



Family Drug Court Peer Learning Court Application

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Office of Justice Programs



ABOUT CHILDREN AND FAMILY FUTURES

The mission of Children and Family Futures is to improve the lives of children and families, particularly those affected by substance use disorders. CFF consults with government agencies and service providers to ensure that effective services are provided to families. CFF advises Federal, State, Tribal and local government and community-based agencies, conducts research on the best ways to prevent and address the problem, and provides comprehensive and innovative solutions to policy makers and practitioners.

Children and Family Futures is a leader in the Family Drug Court field and has been providing training and technical assistance to Family Drug Courts across the nation for the past ten years. Currently, CFF is working as both hands-on and web-based technical assistance provider and program evaluator for more than 70 Family Drug Courts, through contracts with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, and several County grants.

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OJJDP Family Drug Court Peer Learning Court Project

About Family Drug Courts

Family Drug Courts (FDC) oversee cases of child abuse and neglect involving parental substance use disorders. Their purpose is to protect child safety, ensure permanency in caregiving environments, and promote the well-being of children through family recovery. The court operates collaboratively, drawing on community partners' expertise in child welfare, substance abuse treatment and other community services to address the needs and build on the strengths of each family member. The partners ensure timely access to substance abuse treatment and other needed services for parents, children, and families through better communication and efficiencies across service systems. In comparison with standard services, FDC outcomes have shown that parents achieve faster access to substance abuse treatment, increased reunification rates and decreased re-entries to child welfare services (Children and Family Futures Inc, 2010). FDCs aid parents or guardians in regaining control of their lives and promote long term stabilized recovery to enhance the possibility of family reunification within mandatory legal timeframes (Huddleston, et al., 2005). This creates substantial cost savings.

About Family Drug Court Peer Learning Courts

Courts that are selected as a Family Drug Court Peer Learning Court (FDC PLC) will demonstrate their use of sound evidence-supported practices and policies, and demonstrate strong collaboration among the courts, child welfare, substance abuse treatment agencies and other partners. Peer Learning Courts will host visiting Family Drug Court professionals to view their FDC in action, and will share policies and practices, as well as lessons learned. The selected Peer Learning Courts will be geographically representative, with the goal of selecting programs regionally across the country to reduce the travel distance for those who wish to visit. To highlight the range of settings in which Family Drug Courts are successful, particular emphasis will be made to identify one rural and/or Tribal applicant as a Peer Learning Court.

Applications Due: April 30, 2012

Peer Learning Courts: Benefits and Expectations

Benefits: Once selected, Family Drug Court Peer Learning Courts will receive a range of benefits. These courts will receive national recognition identifying them as a leader in the Family Drug Court field and will have the opportunity to network with other Peer Learning Courts. They will receive support and priority access to training and technical assistance resources. Assistance in scheduling, coordinating, and materials production will be provided to all Peer Learning Courts to support the peer learning visits and up to a \$1000 stipend will be made available to offset any related costs. Additionally, Peer Learning Courts will receive travel scholarships for up to four team members to attend the SAMHSA sponsored "Family Drug Court Symposium" September 5-7, 2012 in Anaheim, California where they will receive a *Peer Learning Court of Excellence* award.

Expectations: Peer Learning Courts will be selected for a two-year term, contingent on Federal funding. These courts will be responsible for hosting two to four visiting court teams annually and for providing an opportunity for visitors to view their Family Drug Court proceedings and staffing session. These visits will typically be one day in length and will include a wrap-up session where the entire team will meet with the visitors to answer questions and debrief the court session. Peer Learning Courts will be periodically asked to participate in webinars and may be highlighted in publications. Peer Learning Courts will also be asked to share their operational documents. Also, a team of four will be expected to attend and participate in the 2012 Family Drug Court Symposium. Peer Learning Courts will be expected to maintain operations consistent with current best practices and will be provided technical assistance and materials as needed.

Selection Process & Criteria

Submitted applications will be peer reviewed and scored by Family Drug Court professionals, and will then undergo an internal review process after which the highest scoring applications will receive a site visit.

Family Drug Courts applying to become a Peer Learning Court must possess the following qualifications:

Length of Operation: Must be operational a minimum of three years.

Evaluation: Must have had at least one independent process and outcome evaluation completed on their program within the last five years focusing on parent substance abuse treatment, child welfare, and court outcomes. Preference will be given to sites who've used a comparison group in their data analysis, and who have cost information included in their evaluation.

Scale: Must provide information (within the jurisdiction) on the annual (a) number of substantiated abuse and neglect reports, (b) number of new open cases, (c) number of removal cases, (d) of these the number affected by substance abuse, and (e) of these how many parents and children are being served in the Family Drug Court.

Scope: Must be serving parents, children and family members comprehensively through gender-specific, developmentally appropriate, family-centered service delivery addressing parental substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence and trauma issues of all family members.

Collaboration: Must have a well-established core team including the courts, child welfare and treatment provider(s), as well as other service providers and attorneys.

Applicants should consider the following concepts when completing their applications. These elements provide a foundation for Family Drug Court practice, and while no FDC may have achieved all of these benchmarks, they provide a framework for an applicant's response.

Mission, Vision and Values

- The FDC has included the judicial officers, attorneys, child welfare, substance abuse treatment providers as well as other service providers as partners in the development of the FDC.
- The FDC has negotiated shared principles or goal statements that reflect a consensus on issues related to families with substance abuse-related problems in child welfare and the dependency court.
- The FDC has discussed and developed responses to the conflicting time frames associated with the child welfare system, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), substance abuse treatment and child development.
- The FDC has a process in place to revisit mission, vision and values on an annual basis, taking into consideration new team members.

Early Client Identification and Assessment

- The FDC has developed a joint substance abuse treatment-child welfare system-dependency court policy on its approach to standardized screening and assessment of substance abuse issues among families in child welfare.
- The FDC has developed coordinated substance abuse treatment and child welfare case plans, based on assessment results.
- The FDC supplements child abuse/neglect risk assessment with an in-depth assessment of substance abuse issues and their impact on each of the family members, including the children.
- The FDC's substance abuse treatment providers have sufficient information about the child welfare case to conduct quality assessments of families referred by child welfare to treatment.

Client Engagement, Accountability and Behavior Change

- The FDC has implemented integrated case plans that include the substance abuse recovery plan integrated or coordinated with the child welfare case plan.
- The FDC understands what motivates behavior change and how to apply those principles when working with and responding to client behavior.
- Client relapse and other risk indicators typically lead to an FDC intervention to re-engage the client in treatment and to re-assess child safety.
- The FDC ensures that substance abuse treatment and other services are:
 - Evidenced Based
 - Gender specific
 - Culturally relevant
 - Geographically accessible
 - Family focused, and
 - Trauma Informed

Addressing the Needs of Children

- The FDC has implemented substance abuse prevention and early intervention services for the children of parents in the FDC.
- The FDC ensures that children of parents in the FDC have a comprehensive mental health assessment that includes screening for developmental delays and neurological effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol and other drugs, the emotional and mental effects of their parents substance use and, if placed in out-of-home care, the separation experience.
- The FDC has developed a range of programs for children of parents in the FDC that are targeted on the special developmental needs of these children.
- The FDC is familiar with national models of prevention and intervention for substance abuse-affected children.

Developing Interagency Partnerships

- Clinical services to address mental health and trauma issues are included in comprehensive assessments and case plans for all families participating in the FDC.
- Domestic violence advocacy and services are included in comprehensive assessment and case plans for all families participating in the FDC.
- The FDC staff knows how to identify and link families with the support services that are frequently needed by clients (e.g., transportation, child care, employment, housing) and has established relationships with service providers.
- The FDC coordinates with law enforcement and community supervision professionals to meet the needs of clients and their children in the criminal justice system (e.g., visitation for children with incarcerated parents, treatment while parents are incarcerated).

Effective Communication for Information Sharing

- The FDC has an established practice of staffing cases prior to court for an up-to-date exchange and discussion of information.
- The partners in the FDC have agreed on the level of information about clients' progress in treatment that will be communicated from treatment agencies to the FDC.
- The FDC has identified the confidentiality provisions that affect child welfare-substance abuse treatment and dependency court connections and has devised the means of sharing information about parents, children and families in treatment with the FDC team, while observing these regulations.
- All FDC team members and the parent are aware of what information will be shared and with whom.

Ensuring Interdisciplinary Knowledge

- The FDC team receives training and education on working with substance abuse-affected families in the child welfare system; the training includes gender-specific and trauma training.
- The FDC has developed joint training programs for substance abuse treatment, child welfare, court staff and providers to learn effective methods of working together.

- The FDC has a multi-year staff development plan that includes periodic updates to the training and orientation.
- The FDC has training and educational programs that include cultural issues to improve the team's cultural competency in working with diverse substance abuse treatment-child welfare client groups.

Garnering Community Support for Families

- The FDC has developed strategies to recruit broad community participation in addressing the needs of the FDC-involved families.
- Consumers, parents in recovery and program graduates have an active role in planning, developing, implementing and monitoring services in the FDC.
- The FDC has developed a formal mechanism to solicit support and input from community members and consumers.
- Youth and former foster children/youth have an active role in planning, developing, implementing and monitoring services in the FDC.

Funding and Sustaining Family Drug Court

- The FDC's partners (child welfare system, substance abuse treatment agencies and dependency courts) are able and willing to share information about each other's budgets.
- The FDC has implemented joint funding projects (i.e., braided/blended funding).
- The FDC has a community outreach and education plan to further sustainability efforts.
- The FDC has sought funding to take the program to the scale of operations needed to meet the demand for these services.

Ongoing Evaluation for Shared Outcomes and Accountability

- The FDC has identified shared system outcomes and has developed them with child welfare and substance abuse treatment partners.
- The FDC has developed shared individual outcomes for child welfare-substance abuse involved families and have agreed on how to use this information to inform policy leaders.
- The FDC clients are referred to child development and parenting education programs that have demonstrated positive results with this population.
- The FDC team shares accountability for successful treatment and child safety/permanency outcomes for their mutual clients.

Application Process

Established Family Drug Courts are invited to apply to become a Peer Learning Court. Only applications that address the requirements and that provide a thoughtful assessment of the program's strengths and challenges will be considered. In no way are Peer Learning Courts expected to be perfect or devoid of problems; however successful applicants will describe the manner in which they are addressing the challenges they face.

I. Technical Requirements

The application must be double-spaced, using a standard 12-point font with 1-inch margins, and should not exceed 18 pages. Please number pages "1 of 18" "2 of 18," etc.

The following sections must be submitted for the application to be complete:

II. Applicant Information Page (One page—not part of the 18 page limit)

Applicant: [Court Name, Address, Phone, Fax]

Lead Judge: [Name of judicial contact]

Contact: [Name, Address, Phone, Fax, Email]

County/Jurisdiction Population:

III. Peer Learning Court Application (Total Page Limit: 18)

A. *Description* (2 pages of 18 page limit)

1. First Date of Operation:
2. Briefly describe your jurisdiction.
3. Capacity: [How many parents/children/families can be served at one time]
4. Current Participation: [How many parents/children/families are currently active in the program]
5. Number of parents/children/families served since program began and how many graduates.
6. Current Child Welfare Population in your jurisdiction. [How many children in Out of Home Care]
7. Scale: provide information (within the jurisdiction) on the annual (a) number of substantiated abuse and neglect reports, (b) number of new open cases, (c) number of removal cases, and (d) of these, the number affected by substance abuse. Please provide the source of the information.
8. FDC Model: [Integrated or Parallel] If using a Parallel Model, how are children's services integrated? (See Appendix A)
9. Describe any plans for expansion—what is your five year plan for growth?

B. *Operations* (10 pages of 18 page limit)

1. Describe your eligibility criteria, including any exclusionary criteria.
2. Explain and list how your Family Drug Court is utilizing evidence supported practices.
3. Describe your treatment and service provision to both parents and children, and how team members and partners facilitate this process. If you are selected as a Peer Learning Court, how will this be demonstrated to the FDC professionals visiting? Include a discussion of the breadth of services available to parents and children including screening, assessment and individualized case planning. Discuss how evidence-based treatment services are incorporated into your program. Include any evaluation findings that illustrate these descriptions.
4. Describe the leadership of your program, demonstrated through the judge and others on the team.
5. What are the characteristics of your program that make it an example of excellence in the field? What challenges does your program face?
6. How does your Family Drug Court fit in with parallel initiatives in your jurisdiction (health care reform, etc.)
7. Provide current and historical budget information, including sources of program support.

C. *Organizational Capacity* (4 pages of 18 page limit)

1. Please list operational team members, their titles and credentials and how long they have been working in the Family Drug Court.
2. What changes have occurred since the program became operational, and how have you addressed these changes?
3. What is your governance structure and how are program policy decisions made? Do you have a steering committee and what agencies are represented?

D. *Logistics* (2 page of 18 page limit)

1. When is the Family Drug Court held—both staffing and court proceedings? [Day and Time]
2. Which team members attend staffing and/or court proceedings?
3. How many visitors can you host at one time?
4. How often would you be able to host a visit?
5. Please provide the name of the nearest airport and the distance to the court. What are the available modes of transportation to access the court?

IV. Required Attachments (No Page Limit)

1. Completed Signature Page “acknowledgement of joint application”, signed by Presiding Judge, Child Welfare Director and Treatment Provider Representative (see Appendix B)
2. Family Drug Court Policy and Procedure Manual
3. Family Drug Court Program Evaluation
4. Family Drug Court Client/Parent Handbook
5. Existing Memoranda of Understanding/Memoranda of Agreement currently in place
6. Any other documents or forms that support the application

Applications Due: April 30, 2012

Submission Details: All applications must be submitted by email to PeerLearningCourts@cffutures.org with the following Subject line: “[JURISDICTION NAME]: PLC APPLICATION”.

Please direct questions about the application process to PeerLearningCourts@cffutures.org

Answers to questions submitted during the application process will be posted on the CFF website: <http://www.cffutures.org/projects/family-drug-courts>

Appendix A: Family Drug Court Models¹

Integrated Family Drug Courts - In the integrated model, one family court judge oversees both the dependency-related petitions and the compliance with substance abuse treatment orders. This judge has primary responsibility for the child welfare case. The judge may preside over each of the court hearings from the initial temporary custody proceeding through the final disposition of the case, including termination of parental rights and adoption proceedings. Examples of the integrated model include the FDCs in Jackson County, Missouri; Suffolk County, New York; Denver, Colorado and Washoe County, Nevada.

Parallel Family Drug Courts - In a parallel FDC, the dependency case proceedings regarding the child abuse/neglect issues including aspects of visitation and permanency are conducted on a regular family/dependency court docket. The parent is offered specialized court services and a specialized court officer hears the compliance reviews and manages the recovery aspects of the case throughout the parent's participation in the family drug court. Examples of the parallel model include FDCs in Pima County, Arizona, Riverside County and Sacramento County, California.

¹ Young, N. K., Wong, M., Adkins, T., & Simpson, S. (2003). *Family Drug Treatment Courts: Process documentation and retrospective outcome evaluation*; Children and Family Futures. Irvine, CA.

Appendix B: Signature Page

We jointly submit this Peer Learning Court application for consideration. To the best of our knowledge the information contained herein is true and accurate.

Presiding Judge
Name (typed or printed)

Signature

Date

Child Welfare Director
Name (typed or printed)

Signature

Date

Treatment Provider Representative
Name (typed or printed)

Signature

Date