

# Results at a glance

## Evaluation of the Drug Treatment Court Funding Program

The Drug Treatment Court Funding Program (DTCFP) aims to reduce crime committed as a result of drug dependency through court-monitored treatment and community service support for non-violent offenders with drug addictions.

The objectives of the DTCFP are:

- To promote and strengthen the use of alternatives to incarceration;
- To build knowledge and awareness among criminal justice, health and social services practitioners, and the general public about drug treatment courts; and
- To collect information and data on the effectiveness of DTCs in order to promote best practices and the continuing refinement of approaches.

To date, the DTCFP has established funding agreements with eight provinces and two territories to fund 13 DTCs. DTCs provide an alternative to incarceration by offering the offender an opportunity to participate in a court-monitored, community-based drug treatment process. In Canada, under the DTCFP, the DTC model has continued to evolve to address local community contexts and populations needs. DTCs are provincial and territorial courts that target adult, non-violent offenders who have been charged under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act or the *Criminal Code of Canada*, in cases where their substance use disorder was a factor in the offence. Rather than incarceration, DTC participants may receive a non-custodial sentence upon completion of treatment.

### WHAT WAS FOUND

- The DTCFP is relevant and is well aligned with federal and Justice priorities.
- As the impact of substance use on crime remains a concern, DTCs reflect the growing societal recognition that addiction is a health issue. The opioid crisis is highlighting the need for and appropriateness of alternatives to the traditional justice system for those with substance use disorders.
- Due to expansion in capacity, participation in DTCFP-funded DTCs has increased over the study period. The profile of DTC participants has remained stable, with participants overall being predominantly Caucasian males.
- Each DTC may define their eligibility criteria, as long as they align with PPSC Guidelines. Some groups such as women, indigenous, and racialized Canadians are seen as being underrepresented. Some stakeholders would like to see greater flexibility in the eligibility criteria, as

well as increased use of experimentation. This could include new streams of participants for DTCs such as an early intervention DTC, DTCs for lower risk participants, and an Indigenous focused DTC.

- DTCFP-funded DTCs are widely believed to be effective in reducing recidivism, and available literature confirms that participation in DTCs reduces recidivism, although the estimated extent of this impact varies somewhat.
- There is evidence that DTCs reduce substance use during the program, as well as provide other positive outcomes (social, employment) for participants.
- The Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Working Group meets regularly to share information about the DTCFP and the implementation of DTCs across jurisdictions. However, there is a desire among stakeholders for increased sharing of best practices.
- Almost all jurisdictions are interested in the expansion of DTCs, including establishing additional centres or increasing capacity at existing centres to meet demand.
- The Drug Treatment Court Information System (DTCIS) is the primary vehicle for DTCFP-funded DTCs to report on a national/federal basis; however, there are numerous data limitations.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Recommendation 1:** Continue to enhance sharing of information and lessons learned among the DTCs.

**Recommendation 2:** The Program, in collaboration with the FPT Working Group, should consider ways to support DTCs in any efforts to include groups who may be under-represented or experience barriers to access.

**Recommendation 3:** Examine ways to enhance DTCIS reporting quality and strengthen the expectations in funding agreements for reporting by DTCs.

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**ABOUT THE EVALUATION:** The Evaluation of the Drug Treatment Court Funding Program was conducted by the Department of Justice Evaluation Branch and covered fiscal years 2016-17 to 2020-21. Its main objectives were to examine the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Program, in accordance with the Treasury Board's *Policy on Results* (2016). A planned recidivism study could not be completed within the evaluation timelines, and will be completed later.

