



Harris County Juvenile Specialty Courts

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Harris County Juvenile Probation



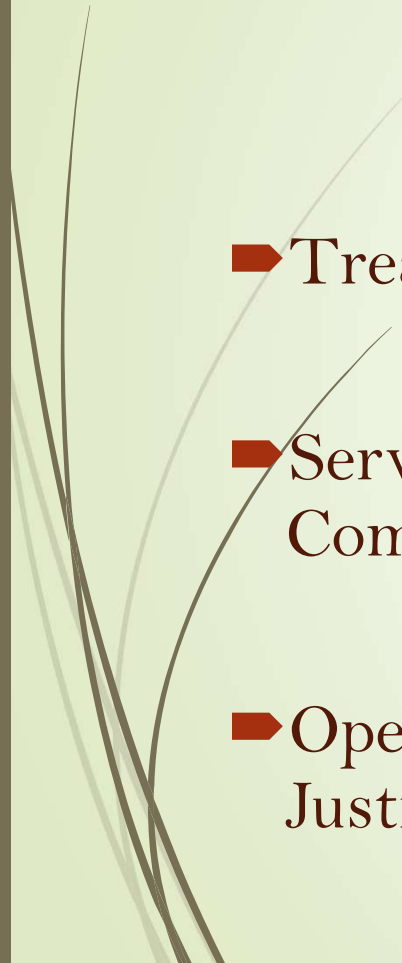
DISCLAIMER

- This project is supported by Grant #2019-MU-MU-K002 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.
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PRIORITIES

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP),
Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice

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- Treating Children as Children
 - Serve Children at Home, with their Families, In their Communities
 - Open up Opportunities for Young People Involved in the Justice System

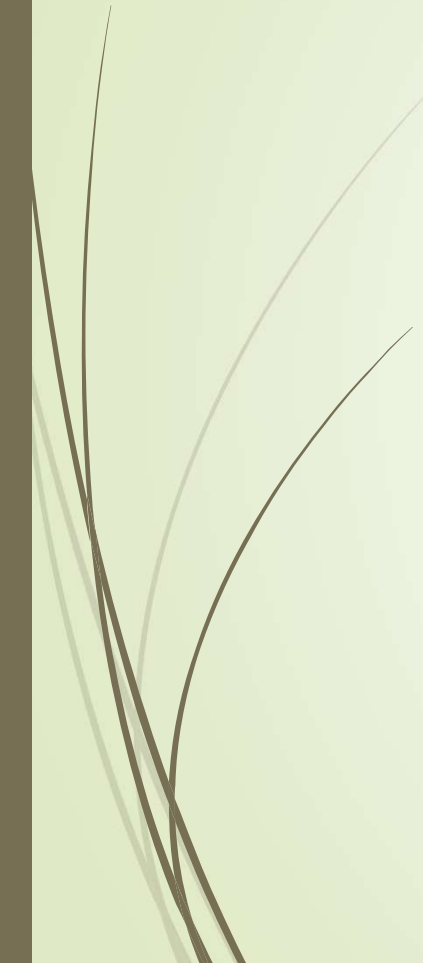


Problem Solving Courts

- Innovative approach pioneered in the 1980s, replacing the traditional adversarial model with a therapeutic focus on comprehending and addressing the underlying causes of problematic behavior.
- Developed to tackle a range of social issues, including Substance Dependence, Gang Association, Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, and Mental Illness.



Goals Of Problem Solving Courts

- Deliver a tailored individualized intervention program addressing root causes of offending, emphasizing enhancement in youth and family functioning across vital areas such as education, vocational skills, autonomy, self-worth, and accountability.
 - The primary goal is strengthening public safety by breaking the cycle of a "revolving door" justice system. This entails minimizing the recurrence of youth offenses, immediate responses to violations, and fostering a more secure community.
 - The long-term success objectives encompass the reduction of recidivism, the promotion of sustainable change, and meticulous tracking of long-term outcomes and success stories.
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Foundations of a Problem-Solving Court Approach

- In these courts, the primary focus is not solely on determining guilt or innocence and imposing punitive measures; instead, the emphasis is on collaboration, rehabilitation, and addressing the underlying issues that contribute to criminal behavior. The approach encourages participant compliance through a balanced system of rewards and sanctions.
- Collaborative Decision-Making
- Individualized Treatment Plans
- Therapeutic Justice
- Early Intervention Responses
- Ongoing Monitoring and Support
- Alternative and Progressive Sanctioning
- Long-Term Success



Multidisciplinary Team Roles

■ Judge

- Oversees team efforts and promotes collaboration
- Maintains regular interaction with court participants
- Actively supervises cases from acceptance through completion

■ District Attorney

- Reviews current and past conduct for suitability assessment
- Contributes to the development of comprehensive treatment plans

■ Defense Attorney

- Evaluates whether participation and proposed treatment plans align with the youth's best interests
- Represents the youth throughout the entire legal process

■ Court Case Manager

- Manages administrative requirements
- Facilitates and monitors compliance with the treatment plan

■ Clinical Coordinator

- Identifies suitable candidates for the program
- Develops personalized treatment plans and service recommendations
- Coordinates with service providers as necessary

■ Probation Staff

- Provides community supervision with weekly face-to-face visits

■ Parent Partner

- Provides guidance to guardians navigating daily challenges and the court system
- Creates a comprehensive family plan with individual goals, expectations, and links to community resources

■ Service Providers

- Delivers community-based interventions to address individual needs

Gang Recidivism Intervention Program (GRIP) Court

313th District Court – Presided by Judge Natalia Oakes
with Associate Judge William Thursland



Statistic Snapshot

- There are an estimated 100,000 gang members in Texas.
- Prominent youth gangs in Harris County include 52 Hoover Crips (52HC), Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13), and the Southwest Cholos 3 (SWC13).
- Per the 2021 Gang Threat Assessment:
 - 1,410 gang member arrests
 - Seizures of \$1,292,748, 602 weapons, 2,738-kg heroin, 147-kg cocaine, 123-kg cannabis, 123-kg methamphetamine, 63,963-DU ecstasy, and 6,065-DU Xanax in the Houston area.
- The Houston area has the highest number of gangs and gang members in southeast Texas, with 423 gangs and nearly 20,000 gang members documented in the HPD Gang Tracker database.
- Per HCJPD 2021 data, 126 of 1,153 youths placed on probation were identified as gang-involved.
- Emerging trends indicate that younger gang members are forming neighborhood cliques characterized by reduced adherence to traditional structures and rules. Instead, they prioritize the freedom to serve in self-interested roles.



GRIP Mission Statement

- The goal of the GRIP Court is to eliminate delinquent conduct by reducing gang association through increasing pro-social factors, redirecting youth to healthier alternatives, and improving relationships within the family.



GRIP Target Population

- Ages 14—17; male or female
- History of gang involvement
 - Self-reported, evidenced by a gang assessment, or reported by law enforcement
 - Formal gang assessment must be completed prior to final acceptance
- Youth rated moderate to high risk for delinquency according to the PACT
- Post-Adjudicated
- Minimum of 6 months remaining on probation
- Willing family/youth participation


Exclusionary Criteria

- Youth with a psychotic disorder or a significant intellectual disability
- Sexual Offenses
- Parent/Guardian refusal



Community Partnership and Support Initiatives

- Ongoing collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Gang Recidivism and Intervention Program (MOGPI).
- Successful relocation of youth and families away from neighborhood gang activity.
- The additional support of parent partners in providing ongoing assistance with immigration status, securing necessary government identification, housing relocation, food assistance, transportation, and employment.



GRIP Challenges and Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

- Family history/legacy of gang involvement.
- Reliance on gangs for financial/emotional support
- High recidivism rate.
- Severity of previous charges and gang rivalries can exclude youth from services.
- Low academic motivation and limited supportive services.
- Strategies to overcome these barriers include,
 - grant writing to secure funding;
 - providing laptops;
 - assisting with access to free/low-cost internet;
 - bringing the services directly to the home.



Program Outcomes and Impact

- 63 families participated in GRIP Court FY 2023.
- We celebrated a 79% successful completion rate.
- 95% of supervised youth had Felony Level offenses.
- 100% of youth participated in extracurricular activities, including school activities, sports, mentoring, volunteering, or employment.
- 86% of youth demonstrated reduced gang association with the support of MAGO, family, and school.
- 73% of eligible youth (aged 16 and above with legal documentation) successfully obtained Texas ID.
- 55% of eligible youth secured employment (aged 16 and above with legal documentation).
- 89% of youth showed improvement in school performance, measured by attendance and grades.
- 24% qualified for 504/Special Education Services.
- 10 youth attained a High School Diploma or equivalent.
- 14 youth enrolled in vocational programs or college upon graduation.
- 10% two-year recidivism rate after completing the program in 2022 and 2021.
- 18% of successfully completed youth received early terminations of probation.

Harris County Juvenile Drug Court



Sobriety Over Addiction and Relapse (SOAR)
314th District Court – Judge Michelle Moore and
Associate Judge Eric Andell



SOAR Mission Statement

- *It is the mission of the Harris County Juvenile SOAR Court Program to reduce substance use and related delinquent behavior among participants while increasing pro-social behavior.*




SOAR Target Population

- Ages 14—17
- Substance use with dual dependence diagnoses
- Willing family participation
- Post-Adjudicated
- Minimum of 6 months remaining on probation

Exclusionary Criteria

- Adjudications opened or closed for the use of force against the person of another; sexual offense; carrying, possessing or using a firearm or other dangerous weapon; the death or serious bodily injury to another; habitual felony conduct; sale of drugs
- Youth with a psychotic disorder, or a significant intellectual disability




Innovative Collaborations and Support Initiatives

- Collaboration with Premier High School to offer a non-traditional schooling option for students at risk of dropout
- Partnership with The Houston Council to provide multifaceted outpatient substance abuse services to our youth and families
- The additional support of parent partners in providing ongoing assistance with immigration status, securing necessary government identification, housing relocation, food assistance, transportation, and employment
- Newly acquired drug arm patches to provide 24/7 intensive drug monitoring



SOAR Challenges and Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

- Availability of illegal and synthetic drugs
- Struggles in addressing immigration and acculturation issues
- Availability of inpatient substance use disorder treatment providers
- Low academic motivation and limited supportive services



Program Achievements and Client Successes

- 28 families participated in SOAR Court FY 2023.
- 100% of youth received comprehensive substance use disorder assessment and treatment.
- 85% of terminations were sober upon program completion.
- 39% of youth's drug dependency warranted residential drug treatment.
- 86% of youth exhibited improvement in school performance, measured by attendance and grades.
- 50% of youth qualified for 504/Special Education Services.
- 3 youth attained a High School Diploma or equivalent qualification.
- 11 youth enrolled in vocational programs or college after graduation.
- 85% of eligible youth (aged 16 and above with legal documentation) successfully obtained a Texas ID.
- 57% of eligible youth (aged 16 and above with legal documentation) secured employment.
- 0% two-year recidivism rate after program completion in 2022 and 2021.
- 62% of successfully completed youth received early terminations of probation.
- Incidence of Charges: Property Crimes: 12 cases; Illegal Substances: 9 cases; Evading Vehicle: 5 cases.
- Success Rate: 100% with 8 Early Termination of Probation (ETP) cases.



Specialty Court for Victims of Sex Trafficking Creating Acceptance Recovery Empowerment (CARE) Court

315th District Court- Judge Leah Shapiro



CARE COURT Eligibility

- **Age:** 12 – 17
- **Gender:** Male, female, transgender, and non-binary youth.
- **Supervision Eligibility:** Adjudicated & placed on probation with at least 6 months of probation.
- **Candidate Criteria:** Youth pending court as well as youth who have been unsuccessful on probation because their underlying sex trafficking concerns were not previously identified or comprehensively addressed. Youth must have a primary address in Harris County.
- **Current Sex Trafficking Concerns:** Self-report acknowledging sex trafficking history (or behavior suggesting significant risk) & expressing ambivalence or a desire to leave the life, CSE-IT score in the Clear Concern range, and/or contact with law enforcement suggesting sex trafficking-related concerns required.
- **Exclusionary Criteria:** Known/active recruiters, significant intellectual disability, active psychosis or significant history of a thought disorder, significant antisocial traits.
 - Youth in DFPS custody & those with significant gang involvement will be referred to appropriate programs to better meet their needs.
- **Agreement:** Youth & guardian must express willingness to participate.



CARE Court Supervision

- Multidisciplinary team
- 3 CARE Court Juvenile Probation Officers
- Caseload of between 8-10 cases per officer
- Minimum of two contacts per week.
- Weekly case staffing with team.



CARE Court Review Hearing

- Youth and parent/guardian attend a Review Hearing every 6-8 weeks
- Hearings are closed sessions
- Hearings are aimed either at praising the youth for success, or problem solving issues that have occurred.
- Youth are able to engage with all members of the team, including the judge directly.
- Snacks, fidget toys, and waters provided for all youth. Incentives are available as rewards.



CARE Court Challenges

- ▶ Youth do not identify themselves as victims and do not want to be rescued
- ▶ Many are very attached to their traffickers and will frequently return
- ▶ Working through the trauma and trauma bonding can take a long time (beyond their probation term)
- ▶ Youth feel they are the one being punished—what about the “pimps” and “johns” ?
- ▶ Limited or no family involvement
- ▶ No model for working with these youth



How does success look?

- Recognition that change is a process—sometimes we just have time to plant seeds
- Youth have an increased understanding of sexual exploitation and are engaged in community resources to promote healing
- Youth have re-engaged in the education process and/or job training
- Youth have made some progress in their individual treatment and may have increased understanding of self worth
- Some improvement in family functioning or family support
- Understanding that working through the trauma will require services beyond their probation term and a willingness to do so
- Knowledge that youth can ask for support from their CARE Court team beyond their probation term
- Connection to the CST Continuum for ongoing CSE support beyond probation




Key considerations for the population

- Healing is a long-term process
- Trust and relationship building
- Patience, consistency, and predictability
- Risky behaviors (leaving home, substance use) may be regulation strategies
- Goal – recognize triggers and utilize adaptive coping strategies
- Steps toward that goal – approaches will vary (e.g., safety planning, harm reduction, motivational interviewing)

Behavioral & Mental Health Specialty Court “Court 360”



315th Court- Judge Meredith Carr- Associate Judge



Court 360 Eligibility

- **Age:** 10 – 17
- **Gender:** Male, female, transgender, and nonbinary youth.
- **Supervision Eligibility:** Youth who have been adjudicated with at least 6 months probation.
- **Candidate Criteria:** Youth pending court as well as youth who have been unsuccessful on probation because their underlying mental health concerns were not previously identified or comprehensively addressed. Youth must have a primary address in Harris County.
- **Current Mental Health Concerns:** DSM-5-TR diagnosis other than, or in addition to, substance use, ADHD, or autism spectrum diagnoses. Youth with trauma and anger concerns are also eligible for participation. Youth with ODD and Conduct Disorder diagnoses are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- **Exclusionary Criteria:** Sexual offenses (and related diagnoses), eating disorders, and significant intellectual disability.
 - Youth in DFPS custody will be referred to the Dual Status Court.
- **History of Prior Treatment:** No history of treatment is required. Youth and caregivers must express willingness to participate in a program that requires engagement in treatment.



Court 360 Supervision

- Multidisciplinary team 3 CARE Court Juvenile Probation Officers
- Caseload of between 8-10 cases per officer
- Minimum of two contacts per week.
- Weekly case staffing with team.
- Youth and parent/guardian attend Review Hearing every 6-8 weeks



Court 360

What does success look like?

- Increase understanding of mental health warning and proactively reach out for help
- Youth and guardians understand and comply with medication recommendations because they see the positive effects
- Parents learn to advocate for their child's needs
- Receive appropriate support in school
- Youth identify their “spark” and as a result engage in extracurricular activities that increase positive adjustment
- Families understand their role in the supporting their child's mental health need and how to positively impact their success



COURT 360 Challenges

- Youth and their families may not recognize the need for mental health services
- May be especially difficult for families and youth to recognize the benefits of medication
- Understanding that behavioral issues may mask underlying mental health problems that need to be addressed
- Family engagement may be difficult as caregivers are exhausted from dealing with their youth's difficulties
- Helping families understand that addressing mental health needs will assist their youth in being more successful in probation completion



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