

Michigan Drug Court Recidivism Rates

2011



**Michigan Supreme Court
State Court Administrative Office**

Executive Summary

- Four years after admission to any type of drug court, participants showed a 48 percent reduction in new drug or alcohol convictions compared to individuals who had similar demographics and criminal histories, but who did not participate in a drug court program, indicating that drug court reduced future drug or alcohol use. Drug court participants also evidenced a 44 percent reduction in new convictions of any kind compared to the comparison group four years after admission to a drug court program, indicating that drug court significantly curbed all types of criminal recidivism.
- Sobriety courts consistently showed larger reductions in recidivism than the other drug court types. Sobriety court participants' conviction of new drug or alcohol offenses was three and a half times lower than that of comparison participants two years after admission. After four years, sobriety court participants' conviction of new drug or alcohol offenses was still more than two times lower than that of comparison group participants.
- When new drug or alcohol offenses were analyzed, circuit court drug court participants reduced recidivism 70 percent compared to the comparison participants after two years, and 43 percent four years after admission.
- Drug court programs operating in district courts evidenced a 94 percent reduction in new convictions two years after admission compared to comparison participants, and a 29 percent reduction four years after admission. For new drug or alcohol convictions, drug court participants showed an 88 percent reduction in recidivism two years after admission, compared to comparison participants, and a 41 percent reduction four years after admission.
- Juvenile courts consistently showed no statistical difference in recidivism from the comparison group participants. Due to the limited number of juvenile court participant and comparison participant pairs, it is too soon to draw conclusions about this type of drug court program.

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Introduction

Drug courts serve nonviolent offenders with substance use disorders (i.e., alcohol or drug abuse and dependence) that underlie their entanglement with the legal system. The theory behind drug courts is that involvement in the legal system is a symptom of the disease of addiction. Treating the symptom with incarceration will not rehabilitate the offenders of their disease. As a result, when offenders are discharged from their jail or prison stay, they often return to their old habits. Judges have called this the *Revolving Door* effect. To break the cycle, drug courts allow addicted offenders the opportunity to address their addictions through a program that involves intensive judicial supervision, treatment of their disorders, drug and alcohol testing, and community services tailored to the participants' unique circumstances instead of lengthy jail or prison sentences. If participants do not complete the drug court program, they could serve any incarceration time that may have been held in abeyance. But for those participants that are able to overcome their addictions, incarceration is usually avoided because they have placed themselves on the path to sober living.

The popularity of drug courts has soared in the last decade. Nationally, there were 2,633 drug courts in operation as of December 31, 2010.¹ While anecdotal evidence has suggested that drug courts are effective and life changing, national scientific studies of the impact that these programs have had on offenders' recidivism have lagged behind the movement. The difficulty of quantifying the effect of drug courts nationally is partially due to the fact that there is no nationally accepted definition of recidivism. Therefore, each researcher has the opportunity to define recidivism differently. As a result, it has been difficult to compare studies and to draw conclusions about the effect that drug courts have on their participants. A statistical technique called meta-analysis can address this problem by statistically accounting for the differences in the individual studies that have been published to arrive at a scientifically valid conclusion regarding what the body of evidence as a whole suggests about drug court performance. In 2006, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy identified 57 evaluations of adult drug courts and calculated that the average adult drug court program reduced the recidivism rate of participants by 8 percent.² More recently, in 2011, the United States Government Accountability Office analyzed 32 programs and identified that drug court participants' recidivism rates were lower than the comparison group by 6 to 26 percentage points.³ Among the studies that were identified as most rigorous, the reduction in recidivism for the drug court participants ranged from 10 to 14 percentage points.

The Michigan State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) has recognized the difficulty of drawing conclusions about drug courts from multiple individual studies with inconsistent definitions of recidivism and varying methodologies. The purpose of this report is to disseminate the definition of recidivism and methodology that the SCAO has identified for the

¹ <http://www.ndcrc.org/faq>. This figure includes Adult, Juvenile, Family Dependency, Tribal Healing to Wellness, DWI, Campus, Reentry Drug, Federal Reentry, Federal Drug, Veterans Treatment, and Co-occurring Disorder drug court types.

² <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/06-10-1201.pdf>

³ <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/586793.pdf>

state of Michigan and the results of a statewide evaluation of the drug courts operating in Michigan. The SCAO administers a web-based case management system called the Drug Court Case Management Information System (DCCMIS), which all drug court (N = 38), sobriety court (N = 27), juvenile drug court (N=14), and family dependency drug court (N = 9) staff use to report data and manage drug court participants' cases. In addition to treatment information, drug testing results, and judicial status review hearings, the database houses information about the county in which the program operates, the court that the drug court participant is supervised by, the gender of the participant, the type of offense that the participant committed to come to the attention of the court, and the date of the participant's admission to the program. These data are extracted from the DCCMIS database and used to identify comparison participants in the Judicial Data Warehouse.

The Judicial Data Warehouse is a database that contains extracts from court case management systems in Michigan. If a court is not submitting data to the Judicial Data Warehouse, no comparison participants can be selected from the Judicial Data Warehouse (due to the requirement that the comparison participants come from the same courts as the drug court participants). Therefore, courts not submitting data to the Judicial Data Warehouse as of October 2011 are not included in this report.⁴ By using drug court participants' names, dates of birth, and last four digits of their Social Security number, programmers are able to identify drug court participants within the Judicial Data Warehouse. After identifying the drug court participants, the number of court cases they have had in the two years prior to their drug court admission is identified, and the individuals' age at the time of admission to drug court is calculated. Then, the Judicial Data Warehouse is searched for comparison participants that are similar to individual drug court participants. In order to be considered a match to a drug court participant, the comparison candidate must have a matching offense in the same county and court as the drug court participant. The comparison candidate must also be of the same gender as the drug court participant. The potential comparison participant must fall within the same age range, year of offense range, and the offense under consideration must fall within the same offense category as the drug court participant. The number of court cases in the two years prior to the potential comparison participant's offense must fall within the same range as the drug court participant. Lastly, the comparison group candidate must not have participated in any drug court program, and may not have a violent offense on his or her record, as this would have excluded the individual from eligibility in drug court. This methodology results in pairs of drug court and comparison participants that have similar demographics, criminal histories, offense types, and geographic locations. Analyses are conducted to ensure that the drug court and comparison participant pairs are not statistically different from one another in age or criminality (gender, county, and court are exact matches within each pair). Only the pairs that are statistically comparable are included in the evaluation. Once a pair has been identified, any new offenses

⁴ Six adult drug courts, five juvenile courts, one family dependency court, and one sobriety court were excluded from Berrien County (2nd Circuit Court), Kalamazoo County (9th Circuit Court), Macomb County (16th Circuit Court and 37th District Court), Oakland County (6th Circuit Court), Washtenaw County (22nd Circuit Court), and Wayne County (3rd Circuit Court Juvenile Division).

since the drug court participants' admission to drug court are reported to the SCAO. Likewise, for comparison participants paired to drug court participants, any new offenses since their matching offenses are reported to the SCAO.

In this report, the SCAO is defining recidivism broadly and narrowly under two different definitions.

1. Recidivism is defined as **Any New Conviction** within the categories of violent offenses, controlled substance use or possession, controlled substance manufacturing or distribution, other drug offenses, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol first offense, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol second offense, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol third offense, other alcohol offenses, property offenses, breaking and entering or home invasion, nonviolent sex offenses, juvenile status offenses of incorrigible, runaway, truancy, or curfew violations, neglect and abuse civil, and neglect and abuse criminal. This definition excludes traffic offenses and offenses that fall outside the above categories.

2. Recidivism is defined as **New Drug or Alcohol Convictions** including controlled substance use or possession, controlled substance manufacturing or distribution, other drug offenses, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol first offense, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol second offense, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol third offense, and other alcohol offenses.

In order to calculate recidivism rates, specific timeframes must be selected. The SCAO is reporting on new convictions under both definitions occurring within two years and within four years of admission.⁵

Lastly, the SCAO is defining a drug court participant as an individual who has been admitted to and successfully completed the requirements of a drug court program within the state of Michigan. Drug court programs within this evaluation include drug courts operating in circuit courts, drug courts operating in district courts, sobriety courts, and juvenile drug courts. Family dependency drug courts were excluded due to the limited number of participants (N = 4) that were paired with comparison group members using the above methodology. The analyses that follow include 3,184 total pairs of drug court and comparison participants in the two years postadmission analyses and 2,020 total pairs of drug court and comparison participants in the four years postadmission analyses.

Any New Conviction Within Two Years of Admission

Two years after admission to any type of drug court, 8.84 percent of drug court participants had been convicted of a new offense. In contrast, 17.93 percent of comparison group participants had been convicted of a new offense within two years. Drug court

⁵ For comparison group members, the time frame is calculated from the date that the court case matching them to a drug court participant was opened in the court's case management system.

participants had less than half the recidivism rate of comparison group members and this difference was statistically significant.⁶

The recidivism rate varied according to the type of drug court participants completed. Figure 1 illustrates the recidivism rates by drug court type. Participants in sobriety court showed the largest reduction in recidivism. Two years after admission to sobriety court, 5.13 percent of participants had been convicted of a new offense. However, 15.67 percent of their comparison participants had been reconvicted of a new offense in the same time period. Hence, sobriety court participants had recidivism rates three times lower than their comparison counterparts and this difference was statistically significant.⁷

Drug court programs in district courts and circuit courts had similar impacts on recidivism. In district court drug court programs, 7.36 percent of drug court participants had a new conviction within two years of admission. In the comparison group, 14.34 percent had a new conviction within two years. With just under half of the recidivism rate of the comparison group, drug court participants had a statistically significant reduction in recidivism.⁸ In circuit court drug court programs, 11.93 percent of drug court participants had a new conviction within two years of admission. In the comparison group, 21.78 percent had a new conviction in the same time frame. This, too, is a statistically significant difference⁹ between the groups with drug court participants having roughly half the recidivism rate of the comparison group.

Juvenile drug court participants did not compare as favorably to their comparison participant pairs as drug court participants in other types of drug courts. After two years, 32.67 percent of juvenile drug court participants have been convicted of a new offense. In contrast, 34.26 percent of the comparison group had been convicted of a new offense within two years. Although juvenile drug court participants had a lower recidivism rate than comparison participants, the difference between the groups was not statistically significant.¹⁰

⁶ $t(1, 3183) = 11.227, p < 0.001$

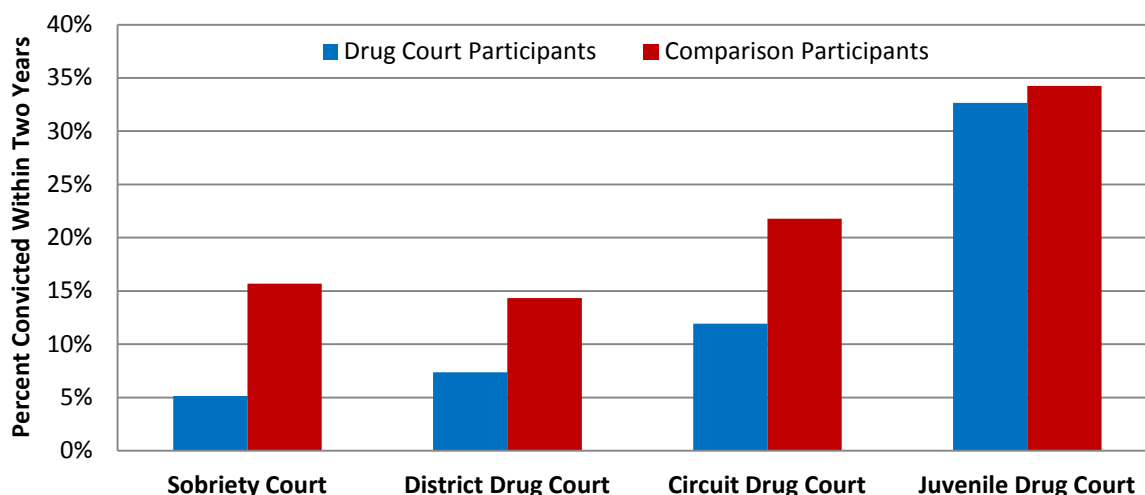
⁷ $t(1, 1869) = 10.937, p < 0.001$

⁸ $t(1, 515) = 3.680, p < 0.001$

⁹ $t(1, 527) = 4.473, p < 0.001$

¹⁰ $t(1, 250) = 0.399, p > 0.05$

Figure 1
Any New Conviction Within Two Years of Admission by Drug Court Type



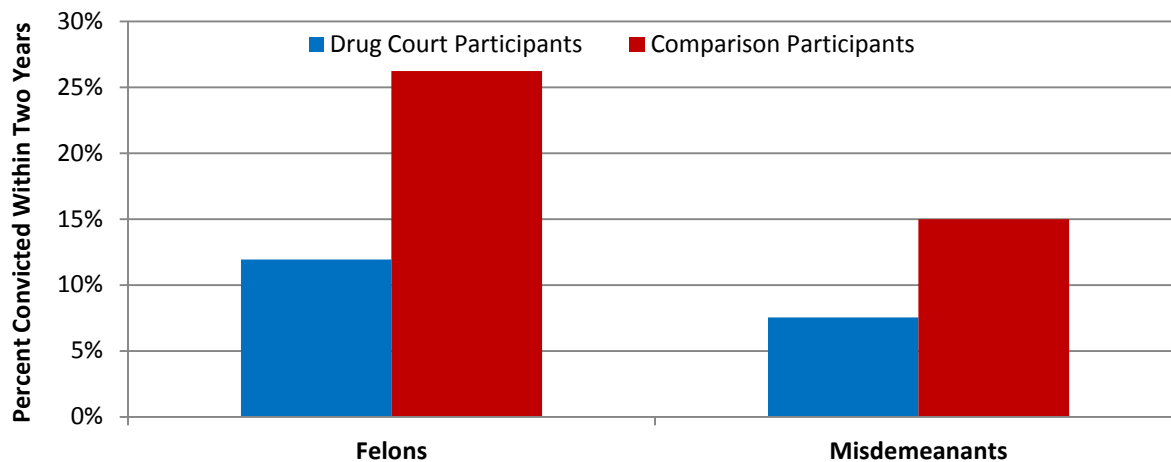
A significant amount of district drug court programs are comprised of participants that entered the program by pleading to felonies and misdemeanors. This is possible where district court judges are cross-assigned to preside over circuit court cases. As a result, it is not unusual to see district court drug court programs admitting participants charged with felonies, and one cannot assume that circuit court drug court programs and programs accepting felony participants are synonymous. To examine whether or not the type of charge that brought an individual to the attention of a drug court program resulted in different recidivism rates, analyses by type of charge were also examined and are illustrated in Figure 2.

Regardless of the type of charge bringing a participant to the attention of a drug court, drug court participants were less likely to recidivate than the comparison group members. After two years, 11.93 percent of drug court participants that entered the program on a felony offense had been reconvicted. In contrast, 26.46 percent of comparison group participants had recidivated within two years. For drug court participants that had entered the program on a misdemeanor offense, 7.54 percent had received a new conviction within two years. For the comparison group members, the recidivism rate was 14.99 percent after two years. The reduction in recidivism between drug court and comparison group members was statistically significant for participants with felonies¹¹ and those with misdemeanors.¹²

¹¹ $t(1, 770) = 7.483, p < 0.001$

¹² $t(1, 2361) = 8.618, p < 0.001$

Figure 2
Any New Conviction Within Two Years of Admission by Charge Type



Any New Conviction Within Four Years of Admission

Four years after admission to any type of drug court, 17.62 percent of drug court participants had been convicted of a new offense. In contrast, 25.41 percent of comparison group participants had been convicted of a new offense within four years. The reduced recidivism rate for drug court participants compared to comparison group members was statistically significant.¹³

The recidivism rate varied according to the type of drug court participants completed. Figure 3 illustrates the recidivism rates by drug court type. Participants in sobriety court and circuit court drug court programs evidenced the largest reductions in recidivism compared to the comparison group participants. Four years after admission to sobriety court, 11.75 percent of participants had been convicted of a new offense. However, 21.98 percent of their comparison participants had been reconvicted of a new offense in the same time period. This difference between the groups was statistically significant.¹⁴ Circuit court drug court participants also showed a ten percentage point decrease in recidivism with 23.99 percent of circuit court drug court participants being convicted within four years in comparison to 33.24 percent of the comparison group participants. The reduction in circuit court drug court participants’ recidivism compared to the comparison group was statistically significant.¹⁵

Only 16.38 percent of district court drug court program participants were reconvicted within four years. In contrast, 21.26 percent of the comparison group participants were

¹³ $t(1, 2019) = 6.422, p < 0.001$

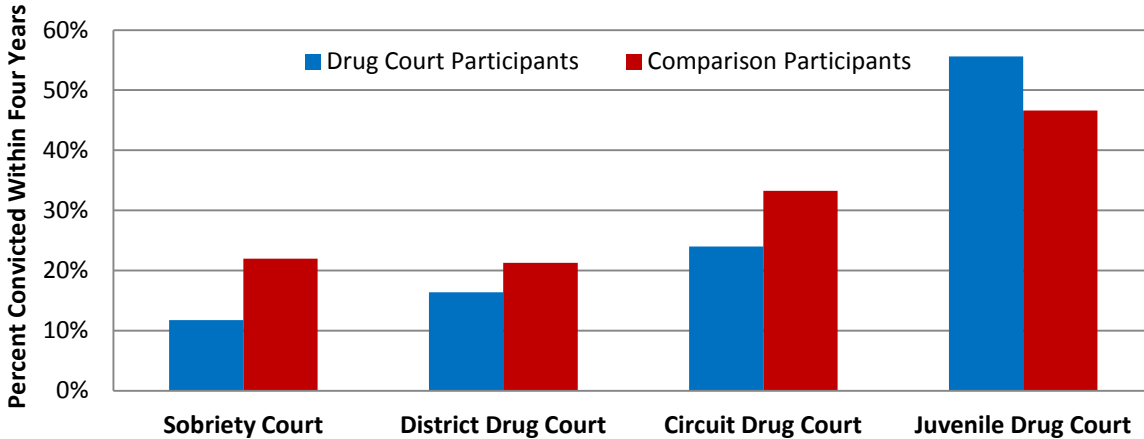
¹⁴ $t(1, 1739) = 7.047, p < 0.001$

¹⁵ $t(1, 345) = 2.791, p < 0.006$

reconvicted in the same time frame. In spite of the five percentage point reduction in recidivism for drug court participants, the averages between the groups were not statistically different.¹⁶

Four years after admission, 55.64 percent of juvenile drug court participants had been reconvicted of a new offense. This is contrasted by 46.62 percent of the comparison group participants recidivating within four years. While the averages for the two groups did not reflect the expected reduction in recidivism as a result of drug court participation, it is important to note that the difference between the averages is not statistically significant.¹⁷ In other words, although the recidivism rate is higher for the juvenile drug court participants than for the comparison group, the difference between the groups' averages could be accounted for by high variability in the data. Therefore, at this time, there is no scientific basis for concluding that juvenile drug court participants recidivate more often than comparison participants.

Figure 3
Any New Conviction Within Four Years of Admission by Drug Court Type



Whether a drug court participant entered a program with a felony or a misdemeanor, they were less likely to recidivate than the comparison group members, as illustrated in Figure 4. After four years, 24.79 percent of drug court participants that entered the program on a felony offense had been reconvicted. In contrast, 37.08 percent of comparison group participants had recidivated within four years. For drug court participants that had entered the program on a misdemeanor offense, 15.01 percent had received a new conviction within four years. For the comparison group members, the recidivism rate was 21.65 percent after four years. The reduction in recidivism between drug court and comparison group members was statistically significant for participants with felonies¹⁸ and those with misdemeanors.¹⁹

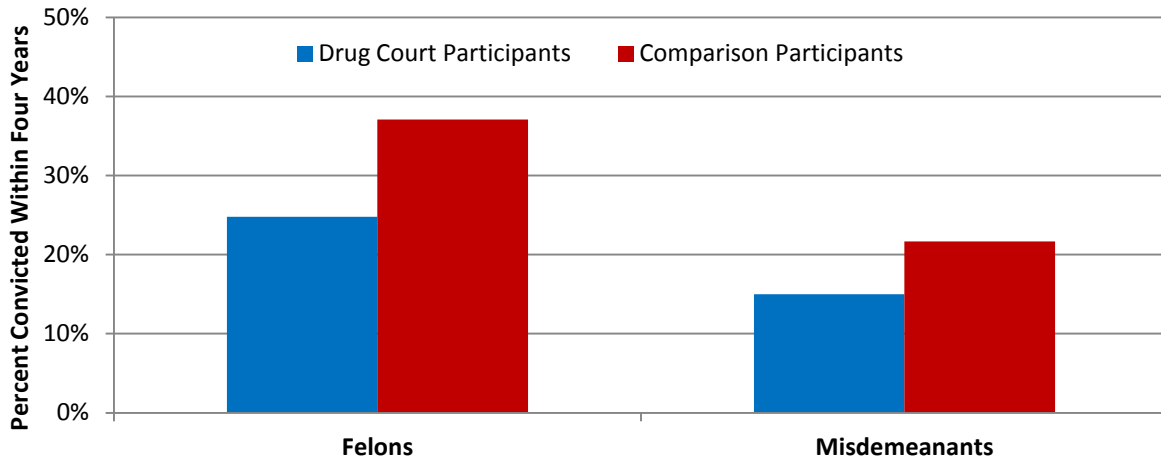
¹⁶ $t(1, 347) = 1.663, p > 0.05$

¹⁷ $t(1, 132) = 1.557, p > 0.05$

¹⁸ $t(1, 479) = 4.301, p < 0.001$

¹⁹ $t(1, 1505) = 5.028, p < 0.001$

Figure 4
Any New Conviction Within Four Years of Admission by Charge Type



New Drug or Alcohol Convictions Within Two Years of Admission

As discussed previously, two definitions of recidivism were used to analyze the data reported in this document. This section of the report utilizes a narrow definition of recidivism that limits new convictions to drug or alcohol offenses. Two years after admission to any type of drug court, 5.65 percent of drug court participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense. In contrast, 11.43 percent of comparison group participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense within two years. Drug court participants had less than half the recidivism rate of comparison group members and this difference was statistically significant.²⁰

Figure 5 illustrates the recidivism rates by drug court type. Sobriety court participants showed the most impressive reduction in recidivism compared to the comparison group participants, with three and a half times fewer sobriety court participants recidivating. Two years after admission to sobriety court, 2.83 percent of participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense. However, 10.04 percent of their comparison participants had been reconvicted of a new drug or alcohol offense in the same time period. As would be expected, the difference between the groups was statistically significant.²¹

District court and circuit court drug court programs had similar impacts on recidivism, with participants in circuit court drug court programs showing slightly larger reductions in recidivism compared to the comparison group. In district court drug court programs, 5.23 percent of drug court participants had a new drug or alcohol conviction within two years of admission. In the comparison group, 9.88 percent had a new drug or alcohol conviction within two years. The difference in recidivism between district court drug court participants and the

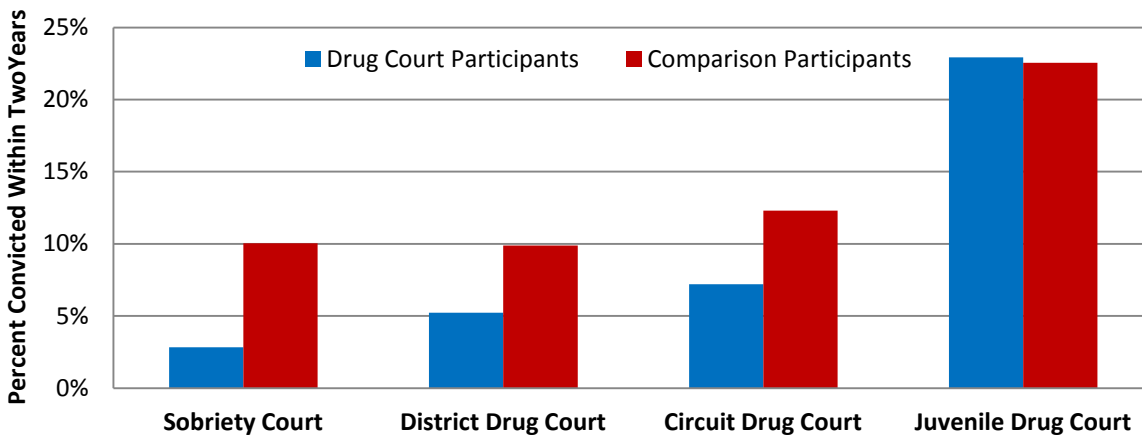
²⁰ $t(1, 3183) = 8.546, p < 0.001$

²¹ $t(1, 1872) = 10.937, p < 0.001$

comparison group participants was statistically significant.²² In circuit court drug court programs, 7.20 percent of drug court participants had a new drug or alcohol conviction within two years of admission. In the comparison group, 12.31 percent had a new conviction in the same time frame. This, too, was a statistically significant difference between the groups.²³

After two years, 22.93 percent of juvenile drug court participants have been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense. In contrast, 22.56 percent of the comparison group had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense within two years. Since recidivism rates were nearly identical between the groups, the percentages were not significantly different.²⁴

Figure 5
Drug or Alcohol Conviction Within Two Years by Drug Court Type



Whether a drug court participant entered a program with a felony or a misdemeanor, they were less likely to recidivate than the comparison group members, as illustrated in Figure 6. After two years, 7.26 percent of drug court participants that entered the program on a felony offense had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense. In contrast 15.30 percent of comparison group participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense within two years. For drug court participants that had entered the program on a misdemeanor offense, 4.95 percent had received a new drug or alcohol conviction within two years. For the comparison group members, the recidivism rate was 9.99 percent after two years. The reduction in recidivism between drug court and comparison group members was statistically significant for participants with felonies²⁵ and those with misdemeanors.²⁶

²² $t(1, 515) = 2.848, p < 0.005$

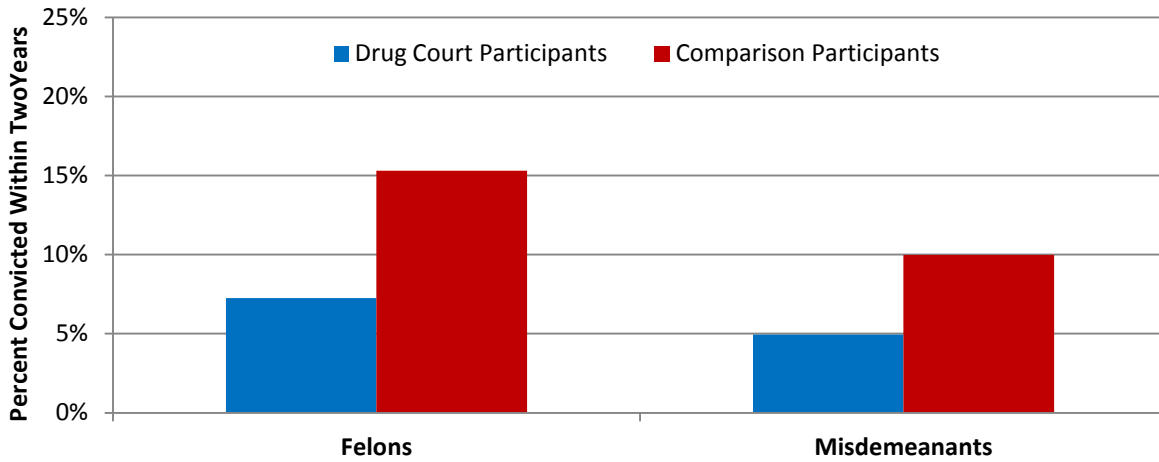
²³ $t(1, 527) = 4.473, p < 0.007$

²⁴ $t(1, 250) = 0.111, p > 0.05$

²⁵ $t(1, 770) = 4.977, p < 0.001$

²⁶ $t(1, 2361) = 6.927, p < 0.001$

Figure 6
Drug or Alcohol Conviction Within Two Years by Charge Type



New Drug or Alcohol Convictions Within Four Years of Admission

Four years after admission to any type of drug court, 11.68 percent of drug court participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense. In contrast, 17.33 percent of comparison group participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense within four years. This nearly 50 percent reduction in recidivism for the drug court participants was statistically significant.²⁷

Figure 7 illustrates the recidivism rates by drug court type. Sobriety court participants showed the most impressive reduction in recidivism compared to the comparison group participants, with more than two times fewer sobriety court participants recidivating. Four years after admission to sobriety court, 7.14 percent of participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense. However, 15.15 percent of their comparison participants had been reconvicted of a new drug or alcohol offense in the same time period. As would be expected, the difference between the groups was statistically significant.²⁸

District court and circuit court drug court programs had similar impacts on recidivism, with participants in circuit court drug court programs showing slightly larger reductions in recidivism compared to the comparison group. In district court drug court programs, 10.34 percent of drug court participants had a new drug or alcohol conviction within four years of admission. In the comparison group, 14.66 percent had a new drug or alcohol conviction within four years. Although the drug court participants recidivated less often than the comparison participants, the difference between groups was not statistically significant.²⁹ In circuit court drug court programs, 13.87 percent of drug court participants had a new drug or alcohol

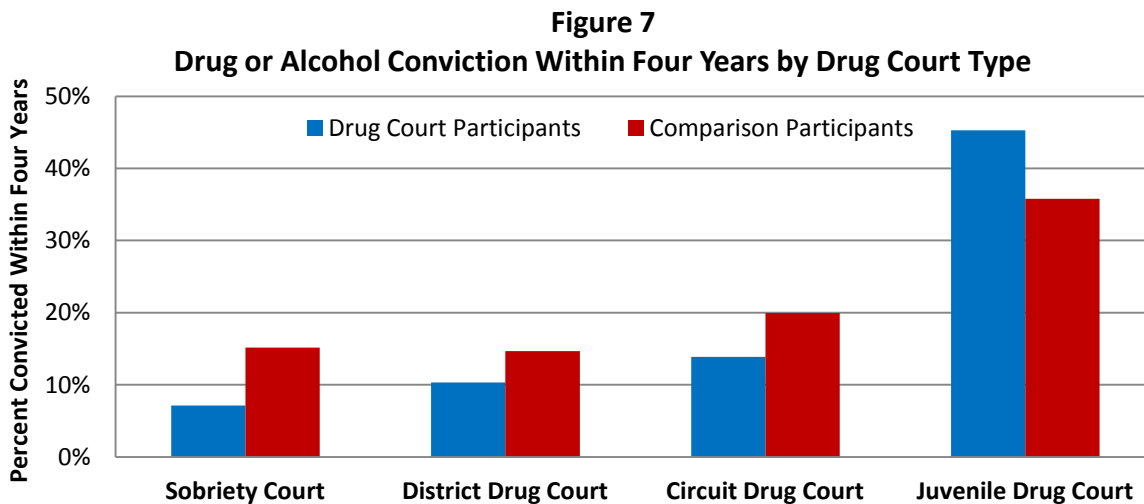
²⁷ t (1, 2019) = 5.375, p < 0.001

²⁸ t (1, 1175) = 6.360, p < 0.001

²⁹ t (1, 347) = 1.711, p > 0.05

conviction within four years of admission. In the comparison group, 19.94 percent had a new conviction in the same time frame. This was a statistically significant difference between the groups.³⁰

After four years, 45.27 percent of juvenile drug court participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense. In contrast, 35.80 percent of the comparison group had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense within four years. This was not a significant difference between groups³¹ which indicates that, although the drug court participants had a higher recidivism rate than the comparison group, statistically there were no differences between the groups' recidivism rates.



Whether a drug court participant entered a program with a felony or misdemeanor, they were less likely to recidivate than the comparison group members, as illustrated in Figure 8. The largest reduction in recidivism occurred for participants that entered drug court on felony charges. After four years, 14.58 percent of drug court participants that entered the program on a felony offense had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense. In contrast 23.75 percent of comparison group participants had been convicted of a new drug or alcohol offense within four years. For drug court participants that had entered the program on a misdemeanor offense, 10.23 percent had received a new drug or alcohol conviction within four years. For the comparison group members, the recidivism rate was 15.27 percent after four years. The reduction in recidivism between drug court and comparison group members was statistically significant for participants with felonies³² and those with misdemeanors.³³

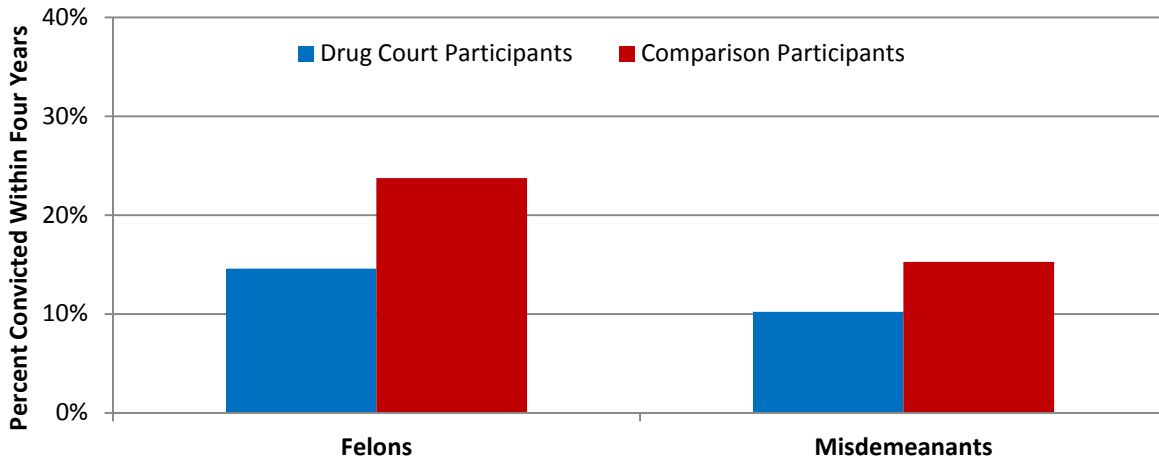
³⁰ $t(1, 345) = 2.166, p < 0.031$

³¹ $t(1, 147) = 0.1791, p > 0.05$

³² $t(1, 479) = 3.742, p < 0.001$

³³ $t(1, 1505) = 4.400, p < 0.001$

Figure 8
Drug or Alcohol Conviction Within Four Years by Charge Type



Conclusion

Successful drug court participants use the tools and techniques that they learn during recovery to combat their addiction on a daily basis. One way to identify if participants have continued to address their addictions long-term is to examine criminal recidivism rates several years after admission to a drug court program. By narrowly defining recidivism as new drug or alcohol convictions and extending the time frame in which drug court participants could commit new offenses to four years, a critical analysis of the impact of drug court programs on drug and alcohol use is achieved. Four years after admission to any type of drug court, drug court participants showed a 48 percent reduction in new drug or alcohol convictions compared to individuals who had similar demographics and criminal histories, but who did not participate in a drug court program.

Although defining recidivism as new drug or alcohol convictions provides a measure of return to drug or alcohol use, it is important to remember that drug court programs accept participants whose charges encompass a larger variety of offenses other than drug or alcohol offenses and they do so because many offenses, such as larceny, were committed in order to obtain money to support an addiction. Including these types of convictions in an examination of recidivism is important because it captures the offenses that may be driven by drug or alcohol use in addition to measuring the participants' return to a law abiding lifestyle. Drug court participants evidenced a 44 percent reduction in new convictions compared to the comparison group four years after admission to a drug court program, indicating that drug court significantly curbed criminal recidivism. This reduction in recidivism, from 25 percent in the comparison group to 17 percent in the drug court group, replicates the 8 percentage point recidivism reduction that was calculated by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy when analyzing the effects of fifty-seven individual drug court evaluations nationwide.

With solid evidence that Michigan's drug court programs compare favorably to the impact other programs are producing around the country, it is important to note that the different types of programs produced different results. Sobriety courts consistently showed larger reductions in recidivism than the other drug court types. In Michigan, a program is designated as a sobriety court if the majority of participants whom are admitted into the program are charged with driving under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. However, sobriety courts may accept participants charged with other offenses, and drug courts may accept participants charged with driving while impaired (DWI). Sobriety court participants' conviction of new drug or alcohol offenses was three and a half times lower than that of comparison participants two years after admission. After four years, sobriety court participants' conviction of new drug or alcohol offenses was still more than two times lower than that of comparison group participants.

Drug court programs operating in circuit courts also showed large effects on recidivism. When recidivism was defined as any new conviction, drug court participants in circuit court showed a ten percentage point reduction in recidivism compared to the comparison group after two years and maintained that ten percentage point reduction four years after admission. When new drug or alcohol offenses were analyzed, circuit court drug court participants reduced recidivism 70 percent compared to the comparison participants after two years and 43 percent four years after admission. These impressive recidivism reductions support the evidence-based practice of targeting high-risk and high need offenders in drug court programs as these offenders have consistently been shown to benefit greatly from drug court programs. The point is further reinforced by the four years postadmission analyses by type of charge that showed a 62 percent reduction in recidivism compared to comparison participants for those with felonies as opposed to a 49 percent reduction compared to comparison participants for those with misdemeanors.

Drug court programs operating in district courts evidenced a 94 percent reduction in new convictions two years after admission compared to comparison participants and a 29 percent reduction four years after admission. For new drug or alcohol convictions, drug court participants showed an 88 percent reduction in recidivism two years after admission, compared to comparison participants, and a 41 percent reduction four years after admission. Drug court participants in district court programs tend to have less extensive criminal histories than those in circuit court programs. Assisting these participants in their recovery may prevent them from becoming more costly felony drug court participants in the future, and may place them on the path to sobriety more quickly.

Juvenile courts consistently showed no statistical difference in recidivism from the comparison group participants and appeared to be trending toward higher recidivism than the comparison group. While the trend is disconcerting, with the limited number of participants in the juvenile drug court analyses, the trend could be explained by highly variable data. As more participants become involved in juvenile drug courts, the validity of the observed trend will become apparent. It is too soon to draw conclusions about this type of drug court program.

The goals of this report were to provide definitions of recidivism that will be used by the SCAO to evaluate and monitor drug court programs operating in Michigan and to analyze the most recent data available to determine the effect programs are having on participants' recidivism compared to comparable nondrug court participants. With clear reductions in recidivism for individuals in drug court programs, it is proper to conclude that Michigan's drug court programs are effective. In addition to monitoring recidivism rates in the future, the SCAO staff plans to investigate programs with participant recidivism rates that are overwhelmingly positive to identify what components of their programs produce the low recidivism rates and the high success rates that their participants experience and to avail programs throughout the state with these programs' best practices.