetings not regularly scheduled,
- No tribal leaders or elders on team,
- Program commitment not emphasized with potential participants,
- Program requirements not enforced,
- Program requirement changes applied retrospectively,
- No individualized treatment plan,

- Poor coordination of counseling,
- Available after-aftercare not utilized,
- Too little family involvement with treatment,
- Law enforcement officers not assisting in monitoring and supervision,
- Drug testing procedure and drug test results not documented,
- Too few incentives,
- No graduated schedule of sanctions and incentives,
- Drug Court case file information not automated,
- Lack of regular reviews,
- Repetitive training,
- Lack of written materials for cross-training and Drug Court institutionalization,
and
- No community-wide steering committee.

The pre-Drug Court recidivism rate is not known, but the relatively low recidivism rate of 32% provides evidence the Drug Court is achieving its goal of reducing recidivism. The positive changes seen in many of the Drug Court participants-increases in self-esteem and decreases in substance abuse behavior-are additional proof for successful rehabilitation. A major measure of success is the continued existence of the program after federal funding ceased.