

# Summary Debriefing

October 15, 2009



## Access to Services:

- **The best in Wyoming at Albany County Adult Drug Court** (hereafter referred to as court supervised treatment program)! *It is often just minutes;* calculated as the time to walk between two buildings, from detention to the court supervised treatment program offices, for a client to begin the program.
- Some participants reported trying to obtain services on their own through Peak Wellness; however the wait was up to 6 weeks and participants reported needing the “structure” and “accountability piece” of the court supervised treatment program.
- Due to an emphasis on “numbers served,” the question whether all participants are appropriate for this type of program arises.



## Quality of Services including support for recovery:

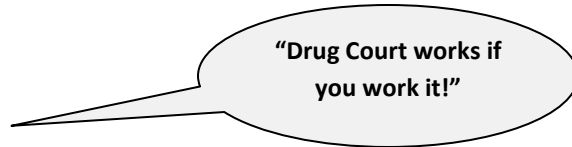
- **Good balance between treatment and accountability!** Participants felt they benefited from the treatment aspect of the program; but would also comment on the importance of the supervision aspect and vice versa.
- **Participants continue to “think” in this program;** they are not programmed and substituting one habit for another.
- Participants may be “over thinking” some aspects of the program. For instance, attendance at AA meetings; participants may find it beneficial if they were encouraged to discover something positive that they could apply to their individual life as opposed to trying to determine and convince others of the existence or non existence of a “higher power.”
- It is unclear to a few participants whether or not they could continue to receive “immediate” and emergency services once graduated from the program.



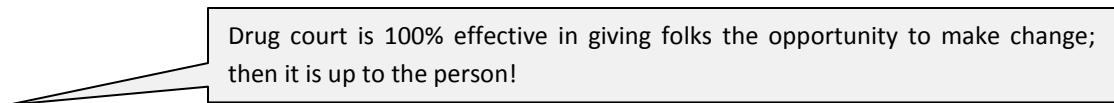
## Collaboration:

- **Albany County does it right!** While not specifically labeled as such, Albany County officials at most levels administratively subscribe to a system of care approach. However, this philosophy should then trickle down to treatment and those types of services.
- It appears that there needs to be improved communication and coordination between the treatment aspect and the administrative side of

the court supervised treatment program. Any philosophical differences that exist need to be handled administratively leaving the program participants out of the discussion.



**“Drug Court works if  
you work it!”**



Drug court is 100% effective in giving folks the opportunity to make change;  
then it is up to the person!

# Albany County Adult Drug Court<sup>1</sup>

Laramie, Wyoming

October 2009



## Overarching principals as reported from review participants and others:

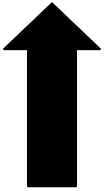
- The court supervised treatment program appears to instill a sense of accountability in participants rather than being all punitive based or all reward based; based on reviews of these types of courts around Wyoming, this is not an easy balance to strike. Participants realize that their reward for doing well in the program is actually their life.
- According to the court supervised treatment program coordinator, “*a person is not a bad person, because they made a bad choice;*” this is a great foundation from which to manage a court supervised program.
- It is quite clear that the court supervised treatment program coordinator has a very clear understanding of the dynamics of the program and encourages a “comprehensive treatment plan.” The coordinator and members of the program team appears to have the flexibility to “reinvent” themselves to accommodate changing dynamics of the program while not vacating the core values and mission of the program.
- It is positive that participants in this court supervised treatment program can still “think” and are not “programmed” by their treatment and probation experience.
- Once a participant is accepted into the program, it is literally a matter of minutes between leaving the detention facility and beginning the court supervised treatment program.
- While not specifically labeled as such, this community philosophically adheres and operates from a systems of care, wrap around approach. The systems of care approach could be employed to a greater extent at the treatment level of the court supervised treatment program.
- With some very general exceptions, external communication appears to be productive among all organizations and agencies involved in providing services or monitoring participants in the court supervised treatment program. Additionally, it appears that the organizations and agencies involved are always looking for ways to improve and make communication more productive.
- The magistrate for the court supervised treatment program is seen as being vested in the participant’s success. Additionally, participants feel that the magistrate clearly depends heavily on the recommendations of the program team and has at least once

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<sup>1</sup> A total of eleven samples were reviewed in the SYNC review process. The cases were not “chosen” and all participants volunteered to have their cases reviewed.

described his position on the bench as being the “conduit” between the program team and the participant.

- The county attorney’s office is the “gate keeper” as to who can enter the court supervised treatment program and seems to operate from a clear set of standards.



### **Strength Findings:**

- Of the 17 participants currently in the court supervised treatment program, 16 are working fulltime and one is going to school fulltime, and
- the 17 participants currently in the court supervised treatment program have given back over 750 hours of service to the community.
- The case manager position is very important in court supervised treatment program; once needs are identified, this position is very useful in helping the participant connect with those services.
  - The case manager resigned on October 5, 2009 to accept a job in Casper and, therefore, did not participate in this review . The court supervised treatment program is anticipating filing this position by mid November 2009.
- The Oxford House for men was cited as a good resource among those who have used it. Albany County originally opened an Oxford House for women, but closed it as a result of not enough female applicants. However, they opened it up a second time as a house for men.
- There are published guidelines for the court supervised treatment program that upon review seem to be clear and concise; the information is published in a participant handbook.
- Participants seem to have a good understanding of the sanctions; for example:
  - Being late or missing an appointment a participant receives five hours of community services;
  - for every minute late to court; a hour of community service, and
  - sanctions for “using” are individual based.
- Participants universally report that the treatment component of the court supervised treatment program is a very beneficial component of the process. Conversely, they also report that they could not be successful without the structure and accountability of probation as well.
- Once out of jail, participants who have been accepted into the court supervised treatment program immediately begin their treatment and probation obligations in the program; immediately means within minutes in most cases.
- Within the court supervised treatment program is a book group, which meets once a week; participants report that this is a very beneficial activity from the perspective that it promotes communications among participants.

- The court supervised treatment program coordinator clearly demonstrates consistency and efficacy in the administration of the program.
- There appears to be a very clear and appropriate relationship between participants in court supervised treatment program, the program administrator and the probation officer assigned to the program.
  - The probation officer was noted for being caring, but consistent and very clear on expectations of the participants.
- This court supervised treatment program, while missing a probation officer between the prior review in the spring of 2009 and this review has continued to provide consistent services in large part through long hours and hard work on the part of the case manager and program administrator. While the program did not accept new participants during this period of time, services were maintained and productive for existing participants.
- This court supervised treatment program encouraged a participant (and others) to address underlying medical issues but participant reports not following up on recommended medication.
- While some other court supervised treatment programs report that the Addiction Severity Index (ASI)<sup>2</sup> has a delayed “turn around process” and slows the process down, this program reports it has a two to three day turn around process which benefits clients and the program.
- This court supervised treatment program appears to have sufficient capacity and does not turn many participants away.
- This is not a “knee jerk” diversion program according to the magistrate; “we want people to make life-long, meaningful reform from within.”
- This program assists people with things like filing taxes and helping them to understand those types of “life skills.”
- Participants report that they have to be accountable and appreciate the program helping them be that way with an element of treatment from a social work perspective.
- The court assumes a system of care approach such as inquiring into financial issues of participants from the bench to insure that they are advancing their positions and working towards their goals which include items such as financial responsibility.
- According to the magistrate for the program, the bottom line is: “**Be honest and create some personal integrity.**” Participants apparently understand this and make this concept a goal.
- Participants report that while there seems to be a shortage of public defenders, the public defender in one case was responsible for the participant being directed to the court supervised treatment program; this particular public defender was reported to work well with and value the program.

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<sup>2</sup> More information on the ASI can be found at: <http://www.health.wyo.gov/mhsa/treatment/DENS.html>.

- A participant reported to be finished with court at 1000 hours and was in the court supervised treatment program in minutes; additionally, the participant had been in “lock up” for 32 days but with maintenance services;
- This court supervised treatment program requires that a participant must be going to school full time or maintaining 30 hours of employment. If the participant is not going to school or employed, the difference in hours must be made up in community service.
- The cost to be in this court supervised treatment program is \$50.00 per month; sometimes this cost is waived for special initiatives such as participating in this SYNC review process.
- A typical case strives to have a case manager, therapist, public defender and probation officer as a program team.
- This court supervised treatment program is not seen as punitive in nature by one participant, but more of celebration of success, with rules!
- A participant reported that their partner has also benefited from the participant’s tools and resources gained in the program.
- The Downtown Clinic has helped with participant’s medication.
- Colorado, Arizona and Wyoming officials worked very well together to get all issues involving one participant taken care of through this program.
- The magistrate evaluates a participant’s perceived success as whether the participant is “swimming or just treading water.”
- Relapses are seen as a part of the process; it is understood that everyone may have one or more but that may not necessarily make them fail in the overall program.
- Typically the program team meets on Thursday with the magistrate, before court.
- The program team, case manager, probation officer and coordinator are considering meeting on Wednesday as well to exchange additional information and discuss cases prior to the Thursday meeting to streamline case management discussions on Thursday before court.
- The magistrate empowers and encourages participants to do their own research on issues of concern or interest to them.
- A case management “check list” is being formulated that will assist in insuring that “participants” are actually working on life skills while in the court supervised treatment program.
- One participant reported a counselor has advised them they are accessible free of charge even after successful graduation from the court supervised treatment program.
- Several participants report having meaningful input into their treatment plan.



### Opportunities for Improvement:<sup>3</sup>

- A participant reports receiving no maintenance services other than an assessment while in detention; this is probably not typical however and other participants report having access to maintenance services such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings while incarcerated.
- A participant in phase IV of the court supervised treatment program, and involved in the program for 16 months, reports “not having a substance abuse problem” despite having four driving while under the influence charges.
- A participant would like to “go home” in another state where there are family members for support; but there is no way to transfer the court supervised treatment program to another state.
- Criteria for entering the court supervised treatment program, and the appropriateness of some participants being in the program, may be a concern based on the State of Wyoming placing an emphasis on “numbers served” for continual program funding. Philosophically, it is reported that it costs the same to operate the program with 15 participants as it does 20 participants.
- Several participants reported that faith based initiatives such as AA and Narcotic Anonymous (NA) are not meant for everyone and that they receive little or no value attending these meetings. When program officials were asked about this, they advised that participants are encouraged to come up with alternative, acceptable meetings, bring those alternatives forth to the program team and ultimately the court for consideration. One participant questioned advised that he knew this, but had just not taken the time to do it.
- One court supervised treatment program official felt the program could use better and quicker initial needs assessments.
- Increased communication from the Wyoming Department of Corrections (DOC) with the court supervised treatment program was reported as being a slight need particularly with using the DOC needs assessment.
- Participants reported that it needs to be made clear that the court supervised treatment program is requiring them to go to an AA or NA meeting but not necessarily have to subscribe to the doctrines of AA and NA.
- One participant reported that after AA and NA meetings, they did not leave with any tools that were helpful, “just a bunch of stories.”
- Participants report that they sign a document that says they will have access to a public defender but often times there is none and it is perceived that there is a shortage of public defenders in the area.

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<sup>3</sup> Not all opportunities for improvement are specific to Albany County Adult Court Supervised Treatment Program.

- One participant reported that the same question asked may get several different answers and perspectives that the participant must ultimately “put together” for interpretation.
- Participant reports that consistent information needs to be disseminated such as the new rules and regulations.
- A spouse with addiction issues wanted to participate in the court supervised treatment program with their spouse who was not in the program but could not: *“What does that person have to do, go out and commit a DUI to get help”* asked the participant?
- Participant reports that a number of participants still continue to use drugs and alcohol while in the program.
- Participant does not agree with the “abstinence only” policy and feels that a person should just be able to “control their habits.”
- In May of 2006, participant needed help and was using cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana and alcohol; the participant tried to get help from Peak Wellness; unfortunately, it took six weeks to get any assistance from them and by then the participant had quit using. Participant went once to Peak Wellness and never went back.
- Participant feels that communication among the stakeholders of the program could be improved.
- Participant felt that it would be beneficial if the participant was involved by meeting with the program team occasionally. According to the participant, there is never a time that the participant meets with the entire program team forcing the participant to tell their story over and over with each member of the program team.
- One participant felt that the court supervised treatment program needed to be friendlier towards indigent people.
- Generally, participants felt that the rules and regulations need to be clear and consistent. A review of those published rules and regulations by reviewers really did not see any troubling issues.
- Participant feels that there is a lack of representation for the participant at the program team meetings.
- Scheduling is a problem; for instance probation and parole is open normal business hours and they want the participant to meet them during those hours but the participant must also maintain employment, according to one participant interviewed. However, after speaking with the probation officer it is clear that he is available for any participant in “off hours.”
- As with many courts, there is an underlying issue balancing sanctions and whether the program team should be treating from the addiction standpoint or an abuse standpoint.
- All participants interviewed reported that they did not like the attitude of the AA program.

- A participant received three driving while under the influence (DUI) charges in three years; the first one resulted in a fine in municipal court. The second resulted in a fine in municipal court, but no alcohol assessment was performed. The third charge was through circuit court and resulted in jail, a fine and probation. The subject was finally recommended for the court supervised treatment program after a probation revocation. This individual felt that if the behaviors had of been more aggressively addressed during the first DUI and encounter with the court, it may have prevented further DUIs.
- Several participants felt that they would like to have some “hands on analytical tools” to use when they left the program. When queried further, one participant said that a way to look at issues which arise in life analytically would be helpful.
- One participant felt that often times, the strengths of the court supervised treatment program participants were never discovered in group sessions and subsequently the group development and dynamics were influenced by only negative feedback.
- Several participants reported that when they attempted to seek services on their own through Peak Wellness, the wait was anywhere from three to six weeks.



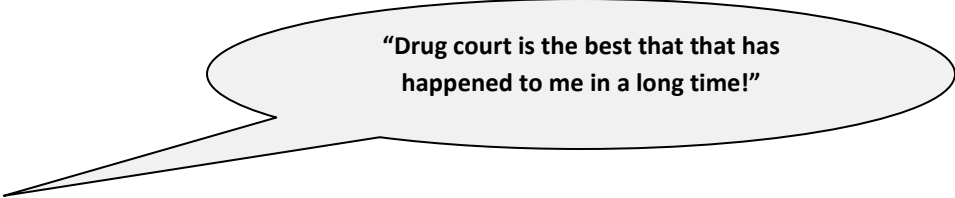
### **General Findings:**

- Success for a participant in the court supervised treatment program is of course very dependent on where the person is in their life.
- An added benefit of the program is that the community is protected while participants are in the program.
- The continued establishment and support of court supervised treatment programs in Wyoming, and not knowing long term how these programs will evolve legislatively, has been a concern for officials managing these types of programs.
- Several officials are waiting for the Wyoming Supreme Court rules on court supervised treatment programs:
  - A proposed rule says that a full time magistrate cannot be a presiding judge for a court supervised treatment program; proposed rule 10. This rule has some officials interviewed in this review process concerned since they use a magistrate very effectively.
- Alcohol seems to be the “drug of choice” in this area; two or three cases reviewed involve marijuana, one or two involve cocaine but usually in conjunction with alcohol and one case involves heroin.
- It appears that methamphetamine (meth) usage has declined:
  - The court coordinator reports that no one has entered the court supervised treatment program on a meth citation in 18 months, however, at least half of the

active 17 participants have experimented with meth prior to entry into the program.

- All participants interviewed minimized to some degree their abuse and/or addiction, yet reported benefit from being in the court supervised treatment program.
- Participant feels that AA is somewhat discriminatory because when the participant has a “signature slip” the other AA participants discriminate against the court supervised treatment program participants.
- A participant reports it is very difficult to succeed when their partner is not working a program and has substance abuse issues; unfortunately there appears to be no way for the court supervised treatment program to assist people who do not come through the judicial system in some fashion.
- Participant had children removed by DFS who simply took the children away and did not try and get any help for the participant; this would appear to not be in line with DFS’s family centered approach to case work.
- The State of Wyoming Department of Transportation was hard to reimburse for the destruction of a sign; they would not work with or return calls to the participant’s insurance carrier despite repeated attempts to pay the bill by the participant’s insurance carrier.
- Subject has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and reports not doing well taking medication so he uses marijuana to treat the condition; the participant continues to believe this and does not seem to see this as an issue for effective treatment.
- One participant felt “red flagged in the police department computer” while participating in the court supervised treatment program;
- in at least one case, a participant reported that navigation of the “civil court system” was a problem affecting the participant’s ability to work the court supervised treatment program as much as necessary;
- Participant sought out services at Peak Wellness, but the program did not work out due to the lack of structure that is found in this court supervised treatment program.
- An Albany county detention officer provided a perspective participant with information about the court supervised treatment program.
- This court supervised treatment program has a maximum of 22 participants with a 20-22 month average of being in the program; participants commit to a minimum of an 18 month program.
- Recidivism is difficult to calculate to determine program effectiveness; it is typically calculated through re arrests but that only captures data from those that come to the attention of the court.
- 10 participants have been revoked for program non-compliance since the program began five and a half years ago.

- Participant first used marijuana when 6 years of age with parents and then continued to use marijuana with parents until participant was removed from the home at the age of 12 in a child abuse and neglect case. This participant has literally been involved with the system for 16 years. Participant reports that feeling the need to just “run” to get away from the “system.”
- There is urgency on the part of the court(s) for participants to receive services; but other than the court supervised treatment program, there is reported to be little urgency on the part of certain providers such as Peak Wellness.
- Several participants have reported that legal spice smoking has become a substitutive behavior in the area for smoking marijuana.
- Participants seem to get frustrated in the program because they are maintaining their sobriety, for instance, but continue to receive sanctions for being late. Philosophical differences exist between the treatment portion of this program and the accountability portion of this program.



**“Drug court is the best that that has happened to me in a long time!”**