



# PEER LEARNING COURT PROGRAM

## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPENDENCY DRUG COURT

### LEAD AGENCY

**Miami-Dade County  
Dependency Drug  
Court**

### LOCATION

**Miami, Florida**

### FIRST DATE OF OPERATION

**August 2004**

### CAPACITY

**Adults: 75**

### NUMBER OF GRADUATES TO DATE

**Adults: 333**

### NUMBER SERVED

**Adults: 700**  
**Children: 2100**  
(estimated average)

### MODEL

**Integrated**

### DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>1</sup>

**Population: 2,662,874**  
**Children under 18:**  
553,877  
**Persons below  
poverty level: 529,911**

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

In its 15 years of operation, Miami-Dade Dependency Drug Court (DDC) has evolved into a leader in the local and national community. The DDC provides early intervention and immediate, concerted treatment to parents with an open dependency case and who are affected by substance use disorders.

The DDC has successfully developed collaborative partnerships and combines resources that provide maximum support to parents trying to gain control of their alcohol and/or drug use problems. The DDC offers heightened supervision provided by the court; therapeutic interventions by DDC staff and treatment service providers; and peer support services that encourage parents to fully engage with the program. The collaborative effort of the DDC is designed increase the reunifications of families within statutory time frames.

DDC began operations with independent contractors (Drug Court Specialists) assigned to the program and a collaborative partnership with the Department of Children and Families. The Drug Court Specialists are now full-time employees and provide case management. Partnerships with community agencies have allowed the DDC to expand program services to meet the needs of its participants.

A unique feature of the Miami-Dade DDC is the Miami-Dade Community Based Care Alliance (CBC), which oversees the privatized child welfare system for Miami-Dade County. The privatized, local nature of Miami’s child welfare system creates a flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation that are rare in the provision of child welfare services. The CBC partners with the Dependency Drug Court to engage the child welfare community, system stakeholders, and community partners, identifying and addressing system challenges and barriers that impact outcomes for children and families in Miami-Dade.

<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2013). State and County Quick Facts. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/12086.html>

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## PROGRAM GOALS

The goal of the Miami-Dade County DDC is to provide safe, permanent homes to children by helping primary custodians live a drug-free life and assume the full responsibilities of parenthood. The program provides effective, evidence-based, interventions and addresses concurrent substance abuse and child maltreatment problems. These practices are essential for permanency planning and decreasing recurrence of maltreatment.

## TARGET POPULATION

To be eligible for DDC, the participant must be the primary custodian in a dependency petition, present with a substance use disorder, and volunteer for the program. Parents who are alleged to be sexual perpetrators, are incompetent, or are suffering from an unstabilized, severe mental disorder or have an advanced terminal illness are excluded. Those parents with a history of violent offenses or who are on methadone maintenance programs are considered on an individual basis.

## PROGRAM SERVICES

Individuals assessed as requiring treatment are admitted to a treatment unit on the same day or as quickly as is possible. DDC parents have access to varying levels of substance abuse treatment including co-occurring and gender responsive; intensive outpatient; and in-patient.

Additionally, substance use treatment agencies in the community provide development components emphasizing daily life skills, how to access community resources and strategies to maintain a drug-free and crime-free lifestyle. Providers also address trauma and mental health issues. Aftercare services that promote sustained recovery after completion of inpatient or intensive outpatient treatment are also provided.

## PLC DESCRIPTION



***Children and Family Futures has identified best-practice models from across the nation and designated them as mentor sites called Peer Learning Courts. These exemplary programs are willing to help further education about Family Drug Courts through peer-to-peer technical assistance.***

***Peer Learning Courts provide:***

- ***Consultation***
- ***Site Visits***
- ***Sharing of Program Policies & Procedures***
- ***Peer-to-Peer Virtual Learning Opportunities***
- ***Developing Technical Assistance Action Plans***
- ***Operational tune-ups***

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The DDC utilizes the research-based *Engaging Moms* case management model. *Engaging Moms* is Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy focused on helping mothers with substance use disorders enter and remain in treatment. Evidence-based parenting classes, which include pre/post testing, as well as observational sessions between parent and child, are the standard practice. The goal of these efforts is to utilize the science of child development and parenting skills through evidence-based curricula that measure change and promote positive outcomes for children and families. Additionally, the DDC offers *Seeking Safety*, an evidence-based therapy to help people attain safety from trauma/PTSD. *Seeking Safety* is utilized within the residential substance abuse treatment centers.

Psychological and psychiatric assessments are conducted on an as-needed basis, followed by the provision of specialized therapy to address indicated psychopathology, appropriate pharmacological interventions, and monitoring by practitioners recognized by appropriate state or local authorities

The DDC Specialists provide the critical link between the parent, the treatment provider, and the court. They use strategies that involve family members and/or significant others in the treatment process in an effort to keep parents actively engaged and supported.

DDC also encourages the use of peers as mentors and sponsors, and strong linkages to self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).

## KEY OUTCOMES

A three-year evaluation study was conducted in 2013 and provided the findings below:

Overall, participant recruitment and retention efforts have been successful. DDC has far exceeded its initial annual goal of 40 participants per year.

Over the grant period, 94 out of 212 participants (44.3%) successfully completed the DDC program, 50 participants (23.6%) were still active in DDC, and 5 participants (2.4%) considered not appropriate for DDC, resulting in a 70% retention rate.

## OPERATIONS: HIGHLIGHTS

### Evidence Supported Practices

- Engaging Moms
- Seeking Safety
- Peer Recovery
- Hand N Hand Parenting

### Services for Children

- Developmental Assessments & Screening
- Psychological/psycho-educational assessments
- Children's Counseling
- Parent-Child Psychotherapy

### Substance Abuse Treatment for Parents

- Intensive and Extended Outpatient
- Intensive Inpatient
- Co-Occurring and Gender-Responsive Treatment
- Detoxification treatment
- Medication Assisted Programs

### Screening and Assessment

- Addiction Severity Index (ASI)
- Psychological/psychiatric assessments, as needed
- Trauma Screening
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (Children)

### Highlights

- Child care provision at treatment facilities (where appropriate)

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One hundred forty-seven out of 212 participants were administered drug screens to establish a 90-day baseline period. They also were administered drug screens after a minimum of 30 days post baseline (i.e., a minimum of 120 days in total).

Of the 147 participants who were tested, 78.9% exhibited a positive outcome, meaning decreased, or no substance abuse.

Of the 392 children of DDC participants, 256 (64.8%) achieved permanency. Sole Custody was the most frequent type of placement (42.2%).

Overall, based on satisfaction survey results, clients of DDC are satisfied with their experience of DDC. Program components found to be most helpful included the availability of DDC Specialists, recovery support, access, and engagement in services, and the development of a trusting relationship with those involved in the client's case.

## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN VISITING MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DDC?

### Day and Time of Court Hearings:

Mondays at 1:30 PM and Thursdays at 11:30 AM, Drug Court staffings with core team members, excluding the Drug Court Judge, take place on Tuesdays at 12:30 PM

### Hosting Availability:

Once per quarter

### Visitor Capacity:

5-10 people

### Nearest Airport:

Miami International Airport

## KEY PARTNERS AND AGENCIES

### Child Welfare & Services for Children

- Depart of Children and Families
- Community Based Care Alliance (CBC)
- Our Kids of Dade and Monroe, Inc.
- Guardian Ad-Litem
- Linda Ray Intervention Center

### Substance Abuse & Mental Health

- South Florida Behavioral Health Network (SFBHN)
- An array of community treatment providers

### Courts

- Parents' Attorneys
- Child's Attorney
- Attorney General's Office

### Other

- Family Resource Center

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

### PROGRAM COORDINATOR

#### **ELIETTE DUARTE**

Miami Dade Children's Courthouse

155 N.W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, #5335  
Miami, FL 33128

Phone: (305) 679-1616

### JUDGE

#### **HONORABLE JERI B. COHEN**

Miami Dade Children's Courthouse

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*This project is supported by Award No. 2013-DC-BX-K002, awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs.*