

# Judicial – Academic Partnerships For Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts

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A Technical Assistance  
Bulletin



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

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# Introduction

Juvenile drug treatment courts (JDTCs) connect youth struggling with substance use-related problems and delinquent behavior with treatment, services, supports, and pro-social activities in the community. Through the coordination of these responses and services, JDTC programs hold youth accountable for their behavior, create safer communities, and provide youth with opportunities to develop competencies that lead to crime-free lives. Having strong ties to a range of community resources is important to the success of JDTCs. Such connections are intended to assist youth to transition into adulthood and a healthy, law abiding and productive lifestyle. JDTC teams are made up of representatives and liaisons from diverse organizations, agencies, and services in the community (e.g., education, substance use treatment, mental health treatment, and probation). Teams also network with a variety of resources such as workforce development agencies, community recreation centers, and organizations that provide mentors to bring enrichment opportunities to youths in their programs.

Universities and colleges may be an overlooked but important community resource for JDTCs. University faculty, staff, and students have similar interests as JDTCs and can provide assistance on a variety of matters. Program evaluation is one area where the interests and needs of JDTCs and the interests and skills of university faculty and students can overlap. JDTC programs and organizational contexts are attractive opportunities for academics to use their evaluation and research expertise to advance knowledge in a particular academic or applied field. At the same time, their evaluation expertise can be used by a JDTC to improve its processes and outcomes.

JDTC academic partnerships can also provide other opportunities that are mutually beneficial to JDTC teams, program participants, university faculty, and students. These include services to JDTC team members such as professional training/development, planning for program improvement, and services to program participants such as mentoring, counseling, and tutoring. Engaging university students in opportunities to apply the knowledge they are acquiring through their academic studies in education, behavioral health, and business to the JDTC context will enrich their overall university experience. Such engagement also enriches and expands what JDTCs offer to participants.

**A brief survey of JDTCs found that 75% of courts that partnered with an academic institution found the assistance very helpful.**

# The Academic Environment<sup>1,2</sup>

There are distinct aspects of the academic environment that JDTC team members may want to know about to help them identify and reach out to the most relevant university-connected individuals or groups.

**Faculty members** have subject-matter expertise relevant to JDTCs. What they learn about JDTCs by partnering with them may, in turn, help them add knowledge to their field. This can occur through conducting studies and writing articles about JDTCs for publication. Faculty members are often in a position to partner with JDTCs to provide specialized services or expertise on a pro bono or a contract-for-services basis.

**Graduate students** are pursuing additional education in a specialized field and often are required to conduct research for a thesis or dissertation. They may make available their emerging expertise with such matters as data collection, instrument development, and statistical analyses to a JDTC at no cost. Through the original research they undertake in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree, they may help to advance knowledge in the field of JDTCs.

**Undergraduate student** research opportunities are offered to students who wish to apply what they are learning in their classes and explore their interests within their majors or other areas of study. JDTCs can propose a project to a local university to involve students who may be interested in helping to administer surveys, revise or update team documentation on policies or procedures, or create or update a participant handbook.

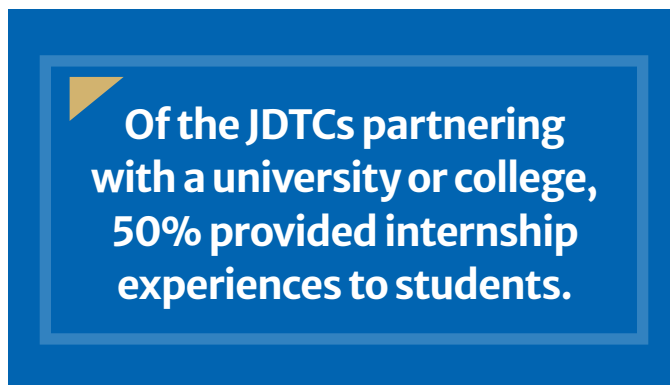
**Assistantships** are available for masters and doctoral students. These positions are offered through various departments and are paid for by grants or state funds. A research assistantship that involves collecting or analyzing data or other research activities undertaken in partnership with a JDTC enables graduate students to be employed or otherwise remunerated through tuition or university fee waivers. This opportunity allows graduate students to apply their academic learnings and contribute to the ability of a JDTC program to assess and improve its impact.

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1. Information provided by the University of Nevada, Reno.

2. Elite Research (2012). *Internal vs. External Funding*. Retrieved from: <https://eliteresearch.com/about-elite/press-releases-articles/87-grants/312-internal-vs-external-funding>.

**Internships** are temporary work positions designed to provide students with hands-on experience in careers. Internships can be full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid, for academic credit or not. Internships are completed by undergraduate and graduate students. Many academic departments require an internship experience as a condition for graduation.



**Of the JDTCs partnering with a university or college, 50% provided internship experiences to students.**

**Student Life/Clubs** are available on almost all campuses and can offer myriad ways to support a JDTC. Clubs contribute to the community through involving student members in a variety of volunteer activities and services. For JDTC participants, these could include mentoring, prosocial activities, and tutoring. These student club-related activities help to introduce JDTC participants to college life and give them opportunities to interact with college students who can be positive role models.

An **Internal Grant** is funding from the university that may focus primarily on supporting faculty to undertake research. Awards are often given to encourage academics to build their research credentials, prepare to seek external grants, and conduct pilot studies. Internal grants may especially be targeted to newer or younger faculty members in particular to help them advance their publication and research agendas early in their academic careers.

An **External Grant** is funding outside the university that gives academics the necessary resources to undertake large-scale research projects and programs. When JDTCs apply for federally funded grants from such entities as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), they often may (or are required to) include a third-party program evaluation as an aspect of the activities to be funded. If they engage university faculty in such evaluation, this may be a welcome source of external funding to the university and the faculty member.

# Academic Outreach<sup>3</sup>

The first step in creating a successful judicial-academic partnership is to identify whom to consider as part of the collaborative partnership. The JDTC team should select a team member to be the point person for the outreach to the institution of higher education. The point person could be the coordinator, but it also could be a graduate of the institute or one who has other ties to the school.

Steps for JDTC team outreach include:

**Identifying local institutions.** Both local universities and community colleges have faculty and students who would make productive and valuable partners for a JDTC. These institutions are a unique resource to JDTCs for data collection, data analyses, and research. Internet searches are an efficient way to identify potential academic partners.

**Examining institution websites for departments and internship requirements of interest.** The websites for institutions of higher learning contain detailed information on degree programs and departments that may be relevant to JDTCs. Names and contact information for advisors for academic departments are often available on websites. These individuals have information regarding undergraduate and graduate internship requirements. Some departments also include the names and contact information of specific individuals who have responsibility for overseeing undergraduate or graduate student internships as part of a department's website. Information about institutional resources such as undergraduate and graduate research assistantships can be found on a university's website as well. Additionally, "Student Life" can be a useful university website tab for finding information on student clubs and extracurricular activities and groups.

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3. Summers, A., & Shdaimah, C. S. (2010). *Creating Judicial-Academic Partnerships: An Effective Way to Leverage Resources for Evaluation*. Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.



**Finding interested faculty.** Faculty in any of the departments listed below may be interested in working with the courts to conduct program evaluation. Institution websites include faculty pages that list research interests and experiences.

**Contacting potential collaborative partners.** Most institution websites include email addresses and phone numbers for their department heads, advisors, and faculty. While phone conversations make it easier to communicate, an initial email to a faculty member, student advisor, or internship administrator may be the easiest way to receive a timely response.

**Developing a resource packet about the JDTC program.** While it is likely that the relationship the JDTC creates with a student or faculty member will develop over time, JDTC teams should develop an overview of their program and provide any prospective partners with a list of possible partnering opportunities.

## Potential Collaborative Academic Departments

- Addiction Treatment
- Business
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Health
- Human Development and Family Studies
- Juvenile Justice
- Law
- Legal Studies
- Policy
- Political Science
- Program Evaluation
- Public Affairs
- Social Psychology
- Sociology

# Partnering for Assistance with Data and/or Program Evaluation<sup>4</sup>

Recommended practice for JDTCs<sup>5</sup> is to routinely collect data and to use data to inform responses to youth behavior, to provide equivalent outcomes for all program participants, and to engage in continuous quality control for improving program operations and services.



**Over one-third of the JDTCs that reported partnering with an academic institution received data analysis and program evaluation assistance.**

The effectiveness of a JDTC can only be determined with data. With today's emphasis on implementing evidence-based practice in JDTCs, evaluating program effectiveness is a necessity. SAMHSA recommends that after an evidence-based practice or program has been implemented, courts should monitor implementation, evaluate effectiveness, sustain effective activities, and improve or replace those that fail.<sup>6</sup> JDTCs exist to promote community safety through holding youth accountable while reducing illegal behavior and substance use and strengthening youths' prosocial connections and behavior. It is important for courts to know how they are doing in accomplishing these goals. While many courts understand the need for data collection and practice/program evaluation, determining how to accomplish this may create a challenge. Hurdles with data collection and analyses can include addressing how to collect data, whom to involve in collecting and analyzing data, and what data should be collected.

Courts may not have the time or expertise to perform evaluations, develop research questions, collect data, or explain results. Local colleges and universities are excellent resources for data collection and analyses. Further, collaborating with an academic researcher can provide JDTCs with an effective way to leverage resources to increase the court's ability to evaluate practices and programs.

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4. Summers, A., & Shdaimah, C. S. (2010). *Creating Judicial-Academic Partnerships: An Effective Way to Leverage Resources for Evaluation*. Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

5. Specifically, *Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Guidelines*, accessible at <https://www.ojjdp.gov/juvenile-drug-treatment-court-guidelines.html>, call for JDTCs to track and monitor their program participants, practices, services, and outcomes.

6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. (January 2009). *Identifying and Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions: Revised Guidance for the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant Program*. Available online at: <http://www.ca-cpi.org/docs/Resources/SAMHSA/Identifying-and-Selecting-Evidence-Based-Interventions.pdf>.

An evaluation partnership should begin with setting a common data collection and/or research agenda. This would include clear expectations regarding the questions the JDTC would like university assistance with answering.

**Questions to consider when setting a common data collection and/or research agenda:**

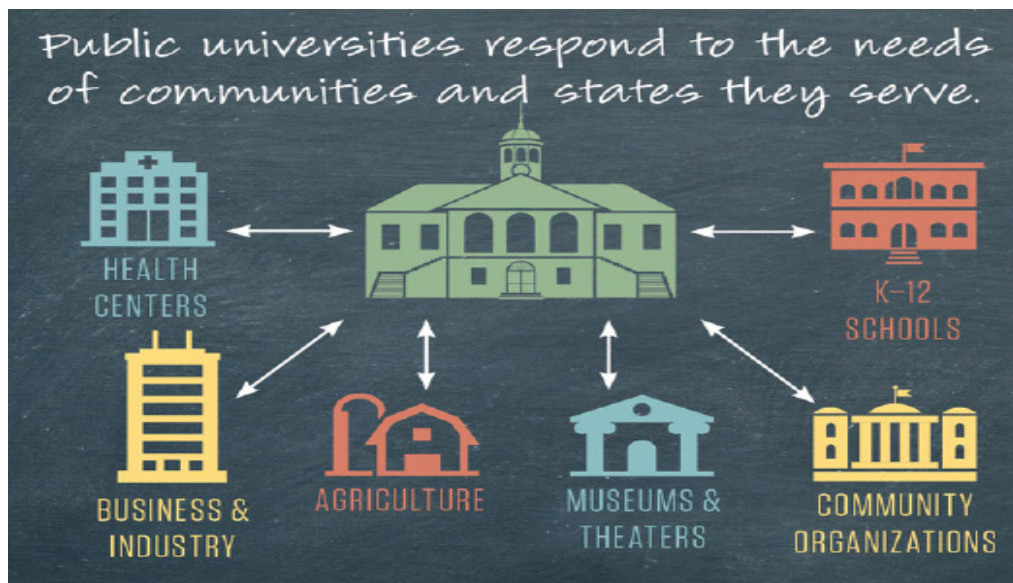
1. What is the goal of the program/project?
2. What questions need to be answered? (Use this to inform question #3.)
3. What type of assistance is the court seeking?
  - a. Identifying data to collect to help the court with performance measurement
  - b. Program or practice evaluation
    - i. Process Evaluation – How is the program working?
    - ii. Outcome Evaluation – What has happened because of the program?
4. What is the expected timeline for data assistance?
5. What are the expected outputs (e.g., reports, paper, presentations)?
6. What expectations does each party have of the other party’s potential contributions?
7. What types of constraints does each party have (e.g., time, funding, confidentiality requirements)?
8. What are the expected roles of each party?



**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**  
Everything You need to Know

# Assessing Available Data Resources<sup>7</sup>

JDTCs may have data about their participants, services, and practices in a variety of places including a local court data base, a centralized state juvenile justice system data base, a treatment provider’s billing data base, the office of the district attorney’s data base, a county probation/juvenile services data base, a school district system data base, and a county department of health and human services/behavioral health data base. One activity that an academic partner can help a JDTC undertake is mapping or identifying data that currently exist, how they are collected, in what system they are maintained, how they be accessed, and by whom. This activity can help inform the JDTC about whether its data collection needs revolve more around working with existing data and data systems or around collecting data that are not otherwise available or being collected. This activity is also the first step in developing a plan for the court-academic partnership to obtain, aggregate, analyze, and apply data to answer questions that the JDTC has about its participants and their needs, the JDTC’s effectiveness in addressing such needs, and the JDTC’s contribution to promoting community safety through reducing youth illegal behavior and substance use and strengthening youths’ prosocial connections and behavior.



## Partnering to Meet Other JDTC Needs

As noted, judicial-academic partnerships provide valuable resources and expertise especially related to data collection and program evaluation. But such partnerships provide resources to meet a variety of other needs that a JDTC court team may have.

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7. Summers, A., & Shdaimah, C. S. (2010). *Creating Judicial-Academic Partnerships: An Effective Way to Leverage Resources for Evaluation*. Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Below is a list of the range of JDTC needs and specific academic programs/resources that can meet those needs:

| <b>JDTC Needs</b>  | <b>Relevant Academic Resource</b>   |
|--|---|
| <b>Program Performance and Impact</b>  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection instrument development</li> <li>• Data collection and performance measurement planning</li> <li>• Data collection and analyses</li> <li>• Practice/program evaluation</li> <li>• Data-driven decision-making</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math Department</li> <li>• Statistics Department</li> <li>• Social Science Departments (Political Science, Sociology, Psychology)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Team Member Professional Development and Training</b>   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training on Adolescent Development</li> <li>• Training on Family Dynamics/Parenting</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Development Department</li> <li>• Human Development and Family Services Department</li> <li>• Sociology Department</li> <li>• Psychology Department</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Strategic Planning</b>  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated Team Strategic Planning</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Department</li> <li>• Business Management Department</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Direct Services to JDTC Participants</b>  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health Assessments</li> <li>• Counseling</li> <li>• Education Enrichment (e.g., tutoring)</li> <li>• Pro-Social Enrichment Activities (e.g., peer mentoring activities)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology Department</li> <li>• Psychiatry Department</li> <li>• Counseling Department</li> <li>• Education Department</li> <li>• Student Teaching Training/Certification Program</li> <li>• Student Clubs and Organizations (Sociology Department, Criminal Justice Department, sororities, fraternities, intramural clubs)</li> </ul> |

# Conclusion

JDTCs are encouraged to explore and develop partnerships with local universities or community colleges because of the varied benefits and resources such relationships offer. The benefits range from assistance to the team with program evaluation to prosocial opportunities and direct services (e.g., assessment, counseling, mentoring relationships) for youth. In addition, such partnerships have symbolic value as well. They signal that a JDTC is connected to an important institution in the community that is associated with pathways to success in adulthood. Both JDTCs and universities exist to develop the capabilities and competencies of young people to be productive citizens and to engage with and contribute to their community.



# Additional Resources:

California State University Los Angeles Juvenile Court Partnership

- [https://www.calstatela.edu/univ/ppa/publicat/today-fall\\_2012/storyArchives/winter2009/court.php](https://www.calstatela.edu/univ/ppa/publicat/today-fall_2012/storyArchives/winter2009/court.php)

Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform

- <https://cjr.georgetown.edu>

University of Central Arkansas Partnership with Faulkner County Juvenile Drug Court (FCJDC)

- <https://uca.edu/magazine/uca-community-builds-stronger-partnership-with-juvenile-court/>





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