

TASK FORCE ON SPECIALTY COURTS

Oregon State Legislature

900 Court Street NE Salem, OR 97301

<https://www.oregonlegislature.gov>



RECOMMENDATION PROPOSAL

For questions or assistance filling out this form, please reach out to task force staff:
jules.dellinger@oregonlegislature.gov or patricia.pascone@oregonlegislature.gov.

Please submit one form per policy recommendation. There is no limit on the number of forms you may submit for discussion.

Task force members are encouraged to collaborate. If you collaborate, please submit one form per recommendation and list all group members' names.

Name(s) of submitter(s)
Caroline Wong
Proposal number and draft number (as applicable):
1, 1
What problem are you trying to solve?
This recommendation attempts to solve the problem of the lack of regularly collected data on the costs of operating treatment courts using standard definitions in each jurisdiction.
Title of proposal (25 words or less):
Collecting meaningful data about the costs of operating treatment courts
Task Force Study Topic (eligibility, accountability, administration, funding):
Funding & Administration (Discussion Topic #3: Should data be regularly collected about costs of operating each treatment court, or about amounts and uses of funds received from sources in addition to Specialty Court Grants? If so, how?)


Detailed description of proposal (50 words or more):

Recommendation: This proposal recommends 1) using standardized definitions to 2) collect Specialty Court operation costs every two years.

Rationale: The cost of operating specialty courts can change drastically year to year, especially during times of recession or inflation. Taking into account the national 2021 inflation rate (4.7%) and the 2022 inflation rate (8.3%), court operating costs would likely rise significantly by 2023 with cost-of-living adjustments alone. Relying on outdated numbers is both misleading and detrimental to sustaining funding for these programs. Likewise, not providing standard definitions or methods of calculating costs results in inconsistencies and confusion. For example, recent surveys asked specialty court practitioners for their “salary” amount while also asking specialty court teams for their “personnel costs.” These are two different things (e.g. an attorney’s salary might be \$100,000 annually but their personnel costs, e.g. “total employee cost,” is \$170,000 when calculating fringe benefits, insurance, PERS, etc.). Additionally, terminology was confusing such as what to include under “non-insurance billables” and whether contracted treatment providers should be considered personnel for quantified costs. The more jurisdictions employ different methodologies to calculate costs, the greater the risk that specialty courts are not appropriately funded.

Potential Timeline: This new process will start in the 2025-2027 grant cycle.

Enforcement:

How will the legislature make sure the policy is followed, if applicable?

This recommendation proposes requiring a summary of the anticipated average annual cost of operating specialty courts as part of CJC’s Specialty Court grant application process *in addition to* the budget submission for requested grant funds. This includes in-kind contributions. Each application will be asked to provide the anticipated total cost using a standardized definition key.

There is an added benefit of knowing what percent of the total operating cost each court is requesting CJC grant funds to cover.

Reporting mechanisms:

What information will be collected so the legislature knows if the policy is working as intended?

Information will be collected by Specialty Court teams during the grant application budget process and inputted into the grant application for Specialty Court funding during each new budget cycle (usually two years). That data will be collected by CJC to monitor total operating costs versus grant-requested costs. This ensures that each funded specialty court will provide the requested data (versus the hit or miss responses from surveys or informal requests) using a standardized method across jurisdictions.

Agency responsible for implementation:




CJC and any entity applying for Specialty Court grant funding through CJC.

Creation of the standard definitions should involve a collaboration between CJC and OJD.

