



Florida Association of Drug Court Professionals Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

May 2021

Executive Committee

The Honorable Melanie G. May
Acting Chair /Vice Chair, 4th DCA

Jennifer Grandal, Treasurer, Statewide

The Honorable Michele Towbin- Singer,
Secretary, 17th Judicial Circuit

The Honorable Jeri B. Cohen
Past Chair, 11th Judicial Circuit

Eve Janocko, At-Large, 7th circuit

Jennifer L. Bassett, At-Large, 16th circuit

Board Members

Cristy Altaro, 15th Judicial Circuit

Robert Batie, 7th Judicial Circuit

Stephanie Coberly, 17th Judicial Circuit

Anita Cocoves, 19th Judicial Circuit

Audra Cohen, 11th Judicial Circuit

Kristin Pickens ,8th Judicial Circuit

Frank C. Rabbito, 11th Judicial Circuit

Dear FADCP Members:

It's Drug Court Month and the perfect time to reenergize the Florida Association of Drug Court Professionals [FADCP]. We intend to reopen the lines of communication and provide opportunities for networking, training, and collaboration.

Currently, we have 86 FADCP members. We will begin our 2021-2022 membership drive over the summer. We encourage everyone to join so be on the lookout for membership applications in August.

I want to thank the Honorable Jeri Cohen for her outstanding leadership over the last several years. We wish her much happiness in her retirement from the bench and hope she will soon be able to continue her amazing travels around the world. We would also like to thank Judge Jack Espinosa and Judge Michele Towbin-Singer for their many years of dedicated efforts to advance drug courts statewide.

I am honored to serve once again as your acting chair until we elect new leadership during the 2021-2022 membership cycle. We are currently working on a Zoom webinar for the field on May 26th at noon where the Office of the State Courts Administrator [OSCA] and FADCP will provide a forum where each discipline can network among themselves, share their experiences during this pandemic, and get feedback on issues. By now you should have received an email notice from OSCA with registration information. We hope you join us.

We have all struggled throughout last year but I look forward to FADCP regaining its momentum. Through your hard work and perseverance, you help people change their lives and become productive citizens again. Keep up the good work! You do make a difference!

Sincerely,

FADCP Acting Chair



GREETINGS FROM OUR FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE FLORIDA OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

By: Retired Colonel James R. McDonough

Dear Members of the Florida Association of Drug Court Professionals,

Greetings and thank you for allowing me to offer my respect and appreciation for your wonderful efforts in helping to enhance the important work that drug courts do for the citizens of Florida. It has been my great pleasure to work with and get to know many of you, often in person and also by reputation. When I first arrived in Florida to take up coordination of its drug control efforts over 20 years ago, I was delighted to discover how advanced the development of your drug court system was in helping address what had become a widespread addiction and crime burden throughout the state. You were leading the nation in both quantity (on a per capita basis) and quality (by any measure) of drug courts taking this problem head on. Drug courts were then -- and I'm pleased to say yet remain -- the key to making treatment work through deterrence, encouragement, and inspiration.

Through your hard work and professionalism, the Association has continued that record and tradition of efficacy and service. I am proud to have been a part of it and pleased that you continue to grow and prosper. It has been a joy to come to know many of you over the years and to see your names yet on the rolls. It is equally pleasing to see the new names and hear of your successes. At this point in time, there are easily tens of thousands of Floridians who are personally indebted to you for helping them get their lives in order and tens of thousands more who would thank you for bringing a loved one back to a decent life style or sparing the ruin and hardship that would have resulted from unchecked addiction and crime.

I am proud to have stood with you in the ranks that took on that challenge. I am proud to see you take it into the future.



CELEBRATE DRUG COURT MONTH NETWORK WITH YOUR STATEWIDE PEERS

Share Your Pandemic Experiences

On May 26, 2021 at noon the FADCP and OSCA will host a one hour statewide meeting of Florida's drug court teams. The meeting will allow each discipline to meet in breakout rooms to discuss the challenges and opportunities caused by the pandemic and to share experiences.

[To join, register in advance for this session:](#)

*******Registration is required by May 12, 2021.*******



UPCOMING WEBINARS FOR ADULT DRUG COURTS

The OSCA is in the process of scheduling webinars on the topics you asked for! Through a Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant to provide training and technical assistance to Florida's adult drug courts on the Florida Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards, webinars are being planned for later this year to cover many of the training topics identified through the recent training needs survey completed by the adult drug court coordinators! More information will be shared as webinar topics, dates, and times are finalized!

“A Silver Linings Playbook”

***By: Judge Tarlika Navarro, Drug Court Judge
Seventeenth Judicial Circuit***

The COVID-19 pandemic is proving to be one of the most challenging and unprecedented events in our country's history. It has changed our lives in more ways than any of us could ever have imagined and while our Judiciary and our drug court team work tirelessly to maintain essential operations, our team is dedicated to pivoting through the challenges and finding the silver lining in all we encounter as a drug court community.

And yet, there were a lot of positives that have and will change the trajectory of our Drug Court Program. Our drug court team has witnessed the silver lining in transitioning from in-person court appearances to Zoom-court appearances. The drastic benefits have become irrefutable. Drug court participants are able to zoom into court hearings while working. They do not have to take three or more buses for transit, they do not have to pay a daily rate for parking, find babysitters, arrange child care, and so on.

Similarly, the Court is able to “zoom into the lives” of our participants; such as, meeting family members, bosses, significant others, their children and others who support and contribute to the recovery of our drug court participants. Our drug court team is able to more closely monitor our participants if needed, and virtual Court provides our participants with access to our courtroom to address any issues that may arise with their recovery, treatment, housing etc.

We see daily the benefits of virtual Court through drug court participation and successful completions. Since our last formal Drug Court graduation in February 2020, 366 drug court participants have successfully graduated, resulting in soon-to-be fire fighters, emergency care workers, pre-law students and a myriad of other professions. They will soon contribute back to our community tenfold. And isn't that essentially what a problem-solving Court should aim to accomplish?

“Thinking Outside the Drop Box”
By Eve Janocko, Chief Deputy Court Administrator
Fourth Judicial Circuit

The Fourth Judicial Circuit runs an in-house, drug court lab processing specimens for all ten problem-solving courts as well as child welfare agencies. When the pandemic hit, all specimen collection and lab operations were halted at the Duval County Courthouse. To address the critical need for accountability, Teri Hamlyn, Director of the Fourth Judicial Circuit’s Problem-Solving Courts worked with a local vendor to quickly transition clients onto drug patches. Using drug patches was a good alternative but proved problematic with clients questioning the results from these devices. Ms. Hamlyn coordinated training for the PSC teams so they understood the efficacy of the drug patches and could converse with clients. Fast forward seven months, frustration mounted. Participants created improbable explanations for the positive tests, which were at times comical.

One of our main treatment providers offered an off-site location so that specimen collection could begin once again. Ms. Hamlyn ordered PPE and trained PSC staff on pandemic safety protocols for specimen collection at the alternate location. Crisis begets creativity. The Fourth Circuit is indeed fortunate to have a multi-talented Director who oversees ten PSCs and consistently goes above and beyond to find a solution no matter what box she must open.

“Snatching Victory from the Agony of the Pandemic”
By Stacy Roberts, Drug Court Program Coordinator
First Judicial Circuit

Despite financial stress and isolation, the participants in Escambia and Okaloosa counties have proved that their desire for recovery and the drug court team’s continued assistance keeps their recovery an attainable goal despite the pandemic. Our Drug Court Programs quickly transitioned to virtual court hearings and individual/group treatment sessions within a couple of weeks after court closures. Drug court team members increased their telephone contact with each participant to ensure they knew that they were not alone by providing support and assistance. It was amazing to witness how effective the utilization of virtual court and treatment could be for our participants. In fact, the drug court virtual experience has been surprisingly efficient as participants no longer have to travel to/from court and treatment sessions saving them time spent away from their support systems and employment.

CERTIFICATION UPDATE

By Judge Melanie G. May, Fourth District Court of Appeal



As most of you know, the Certification Subcommittee of the Supreme Court Steering Committee on Problem-Solving Courts has been working over the last three years to create a certification system. That work continues!

We are currently awaiting the approval of the proposed certification plan considered by the Florida Supreme Court on April 20, 2021. Once the plan is approved, we can set a schedule for certification applications. In the meantime, we are working on producing a webinar to bring you more information about the proposed plan. More news to follow!

THE BUDGET: The Good, The Bad, and the Not So Ugly

*By Jennifer Grandal, Senior Court Operations Consultant,
Office of the State Courts Administrator*



With the conclusion of the 2021 legislative session on April 30th and the passage of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 state budget, we can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that State Courts System's budget fared very well this year. While the Governor must still provide final authorization of the state budget, the court's problem-solving court appropriation, which provides funding through the trial courts for drug courts and other problem-solving courts, was maintained at the same level as last year with no reductions. In addition, the Legislature included language in the General Appropriations Act that allows for unspent funds from this fiscal year to revert and be reappropriated next year for spending. This is especially helpful this year because funds that were either held back or spent conservatively by the circuits due to the budget reduction exercise implemented earlier this year will be available for spending next year. The Problem-Solving Court Advisory Group and the Trial Court Budget Commission are currently in the process of making decisions on next year's allocations and the process for making the additional funding available for next year. More information will be shared with the circuits as final decisions are made!

SUPREME COURT COMMITTEE ON PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

"The Latest Happenings"

By The Honorable Steve Leifman, Chair

Latest news

The Florida Supreme Court became more involved in behavioral health issues in 2007 when they created a Mental Health Subcommittee within the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court. The subcommittee subsequently became the Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health and in 2018 it evolved into the Steering Committee on Problem Solving Courts.

The Steering Committee is tasked with developing best practice standards and guidelines for problem-solving courts and implementing the recommendations previously made by the Task Force. These recommendations include establishing a re-entry program for prison inmates with substance use and mental health disorders as well as making improvements to the Baker and Marchman Acts.

To date, the Supreme Court has approved the Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards and Early Childhood Court Best Practice Standards (developed by FCC Steering Committee). The Steering Committee has recently developed Dependency Drug Court Best Practice Standards, Mental Health Court Best Practice Guidelines, and Veterans Court Best Practice Guidelines that are expected to be ready for court consideration this year. More recently, the Steering Committee has started their research on the development of standards or guidelines for juvenile drug courts and DUI courts.

Equally important has been the development of a Certification Program for our problem solving courts that has been presented to the Supreme Court and is pending final approval. Eventually, funding for the problem solving courts will be tied to meeting the approved standards.

We are currently providing guidance on statewide training initiatives on best practices and we are working with OSCA on a series of training programs on Stimulants. The Steering Committee is also developing recommendations for judicial branch emergency preparedness on the needs and expectations of problem-solving court participants and the courts during times of pandemic, natural disasters, and other unexpected events that may lead to court closures or alternative means of holding court.

The Magnificent Ten



Office of the State Courts Administrator's Staff
November 2019 Adult Drug Court Conference

Judge Melanie May and
attendees at the 2019
Statewide Drug Court
Conference



PHOTO OPS

A Look Back at the Past



Broward's Judge Marcia Beach and Former Attorney General Janet Reno



Judge Jeri Cohen and Judge Michele Towbin-Singer and 17th Circuit drug court team



The FADCP general membership meeting will not take place this year due to the court system's travel restrictions.

National Association of Drug Court Professionals

[NADCP 2021 Annual Conference](#)

NADCP's 28th Annual Drug Court Training Conference

Location: National Harbor, MD

Dates: August 15-18, 2021

NADCP provides training to over 6,000 treatment court professionals annually at its national conference – the largest training conference in the nation addressing substance abuse and crime. RISE21 is specifically tailored to enhance the skills, leadership, and training of the treatment court team with approximately 180 cutting-edge sessions, opportunities to connect and learn from colleagues around the world. You will come away educated and energized! RISE21 offers courses for the new practitioner and team members who have been in the field for years. The sessions will be a blend of providing what to watch for now and in the future and practical ways to implement these concerns at a minimal cost. The focus will be on the highest risk areas given how stretched our resources are.

FADCP SNIPPETS



Visit the [FADCP Website](#) for more information on initiatives and training opportunities.

Drug Court and Other Problem-Solving Court Happenings and Resources

The Office of the State Courts Administrator is working to revamp its Problem-Solving Court related websites. Check out the latest information at the links below:

Problem-Solving Court Website:
[Problem-Solving Courts Resources](#)

Florida Courts Opioid Initiative (FCOI):
[Opioid Initiative](#)

Find this year's drug court month proclamations here:
[Florida's 2021 Drug Court Month Proclamation](#)
[State of Florida's 2021 Drug Court Month Resolution](#)

National Drug Court Month

National Drug Court Month will be held in May 2021. To assist you with planning your events, NADCP has prepared a field kit with resources offering proven strategies for reaching the right audience in the best ways.