



- x Mental health courts, a newer development within treatment courts (these courts deal with non-violent individuals who have been diagnosed with mental health issues occurring substance abuse disorders)
- x Veterans' Treatment Court, which deals with veterans who have substance abuse disorders and are involved in the justice system, and,
- x Tribal healing and wellness courts, a compilation of resources within the context of the tribal justice system.

Drug Courts are utilized by those with substance abuse disorders charged with criminal drug related offenses. These courts do provide an alternative to incarceration and receive holistic treatment to address substance abuse disorders. The process is intensive, requiring random drug tests and regularly scheduled hearings. The entirety of the process lasts more than a year. Participants must abstain from substances over a long period, complete a substance abuse disorder program, not be detained, and have to complete the program. Upon completion, participants may expunge their records. If participants fail to complete the program, they are subject to a traditional court proceeding.

### Drug Courts in Vermont

Within the state of Vermont, there are six treatment court programs. These programs operate within family and criminal courts. In Vermont, there are three Adult Drug Treatment Dockets located within Chittenden, Rutland, and Washington County. The focus of these treatment courts is "voluntary, post-SOHD SURJUDPV IRU GHIHQGDQWV RYHU DJH

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Judicial Commission on Family Treatment Dockets which has the primary focus of addressing the upsurge in child protection cases that have resulted due to the current opioid crisis.

In 2023, Vermont treatment courts were allocated \$190,000 through the Vermont Department of Health -

the authors found that these studies showed that participation in treatment court programs led to an average twelve percent drop in recidivism. Going deeper, the report found that courts with higher graduation rates and those that only accepted violent offenders saw even larger reductions in recidivism.<sup>22</sup> One additional finding of this study is of note: the studies analyzed did not find any notable effectiveness for juvenile treatment courts, only adult treatment courts. A narrower metaanalysis of exclusively juvenile treatment courts reached a similar conclusion, finding that there was no evidence of juvenile treatment courts being more effective than traditional courts; however, the study's authors noted that much of the research on the subject was of poor quality.<sup>23</sup>

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## Conclusion

Drug and treatment courts can be used as an alternative to incarceration for violent crimes while also addressing individual substance abuse issues. These are studies and other state programs that have been shown to highlight the success of these programs on decreased recidivism. There is also some evidence that treatment courts also lower the best incurred by state governments compared to traditional incarceration.

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