Problem-Solving Justice: Community Court Model for Tribal Justice Systems
Mission
Reduce Crime
Aid Victims
Strengthen Communities
Improve Trust in the Justice System
Demonstration Projects
Research

Expanding Access to Drug Court
An Evaluation of Brooklyn's Centralized Drug Screening and Referral Initiative

By Sarah Picard-Feitsche
May 2010

A Statewide Evaluation of New York's Adult Drug Courts
Identifying Which Policies Work Best

By Amanda B. Cissner, Michael Rempel, and Allyson Walter Franklin
Center for Court Innovation

John K. Roman and Samuel Beller
The Urban Institute

Coryn Cohen and Carolyn E. Caporet
New York State Unified Court System
June 2013
Expert Assistance
Problem-Solving Courts

- Focus on the person before the court rather than the court process
- Hold offenders accountable for their behavior while offering needed help
- When possible, have the offender repair the harm they caused to the community
Examples of Problem-Solving Courts

- Community Courts
- Drug Courts
- Mental Health Courts
- Reentry Courts
- Veterans courts
- Attendance/Truancy Courts
- Youth Peer-to-Peer Courts
WHAT IS A COMMUNITY COURT?
What is a Community Court?

- Neighborhood Focus
- Harness Power of Justice System
- Help Community Solve Local Problems
Justice System

Courts

Community
Community Justice = Community Engagement = Community Empowerment
Neighborhood Focus

- Spokane, Washington
- Eugene, Oregon
- Red Hook, Brooklyn, NYC
- Vancouver, Canada
- San Francisco, California
- Melbourne, Australia
- Midtown Manhattan, NYC
Six Guiding Principles

1. Enhanced Information
2. Community Engagement
3. Collaboration
4. Individualized Justice
5. Accountability
6. Outcomes
1. Enhanced Information

- Staff training

- Better information sharing

- *WHY?* Improved decision making of judges, attorneys, and other justice officials
2. Community Engagement

► Actively engage citizens

► Allow citizen and neighborhood groups to identify, prioritize, and solve local problems

► WHY? Improves public trust in the justice system
2. Community Engagement

Case study:

Red Hook Community Justice Center

- Advisory board
- Presentations at community meetings
- Volunteer opportunities
- Special task forces
- Community surveys
- Blog, social media
- “Peacemaking” dispute resolution program
- “Youth Court” diversion program
- Community-driven public benefits projects
- Community access to services
3. Collaboration

► Convene justice players

► Invite stakeholders beyond the courthouse

► **WHY?** Improves communication, creates trust, and fosters new responses to problems
4. Individualized Justice

► Use evidence-based risk and needs assessments

► Link offenders to tailored community-based services

► WHY? Reduces recidivism, improves public safety, and helps change behavior
5. Accountability

► Community restitution mandates

► Rigorous compliance monitoring

► Clear consequences for non-compliance

► \textit{WHY?} Improves offender accountability
6. Outcomes

► Collect and analyze data

► Measure outcomes, process, costs, and benefits

► *WHY?* Evaluates the effectiveness of operations and encourages continuous improvement
COMMUNITY COURT PROFILES
Community Courts Today

- 46 US projects in operation

- Internationally: England, South Africa, Australia, Canada, Singapore, New Zealand
Common Cases Heard

About 3/4 are **criminal only**

Others are *multi-jurisdictional*:
Criminal plus . . .

- Civil (small claims, housing)
- Environmental
- Family/juvenile
- Parole re-entry
Neighborhoods served

- Most in **high crime residential** neighborhoods
- Others:
  - Central business districts
  - Citywide
  - Suburban
  - Rural
Creative Facilities

- Dedicated stand-alone building
- Centralized courthouses
- Existing community centers, libraries, homeless service centers, etc.
Model #1: Standalone Building

Austin, TX

Indianapolis, IN

Brooklyn, NY
Model #2: Court co-located in Community Center

Dallas, TX
Spokane, WA
Model #3: Central Courthouse, with centralized service provision

Washington, D.C.

Newark, NJ
Multiple Community Courts by police district: Washington DC
Central Courthouse, with onsite Court Resource Center

Seattle, WA
Vancouver’s Downtown Community Court
Portland Community Court
Model # 4: Co-located in Homeless Shelter

Portland, OR
Model #5: Rural
CCI Demonstration Project: Midtown Community Court
CCI Demonstration Project: Red Hook Community Justice Center
Red Hook Community Justice Center
Catchment Area
SEATTLE COMMUNITY COURT

INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY

RESULTS
What we’re seeing

► **Offender Diffusion:** Offenders may spread positive perceptions where they live (less feasible in business district-focused community courts).

► **Community Visibility:** E.g., 35,250 hours of annual community service/year at Midtown Community Court.

► **Community Engagement:** Advisory boards; community meetings, neighborhood clean-up events.

► **Court Reputation:** E.g., Red Hook residents & offenders know the judge’s reputation for fairness and interest in the community needs.
Improving Public Trust

► Improving Trust in Government
Approval ratings for local courts, police, and prosecutors improved three-fold since the opening of Red Hook Community Justice Center.

► Improving Fairness
The Center’s community courts in Harlem and Red Hook improved perceptions of fairness among litigants and defendants; nearly nine out of ten report that their cases were handled fairly.

► Increased Public Support
57% of Midtown residents willing to pay more taxes for a community court; 94% of Red Hook residents approve of the court
Emphasis on Procedural Justice

Research has shown that when defendants and litigants perceive the court process to be fair, they are more likely to comply with court orders and follow the law in the future—regardless of whether they “win” or “lose” their case.
Increased Compliance

80% community service compliance rate, compared to ~50% in the traditional system at Midtown Community Court.

Paying Back the Community

Use of community service sanctions in Red Hook and Midtown contributed 75,000 hours and $600,000 worth of labor per year.
Platforms for experimentation

- Folding in new calendars (trafficking, veterans, drug, etc.)
- Validating new assessment tools
- Honing procedural justice practices, research base
- Testing new technologies
- Peacemaking, restorative justice, mediation and other alternatives
- Offering diversion options for earlier intercepts
Reducing Crime

► **Crime Reduction** Midtown street prostitution fell by 56%; illegal vending fell by 24%. Melbourne crime rate reduced by 12%, burglaries down by 26%, and motor vehicle theft down by 38%.

► **Reduced Recidivism** The Red Hook Community Justice Center reduced reoffending by adult defendants by 10% and juvenile defendants by 20%.

► The Harlem Reentry Court reduced recidivism among parolees by 19%.

► The San Francisco Community Justice Center had a re-arrest rate reduction of 9-10%.
Reduced Taxpayer Costs: $3,912 saved per defendant processed at Red Hook Community Justice Center rather than traditional misdemeanor court, totaling over $10 million annually.

Reducing Incarceration: Red Hook reduced the number of offenders receiving jail sentences by 35%.
Questions and Comments?

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