



FAMILY TREATMENT COURT PEER REVIEW PROCESS OVERVIEW

Oregon Judicial Department and NPC Research have collaborated to establish a process to improve family treatment court (FTC) program practices and increase accountability relating to the implementation of best practices. The development of a peer review process was determined to be an effective method to accomplish this goal. This peer review process has been developed to help programs align with the Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards, the Oregon Specialty Court Standards, 10 Key Components of Drug Courts, and Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards. The peer review materials are research-based and include policies and practices that will help ensure that programs provide access to treatment and other needed services, reduce recidivism, and remain cost effective.

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?

The peer review process is intended to create a learning community among treatment court teams. The idea is for peers to help each other identify ideas for program improvements and share successes and challenges. This approach will allow the family treatment court community access to information and support at a low administrative cost while building relationships between programs. It will also provide important information to Oregon Judicial Department about areas of needed technical assistance and training, and how to focus those resources most effectively, in addition to gathering information critical to grant applications and future family treatment court expansion.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Family treatment court team members (peer reviewers) will review another program and provide feedback about that program's alignment with best practices. The peer reviewers will be trained in how to conduct the peer review, including a site visit of the other program, and compile the information into a simple report that includes suggestions and resource ideas. In turn, the peer reviewers will have the opportunity to learn about innovative and successful practices that have been implemented in another program. The main activities involved in the peer review process include:

- Online assessment about program characteristics, policies, and procedures completed by the program being reviewed.
- Review of program documents (policy and procedure manual, participant handbook, etc.).
- 2-3-day site visit where peer reviewers observe staffing and court hearings, interview team members and partner agency staff, and talk with program participants [typically not 3 full days, but activities may spread across multiple days if that works best for scheduling].



- Debrief of findings from the site visit activities.
- Summary report of feedback, including a table of best practices and which ones the program is meeting, recommendations for program improvement, documentation of innovative/successful practices to share with other programs, and requests for future training or resources.
- Follow-up phone call/meeting with the program under review to discuss the report, including additional findings, commendations, and recommendations that were not covered during the exit debrief.

WHO PARTICIPATES?

Peer reviews should occur at least every 3 years, and/or can be requested by the Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) for programs that do not meet state standards. Peer review reports will be provided to the OJD, which will address any inconsistencies between the peer review and grant applications. They will also be used as an opportunity to provide support, technical assistance, and additional information for both the OJD and the program to improve program operations and identify any new innovations that could be utilized statewide. Peer review teams typically include a judge and coordinator (who may not necessarily be from the same court), at a minimum. OJD staff may also participate in the site visits. One of the peer reviewers takes on the role of “lead reviewer,” which involves some specific responsibilities for coordinating the scheduling and other logistics related to the review, as well as drafting the summary report. Other peer reviewers participate as “co-reviewers” (see Roles document for additional details).

Judges as peer reviewers

Whenever possible, peer reviews benefit from the involvement of a judge as one of the reviewers as they have a unique perspective and authority related to treatment court programs. A judge can ask certain questions and provide feedback as the counterpart to the judge of the program being reviewed. Because of the additional time and responsibility involved in being a lead reviewer, judges typically volunteer to be a co-reviewer. While every peer reviewer who agrees to participate in a review, including a judge, is expected and requested to participate in all of the review activities, the most important aspects of the peer review for judges are the review of the summary of best practices achieved by the program to date (in preparation for the site visit), interviews with the judge and attorneys, interviews with other partner agency leadership when applicable/needed, observation of the staffing and court sessions (see Roles document and peer review checklist for a list of activities for peer reviewers), and providing feedback during the debrief with the team. After the visit, all co-reviewers, including judges, are asked to read and comment on the summary report drafted by the lead reviewer.