



# Specialty Court Peer Review Overview

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# What is peer review?

Team members from different treatment courts observe one another's programs to:

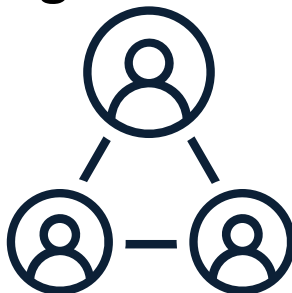
- ✓ Assess alignment with best practices
- ✓ Share successful practices
- ✓ Address challenges
- ✓ Identify strengths and recommendations



Peer review aims to maximize adherence to best practices to **increase program quality** and **improve participant outcomes**.

# Purpose of Peer Review

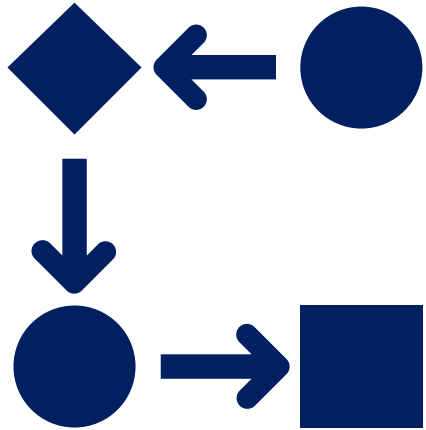
- Create **learning communities and peer connections** across specialty courts.
- Support and enhance **alignment with Best Practices and Standards**.
- Provide feedback on strengths and suggest improvements for **better participant outcomes**.
- **Share innovative and successful practices**.
- **Demonstrate program needs** for resources or requests for technical assistance and training.
- Once implemented, sustained with **lower administrative costs** than hiring outside evaluators.



# How is peer review used?

- Peer review is intended to be educational. It is not an audit.
- The program being reviewed will discuss findings and recommendations and create an action plan.
- Peers may get ideas for implementation in their own programs.
- State will provide information and support to programs based on the results.
- State will identify training and technical assistance needs based on the results.





What does  
peer review  
look like?

# Process Overview

# Oregon Peer Review

- HOME
- TABLE OF CONTENTS
- OVERVIEW
- ROLES
- CHECKLISTS
- PEER
- SITE
- STATE
- LOGISTICS
- SCHEDULE
- CONFIDENTIAL FORM
- BEST PRACTICES
- BP ASSESS
- BP REPORT
- INTERVIEW
- FOCUS GROUP
- RECRUIT
- DESCRIPT
- QUESTIONS
- OBSERVE
- STAFF
- COURT
- DEBRIEF
- REPORT
- TEMPLATE
- REC LANG
- SAMPLE 1
- SAMPLE 2
- FOLLOW-UP
- APPEND: Tx DEFS



# Process Overview

## Prior to the Site Visit



### Scheduling

Specialty Court Resource Center staff work with Peer Reviewers and the site under review to schedule the site visits and the training.



### Best Practice Assessment

The site under review completes the Best Practice Assessment (if not already completed). Peer Reviewers review the results.



### Document Review

The site under review shares its Policy & Procedures Manual and Participant Handbook. Peer Reviewers review them.



### Peer Reviewer Training

Specialty Court Resource Center staff schedule a training for the Peer Reviewers on the process and each component of the site visit. Designated Peer Reviewers should attend the training. Additional team members may attend the training if they would like to do so, but it is only required for the Peer Reviewers.

## Site Visit (typically occurs over 2 days)

### Staffing and Court Observations

Peer Reviewers observe a staffing meeting and court sessions. This is business as usual for the site under review.

### Team Member Interviews

Peer Reviewers individually interview each treatment court team member at the site under review. All team members should have a scheduled interview (up to 50 minutes).

### Components of the Site Visit

### Participant Focus Group

Peer Reviewers facilitate a focus group with participants. The site under review will recruit participants but will not be present for the focus group.

### Site Visit Debrief Meeting

Peer Reviewers and the team being reviewed meet at the end of the site visit to discuss initial findings and address remaining questions.

## After the Site Visit (within 2-3 weeks of the site visit)



### Peer Review Report

Using a template, Peer Reviewers complete a summary report of best practices, commendations, and recommendations. Specialty Court Resource Center staff can assist. The site under review will receive the report prior to the follow-up meeting.



### Follow-Up Meeting

Peer Reviewers and the site under review meet to discuss the report and findings in further detail and address questions.

# Roles & Responsibilities

	State Staff	Peer Reviewers	Site Receiving a Peer Review
<b>Who</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specialty Court Resource Center staff</li> </ul>	Peer Reviewers are typically a coordinator and a judge, but could be other designated team members. The Lead Reviewer completes the first draft of the peer review summary report.	Each member of the treatment court team should participate in interviews and a debrief meeting at the end of the visit. The time commitment of the site visit for each individual team member is less than 2 hours. They will not need to be available for the entire site visit.
<b>Primary Roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selects and matches programs for peer review.</li> <li>Facilitates scheduling.</li> <li>Communicates with Lead Reviewer on progress throughout.</li> <li>Provides support and help as needed.</li> <li>Links programs to training and technical assistance.</li> <li>Maintains pool of peer reviewers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend a site visit to learn about program procedures and practices.</li> <li>Communicate and provide updates to the Specialty Court Resource Center staff.</li> <li>Provide feedback to the program (including a debrief with the team and a written report).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hosts a site visit for Peer Reviewers.</li> <li>Receives feedback from Peer Reviewers to strengthen their program.</li> </ul>

## Schedule of Major Tasks and Responsibilities

<b>Prior to the Visit</b> (at least 30 days in advance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruits programs to participate.</li> <li>Schedules site visits and coordinates logistics.</li> <li>Provides the Peer Reviewer Training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Peer Reviewer Training.</li> <li>Review Best Practice Assessment and Report.</li> <li>Review program documents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completes Best Practice Assessment (if not already completed in the last year).</li> <li>Sends program documents (Policy &amp; Procedure Manual, Participant Handbook).</li> <li>Recruits participants for a focus group.</li> </ul>
<b>Site Visit</b> (2-3 days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides support and answers questions that peer reviewers and programs have.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe staffing and court.</li> <li>Facilitate a participant focus group.</li> <li>Interview team members.</li> <li>Prepare for and lead the Site Visit Debrief Meeting with the team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participates in team member interviews individually (interviews are up to 50 minutes).</li> <li>Attends the Site Visit Debrief Meeting to ask and answer questions.</li> </ul>
<b>After the Visit</b> (within 2-3 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receives the Peer Review Report draft from the Peer Reviewers and assists if needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the template for the Peer Review Report to provide relevant feedback.</li> <li>Send the draft to SCRC staff for their review.</li> <li>Send the Peer Review Report to the site under review.</li> <li>Lead the Follow-Up Meeting to review and discuss the Peer Review Report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reads the Peer Review Report.</li> <li>Attends the Follow-Up Meeting to review and discuss the Peer Review Report.</li> </ul>

# PEER REVIEW CHECKLIST: PEER REVIEWER



- 1. **Scheduling:** Work with the State Coordinator to schedule the 2-day site visit and peer reviewer training based on your availability. Site visits must occur on days with staffings and court sessions since these sessions are observed.
- 2. **Attend Peer Reviewer Training:** The State Coordinator will facilitate a training that will provide an overview of the peer review process and teach you how to best complete each component of the site visit.
- 3. **Sign and Return Confidentiality Form:** The State Coordinator or site being reviewed will send you a confidentiality form to sign that indicates that you will adhere to confidentiality regulations and will not disclose any personal information about the participants that you receive, see, or hear about on the site visit. Send the signed form to the State Coordinator and the primary contact at the site under review (or bring it with you to the site visit).
- 4. **Review Program Documents:** The site under review will send materials such as its Participant Handbook and Policy & Procedure Manual. Review the program documents and add information to your notes for follow-up questions during the site visit.
- 5. **Review Best Practice Assessment and Report:** You will receive a report of the best practices based on the site's responses to NPC's Best Practice Assessment to review prior to the site visit. In particular, note best practices that are met and are not met. Draft a preliminary list of questions or needed clarifications to add to the basic interview questions.

Checklists by  
Role: Peer  
Reviewer

# PEER REVIEW CHECKLIST: SITE RECEIVING A PEER REVIEW



- 1. **Complete and Send Site Visit Preparation Details Form:** The State Coordinator will send you a form that requests information on your team size and composition, the schedule of staffings and court, and other background information. Complete it and send it to the State Coordinator and Peer Reviewers.
- 2. **Scheduling:** Work with State Facilitators and Peer Reviewers to schedule the 2-day site visit. Site visits must occur on days with staffings and court sessions since these sessions are observed. Work with your team to schedule each team member for an interview (up to 50 minutes) using the Interview Sign-Up Sheet and invite them to attend the exit interview at the end of the site visit. As such, the time commitment of the site visit for each individual team member is less than 2 hours (other than you as the site liaison who helps with some coordination of the visit). No team member will be required to be available for the entirety of the site visit.
- 3. **If not already completed, complete the Best Practice Assessment:** If your program has not completed NPC's Best Practice Assessment within the last year, you will receive a link to the assessment at least 4 weeks prior to the site visit. Reach out to the State Coordinator if you have not received the link. Work with your team to complete and submit the assessment at least 2 weeks prior to the site visit. If your program has a completed assessment, review the responses and best practice report and share any updates with the State Coordinator and Peer Reviewers.
- 4. **Send Program Documents:** Send the State Coordinator and Peer Reviewers program materials, such as your Participant Handbook, Policy & Procedure Manual, MOUs, etc.

Checklists by  
Role: Site  
Receiving a  
Peer Review



# Preparing for the Site Visit

# Site Visit Logistics

*Completed by the Site Receiving a Peer Review.*

Program Name:	
Primary Contact Name:	
Primary Contact Email:	
Primary Contact Phone #:	

	Day of Week	Start Time	End Time
Pre-Court Staffing Meeting:			
Court Sessions/Hearings:			

Current # of participants:

Program Team Members			
Role	Name	Direct Phone #	Email
Judge			
Coordinator			
Treatment Provider			
Prosecutor			
Defense Attorney			
Law Enforcement			
Case Manager			
Probation Officer			
<i>(Add others as needed.)</i>			

# Site Visit Schedule & Interview Sign- Up Form

Day 1: (INSERT DAY OF WEEK & DATE)

Time	Name of Interviewee or Activity	Role on Team (If Interview)	Email
8:00 am – 8:50 am			
9:00 am – 9:50 am			
10:00 am – 10:50 am			
11:00 am – 11:50 am			
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch Break		
1:00 pm – 1:50 pm			
2:00 pm – 2:50 pm			
3:00 pm – 3:40 pm			
3:50 pm – 4:30 pm			

# Sample Assessment Questions

## TREATMENT COURT: CHARACTERISTICS

5. When was your treatment court program implemented?

Month (mm): \_\_\_\_\_

Year (yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you have separate tracks (e.g., distinct dockets, different sets of program expectations, etc.) within your treatment court for:

	Yes	No
Different risk and need levels	( )	( )
Co-occurring disorders	( )	( )
Medication for addiction treatment	( )	( )
Men and women	( )	( )

Best Practice  
Assessment

# Sample Assessment Question

36. Please estimate the percent of current participants who have a substance use disorder or problem related to each of the following substances (note, percentages may total greater than 100% to account for participants who engage in poly-substance use).

Alcohol (%): \_\_\_\_\_

Marijuana (%): \_\_\_\_\_

Crack/Cocaine (%): \_\_\_\_\_

Methamphetamine (%): \_\_\_\_\_

Opiate/heroin (%): \_\_\_\_\_

Misuse of opioid prescriptions (%): \_\_\_\_\_

Misuse of other prescriptions (%): \_\_\_\_\_

Misuse of over-the-counter medications and other substances (such as huffing) (%):

\_\_\_\_\_

Other substance #1 (% only, list name of substance in next question): \_\_\_\_\_

Other substance #2 (% only, list name of substance in next question): \_\_\_\_\_

Best Practice  
Assessment

# Best Practice Report



## ANYTOWN ADULT TREATMENT COURT BEST PRACTICE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### Adult Treatment Courts

This report has been created using the results of NPC's Treatment Court Assessment tool. The best practice ratings below are made based on how questions were answered on the assessment.

#### Treatment Court Background

▶ Implementation year	2002
▶ Current active caseload / current capacity	62 / 120
▶ Graduates (successful completions)	2143
▶ Non-graduates (unsuccessful completions)	273

The most commonly used substance(s) among participants is/are Methamphetamine (40%)

The treatment court serves high, moderate, and low risk and high and low need participants. The treatment court has separate tracks for participants of different risk/need levels.

#### Best Practices by Key Component - Quick Review:

The statistics in this summary table indicate the percentage of best practices (BPs) met within each Key Component (KC). The intention is to help identify which components need additional focus and support. Note, some practices are easier to implement than others (e.g., require less time or fewer resources) and some practices are restricted by local and state policies. This summary is not intended as a score or a grade indicating the quality of your program, but rather a navigational tool to aid in guiding your attention in the report to where you can celebrate best practices met and where you may require more assistance.

Key Component	Best Practices Met (%)
KC1. Team Collaboration	50%
KC2. Public Safety & Due Process	100%
KC3. Participant Eligibility & Program Entry	78%
KC4a. Treatment Practices	80%
KC4b. Treatment & Auxiliary Services	38%
KC5. Drug Testing	100%
KC6. Responses to Participant Behavior	67%
KC7. Role of the Judge	86%
KC8. Monitoring & Evaluation	20%
KC9. Team Training	20%
KC10. Program Support & Sustainability	50%

KC Review Key: Meeting most practices In progress, room for improvement Priority area for discussion

# Best Practice Report

## ANYTOWN ADULT TREATMENT COURT

Results as of March 2024

The tables below provide a list of treatment court best practices and whether your program is meeting that best practice, based on the answers in your assessment. The results for your treatment court on the key best practices listed in the table are meant to serve as a *starting point* for discussion about how you are implementing best practices in your program, including what you are doing well and what you would like to do better. We hope that it will be useful for beginning or continuing conversations with your team.

The answers to the best practices below are compiled based on the treatment court's responses to one or more questions on NPC's Treatment Court Assessment:

- "Yes" indicates that the treatment court reports performing the practice.
- "No" indicates that the treatment court reports not performing the practice.
- "Missing" indicates that the treatment court did not respond to the question, or set of questions, necessary to determine whether the treatment court is performing the practice.

### Key Component 1:

*Treatment courts integrate alcohol and other drug treatment services with justice system case processing*

 **5 out of 10 practices met (50%)**

	Performing this practice?
1.1 The treatment court has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place between the treatment court team members (and/or the associated agencies)	No
i. MOU specifies team member roles	N/A
ii. MOU specifies what information will be shared	N/A
1.2 The treatment court has a written policy and procedure manual	Yes
1.3 All key team members <sup>1</sup> attend pre-court team meetings (staffings)	No
1.4 All key team members <sup>2</sup> attend court sessions/status review hearings	No

<sup>1</sup> Key team members include the judge, a prosecutor, a defense attorney, a substance use disorder treatment representative, the treatment court coordinator, and a representative from probation. Best practice research currently defines supervision as represented by someone from probation. However, treatment court programs where participants enter pre-plea or pre-conviction may not have a representative from probation on the team. Probation may not have legal authority or jurisdiction over participants in these situations, and the role of supervision monitoring may fall under a case manager or other team member. NPC recognizes that the role of supervision may be met by someone from an agency other than probation, and NPC commends programs who have this role identified and actively engaged in staffings and court sessions.

<sup>2</sup> See previous footnote.



# Site Visit Activities

# Team Member Interviews

- **Basic questions are drafted.**
  - Includes general questions for everyone and questions for specific team members.
- **Add other relevant interview questions.**
  - Peer reviewers are encouraged to add questions based on the assessment, other interviews, and observations on the visit.
- **Before the visit, confirm the lead interviewer for each interview.**
  - One person asks questions; the other person takes notes on takeaways (e.g., successes, areas for recommendations).
  - Often best to interview the person in your same role (e.g., coordinator interviews the coordinator, judge interviews the judge, etc.).
- **Interviewing tips are provided.**
  - Be open-minded and curious. Use open-ended questions.
  - Remember confidentiality.

## Team Member Interviews

# Sample Interview Questions

### **Can you describe your role on the treatment court team?**

- What are your main duties?
- What do you see as your main purpose on the team?

### **Please describe your program's approach to responding to participant behavior.**

- Would you say the program leans more toward the use of incentives or the use of sanctions to reinforce or change behavior?

### **What should your treatment court continue doing?**

- What is going well?
- What do you see as a successful practice in your program?

# Focus Group

- **Site under review recruits participants but does not attend.**
  - Guidance is provided on how to schedule the group and recruit participants.
- **Basic focus group questions are provided.**
- **Add other relevant focus group questions.**
  - Peer reviewers are encouraged to add their questions based on the assessment, other interviews, and observations on the visit.
- **Before the visit, confirm who will be the facilitator and note-taker.**
- **Tips for facilitating a focus group are provided.**
  - Remember your role is different than your role on your own team.

## Focus Group Questions

# Sample Focus Group Questions

**What do you like most about the treatment court program?**

- What is most helpful or useful for you?

**What do you like least about the program?**

- Are there any things about the program or your situation that make your progress in treatment court more difficult?

**Do you have any suggestions to improve the program?**



# Observations

- **Peer reviewers will observe a staffing meeting and a court session to see the team in action.**
  - See the information shared, team dynamics, incentives/sanctions, decision-making processes, interactions with participants, etc.
- **They will sign a confidentiality form.**
- **There are observation forms for staffing and court.**

# Sample Staffing Question

4. What kind of information about participants was discussed among the team? Check all that apply.

- Treatment progress (e.g., progress towards treatment goals, attendance)
- Drug tests ( Positive Results  Negative Results  Missed Tests)
- Supervision ( Office visits  Home visits  Phone/virtual visits)
- Case plan and whether the participant is meeting plan goals
- Living situation
- Family
- People the participant spends time with
- Employment status
- Plan for incentives
- Past incentives already received
- Plan for other response(s) (supervision/monitoring responses, therapeutic responses, sanctions)
- Other responses received in the past (supervision/monitoring responses, therapeutic responses, sanctions)
- The plan for what information the judge should talk with the participant about in court and how to deliver the message

Notes: Click or tap here to enter text.

Staffing  
Observation

# Sample Court Questions

9. Did the judge explain to each participant the reasons for the sanctions or incentives being provided?

Yes

Somewhat

No

10. Did the judge describe to each participant what behavior they were doing right, or what behavior s/he would like to see the participant begin doing or continue doing?

Yes

Somewhat

No

Court  
Observation

# Site Visit Debrief Meeting

- **Debrief meeting purpose:**
  - Allows the site to ask questions or share additional information.
  - Allows peer reviewers to ask any remaining questions, highlight findings, and share the next steps.
- **Peer reviewers highlight positives.**
  - Best practices met, program strengths, innovative ideas/practices, areas the participants liked, etc.
- **Peer reviewers offer a few key suggestions.**
  - Best practices not yet met, why this practice is relevant, and any concrete suggestions.



# After the Site Visit

# Peer Review Report



## PEER REVIEW REPORT SAMPLE #1

### BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW:

A peer site visit was conducted with the Anytown Drug Treatment Court (Anytown, ST) on May 6-7, 2024, by Jane Doe (Othertown Treatment Court Judge) and John Smith (Othertown Treatment Court Coordinator). This report summarizes the key findings of the review process.

### SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES:

The following practices that align with the Adult Treatment Court Best Practice Standards (All Rise 2024; NADCP 2015) and the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts have been implemented by your treatment court. They are based on research demonstrating that programs with these practices have more positive outcomes than other programs. Congratulations on your program's achievements in these areas!

A best practice report with a full set of practices implemented by this program is included as a separate attachment to this site visit report.

1. The Anytown Drug Treatment Court has a written policies and procedures manual.
2. The program has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place between the treatment court and team members (and/or the associated agencies). This MOU specifies team member roles and specifies what information will be shared. All team members had signed the MOU.

# Peer Review Report

## RECOMMENDATION REVIEW FORM:

Please complete the following table for each recommendation. For any recommendation there may be multiple tasks in the action plan.

[Please insert the key recommendations from this report under the “recommendation” columns below; the program being reviewed will fill in the rest of this table.]

Recommendation	Responsible individual, group, or agency	Action plan	Goal dates	TA or training needed?
1. (RECOMMENDATION)	enter text	enter text	enter text	enter text
2. (RECOMMENDATION)	enter text	enter text	enter text	enter text
3. (RECOMMENDATION)	enter text	enter text	enter text	enter text
4. (RECOMMENDATION)	enter text	enter text	enter text	enter text
5. (RECOMMENDATION)	enter text	enter text	enter text	enter text

**Responsible individual, group, or agency:** Identify who is the focus of the recommendation, and who has the authority to make related changes.

**Action plan:** Describe the status of action related to the recommendation (some changes or decisions may already have been made). Identify which tasks have been assigned, to whom, and by what date they will be accomplished or progress reviewed. Assign tasks only to a person who is present. If the appropriate person is not present or not yet identified (because the task falls to an agency or to the community, for example), identify who from the group will take on the task of identifying and



# Questions

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