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# Greater Than the Sum of Their Parts:

## Clarifying Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations of Juvenile Drug Court Teams

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# Introduction

Teamwork and collaborative planning are cornerstones of juvenile drug courts (JDCs). The purpose of the JDC team is to provide a seamless continuum of services for youth and their families. For this to take place, juvenile drug courts need a supportive, non-adversarial, and cooperative environment. The team is critical to program planning, implementation, operation, and quality assurance. While the composition is likely to evolve over time, it is important to maintain a commitment to the JDC's primary mission and goals even as new team members come and go. The primary functions of the JDC team are to:

- participate in strategic and ongoing operational planning activities;
- cooperate with multidisciplinary professionals while representing different perspectives;
- review prospects for admission;
- participate in case planning, pre-court staffing, and court hearings;
- provide services, supervision, and monitoring;
- facilitate decision-making regarding phase advancement, imposition of incentives and sanctions, and graduation;
- serve as liaisons to the wider juvenile court and service provider community; and
- take part in performance-based quality improvement efforts.

The JDC team should include stakeholders who engage collaboratively to establish a coordinated and systematic approach to working with JDC-involved youth and their families. Typically, JDCs are composed of judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, juvenile probation officers or other case management staff, substance use treatment providers, educators, and evaluators. A skilled administrator is essential to serve as the JDC coordinator to make sure all of the disparate pieces of the JDC team work effectively toward common goals.

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), in this Technical Assistance Brief, discusses the formal and informal roles of core JDC team members and how these individual roles combine to create organizational synergy—that mysterious alchemy that makes organizations greater than the mere sum of their parts.

# Differentiating Roles from Responsibilities

Organizational roles are often confused with organizational responsibilities. Roles are the positions team members assume or the parts that they play in a particular operation or process. For example, the role of the JDC judge is critical to the success of JDC's as, at their core, they are courts. The role of the JDC judge is to represent the power and authority of the juvenile court. However, the role JDC judges play is different from traditional juvenile courts: it is less formal; less focused on the mission of the juvenile court; more participatory; and more collaborative. This is because JDC judges must also incorporate the goals and objectives of alcohol and drug use treatment.

Responsibilities, on the other hand, are the specific tasks or duties that members of organizations are expected to complete as a function of their roles and for which they are held accountable when they assume, or are assigned to, a role on a project or team. For example, the JDC judge has responsibilities that exceed the judicial norm – the JDC judge is responsible for leading the JDC team, actively participating in the JDC pre-court staffing process, and presiding over increased, regularly scheduled review hearings. In addition, the JDC judge is often called upon to build consensus among JDC team members, a responsibility that may seem foreign to judges in the traditional judicial role.

It is important to understand that JDC team members are likely to have both formal and informal roles. Formal roles are the specific, essential parts or positions that must be filled in order to accomplish the goals of a project or team collectively. Informal roles are those that may or may not be required in order to achieve the team's goals, but can have an impact—either positive or negative—on the progress of the team.

Formal roles describe who is responsible for what. Formal roles are absolutely essential for the success of the team. Obviously, if

### Technical Assistance Tip:

It is difficult to describe informal roles to new team members. JDC coordinators can use the National Drug Court Online Learning System as a training tool for new team members to view JDC professionals describe their role in their own words, in several pre-recorded videos of several core team members. The videos are located at: http://www.drugcourtonline.org/


individual team members do not know what they are expected to do, it is highly unlikely that anything will get done. Clarity around roles and responsibilities is one of the primary reasons that teams succeed. Conversely, lack of clarity or confusion regarding roles and responsibilities is a primary reason that teams fail. Formal roles are driven by the formal structure of the organization. This includes team hierarchy, task and role definition, performance measurement, rules, regulations, and lines of communication.

Informal roles of JDC members are less concrete, often intangible, and thus harder to define. Informal roles are assumed by individuals rather than assigned by the organization. Informal roles are driven by the informal relationships that emerge within the formal structure. This includes individual routines, norms, values, inter-group behavior, coalitions and alliances, perceptions, and organizational culture.

Informal roles can sometimes be more difficult to define, but they often have a significant impact on a team. An individual's informal role can be a boon or a burden to the JDC. For example, some informal roles (unifier, communicator) can enhance the overall productivity of the JDC; while other roles (disgruntled employee, prankster) can negatively impact the JDC's ability to function effectively. There are as many informal organizational roles as there are personalities and points of view, but some of the most common include: informal leader, caretaker, catalyst, optimist, pessimist, realist, and malcontent.[1]

## Core Team Members

There may be some variation from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but the core team members serving on a JDC are fairly consistent and include:

- Judge
- Coordinator
- Clinical Treatment Supervisor or Clinical Treatment Provider
- Juvenile Probation Officer and/or a Juvenile Probation Supervisor
- State's Attorney or Prosecutor
- Public Defender or Defense Attorney
- School Representative
- Evaluator

In the pages that follow, formal and informal roles and responsibilities for each JDC team member are discussed – formal position requirements, preferred characteristics, and some of the intangibles that can enhance or detract from JDC team performance. These descriptions of roles and responsibilities come from a variety of sources, including:

- previous attempts to describe JDC teams and individual members;
- our experience providing training and technical assistance to numerous juvenile drug courts nationally;
- conversations with members of JDC teams; and
- results of an informal survey of the field.

### Technical Assistance Tip:

JDC teams can use the descriptions listed below to enhance job descriptions or as starting points when defining the R & R sections of policy and procedure manuals.

1 Center for Effective Public Policy. *Collaborative Justice: Teamwork Exercise: Discussion of Roles and Responsibilities* (2013). Accessed on May 29, 2016 at http://www.collaborativejustice.org/how/tools/structure/structure-ex1.htm.


## JUDGE

The primary purpose of the JDC judge is to represent the authority of the juvenile court and to preside over court hearings. The judge also serves as the chairperson of the JDC and uses his or her authority to determine when the JDC team meets and who serves on the JDC team. The judge is the leader of the juvenile drug court team and has ultimate responsibility for imposing the conditions of probation, making decisions regarding admission, case plans and service delivery, incentives and sanctions, and graduation. JDC judges may choose to be less formal, more collaborative, and increasingly focused on successful completion of individual JDC case plans, but they should not shed their judicial authority. The JDC is a court organization and judges have the ultimate responsibility for assuring the rule of law and court imposed conditions of supervision and treatment.

The judge is responsible for delegating authority to the rest of the JDC team. Unlike traditional juvenile courts, the juvenile drug court judge works with a multidisciplinary and highly collaborative team. He or she interacts and develops a rapport with participants and families more frequently than in traditional juvenile court.

Important professional characteristics of effective juvenile drug court judges include:

- judicial appointment;
- knowledge of juvenile law and effective interventions and treatment for substance use by adolescents;
- strong and highly skilled judicial presence;
- understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all JDC team members;
- ability to communicate and relate positively to youth and families;
- capacity to balance the authority of the juvenile court with the climate of substance use treatment and intervention providers;
- ability to delegate responsibility, without reducing authority;
- aptitude to collaborate with other agencies and JDC team members.

In addition to the professional characteristics listed above, there are a number of personal characteristics may increase the effectiveness of JDC judges – leadership skills and the ability to build teams and facilitate teamwork. Effective JDC judges are likely to have a broad knowledge-base that includes an awareness of adolescent development, family dynamics, substance use screening and assessment, positive youth development, and community-based services.

Current trending research in the adult and juvenile drug court field suggests that the longevity of the judge matters. Jurisdictions that have an operating JDC are encouraged to discard the practice of rotating judges in and out of JDCs. It is important that judges remain with the JDC team, youth, and families for, at least, a two-year period of time.[2] This creates strong linkages that will likely produce better outcomes for the youth and families.

> *"The judge should always encourage, reinforce, and celebrate a youth's success. Presiding over frequent status hearings allows the court to recognize and build strengths within the youth and their families. The judge should grant incentives when earned but also hold youth accountable through clear expectations and graduated sanctions when justified."*

## COORDINATOR

The primary role of the JDC coordinator is to manage and oversee activities associated with the JDC team. This role has the most varied definition because it can change so much from jurisdiction to jurisdiction depending on the size and funding available. In most jurisdictions, the JDC coordinator is likely to serve as the primary point of contact between the judge and the JDC team.

The coordinator may be a full-time, dedicated position or may have other traditional administrative, supervisory responsibilities, and even maintain a probation caseload.

2 Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards: Volume One. Roles and Responsibilities of the Judge, pg. 20. Published by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (2013).

However, regardless of the structure, the coordinator has many responsibilities essential to the operation of the JDC. The coordinator schedules and plans pre-court staffings, serves as the hub of communication for the team, and coordinates court hearings. In addition, the JDC coordinator may be responsible for maintaining quality assurance and client data, overseeing the drug court budget and resources, grant writing, maintaining individual files on participants, compiling statistical data, and contract management.

Juvenile drug court coordinators are called upon to establish and maintain community linkages, build partnerships with referral sources, orient new participants and families, and ensure that the team receives comprehensive training (e.g., cross-training between treatment and justice professionals). More and more, juvenile drug court coordinators are being asked to proactively market the JDC program internally and externally and to educate stakeholders regarding the efficacy of JDCs.

Important professional characteristics of the JDC coordinator include:

- full-time position
- baccalaureate degree in human service/criminal justice field;
- several years of program administration experience in a human service/criminal justice field;
- experience working with juvenile delinquents and issues related to substance use;
- well-developed organizational and management abilities, including fund raising, grant writing, and budgeting;
- strong communication skills;
- ability to establish a strong rapport with the JDC judge, JDC team members, and JDC-involved youth and families;
- clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other JDC team members;
- knowledge of juvenile substance use treatment and other intervention modalities; and
- keen understanding of risk/needs assessment instruments, case planning, the JDC phase system, incentives, sanctions, and other motivational strategies.

Effective JDC coordinators have the ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with community leaders, criminal justice professionals, treatment professionals, and the judiciary. Other characteristics include the ability to motivate and lead others, foster a spirit of teamwork, encourage professional development, and prioritize multiple tasks.

> *"As the JDC coordinator, I supervise and coordinate the day-to-day operations of the drug court, serve as the central source for all information and communication regarding the drug court, and assume responsibility for all financial aspects of the drug court. Juvenile Drug Court Coordinators have many direct service responsibilities as well, including identifying and determining initial eligibility for program entrance, attending weekly staffings and drug court sessions, ensuring the program is serving its target populations, and supervising community supervision staff. The JDC coordinator is also responsible for selecting and hiring drug court team members, developing program policies and procedures, maintaining program statistics, and working with others to conduct program evaluations."*

## CLINICAL TREATMENT SUPERVISOR OR CLINICAL TREATMENT PROVIDER

Juvenile drug courts are collaborative hybrids. They are juvenile courts, with requirements, rules, responsibilities, and expectations, similar to all juvenile courts. At the same time, they have a clinical responsibility to address, intervene and treat alcohol and drug use and other behavioral health issues.

In this environment, the role of the treatment representative is essential and complicated. It is essential because the treatment representative must represent a discipline that may be unfamiliar to juvenile courts. It is complicated because the juvenile court world and the clinical world share a vested interest in the best interest of the child and family. They have traditionally pursued that shared interest from different perspectives: one ruled by a focus on law, accountability, and control and the other ruled by a focus on health, treatment, and behavioral elasticity.

In addition to representing the clinical perspective on the JDC team, the treatment representative is instrumental in obtaining clinical screens and assessments. The treatment representative identifies the continuum of available, appropriate, and effective treatment programs. He or she participates actively in the initial case planning processes, pre-court staffings, and JDC

hearings. The treatment representative monitors case plans to ensure that clients and staff are following the structure of the JDC program. Their role is to ensure that the behavioral health needs of the youth in the drug court program are being met.

Important characteristics of the JDC treatment representative include:

- graduate degree in an appropriate field (e.g., social work, substance abuse, mental health);
- appropriate and current licenses, accreditations, and certifications;
- clinical experience;
- expert knowledge of drug and alcohol use among adolescents and effective treatment modalities, programs, and interventions;
- familiarity with the existing local continuum of services and interventions, including those that are evidence-based;
- ability to communicate clinical concerns with other members of the JDC; and
- capacity to negotiate with local service providers for services based on the clinical needs of the JDC.

Personal characteristics of effective substance use treatment providers may include excellent listening, communication and empathy skills, the ability to motivate JDC participants and family members, a non-judgmental perspective, and a commitment to long-term solutions.

*"As a Substance Abuse Treatment Service provider, I am responsible for guiding youth through the treatment portion of their journey in JDC. Providing youth with substance abuse treatment goes with exploring and understanding their use, how it has affected them, their family and community negatively as well what drives them into their use and why. Treatment not only explores use but assist the youth in becoming ambivalent towards drugs and alcohol on their own time while exploring options that support their sobriety goals. As a treatment provider we also provide the youth with prevention planning and positive recovery environment building."*

## JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICER AND/ OR JUVENILE PROBATION SUPERVISOR

Providing services to JDC-involved youth in the community is a foundational principal of JDC programs. It is essential that JDC programs have a well-developed capacity for community supervision. These officers have several different titles – probation officers, case managers, surveillance officers, or community supervision officers. Their primary role is to monitor and supervise juvenile drug court participants outside of the court setting. This may include home visits, school visits, periodic contacts, and observing drug tests. Specifically, these officers develop individualized case plans with goals and objectives, monitor JDC phase progress, monitor curfew restrictions, administer drug tests, assure participation in treatment, and facilitate school attendance. In some cases the officer may also complete appropriate risk and needs assessments and re-assessments.

Important characteristics of the JDC Probation Officer include:

- one or more years of case management and community supervision experience;
- working knowledge of juvenile law and court procedures, drug and alcohol use among adolescents, and effective treatment interventions;
- familiarity with the existing local continuum of services and interventions;
- ability to communicate case management concerns with other members of the JDC; and
- strong communication skills and the ability to establish rapport with JDC participants and family members.

*"As the JDC Case Manager (probation counselor) I am primarily responsible for managing the delinquency matter. I spend time each week with each individual participant and manage their individual case plans. I review and support their treatment plan. I set behavioral goals and establish activities for achieving those goals. I document each contact in our Drug Court database system. I coordinate with other team members and agencies to provide services to our participants. I prepare the court calendar for each week and keep the team updated daily on participant's successes and program non-compliance issues. I express my opinion in weekly staffing as to incentives and sanctions for the participants."*


## STATE'S ATTORNEY OR PROSECUTOR

In many respects, the JDC prosecutor has the same role as other prosecutors. The prosecutor represents the state and provides legal advice from the public safety perspective to the JDC team. They serve as the initial gate keepers to the JDC by either selecting juveniles who participate in the program or establishing prosecutorial criteria for juvenile court intake staff. The prosecutor obtains or makes available prior criminal histories of juveniles. JDC prosecutors participate in team meetings and attend non-adversarial court proceedings to address revocations, pleas, and the application of sanctions and incentives as they apply to the participant.

However, within the JDC team structure the role of the prosecutor is quite different from a typical delinquency proceeding where the role of prosecutor and defense attorney are adversarial. In drug court, prosecutors share a common goal of successful treatment completion. As part of a collaborative team, the prosecutor monitors participant progress and can make recommendations regarding sanctions and ultimate treatment outcomes.

Characteristics of effective JDC Prosecutors include:

- law degree;
- strong knowledge of juvenile law and drug and alcohol treatment and intervention options;
- substantial experience prosecuting cases in juvenile court;
- demonstrated capacity for interagency collaboration;
- willingness and organizational permission to dedicate appropriate portion of time to JDC work, including pre-court staffings and multiple court hearings; and
- capacity to be flexible, while still maintaining ethical boundaries, with regards to traditional prosecutor's role and the more collaborative role within the JDC team.

JDC prosecutors appreciate that youth have certain strengths and understand that treatment completion and goal attainment are just as important as enforcing court control or sanctions. These team members understand that JDC outcomes are more than just a recidivism rate; that other outcomes (number of clean days, school achievements, and increased family connectedness) tells a story of success that betters the communities they serve.

> *"The role of the prosecutor on the JDC team can be difficult because of the traditional prosecutorial emphasis on individual accountability. However, I don't think the competing interests between the drug court and public safety are unresolvable. When I work with the JDC team to come up with a plan to make the child successful, I am in fact fulfilling my role as a prosecutor because a sober a person who has life skills is less likely to endanger the public."*

## PUBLIC DEFENDER OR DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Defense counsel is responsible for representing the legal rights of the participant and their health and wellbeing. The defense counsel is responsible for informing the participant about the rigors of juvenile drug court, advocating for fair and equal treatment of the client, and participating in pre-court staffings and non-adversarial court proceedings.

Characteristics of effective JDC defense attorneys include:

- law degree;
- one or more years of experience representing juvenile cases;
- strong knowledge of juvenile law and working knowledge of drug and alcohol treatment and intervention options;
- demonstrated capacity for interagency collaboration;
- willingness and organizational permission to dedicate appropriate portion of time to JDC work, including pre-court case reviews and multiple court hearings; and
- capacity to be flexible, while still maintaining ethical boundaries, with regards to traditional defender's role and the more collaborative role within the JDC team.

JDC defense attorneys understand that the best interest of the child may mean mandated treatment attendance and that the use of adolescent / individualized sanctions can assist with affecting positive behavior change in youth. These team members help the JDC team "right the ship" if they drift back to a more punitive framework.

*"It is my role to represent JDC-involved juveniles each week to ensure that they are constitutionally protected. I attend case plan staffings to represent the juvenile's interests when discussing progress, incentives, and sanctions. However, the juveniles also understand that I am part of the Drug Court Team. As such, there may be times that a sanction (including incarceration) will be presented as an option and I may have to consider the broader range of factors represented by the JDC team, including drug and alcohol treatment and even community protection. If a juvenile receives a new charge, they have the right to request a separate attorney to represent them in that matter."*

## SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE

Recognizing the important role that education plays in delinquency reduction and drug and alcohol use abatement, many JDCs include a local school system representative on their JDC team. School representatives may include teachers, principals, superintendents, and other education administrators. The school representative may be a full-time JDC team member and attend all juvenile drug court pre-court staffings and court hearings or serve on a part-time basis and attend as needed. In some jurisdictions, they act merely as a liaison to the schools and submit data and reports to the team.

The primary responsibilities of the school representative are to ensure that the team is informed of any concerns on the part of the schools, help the team understand school environments and terms, and connect the team to any potential school-based resources. The school representative should engage fully in the collaborative team process and be willing to compromise with team members while ensuring that school safety concerns and the education needs of the youth are addressed.

Characteristics of effective JDC school representative include:

- knowledge of JDC operations;
- ability to communicate educational perspective and available resources;
- understanding of what information is needed and what can be shared between schools and juvenile court;
- willingness and ability to participate as needed (e.g., full time, part-time, ad hoc basis); and
- demonstrated ability to work collaboratively on a multidisciplinary team.

Gathering and sharing education-related data and other information is a very important responsibility. This information is critical to the development and completion of individualized case plans. If the team does not have a school representative, their functions can be performed by the coordinator or supervision officer.

*"As the school representative on the JDC team my role is to gather information from schools and report education progress and attendance. Specifically, I am responsible for reporting academic progress, reporting issues with attendance and behavior in school, and communicating concerns of the JDC team with schools."*

## EVALUATOR

Many JDCs do not have a dedicated in-house or contracted evaluator; however it is recommended that JDCs find/hire a person capable of applying program data to management decisions, continuous quality improvement, and evaluating outcomes. In larger jurisdictions the JDC evaluator may be a court-employed evaluator. In most cases, however, the evaluator is likely to be a contractual position. Local colleges and universities are likely sources for finding a person or persons with the requisite skill set.

Characteristics of effective JDC evaluators include:

- strong conceptual/theoretical knowledge of juvenile justice, juvenile courts, and adolescent drug and alcohol use treatment;
- understanding of research and evaluation methodologies, particularly program assessment and evaluation;
- demonstrated capacity to develop reliable data elements and procedures for reliable data collection, analysis and reporting;

- ability to translate data into useful information that informs the management and operations of JDCs, provides measures of performance, and describes meaningful outcomes; and
- capacity to effectively span the gap between practice and research by applying evaluation results to practice and converting practice observations to research questions.

The JDC evaluator does not necessarily need to be a full-time position or even a full-time member of the JDC team. However, the evaluator must be committed to leading research design efforts, facilitating data collection, and analyzing / reporting data. The evaluator may be best viewed as an ancillary member of the JDC team. The evaluator should not participate in drug court team pre-court staffings (except perhaps occasionally as an observer to assure implementation integrity as part of a process evaluation). Participation as a voting member of the JDC team is beyond the scope of the evaluator's role and may compromises the objectivity of the evaluator and the integrity of the evaluation process.

*"As the JDC program evaluator, I am responsible for observing program processes; discussing with all staff their perceptions of their roles and their observations about the program's operation; conducting post-program interviews with participants to gather their observation about the programs and their perceptions of how they might be more successful; analyzing case data to develop reports on relationships between participant's backgrounds and program participation data related to short- and long-term participant success after leaving the program; attending staff meetings at which I present my observations and conclusions about ways in which the program might be improved; writing formal reports required by funding sources; and, when requested, developing specific written recommendations for program improvement."*

## Value-Added Team Members

The descriptions above represent the roles and responsibilities of core team members on JDC teams; however, many teams include other players as either full-time or adjunct members. These members serve a specific purpose and generally add value or services that help the team achieve their mission and goals. Some of these roles are briefly described below.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT** – This value-added team member may be responsible for taking minutes during pre-court staffing and court hearings, coordinating the monthly drug court calendar, revising weekly court status reports, and collecting/updating/revising JDC statistics on a monthly basis. An administrative assistant may assist coordinator by creating program files and serving as the point of contact for the team with other juvenile court staff.

**ASSESSMENT OFFICER/SPECIALIST** – This team member may already exist in the juvenile justice system and may be housed in an assessment unit or specialized department. This professional completes assessments on youth, makes treatment recommendations, conducts follow-up assessments, and maintains statistical data for the jurisdiction regarding assessment/reassessment scores. These assessments provide valuable information to the team regarding case planning and progress on goals and objectives.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER/SURVEILLANCE OFFICER** – Some teams have a law enforcement officer or a surveillance officer as a member of the JDC team. This is a valuable team member to have, especially if the team wants to drug test on the weekend or after hours. Usually, these team members have the ability to go out into the community and drug test in the early morning hours on Saturday or Sunday.

# Roles of the Juvenile Drug Court Team at Critical Decision Points

The JDC team is highly complex because of its multi-disciplinary composition and the tension inherent between team members' roles on the team and their responsibilities outside of the Team members are generally expected to actively participate in many aspects of a JDC – for example: acceptance decisions, assessment / treatment planning, pre-court staffing and court hearings, graduation or termination decisions, and incentives/sanctions – just to name a few. However, it is sometimes difficult for team members to know what their specific roles are within these decision points. This section attempts to offer some advice to JDC teams; the important take-away for readers should be to develop actual policies and procedures that clearly define decision points for your JDC.

**REFERRAL TO DRUG COURT** – Generally, there are two paths youth take into the JDC:

1. The prosecutor has primary responsibility for referring juveniles to JDC. The prosecutor may receive input from schools, law enforcement, probation, and treatment providers; however, referrals should be made in accordance with the JDC's eligibility criteria.
2. The youth is referred to JDC post-adjudication while on probation. In these cases, referrals generally come from probation officers. Again, referrals should be made using a concrete set of criterion.

The entire team should discuss and develop eligibility and referral checklists and periodically review procedures to ensure adherence to policy. It is the coordinators responsibility to track referral, acceptance, and non-acceptance rates and share with the team on a regular basis.

**ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT PLANNING** – The assessment and treatment planning process provides vital information when individualizing interventions for youth; however, the entire team does not need to be directly involved in the assessment and treatment planning process.

Usually, the probation officer, treatment provider, and coordinator have the primary responsibility for assessment, reassessment, and case planning. Individual assessments typically cover all areas of the youth's life including: substance use, mental health, physical health, academic and vocational abilities, family environment, peer relations, interests, and strengths. JDCs should always strive to have assessments conducted by professionals with the appropriate level of education and training.

The results of the assessment process will determine and match the appropriate level of supervision and treatment and should include attainable goals, objectives, and activities that the youth will accomplish while participating in the drug court program. Once completed, it is shared with the team to enable full support/knowledge of the case plan. Progress made on the integrated case plan should be reported at pre-court staffings, so the entire team will understand where the youth is "at" in the process.

**INCENTIVES AND SANCTIONS** – The JDC represents a process for changing behavior of delinquent youth who use drugs and alcohol. To facilitate behavior change while a youth is under supervision, JDCs should develop and apply a host of behavioral incentives and sanctions to reinforce desired behaviors, reduce or eliminate undesirable behaviors, and to achieve treatment goals. An effective system of incentives and sanctions promotes each youth's ability to take responsibility and be accountable for his or her actions.

This MUST be a formal written process that goes beyond an incentive list or a sanctions grid. It is the team's responsibility to develop this formal process, but it is the coordinator's responsibility to track and maintain fidelity to that process.

**WEEKLY PRE-COURT STAFFING** – JDC Teams are expected to meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to review and gauge progress on case plans for each youth. All JDC team members are expected to participate actively in the pre-court staffings.

The entire team should develop a standard process for pre-court staffings. This process should include formal rules regarding:

- team communication;
- meeting structure (e.g., difficult cases first, easier cases last);
- weekly reports;

- decision making framework (i.e., voting or consensus)
- time, day, and location; and
- meeting facilitation (i.e., who is in charge of running the staffing).

**Technical Assistance Tip:**
JDC teams are encouraged to set guidelines or ground rules for pre-court staffing. A list of guidelines, to assist in this process, can be found in Appendix B.

**TERMINATION FROM DRUG COURT** – The decision to terminate a juvenile's participation in the JDC should be based on a set of concrete criteria that the entire team agrees upon (i.e., a certain level of non-compliance or a new charge). The JDC judge does have ultimate authority for terminating cases (either as successful of not); however, the entire JDC team plays an important role in recommending termination. And, the entire team is responsible for carving out a post-release plan and recommendations for the youth and family before they exit the program.

**GRADUATION PROCESS** – The decision for a youth to graduate from the JDC should be based on his or her success in meeting attainable case plan goals. The team does not need to vote on the graduation of the youth, it should be evident that graduation is warranted based on their success. So, it is important to implement objective measures that adequately define success for youth (e.g., phase checklists, Likert scales[3], reassessment scores). These objective measures allow the youth, family, and team to understand exactly when a youth can exit the JDC program.

## Beyond the Sum of Their Parts

JDCs should strive to be greater than the mere sum of their parts. They should strive to achieve a state of synergy in which JDC team members working together in a cooperative effort are able to achieve outcomes superior to those resulting from individual efforts alone.

**Technical Assistance Tip:**
JDC teams can work to exceed the sum of their parts by working through team-building activities. The activity detailed in Appendix A is a good place to start and can be facilitated by the coordinator.

What is the magic elixir that converts a collection of dedicated and experienced professionals into a unified unit that operates effectively to address the multiple needs of JDC-involved youth? There are doubtless many ingredients to this mixture and they are sure to be different with each JDC team.

A poll of juvenile drug court professionals conducted by NCJFCJ in preparation for this technical assistance brief identified a number of characteristics of JDC teams that may lead to exceeding the sum of their parts. These include:

- highly skilled team members;
- commitment to the JDC philosophy;
- sense of camaraderie; and
- teamwork combined with high expectations.

**HIGHLY SKILLED TEAM MEMBERS** – Strong judicial leadership is essential; however, the judge needs a highly skilled team composed of high functioning individuals to achieve exemplary results. Each member on this team:

- knows what their job is;
- brings demonstrable expertise to the table;
- has highly developed communication skills;
- collaborates effectively across disciplines; and
- provides broad perspectives on youth, families, juvenile justice, and substance use treatment.

3 A Likert scale should be clearly defined by the entire team – for example: **Progress Codes: 0- No Progress; 1- less Than Expected Progress; 2- Expected Progress; 3-Completed**

**COMMITMENT TO THE JDC PHILOSOPHY** – For a team to be effective, all the members of the team have to play the same game. To be extraordinary, a JDC team must be composed of members who have a clear understanding of the purpose of juvenile drug courts and a common understanding of what they are trying to achieve. JDC team members must believe in the program, want to be part of the program, and strive to fulfill the program's purpose. Exceptional JDCs have extremely dedicated team members with a long-standing commitment to the work.

Commitment to the JDC philosophy necessarily means commitment to youth. While JDCs may have been derived from the adult drug court model, they are definitively not mini-versions of that model. Excellence in JDCs requires that all team members care greatly about youthful participants and understand the legal, emotional, and developmental characteristics of adolescents. They must have empathy and concern for the well-being of youthful participants and emphasize different aspects of the participant's life for a more well-rounded approach. They demonstrate genuine interest in supporting the best interest of the youth.

**SENSE OF CAMARADERIE** – Strong, mutually respectful interpersonal relationships among team members are an essential ingredient of JDCs that excel. JDC team members must genuinely like one another, have great working relationships; and share mutual respect for each other and for each other's views. Camaraderie does not mean total compliance with a common view; disagreements will occur (and should occur) but disagreements and differences of opinion are addressed in a supportive and respectful way while keeping an eye on the prize—the best possible outcome for the youth.

**TEAMWORK AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS** – High achieving JDC teams set the bar high. Individually and collectively, JDC team members have expectations that exceed the norm. They demonstrate a willingness to listen, learn, compromise, push, try new things, and go the extra mile (or two, if necessary) to achieve the best possible outcomes for the youth, families, and communities they serve.

## Summary

The JDC team a critical component of the juvenile drug court. It differentiates them from traditional juvenile courts. It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to have an effective juvenile drug court without an effective JDC team. It is important, then, to make sure that the individual members of the JDC team fit the specific roles assigned to them and understand the responsibilities associated with those roles. Teams are funny things. They operate in an organic fashion—they are the sum of their parts and they are only as good as their weakest links. At their best, they can exceed the sum of their parts.

To exceed the sum of your team's parts, NCJFCJ encourages you to work with your JDC teams to clearly define roles and responsibilities of all the JDC team members. This should occur on a scheduled and continuous basis, and it is important to have stated procedures to ensure that the clarification and review process takes place. This Technical Assistance Brief is a tool for you to utilize as your JDC team strives for excellence!

# Appendix A

## JDC Team Role Definition Activity[4]

1) Provide each participant with an index card.

2) Have participants use a scratch piece of paper to complete the following phrase "my role on the team is..."

   a. Ask participants to be descriptive. Rather than saying, "my role on the team is the judge," have individuals focus on sharing what they do as a team member in a particular capacity. E.g., "my role on the team as the judge is to be leader of the team, but share leadership and decision making with all team members. I am the face of the team in the courtroom and one of the most important things I do is form a rapport with the youth and his or her family."

3) Ask participants to use the index card to write one question they have about other roles on team or team processes.

4) Collect all of the index cards and mix them up and pass the index cards back out to the participants (it doesn't matter if a participant gets his or her own index card).

5) Ask each participant to tell the team about his or her role and then read and respond to the question on the index card.

   a. Note, often the participant may not have an answer for the question on the index card, that's okay. Once the participant has responded to the question on the card, ask the larger group to also respond. Allow discussion for each card to last 5-7 minutes.

6) After each person has shared his or her role and read and responded to the question on the card, ask the group to identify themes among the questions and answers. Then say something like "were you surprised by of the questions?" and "do you feel like your role is well defined?"

7) Finally ask the team to brainstorm any changes they'd like to make to ensure that roles are clearly defined and understood among team members.

8) Flip chart the ideas for changes and have the group complete an action plan.

[4] This activity can be facilitated by a trainer or by the team coordinator (in addition to participating in the exercise him or herself and sharing information about the role of coordinator).

# Appendix B

## Shared Meeting Guidelines[5]

- **Respectful Open-Minded Judgment Free Listening** – respectfulness, inclusiveness and collaboration are key components of our core values. We model this by listening; giving everyone a chance to share ideas and concerns, and only then do we begin assessing options.
- **Decisions are by Consensus** – positive consensus to move us forward, not "consensus as veto."
- **Silence is Assent** – When sending out timely emails with date-specific deadlines. All agree that silence in response is assent with any proposed actions.
- **Absence does not hold back Progress** – if a person cannot make a regularly or properly noticed meeting, then they agree to abide by the decisions of the group. If there are agenda items that the absent member is interested in offering thoughts on, those thoughts should be offered prior to the meeting so that they may be incorporated into the discussion.
- **There shall be Deadlines** – Responsible parties for each task are identified at a meeting. When possible, we will allow a person to volunteer for a task, rather than being drafted.
- **Agendas Matter** – each meeting agenda should include those items that are due at the time. If a person is not able to meet a deadline, then a new due date should be set and the item shifted to that agenda. Avoid blame for not accomplishing tasks, but systemize responsible action.
- **Innovation is Key** – ideas proposed by members of the group deserve a hearing (all ideas are potentially good ideas), but ideas lacking support from more than one person should be deferred until there is broader support. (We do this because success in accomplishment really should take more than one person).
- **There will be Disagreements** – when we have a disagreement, the party disagreeing should be prepared to offer an alternative solution to the identified issue.

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[5] These guidelines were developed by Tom Begich, coach and former project director in Anchorage Alaska for Reclaiming Futures. NCJFCJ would like to extend our many thanks for allowing us to use the guidelines in this Technical Assistance Brief.


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