

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS DRUG COURTS PROGRAM OFFICE  
FACT SHEET

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Overview

Title V of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322) authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to states, state courts, local courts, units of local government, and Indian tribal governments to establish drug courts. That authority has been delegated to the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs (OJP).

The OJP Drug Courts Program Office was established to administer the drug court grant program and to provide financial and technical assistance, training, related programmatic guidance, and leadership. In conjunction with other federal agencies, especially the National Institute of Justice, the Drug Courts Program Office also will conduct comparative evaluations of drug court programs to identify the most effective program elements and designs to combat drug abuse and crime.

In FY 1995, Congress appropriated \$29 million for the Drug Court Grant program, but then reduced the funding level to \$11.9 million through the rescissions bill.

Background

Because our criminal justice system often fails to subject nonviolent, substance-abusing adult and juvenile offenders to intervention measures that provide the sanctions and services necessary to change their deviant behaviors, many of these individuals repeatedly cycle through our courts, corrections, and probation systems.

To address this problem some communities have established drug courts. Local coalitions of judges, prosecutors, attorneys, law enforcement officials, and others are using the coercive power of the court to force abstinence and alter behavior with a combination of escalating sanctions, mandatory drug testing, treatment, and strong aftercare programs to teach responsibility and to transition offenders back into the community. Drug courts represent one of few, recent criminal justice initiatives that has started at the grassroots level and spread across the nation. There are over 30 programs now in operation and many more in the planning and early implementation stages.

A study sponsored by the National Institute of Justice of the nation's first drug court in Miami, Florida showed a 33 percent reduction in rearrests for drug court graduates compared with non-drug court offenders. Preliminary results from the Portland, Oregon and Oakland, California drug court programs have also indicated lower rates of recidivism.

The Drug Courts Grant Program

OJP received 130 grant applications from 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia requesting funding totaling over \$59 million. Recent rescission action by Congress, however, has significantly reduced the number of awards possible under this program. The Crime Law authorizes a total of \$971 million for

the Drug Courts Discretionary Grant Program for Fiscal Years 1996-2000. The Attorney General has requested that Congress appropriate \$150 million for FY 1996.

FY 1995 funds are for three purposes: planning, implementing or enhancing drug court programs. Approximately 50 planning grants will be awarded to those jurisdictions interested in developing plans for a drug court. These grants may be for up to \$35,000 for an 8-month period.

Implementation grants will go to approximately five jurisdictions committed to developing a drug court program and that have identified their target populations and case processing procedures. These grants may be for up to \$2 million for an 18-month period. Finally, about seven sites, which have established drug courts and want to improve the delivery of and/or add services to their drug court programs, will receive enhancement grants of up to \$1 million for an 18-month period.

Grant recipients must provide a 25 percent cash match, and federal funds must be used to supplement and not supplant other federal, state or local funds. Grant recipients also must conduct a process evaluation that will provide information to improve the program design. In addition, recipients of implementation and enhancement grants are required to participate in a national evaluation of the Drug Court Grant Program to be conducted by the National Institute of Justice.

Programs must:

- o Target nonviolent substance-abusing offenders;
- o Involve mandatory periodic drug testing during any period of supervised release or probation;
- o Provide substance abuse treatment for each participant;
- o Include the possibility of prosecution, confinement, or incarceration based on noncompliance with program requirements or failure to show satisfactory progress;
- o Provide strong aftercare services, such as relapse prevention, health care, education, vocational training, job placement, housing placement, and child care or other family support services for each participant who requires such services.

Awards will be granted on a geographically equitable basis that will address the needs of smaller jurisdictions, as well as large urban centers. Grantees in federally designated Empowerment Zones or Enterprise Communities will coordinate their drug court effort within the designated area.

For Further Information:

Drug Courts Program Office  
Office of Justice Programs  
(202) 616-5001

Drug Courts Clearinghouse  
The American University  
(202) 885-2875

National Criminal Justice Reference Service  
(800) 688-4252

U.S. Department of Justice Response Center  
(800) 421-6770

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