OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The goal of the Tulsa County Family Drug Court (FDC) is to provide services to parents who have had their children removed from the home due to substance use issues and to give parents the skills they need to reach sobriety and reunite with their children. All Tulsa FDC clients have been identified as high risk and high needs and diagnosed with a substance use disorder (SUD).

Through partnerships with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Centers for Therapeutic Interventions (CTI), Tulsa FDC provides substance use treatment, life skills training, parenting classes, peer mentoring, and wraparound style services along with frequent court interaction to treat FDC families. When participants complete the program, they are expected to reunite with their children and live sober, secure, and stable lives with the tools they need to prevent recidivism.

Tulsa FDC also serves the spouses and significant others of FDC participants in a separate, specialized docket. Tulsa FDC helps significant others to gain an understanding about the nature of their partner’s SUD and to learn how to be a strong support for their partner in early recovery.

Over the years, the Tulsa FDC program has evolved from a phase-based system that centered on attending treatment and time of sobriety to the current milestone approach. The milestone approach is tied to individual progress, life skills building, and substance use treatment. Clients must complete a set of activities to show proficiency in life skills and demonstrate a readiness to move on to the next milestone. The significant other track also requires life skills proficiency, sobriety, treatment, and partners must demonstrate readiness to move on to their next milestone.

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TULSA COUNTY

PROGRAM GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Tulsa County FDC’s primary goal is to assist participants in attaining and maintaining sobriety. The secondary goal of FDC is to give the originating deprived court reliable and verifiable evidence of the clients’ sobriety, or lack thereof, during their participation in FDC and during the pendency of the deprived case, giving confidence to any court order of reunification of children and parents, and to any court decision for termination of parental rights or successful closure of the deprived case.

TARGET POPULATION & ELIGIBILITY

Tulsa FDC’s eligibility criteria consists of:

- Tulsa County deprived court case in which substance use is a primary factor for the removal of the child
- Diagnosed SUD (or be the live-in spouse or significant other of an FDC participant)
- Participant must stipulate to the allegations in the State’s petition regarding alcohol or substance use
- Willing to seek treatment
- Willing to follow all FDC policies, procedures, and protocol
- High risk of recidivism and have high needs demonstrated by the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) assessment

Potential exclusionary criteria include the following:

- Pending felony charge that could interfere with their participation in the program
- Must not have a sex offense history and must not have depravity included as part of the petition
- Cognitive impairments or mental health disorders that would make them unable to function in the program

PLC DESCRIPTION

Center for 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
Child welfare caseworkers most often initiate entry into the Tulsa County FDC. DHS identifies potential participants who meet the FDC eligibility criteria and provide a referral to the FDC Administrator.

The FDC Administrator receives the referral, makes initial contact with the parent, and schedules an in-person interview. During the interview, the client must state that they have a substance use issue.

After the initial interview, participants receive a referral to CTI for a thorough SUD assessment. Assessment tools consist of, the Addiction Severity Index (ASI), Oklahoma Determination of ASAM Service Level (ODASL), Texas Christian University Drug Screen, Behavior and Symptom Identification Scale (BASIS-32), Mental Health Screening III, Posttraumatic Checklist (PCL-C), and the ORAS by a trained professional. CTI generates a comprehensive report that is also combined with criminal and background information to create the “Prospective Client Report.” Through this report, risk and needs are highlighted and identified.

The referral to FDC is made as early as possible in the court process, ideally no later than the filing announcement. However, clients who are referred later in the process may still be considered for the program. The DHS workers and FDC administrator try to initiate the process quickly. Clients are encouraged to engage in services as soon as they are assessed by CTI, even clients that do not end up as FDC participants may still receive services through CTI.

The FDC and its partners work to ensure that parents obtain timely access to treatment by encouraging the parents to begin treatment as soon as they are assessed, even if they have not been adjudicated. This can occur as early as the filing phase of the deprived court case.

Tulsa FDC utilizes peer support mentors trained by the Oklahoma Family Network (that are picked from our graduates and/or advanced clients) and Family Support Specialist that is a certified Recovery Support Specialist and works directly for the court. The Family Support Specialist checks up on clients at their homes, helps with life skills education, and is a general support for
clients. Our Family Support Specialist gives the team personal insight into addiction, which aids the team when dealing with a client’s problems. The peer support mentors are clients that are advanced in the program or graduates that are then trained by Oklahoma Family Network (OFN) to offer support to their peers. They further receive backing from an OFN worker that can help them find more resources for clients in need.

Once in the program, FDC participants utilize a milestone system for promotion. There are five milestones, each with a corresponding colored wristband (or “belt”) that the client is given to wear. The colors are modeled after the Judo concept and are white, yellow, green, brown, and black. Participants are given a white wristband upon signing in to the FDC and are taught that the other milestones will be earned through successful progress in the program. Participants are also provided the client handbook with all the promotion requirements and life skills activities for each milestone.

After participants graduate, they may still receive support. There is an alumni group known as “Parent After Care” (PAC). PAC is a social organization sponsored by the FDC and managed by current and graduated participants that offer social gatherings and a way to reach out for support. Many participants grow close as they progress due to mentoring and groups and they may continue to offer advice and sponsorship to each other as well as provide a family friendly gathering at their events.

**KEY OUTCOMES**

In 2016, the Tulsa County FDC program had a 36% graduation rate. Of the graduates, 93% resulted in successful reunification with their child or children and seven of eight babies born to FDC participants went home with their parents at birth as opposed to foster care. In 2015, Tulsa FDC outcomes were published in the *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* (Brook, Akin, Lloyd, Yan, 2015). The study showed the following key outcomes:

- FDC-involved cases were nearly twice as likely to reunify after controlling for other variables known to impact child welfare outcomes, and did so hundreds of days more quickly

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**Highlights**

- Wraparound Services
- Alumni Association, “Parent After Care” (PAC) Program

**KEY PARTNERS AND AGENCIES**

**Child Welfare & Services for Children**

- Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS)
- CASA
- Parent Child Center of Tulsa

**Substance Use Disorder & Mental Health**

- Center for Therapeutic Interventions (CTI)
- Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS)

**Courts**

- Tulsa County Family Center for Juvenile Justice
- Parents’ Attorneys
- Child’s Attorney
- Attorney General’s Office

**Parent Support**

- Oklahoma Family Network (OFN)
FDCs with the inclusion of two evidence-based parenting programs (Celebrating Families! and Strengthening Families Program) and may offer a timelier route to reunification for families in the child welfare system due to parental substance use than traditional dependency courts.
Tulsa County

Are You Interested in Visiting Tulsa County FTC?

Day and Time of Court Hearings:
Thursday
- Staffing – 8:30 AM
- Women’s Court – 10:30 AM
- Men’s Court – 3:00 PM

Hosting Availability:
Quarterly

Visitor Capacity:
2 people

Nearest Airport:
Tulsa International Airport (TUL)

Contact Information

Program Supervisor

William Anderson
Tulsa County Superior Court, Family Court Operations, Family Treatment Court
315 S. Gilcrease Museum Rd.
Tulsa, OK 74127
Phone: 918-596-5932

Judge

Judge Martha Rupp-Carter
Tulsa County Superior Court, Family Court Operations, Family Treatment Court
315 S. Gilcrease Museum Rd.
Tulsa, OK 74127
Phone: 918-596-5904

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