



Therapeutic Courts

Objective:

Ensure fair and accessible justice systems

Strategy:

Provide therapeutic courts such as mental health and drug courts

Why is this strategy important?

King County has been a leader in providing therapeutic court options within the adult criminal, juvenile offender, and juvenile dependency systems. King County was among the first jurisdictions in the country to implement each of its four therapeutic courts: Adult Drug Court, Juvenile Drug Court (Juvenile Offender) and Family Treatment Court (Juvenile Dependency); and District Court's Regional Mental Health Court and Veterans Court.

Each of these therapeutic courts combines the resources of the justice system and the human service system to promote recovery, reduce recidivism, and improve the lives of the participating individuals and their families, thereby addressing the underlying issue promoting criminal behavior. Reductions in recidivism reduce the need for expensive justice and emergency service resources, saving taxpayer money and improve the safety of our communities. Providing alternative programs for certain types of cases also is an important means of delivering justice while making efficient use of government resources. Diverting individuals from the criminal court system when possible provides better rehabilitation for those individuals and saves taxpayer money.

Many juveniles referred to juvenile court are first or second time offenders who commit offenses such as shoplifting, malicious mischief, or possession of alcohol. These youth may be eligible for an alternative to formal court processing known as "diversion." Diversion is provided by the court's Partnership for Youth Justice Program. After the prosecutor reviews the case and determines that the youth is eligible for diversion, the case is referred to the program. If both the youth and the program agree to diversion, the youth meets with a Community Accountability Board (CAB) made up of volunteers from the community or other community agency. The CAB and the youth enter into a written agreement about what consequences will be imposed for the youth's behavior. The agreement may include restitution to the victim, community restitution work (i.e. community service), a fine, counseling, informational or educational classes, and other options. State law defines the types and extent of consequences that that may be imposed. If the youth does not want to participate in diversion or fails to comply with the agreement, the case is referred back to the prosecutor for filing of charges.

King County District Court has a Relicensing Program to assist individuals with a suspended drivers' license. The program is being held in two locations: West Division in the Seattle Courthouse and the South Division in the Burien Courthouse. The King County Prosecutor's Office

offers an invitation to enroll in the Relicensing Program in lieu of filing the criminal charges of Driving While License Suspended in the Third Degree and No Valid Operator's License. Individuals are able to pay for their outstanding fines through payment plans or King County's Community Work Program, managed by the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention, Community Corrections Division.

How is our performance?

Therapeutic courts have had variable graduation or completion rates, with averages of slightly over 50 percent. In general, King County therapeutic courts serve fewer numbers of participants. The numbers served by each program varies year to year and are determined by many factors such as police emphasis, filing of dependency petitions, and prosecutor filing practices.

For example, In October 2008, the King County Prosecutor changed the Filing and Disposition Standards (FADS) such that low-level drug felonies were filed as "expedited felonies" in District Court, rather than as felonies in Superior Court as had been the policy. As a result of this change, individuals charged with low-level drug possession, which were a large component of the population of Adult Drug Court, were no longer eligible. This change reduced the program's active caseload by 30 percent between 2008 and 2010. In 2010, the criteria for Adult Drug Court were expanded to increase enrollment in the program.

Adult Drug Court cases are considered successful if the defendant is retained in the program or graduated one year following enrollment. King County Juvenile Drug Court operates with the same definitions. King County Family Treatment Court participants are considered successful if their case was discharged due to graduation, dismissal of dependency, relinquishment or termination of parental rights. It is important to note that King County Family Treatment Court, which saw a spike in successful completions in 2009, generally tracks success of the program by averaging the quarterly successful completion rate since the program's beginning. By that calculation, the average successful completion rate for Family Treatment Court is 59 percent. There are many factors that affect successful participation in therapeutic court programs, including individual commitment to treatment and recovery, as well as funding constraints that affect service resources.

Moving forward

King County's Mental Ill and Drug Dependency (MIDD) program, which is supported by a portion of the sales tax, and King County's Veteran's and Human Service Levy, which is supported by a voter approved property tax, have provided critical services for individuals involved in the criminal justice system. Sales tax collections for MIDD have been less than projected in recent years and program reductions may be necessary in coming years. Voters renewed the Veterans and Human Services Levy in 2011 for another six years.

Related Links

[AIMs High Crisis System Use Strategy](#)

[King County Adult Drug Court](#)

[King County Juvenile Drug Court](#)

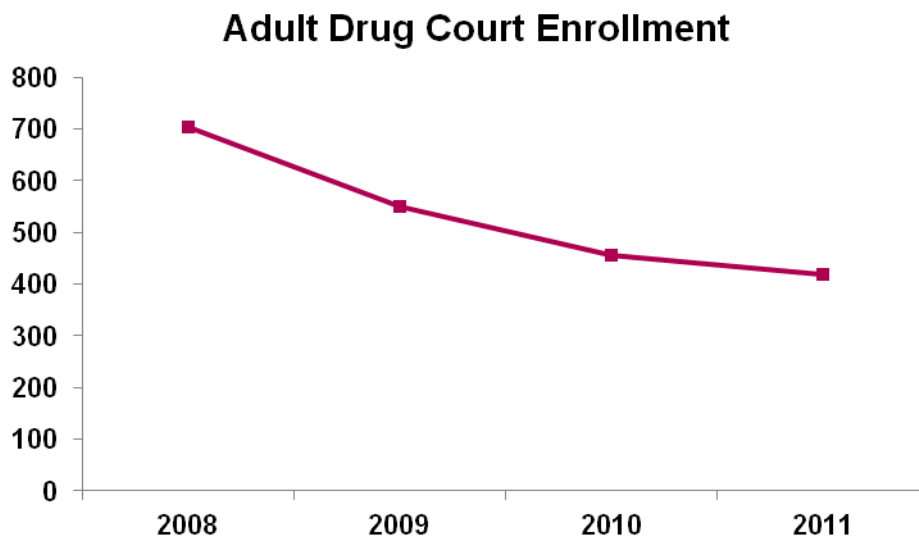
King County Family Treatment Court Program

King County Regional Mental Health Court

Technical Notes

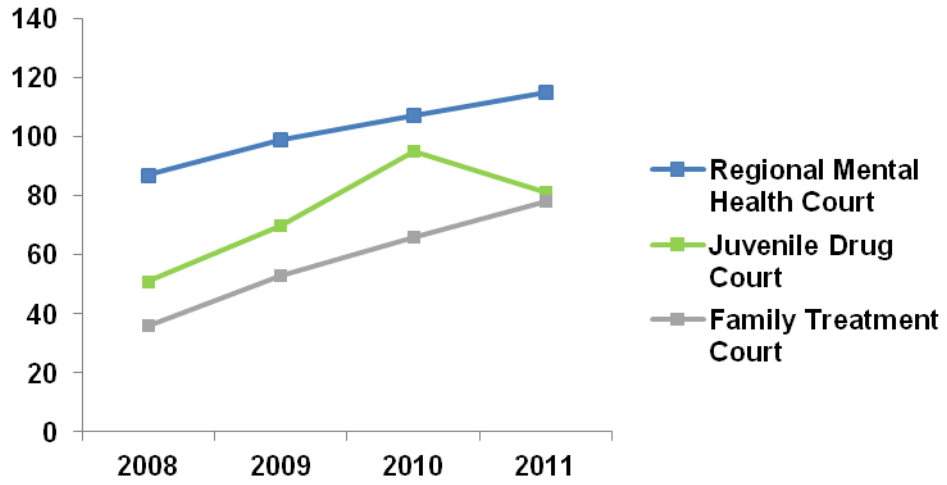
1. Adult Drug Court statistics provided by the Department of Judicial Administration.
2. Juvenile Drug Court and Family Treatment Court statistics provided by King County Superior Court.
3. King County Regional Mental Health Court data collected from the Probation Case Management System (PCMS). This data is the number of Mental Health Court Cases on active supervised probation that were closed each year and the reason for closure 2006 through 2011. "Other" could be positive or negative (found not competent, opted out mid-stream, deceased, closed pending review) and there may be a few cases in earlier years in which graduations were coded as "other."
4. Data for Superior Court's Partnership for Youth Justice Program provided by Juvenile Court staff.
5. Data for District Court Relicensing Program from Washington State Association of Courts, Business Objects XI (BOXI).

Charts and Maps



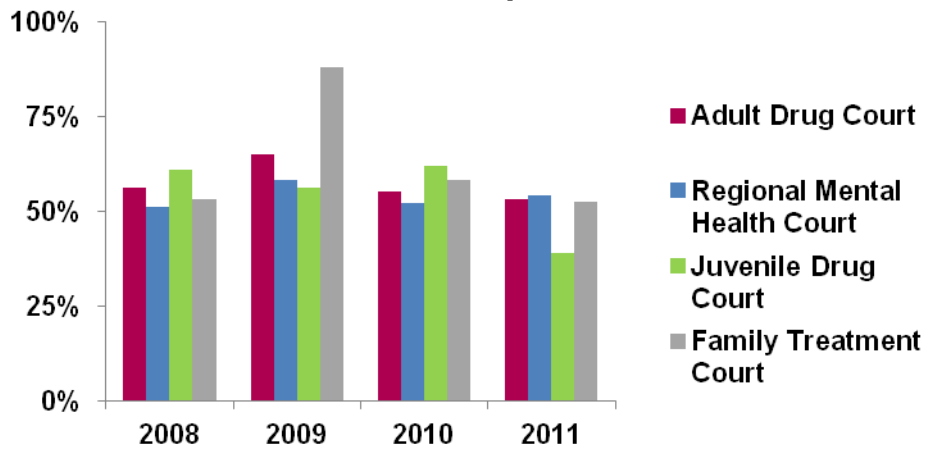
Data Source: King County Superior Court

Other Therapeutic Court Enrollment



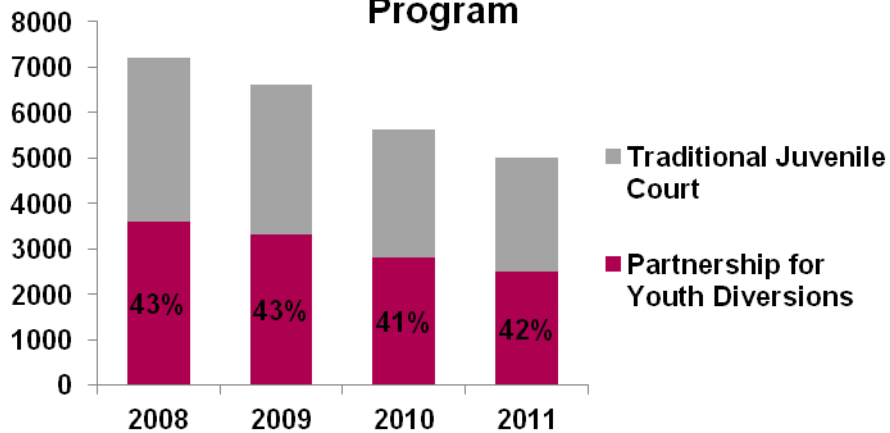
Data Source: King County Superior Court and District Court

King County Therapeutic Court Successful Completion Rates



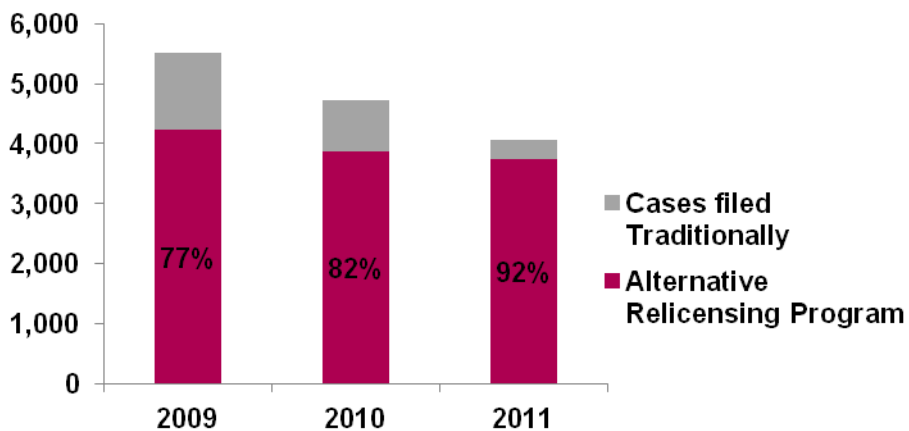
Data Source: King County Superior Court and District Court

Superior Court Partnership for Youth Justice Diversion Program



Data Source: Juvenile Division of King County Superior Court

King County District Court Motor Vehicle Relicensing Program



Data Source: King County District Court