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Importing a popular innovation from adult courts, state and local governments have started hundreds of specialized drug courts to provide judicial supervision and coordinate substance abuse treatment for drug-involved juveniles. The number of youth affected by these new courts is relatively small, but the programs are spreading rapidly and their presence is changing how practitioners and policymakers think about adolescent drug use. Despite the increasing popularity of juvenile drug courts, researchers have only begun to test whether they stop or reduce teen substance abuse more effectively than other programs. *Juvenile Drug Courts and Teen Substance Abuse* is the first book to examine the ideas behind juvenile drug courts and explore their history and popularity. The editors have assembled top justice policy experts to assess the evidence supporting juvenile drug courts and to guide the next generation of evaluation research. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the role of the juvenile justice system in addressing teen drug problems.

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Juvenile Drug Courts and Teen Substance Abuse, edited by Jeffrey Butts and John Roman, is available from the Urban Institute Press (paper, 8 1/2" x 11", 283 pages, ISBN 0-87766-725-X, \$29.50). Order online or call (202) 261-5687; toll-free 1-877-847-7377

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Preface

Juvenile justice officials across the United States are embracing a new method of dealing with adolescent substance abuse. Importing a popular innovation from adult courts, state and local governments have started hundreds of specialized drug courts to provide judicial supervision and coordinate substance abuse treatment for drug-involved juveniles. The number of youth affected by these new juvenile drug courts is small compared with the more than one million cases handled each year by traditional juvenile courts, but the programs are spreading rapidly and their presence is changing the way practitioners and policymakers think about the challenge of adolescent drug use.

Drug courts give offenders an opportunity to change their behavior and stop their use of illegal drugs before they receive serious legal penalties. Those who stop using drugs and complete a rigorous program of treatment may have their charges dismissed or their sentences reduced. To ensure that program participants complete drug treatment as ordered, drug courts assume responsibilities that go beyond the traditional role of a criminal court. They coordinate client case management and probation supervision for every case. They hold regular review meetings and frequent court hearings to monitor each offender's situation. They use graduated sanctions and tangible rewards to motivate offender compliance, and they check for violations by conducting numerous random or unannounced drug tests.

Beginning with a small number of experimental programs, the drug court concept quickly grew into a full-scale movement in the United States. Less than a decade after the first program started in 1989, there were more than 1,000 drug court programs in operation across the country. The first drug courts were designed for adult defendants, but in the mid-1990s state and local jurisdictions began to develop

juvenile drug courts as well. By 2003, approximately 300 juvenile drug courts had opened and another 100 were being planned.

As often happens in the justice system, juvenile drug courts became popular long before evaluation researchers were able to demonstrate that they were effective. In fact, researchers have only begun to test whether juvenile drug courts "work," in the sense that they stop or reduce substance abuse more effectively than the current approaches used for similar youth. Such evidence is hard to assemble, and it takes lengthy research studies with long-term follow-up periods to generate real proof of program effectiveness. Until very recently, juvenile drug courts had not been around long enough for evaluators to complete studies with long-term outcomes. The number of juvenile drug court programs was small until the late 1990s.

Fortunately, adult drug courts appeared five years before juvenile drug courts and the evaluation literature on adult programs has had more time to develop. These studies suggest the drug court concept itself may have merit. At the very least, drug courts seem to affect offender behavior enough to pay for themselves through reduced crime and drug abuse. It is not clear, however, whether the growing evidence about adult drug courts can be applied to juvenile drug courts. Many important policy questions about juvenile drug courts have not been answered. Should juvenile programs differ substantially from adult drug courts? Should they use different treatment models? Should courtroom routines be designed and managed differently? How can juvenile drug courts effectively motivate young offenders to reduce their substance abuse behavior? How should their procedures and strategies be adapted to incorporate the important role of family and school in the lives of adolescents?

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The most important unresolved issue may be whether the juvenile justice system really needs juvenile drug courts. Adult drug courts were a significant innovation for the criminal justice system. They introduced a problem-solving approach to a system accustomed to fact finding and punishment. Rather than simply weighing the evidence in a single case and imposing a sentence, drug courts use the leverage of judicial authority to motivate offenders to change their drug-using behavior. But this approach is not exactly revolutionary in the juvenile justice system. In fact, it is standard operating procedure in traditional juvenile courts. Justice experts even refer to drug courts as "juvenile courts for adults."

Further, adult drug courts usually handle seriously addicted offenders who have been abusing drugs and suffering the consequences for years. Offenders in adult drug courts have often lost housing, jobs, family, and friends because of substance abuse. Very few juveniles will have experienced anything so severe by the time they are referred to a juvenile drug court program. The typical youth referred to a juvenile drug court is 15 or 16 years old and has been drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana for a few years at most. Teenagers are not likely to respond well to a program designed to intervene in an adult-style downward spiral of addiction and dependence. Drug-involved youth usually need improved relationships, exciting recreational opportunities, job preparedness, and perhaps family counseling to support them in making positive choices. In short, drug-involved youth are much like youth in general.

Why then does the juvenile justice system need a "new" court model to handle drug-involved youthful offenders? Perhaps because juvenile courts have strayed too far from their historic problem-solving mission to mimic the "just deserts" orientation of criminal courts. The drug court process may be an important change in style and procedure for today's juvenile courts, albeit one that returns them to their traditional mission. Maybe the introduction of juvenile drug courts allows local juvenile justice systems to acquire treatment resources they otherwise would not be able to access. Juvenile drug courts may be valued not because they offer a new or innovative court process for juvenile offenders but because they enable local officials to leverage new resources for responding to teen drug use.

Whatever factors explain the appeal of juvenile drug court for policymakers and practitioners, specialized

courts for juvenile drug users are clearly a popular and growing program model in the United States. We do not know whether they are actually more effective than traditional juvenile courts in accomplishing their mission of reduced substance abuse among adolescent offenders, but until evaluation researchers produce better studies of program impact, juvenile justice officials will probably continue to fund and implement juvenile drug courts without sufficient evidence. The contributors to this book hope that their work will encourage practitioners and policymakers to think carefully about the role that drug courts can or should play in the juvenile justice system. They also hope the chapters in this volume will encourage evaluation researchers to produce better studies that will begin to fill the current evidence gap about the impact and effectiveness of juvenile drug courts.

Contents of the Book

Most of the material presented in this book was produced for the National Evaluation of Juvenile Drug Courts (NEJDC) project at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. The project was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice and conducted by researchers affiliated with the Urban Institute's Program on Youth Justice. The NEJDC project was designed to facilitate future evaluation research on juvenile drug courts and to encourage policymakers and practitioners to examine the impact and effectiveness of the juvenile drug court process. Together, the chapters in the book highlight the most important factors in the effectiveness of drug courts for juveniles and encourage future evaluation researchers to formulate and test explicit hypotheses involving those factors. The contributing authors hope that their work will encourage policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to ask tough questions about juvenile drug courts and their effectiveness.

In chapter 1, "Drug Courts in the Juvenile Justice System," Jeffrey A. Butts and John Roman introduce the key concepts behind drug courts and describe the emergence of juvenile drug courts, one of the most recent and fastest growing manifestations of the American drug court movement. They scrutinize the uncertain mission of juvenile drug courts and challenge policymakers and practitioners with an implicit query, "If juvenile drug courts are the answer, what is the question?"

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In chapter 2, "American Drug Policy and the Evolution of Drug Treatment Courts," John Roman, Jeffrey A. Butts, and Alison S. Rebeck describe the proliferation of drug courts during the 1990s. They argue that the drug court concept was evolutionary, not revolutionary. Drug courts were a natural extension of moving substance abuse treatment beyond the exclusive domain of social services and into the criminal justice arena.

In chapter 3, "What Juvenile Drug Courts Do and How They Do It," Shelli Balter Rossman, Jeffrey A. Butts, John Roman, Christine DeStefano, and Ruth White review the practices and policies of juvenile drug courts. They describe the typical ingredients of juvenile drug courts and analyze differences within the general model based upon the daily operations observed in six programs studied by the Urban Institute.

In chapter 4, "Drug Court Effects and the Quality of Existing Evidence," John Roman and Christine DeStefano examine the results of drug court evaluations and the limitations of available research for linking drug court components with participant outcomes. They review the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, identify areas that deserve further exploration, and propose strategies for improving future drug court evaluations.

In chapter 5, "Defining the Mission of Juvenile Drug Courts," Jeffrey A. Butts, Janine M. Zweig, and Cynthia Mamalian analyze several important policy

issues related to the uses and possible misuses of juvenile drug courts. They review available evidence about the nature of adolescence and current patterns of illegal drug use among young people, and they question the appropriateness of juvenile drug court programs when they are used for teens that do not show signs of serious drug and alcohol problems.

In chapter 6, "Identifying Adolescent Substance Abuse," Daniel P. Mears reviews the diagnostic instruments used by practitioners to decide when juveniles have drug and alcohol problems that require treatment. He analyzes the current state of research on the accuracy and utility of screening and assessment tools and describes which ones are used most often in the juvenile justice system.

In chapter 7, "Shaping the Next Generation of Juvenile Drug Court Evaluations," Jeffrey A. Butts, John Roman, Shelli Balter Rossman, and Adele V. Harrell present a new conceptual framework for evaluating juvenile drug courts. The framework is designed for researchers who want to develop and test explicit, theoretically derived hypotheses about not only if drug courts influence youth behavior, but also why and how they do it.

In chapter 8, "Building Better Evidence for Policy and Practice," John Roman and Jeffrey A. Butts consider the significance of juvenile drug court research for future policy and practice, and propose several steps needed to advance the quality and applicability of research evidence.