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LEGISLATIVE POLICY
AND RESEARCH OFFICE

Oregon Specialty Court Programs: State Supports and Court Needs Survey Results

PREPARED FOR: Joint Task Force on Specialty Courts

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BY: LPRO Research

About the survey

The Legislative Policy and Research Office surveyed specialty courts to collect information about operating costs, funding sources, and experiences with support from the state for the 2023-25 fiscal year.

The survey included a separate personnel questionnaire to collect information about salaries/wages, time dedicated to courts, and court-related responsibilities directly from court team members.

The Task Force may use survey results to inform its recommendations to the legislature for supporting the long-term stability of specialty courts.

Survey data was collected between August 29 through September 18, 2024.



Which courts are included in the survey results?

75% of all
**active specialty
courts completed
the survey.**

Court Type	Number of Active Courts	Number of Survey Responses	Survey Response Rate
<i>All Courts</i>	67	50	75%
Adult Drug	21	19	90%
DWI/DUI	2	1	50%
DWI/Drug Hybrid	2	2	100%
Family Treatment	12	9	75%
Juvenile Drug	4	4	100%
Mental Health	20	12	60%
Veterans Treatment	5	3	60%



Recap: Preliminary Survey Results

LPRO presented high-level preliminary [results](#) at the September 20th Task Force meeting.

1. The estimated total operating costs reported by survey respondents for FY 2023-25 was about \$40 million. Costs varied substantially by court.
2. Personnel accounted for half of reported operating costs. Contractual services accounted for 20%, and treatment, housing, testing, and other costs accounted for less than 10% each.
3. More than two-thirds of court funding comes from state resources via the Specialty Court Grant program or OJD. Additional state funding is through other grant programs like Measure 57 and the Justice Reinvestment Initiative.



Recap: Preliminary Survey Results

The survey results do not accurately represent actual operating costs and funding; they are rough estimates based on available information.

1. Some courts did not respond to the survey.
2. Some survey respondents did not have complete access to their court's budget information.
3. Courts might categorize and report their costs and funding differently.

The task force discussed the limitations of the survey results and opportunities for improving data collection and better-estimating costs and funding.



New Survey Results

Today's presentation is a summary of how specialty courts and court team members responded to the following survey questions:

- What is working well that the state should continue or do more of regarding funding and administrative support?
- What are the barriers or challenges treatment court programs are experiencing regarding funding and administrative support from the state? How might they be addressed?



What is working well that the state should continue or do more of regarding funding and administrative support?

Survey results show the combination of funding, training, and technical assistance from the state is making a positive impact on the efficacy of specialty courts.

Finding 1.1: State funding is essential to specialty court programs.

Finding 1.2: The state provides impactful training opportunities and collaborative support to specialty court teams.

Finding 1.3: The state provides timely and effective technical assistance to support program implementation and funding access.



Finding 1.1: State funding is essential to specialty court programs.

- The Specialty Court Grant (Grant) program is the primary source of funding for most courts, and for some the grant is critical to staying operational
- The General Fund allocation to OJD for court coordinators will improve long-term stability of court programs and free up resources to address service gaps and other program needs.
- The Specialty Court Grant funds necessary specialty court team positions, including probation officers, district attorneys, defense attorneys, peer support specialists, and case managers.
- Courts rely on state funds to provide education and training opportunities for team members to improve their knowledge and implementation of best practices.
- State investments have helped courts provide program participants necessary support, including housing and rental assistance, employment services, childcare, personal care items, transportation, incentives, and treatment.



Finding 1.1: State funding is essential to specialty court programs.

“The Mental Health Court program could not exist without the support through the Criminal Justice Commission grant for treatment services, mental health service, team member positions for Probation Officer, Deputy District Attorney, and Public Defender.”

“Fully funding coordinator positions has been huge for the treatment courts. [Redacted] County has made that a priority and has been funding the coordinator position for at least 10 years but not all courts have the resources to do that.”

“The funding for treatment costs for uninsured and underinsured participants is very helpful to all the treatment court programs in our judicial district. This support provides essential support barrier removal for participants and is critical to the success of the program.”



Finding 1.2: The state provides impactful training opportunities and collaborative support to specialty court teams.

- OSCA trainings help new and existing court team members learn necessary information about Oregon’s specialty court systems, best practices for implementing effective specialty court programs, and funding.
- Court team members value opportunities to routinely connect with and learn from other court teams through the quarterly coordinators meetings and open office hours is valuable.

“Training opportunities have made a positive difference in the knowledge and tools available to [Specialty] Court teams and their partners. This translates into meeting best practice standards and success for participants. The support has been invaluable.”

“The virtual SCMS office hours and Coordinator office hours have been a great way for coordinators and team members to ask questions and gain new insight and ideas for their treatment courts.”



Finding 1.3: The state provides timely and effective technical assistance to support program implementation and funding access.

- Courts benefit from the quality, availability, and timeliness of technical assistance offered by OSCA/OJD statewide coordinators and analysts.
- The Criminal Justice Commission has helped many courts navigate the Specialty Court Grant application process.

“When we have a question or issue within our treatment court the OCSA treatment team is quick to respond and help us resolve issues in a timely manner.”

“The state specialty court support team is also an excellent source of support for the programs.”

“It is great to have access to the CJC staff who can help facilitate feedback on this process when questions arise. So far, the flexibility of the CJC in approving reallocation requests has been helpful to ensure funding is spent in ways that support specialty court participants rather than being given back to the State when initial plans for funding use does not work as expected.”



What are the barriers or challenges treatment court programs are experiencing regarding funding and administrative support from the state? How might they be addressed?

Survey results show that unstable funding, staffing constraints, and insufficient resources to provide program participants necessary services and supports are limiting the impact of specialty courts.

Finding 2.1: Necessary supports for program participants are under-resourced.

Finding 2.2: Treatment services are not fully covered by Medicaid, further straining court resources.

Finding 2.3: Funding through the Specialty Court Grant program is unstable and contributes to uncertainty in program implementation.

Finding 2.4: Programs are not sustainable without appropriate staffing levels.



Finding 2.1: Necessary supports for program participants are under-resourced.

- The level of funding the state provides through the Specialty Court Grant is not sufficient to cover the costs of housing, phones, clothes, hygiene products, transportation, employment services, childcare and other supports that provide stability for program participants.
- Courts need resources to incentivize program participation.
- Courts need resources to support housing and residential services for program participants. Recent cuts to housing supports through the Specialty Court Grant exacerbated this issue for many courts.

“It is crucial for us to be able to assist with housing, clothing, hygiene items, transportation and with phones so we can get them as stable as quickly as possible. Realistically, it takes at least 90 days to fully stabilize our participants once they are released from jail.”

“It would be helpful if the state would look at best practices and how to address incentives as a whole in supporting all treatment court programs.”

“Housing is woefully underfunded. [It] is a crucial component to the recovery process and without it, the odds of being unsuccessful with their sobriety and court compliance greatly increase.”



Finding 2.2: Treatment services are not fully covered by Medicaid, further straining court resources.

- The cost of treatment services is typically covered by Medicaid, but there are many costs associated with treatment that are considered non-billable and have to be paid through other funding sources.
- Urinalysis and other testing is necessary for the accountability component of specialty court programs, but courts are strained to cover the costs that are not billable under Medicaid.
- Courts help participants who are not qualified for Medicaid pay for treatment services.

“There are a lot of services provided, specifically in peer support and case management, that are not easily billed for and should be covered. One major issue that our provider struggles with are the requirements ... to be in court and to be available for staffing and meetings because that is not time they can really bill for conveniently.”

“Having a statewide contract with labs could [help] reduce the administrative burden on the County as well as obtaining lower rates due to volume.”

“If courts received some funding from the state to run our programs or had benefits for people in treatment courts so they didn’t have to pay out of pocket, this would help immensely. As a lot of the treatment dollars get spent on those who don’t qualify for OHP.”



Finding 2.3: Funding through the Specialty Court Grant program is unstable and contributes to uncertainty in program implementation.

- Specialty Court Grant instability contributes to uncertainty for some courts about whether they will get sufficient funding to implement their programs or even stay operational
- Funding is not sufficient for implementing best practices and reaching all the participants who would benefit from the programs.
- The Specialty Court Grant application timeline does not align with budget cycles, and some courts have challenges with local partners that limit their ability to access grant funds.

“A challenge our program ... face[s] is that the program funding is not guaranteed. Each grant cycle we must apply for the grant and hope it is awarded in order to continue operating our programs. This creates a great deal of uncertainty on whether our program will be able to continue to provide services to our participants.”

“It would also be highly beneficial to align the application and award process with other budget cycles so that all funding sources and amounts are known ahead of proposed budgets and final submission”

“We would like to begin Dual Diagnosis for Treatment Court, but that costs and we can't afford to bring on more programming with our current costs.”



Finding 2.4: Programs are not sustainable without appropriate staffing levels.

- Courts need resources to ensure minimum staffing levels for key program personnel.

“The Judge and Courtroom staff are not currently funded through the grants. The Mental Health Treatment Court program population continues to increase, partially as a result of budget cuts to the State Aid and Assistance programs. The program needs additional docket time along with the increase in Judge and Courtroom staff resource time. This is an area of the program that would benefit from dedicated funding.”

“It is difficult to expand/enhance your programs and maintain best practices if you don't have the staff to do that.”



Survey Report

Full survey results are being summarized in a memo that will be shared with the Task Force and included in the Task Force report.

