



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

W A S H I N G T O N , D C

**Assistance to the
East Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Juvenile Drug Court in
Identifying Treatment Program Needs**

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT



Bureau of Justice Assistance

CRIMINAL COURTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

A Joint Program of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, and
American University School of Public Affairs

**OJP Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project
Technical Assistance Assignment Number 135**

**Assistance to the
East Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Juvenile Drug Court in
Identifying Treatment Program Needs**

October 1999

Consultants:

**Darryl Turpin
Judge Henry Weber**

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
I. Background	1
II. Program Overview	2
III. Program Components	3
A. School	3
B. AA/NA Support Group Requirements	3
C. Family Component	3
D. Probation	3
E. Judicial Supervision	3
IV. Issues Which Need to be Addressed and Recommendations	4
A. Recommendations	4
1. Consider the possibility of instituting an in-house drug court treatment program through local government resources.	4 5
2. Consider reallocating the budget award by eliminating the funding for a case manager and using these funds to provide the in-house treatment services	5
3. Develop local support for the in-house treatment program	5
4. Increase communication with other juvenile drug court programs in Louisiana	6
5. Obtain Training in substance abuse treatment services	6
B. Suggested Phased Program for the Juvenile Drug Court	6
V. Conclusion and Follow-up Developments	8

Assistance to the East Baton Rouge, Louisiana Juvenile Drug Court in Identifying Treatment Program Needs

OJP Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project

Assignment Data Sheet

Technical Assistance Number	135
Requesting Jurisdiction	East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana
Requesting Agency	Drug Courts Program Office/East Baton Rouge Juvenile Drug Court
Local Coordinator	Rebecca Ferguson, Drug Court Coordinator
Dates of On-Site Study	August 11-12, 1999
Consultant Staff Assigned	Darryl Turpin and Judge Henry Weber
DCCTAP Staff Coordinator	Caroline Cooper
Central Focus of Study	Review of Treatment Needs of Juvenile Drug Court

This project is supported by Grant No. 98-NU-VX-K018, awarded by the Drug Courts Program Office, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the United States Department of Justice.

I. Background

This report documents the observations and recommendations resulting from a technical assistance site visit on August 11 and 12, 1999 to the Juvenile Drug Court Program in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, conducted under the auspices of the OJP Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project at American University. The site study was conducted by Judge Henry Weber and Darryl Turpin, Drug Court Judge and Treatment Coordinator and Counselor, respectively, for the Louisville, Kentucky Juvenile Drug Court.

The purpose of the visit was to review the treatment services available for the program and the needs presented by participants, and to identify gaps in treatment and support services that need to be addressed in order to fully implement the juvenile drug court in East Baton Rouge. Since the program had recently been awarded a 1999 Implementation Grant from the OJP Drug Courts Program Office at the U.S. Department of Justice, this technical assistance was also designed to provide a guideline for determining how best to utilize the DCPO funds awarded under the grant to support the program's treatment service needs.

During the course of the visit, the consultants met with Judge Pamela Taylor-Johnson and Rebecca Ferguson, Drug Court Judge and coordinator, respectively, for the East Baton Rouge Juvenile Drug Court. They also met, in groups and individually, with juvenile probation officers; seven treatment providers from both private and public agencies in the metropolitan Baton Rouge area; and with Ms. Sandy Record, of the Louisiana State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Agency. The consultants also visited a treatment facility.

II. Program Overview

The East Baton Rouge Juvenile Drug Court is a post plea/probation program. Juveniles eligible for the program and who intend to enter a guilty plea are given the option to enter the drug court shortly after arrest; if they accept the offer, an Intake Probation Officer conducts an initial screening following adjudication to determine their legal appropriateness for the program and then administers the SASSI. If the youth is determined appropriate for program participation, the program is then explained to the youth and his/her parent. After a brief orientation, the parent and youth sign a waiver of confidentiality and other rights required for program participation. Juveniles who meet the eligibility requirements for the program are then recommended for program acceptance during Drug Court staffings which are held each Thursday. These staffings are attended by the "core" Juvenile Drug Court Team members: the Judge, the Program Administrator, a Public Defender, a representative of the District Attorney's office, and Probation staff. Treatment staff are not currently part of the Drug Court Team. If the Drug Court Team decides that the client is appropriate to participate in the program, the case is placed on the next juvenile Drug Court docket, which is currently held bi-weekly.

At the court hearing, the Judge orders the client to obtain an assessment and a probation officer is assigned to the case. The probation officer assists the family in locating an appropriate treatment provider to perform the assessment and to provide the subsequent treatment services. The "appropriateness of the treatment provider" appears to be primarily influenced by the client's ability to pay. Upon completion of the assessment, the client is ordered by the court to follow the treatment provider's recommendations.

Currently, there is no consistent communication mechanism that allows the drug Court Team to learn the outcomes of the assessment or the treatment plan recommendations. The Drug Court Team, therefore, has very little input into the treatment planning or in determining the client's progression in treatment. There is also no consistent phased program developed so that the determination of a participant's progress is left to the sole discretion of the treatment provider, who, as previously mentioned, is selected primarily on the basis of the family's ability to pay.

III. Program Components

A. School

All of the Juvenile Drug Court clients are enrolled in school or other educational programs. Probation staff monitor school attendance and behaviors. The local school board appears to be a part of the "peripheral" drug court team, and has been since the early planning stages of the program.

B. AA/NA Support Group Requirements

No attendance or participation is required for participants in any support groups.

C. Family Component

All of the treatment providers reported having their own version of a family/parents program. "Core" drug court staff report that these services have been unacceptable or inadequate, at best.

D. Probation

Participant contact with an assigned probation officer occurs through the program. The probation officer monitors all aspects of the client's progress. Supervision contact appears to be very intensive, including home visits and urine drops 2-3 times per week. As the client progresses in the program, the supervision contact is reduced.

E. Judicial Supervision

Currently, the court reviews drug court cases during the drug court hearings, which are held bi-weekly. Initially, clients are required to report to the drug court hearing every session. As an incentive for progress in the program, the client's required attendance is reduced. All "core" drug court team members are present during case reviews. Probation staff are responsible for preparing court reports. Judge Johnson indicates that the interaction that occurs at these reviews is primarily between her and the client, with the rest of the team acting as support.

IV. Issues Which Need to be Addressed and Recommendations

The major obstacle in Baton Rouge to the creation of an efficient and productive juvenile drug court is the lack of available treatment resources. In meeting with the local treatment providers, it was evident that they had little concept of what a juvenile drug court treatment service continuum requires. It also appeared that the treatment providers were unclear or hesitant in their willingness or ability to develop one. They clearly did not demonstrate an understanding of the delivery of juvenile treatment services in a drug court setting nor did they appear to have the capability to deliver quality treatment services within those parameters. Several of the providers were unclear as to what constituted *treatment* contacts, believing that urine screens and probation contacts constituted legitimate treatment services.

The local Drug Court team had apparently already reached a similar conclusion but was not able to establish a treatment alternative. An additional complication has been the core team's lack of experience in the area of treatment. Although the Drug Court team, including the judge, agreed that current services were inadequate, they had difficulty articulating their expectations for the services they wanted the treatment programs to provide. This lack of options and lack of understanding has made it difficult for the team to deal with providers and local government agencies to overcome this obstacle.

Upon determining that the treatment component was the key obstacle for the development of the program and further determining that there was little hope of creating appropriate treatment services through available providers, the consultants began to explore other possible strategies for providing treatment services.

The recommendations below have been designed to suggest an alternative framework for implementing the juvenile drug court program in East Baton Rouge Parish.

A. Recommendations

1. *Consider the possibility of instituting an in-house drug court treatment program through local government resources.*

Given the lack of available treatment services that can be provided by existing treatment providers, the alternative that must be considered is to develop an in-house treatment program for the drug court. This would require hiring their own staff and developing their own continuum of care that would meet the treatment and licensing requirements of the drug court.

The key concerns expressed by local officials regarding this option were: that probation officers already had overloaded caseloads and could not take on additional duties (a view resulting from inadequate understanding of treatment services) and the obvious budgetary concerns. In response, the consultants pointed out that to develop an in-house treatment service capability, certified treatment professionals would need to be hired. Probation staff would therefore not take on any new responsibilities, other than working with additional team members.

2. *Consider reallocating the budget award by eliminating the funding for a case manager and using these funds to provide the in-house treatment services*

The consultants also suggested that the budget problems could be resolved by reallocating some of the program award. The original drug court budget contains funds to hire a case manager. However, upon further discussion of the feasibility of developing an in-house treatment capability, the consultants were told that the contemplated duties of the case manager could, in fact, be performed by probation staff. Funds allocated for the case manager could, therefore, be redirected to provide treatment services. Local officials agreed that, if the funds for the case manager could be applied to provide in-house treatment, their monetary concerns would be allayed.

3. *Develop local support for the in-house treatment program*

During the course of the site visit it became clear that local government officials support the drug court judge and the drug court program. Their support will be critical to the development of the in-house treatment program. Clearly, much effort will need to be made to develop the program but there is confidence that Judge Taylor-Johnson has the skills to accomplish

this. Sandy Record, the local representative of the state alcohol and drug abuse licensing agency indicated that she would also assist the team in this effort.

4. Increase communication with other juvenile drug court programs in Louisiana

There appeared to be very little collaboration or communication between the East Baton Rouge Juvenile Drug court and other juvenile drug courts in Louisiana. Local officials were encouraged to contact the Louisiana Administrative Office of the Courts and the Louisiana Drug Court Association to identify programs and individuals involved with activities of interest to East Baton Rouge.

5. Obtain Training in substance abuse treatment services

Judge Johnson and the rest of the drug court team should receive intensive training in the area of substance abuse and treatment. Judge Johnson should receive this treatment immediately since key decisions need to be made now about treatment and she needs to be able to lead the team in this regard. The team also needs to be educated about treatment services but their training is not as urgent.

B. Suggested Phased Program for the Juvenile Drug Court

Due to the current lack of treatment expertise in the community and the team's need to receive training in the area of treatment, the consultants felt it would be helpful to assist the team in the creation of a phased-concept for the drug court. The treatment program presented in the grant proposal appeared convoluted and difficult to understand in terms of a phased progression.

During the course of discussions with Judge Johnson, Ms. Ferguson and probation staff, the following structure was developed:

- Phase I: 1 - 60 days
- 2 hours of treatment per day
 - random urine screens
 - daily school attendance
 - parent participation in a parents' group

- Completion requirements include:
 - 3 weeks clean
 - completion of all tasks
 - regular attendance at school, treatment, and court

Phase II: 4 months

- 1.5 hours of treatment, 3 times pe week
- parental participation in parents' groups
- random urine screens
- daily school attendance
- completion requirements include:
 - 60 days clean
 - compete all assigned tasks
 - regular attendance at school, treatment and court

Phase III: 5 months

- 1.5 hours of treatment, once a week
- working with parents' in family home
- random urine screens
- daily school attendance

Graduation Requirements:

Can include:

- 6 months clean
- complete all assigned tasks
- regular attendance at school, treatment and court.

Since a primary benefit of the drug court is the frequent contact with the judge, the current practice of conducting drug court sessions bi-weekly should be increased to weekly.

V. Conclusion and Follow-up Developments

Since the on-site visit, the State Alcohol and Drug Abuse agency has provided a consultant to help juvenile drug court officials in Baton Rouge design the treatment component of the program and develop criteria for hiring treatment staff which will comport with state and local licensing standards. The local department of juvenile services is also working with the program to provide a facility to house the treatment component, which will be at a site that is already licensed to provide medical services, accessible by public transportation and in close proximity to the court. Treatment staff would be hired through the city.

With the exception of appropriate treatment resources, the "core" drug court treatment team in East Baton Rouge has all of the qualities necessary to create and maintain a viable juvenile drug court. Judge Johnson is dynamic, energetic and well respected. The coordinator appears to be a very competent manager and administrator and probation staff seem able, interested and willing. The follow-up developments since the consultants' visit provide strong indication that juvenile drug court officials in Baton Rouge are well on their way to developing a sound treatment program and other necessary services for participants in the program.