

Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards Through the Eyes of Healing to Wellness Courts: Practice Applications of the Standards

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Acknowledgment

This presentation is supported by Grant #2019-DC-BX-K013
awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.



This project is supported by Grant # 2019-DC-BX-K013 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

Our Mission

Children and Family Futures strives to prevent child abuse and neglect while improving safety, permanency, well-being and recovery outcomes with equity for all children, parents and families affected by trauma, substance use and mental health disorders.



Center for Children and Family Futures
Strengthening Partnerships, Improving Family Outcomes





CHILDREN & FAMILY FUTURES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & EVALUATION PROJECTS

- Sacramento County Early Intervention Family Treatment Court
- Sacramento County Dependency Family Treatment Court
- Recovery Opportunities Open for Men (ROOM) for Dads
- Strong Families, Strong Children
- Prevention and Family Recovery
- National Quality Improvement Center on Family-Centered Reunification



National Center on
Substance Abuse
and Child Welfare

NATIONAL CENTER ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE & CHILD WELFARE

- In-Depth Technical Assistance
- Regional Partnership Grants

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau



NATIONAL FAMILY TREATMENT COURT TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Funded by Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



NATIONAL SOBRIETY TREATMENT & RECOVERY TEAMS TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Funded by Individual States and/or Local Jurisdictions



NATIONAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY COURT TEAMS

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What are FTC Best Practices?

Research encompassing best and promising practices for:

- Child, parent, and family well-being
- Parenting education and child-parent interactions
- Substance use disorder treatment
- Mental health treatment
- Dependency court
- Child welfare
- Program implementation and operations

What are FTC Best Practices?

- Research and data driven
- Multi-disciplinary and multi-systemic
- Trauma-responsive
- Child and family-focused
- Culturally-relevant
- Community-based

FTC Best Practice Standards



Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards

Moving Beyond Guidance

1. Improve practices and outcomes for children, parents, and families in family treatment courts
2. Improve outcomes for all families involved with child welfare
3. Direct state priorities and resources

<https://www.cffutures.org/home-page/ftc-best-practice-standards-2019/>



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FTC Best Practice Standards



*Family Treatment Court
Best Practice Standards*

“While the FTC Standards provide clear directives to communicate about the critical elements of a high-functioning FTC, they are not a detailed, step-by-step manual for implementation.”

Structure of the FTC Best Practice Standards

Description – Each standard begins with a descriptive summary paragraph.

Provisions – These expand on the description and are mandates stating what FTCs should do; they are designed to be as directive and measurable as possible.

Rationale – Describes the reasoning and applicable research base for each provision, drawing upon both practice-based evidence and empirical studies from a wide range of related fields of study.

Key Considerations – These provide additional explanation of the provision and practical implementation advice.

References – Theses are included at the end of each section.

Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards

Monitoring and Evaluation



Role of the
Judge



Equity and
Inclusion



Early
Screening
and
Assessment



Timely,
Quality
Treatment



Case
Management



Therapeutic
Behavior
Response



Organization and Structure

*No Single Agency Has
the Skill or Capacity to
Meet All of Their Needs.*

Vulnerable children, parents, and family members require the intensive, collaborative efforts of child welfare, the dependency court, treatment providers, and other community members to meet their complex treatment and service needs.



Family Success in FTCs

5 Rs and an E

Recovery

Reunification

Remain Home

Repeat Maltreatment

Re-Entry



Equity

Best Practices Outcomes



A meta-analysis of 16 evaluations examining FTC outcomes found that families that participated in an FTC were two times more likely to reunify than families receiving conventional services.

(Zhang, Huang, Wu, Li, & Liu, 2019)

Organization & Structure

The family treatment court (FTC) has agreed-upon **structural and organizational principles** that are supported by research and based on evidence-informed policies, programs, and practices. The core programmatic components, day-to-day operations, and oversight structures are defined and documented in the FTC policy and procedure manual, participant handbook, and memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

Organization & Structure

- A. Multidisciplinary and Multisystemic Collaborative Approach
- B. Partnerships, Community Resources, and Support
- C. Multidisciplinary Team
- D. Governance Structure
- E. Shared Mission and Vision
- F. Communication and Information sharing
- G. Cross-Training and Interdisciplinary Education
- H. Family-Centered, Culturally Relevant, and Trauma-Informed Approach
- I. FTC Policy and Procedure Manual
- J. FTC Pre-Court Staffing and Court Review Hearing



Role of the Judge

Judicial leadership is critical to the effective planning and operation of the FTC. The FTC judge works collectively with leaders of partner agencies and other stakeholders to establish clear roles and a shared mission and vision. He or she has the **unique ability to engage the leaders and stakeholders** in the development, implementation, and ongoing operations of the FTC. The judge is a vital part of the operational team, **convening** meetings that encourage team members to identify shared values, voice concerns, and find common groups. Additionally, the judge's development of **rappport with participants** is among the most important components of the FTC.

Role of the Judge

- A. Convening Partners
- B. Judicial Decision Making
- C. Participation in FTC Pre-Court Staffing
- D. Interaction with Participants
- E. Professional Training
- F. Length of Judicial Assignment to the FTC



Ensuring Equity and Inclusion

Family treatment court (FTC) has an affirmative obligation to consistently **assess its operations and those of partner organizations** for policies and procedures that could contribute to disproportionality and disparities among historically marginalized and other underserved groups. The FTC actively **collects and analyzes** program and partner organization **data** to determine if disproportionality or disparities exist in the programs; if so, the FTC **implements corrective measures** to eliminate them.

Ensuring Equity and Inclusion

- A. Equitable FTC Admission Practices
- B. Equitable FTC Retention Rates and Child Welfare Outcomes
- C. Equitable Treatment
- D. Equitable Responses to Participant Behavior
- E. Team Training



Early Identification, Screening, and Assessment

The process of early identification, screening, and assessment provides the greatest opportunity to fully meet the comprehensive needs of children, parents, and families affected by SUDs that come to the attention of the child welfare system. FTC team members and partner agencies screen and assess all referred families using objective eligibility and exclusion criteria based on the best available evidence indicating which families can be served safely and effectively in the FTC. Team members **use validated assessment tools and procedures** to promptly refer children, parents, and families to the appropriate services and levels of care. They conduct ongoing validated assessments of children, parents, and families while also addressing barriers to recovery and reunification throughout the case. Service referrals match identified needs and connect children, parents, and family members to evidence-based interventions, promising programs, and trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and family-centered practices. FTC team members take on varying roles for this process to occur in a timely and efficient manner.

Early Screening, Identification and Assessment

- A. Target population, objective eligibility, and exclusion criteria
- B. Standardized and systematic referral, screening, and assessment process
- C. Use of valid and reliable screening and assessment for parents and families
- D. Use of valid, reliable, and developmentally appropriate screening and assessments for children
- E. Identification and resolution of barriers to recovery and reunification



Timely, High Quality, and Appropriate Substance Use Disorder Treatment

SUD treatment is provided to meet the individual and unique substance-related clinical and supportive needs of persons with SUDs. For participants in FTC, it is important that the SUD treatment agency or clinician provide services in the context of the participants' **family relationships**, particularly the parent-child dyad, and understand the importance of and responsibility for **ensuring child safety** within the Adoption and Safe Families Act timeline for child permanency. A treatment provider's **continuum of services** includes early identification, screening, and brief intervention; comprehensive standardized assessment; stabilization; appropriate, manualized, evidence-based treatment including medications if warranted; **ongoing communication** with the FTC team; and continuing care. The parent, child, and family treatment plan is based on individualized and assessed needs and strengths and is provided in a timely manner including concurrent treatment of mental health and physical health.

Timely, High Quality, and Appropriate Substance Use Disorder Treatment

- A. Timely access to appropriate treatment
- B. Treatment matches assessed needs
- C. Comprehensive continuum of care
- D. Integrated treatment of co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders
- E. Family-centered treatment
- F. Gender-responsive treatment
- G. Treatment for pregnant women
- H. Culturally-responsive treatment
- I. Evidence-based manualized treatment
- J. Medication-assisted treatment
- K. Alcohol and other drug testing protocols
- L. Treatment provider qualifications



Comprehensive Case Management Services, and Supports for Families

FTC ensures that children, parents, and family members receive comprehensive services that meet their assessed needs and promotes sustained family **safety, permanency, recovery, and well-being**. In addition to **high-quality** substance use and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment, the FTC's **family-centered** service array includes other clinical treatment and related clinical and community support services. These services are **trauma responsive**, include family members as active participants, and are grounded in cross-systems collaboration and **evidence-based or evidence-informed** practices implemented with fidelity.

Comprehensive Case Management Services, and Supports for Families

- A. Intensive case management and coordinated case planning
- B. Family involvement in case planning
- C. Recovery supports
- D. High-quality parenting time (visitation)
- E. Parenting and family-strengthening programs
- F. Reunification and related supports
- G. Trauma-specific services for children and parents
- H. Services to meet children's individual needs
- I. Complementary services to support parents and families
- J. Early intervention services for infants and children affected by prenatal substance exposure
- K. Substance use prevention and intervention for children and adolescents



Therapeutic Responses to Behavior

The FTC applies therapeutic responses (e.g., child safety interventions, treatment adjustments, complementary service modifications, incentives, sanctions) to **improve parent, child, and family functioning; ensure children's safety, permanency, and well-being; support participant behavior change; and promote participant accountability**. The FTC recognizes the biopsychosocial and behavioral complexities of supporting participants through behavior change to achieve sustainable recovery, stable reunification, and resolution of the child welfare case. When responding to participant behavior, **the FTC team considers the cause of the behavior as well as the effect of the therapeutic response on the participant, the participant's children and family, and the participant's engagement in treatment and supportive services**.

Therapeutic Responses to Behavior

- A. Child and family focus
- B. Treatment adjustments
- C. Complementary service modifications
- D. FTC phases
- E. Incentives and sanctions to promote engagement
- F. Equitable responses
- G. Certainty
- H. Advance notice
- I. Timely response delivery
- J. Opportunity for participants to be heard
- K. Professional demeanor
- L. Child safety interventions
- M. Use of addictive or intoxicating substances
- N. FTC discharge decisions



Monitoring and Evaluation

The FTC collects and reviews data to monitor participant progress, engage in a process of **continuous quality improvement, monitor adherence to best practice standards, and evaluate outcomes** using scientifically reliable and valid procedures. The FTC establishes performance measures for shared accountability across systems, encourages data quality, and fosters the exchange of data and evaluation results with multiple stakeholders. The FTC uses this information to improve policies and practices in addition to monitoring the strengths and limitations of various service components. Evaluation results and data are also critical components of effective stakeholder outreach and sustainability, helping the FTC “tell its story” of success and needs.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- A. Maintain data electronically
- B. Engage in a process of continuous quality improvement
- C. Evaluate adherence to best practices
- D. Use of rigorous evaluation methods





Resources

Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards

8 *Standards* and Key Provisions

<https://www.cffutures.org/home-page/ftc-best-practice-standards-2019/>



Center for Children and Family Futures
Strengthening Partnerships, Improving Family Outcomes



NADCP
National Association of
Drug Court Professionals

FAMILY TREATMENT COURT

Peer Learning Court Program



Center for Children and Family Futures
Strengthening Partnerships, Improving Family Outcomes

King County FTC, WA

Tompkins County FTC, NY

Wapello County FTC, IA

Grant County FRC, IN

Jefferson County FIT Court, CO

Baltimore City Circuit FRP, MD

Pima County FDC, AZ

Travis County PIR/FDTC, TX

PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT INCLUDES:

- Virtual learning opportunities (e.g., video conference calls, topic-specific consultation).
- Access to FTC policies, handbooks, practices, and lessons.
- A virtual and/or in-person team site visit, providing an opportunity to observe their FTC court proceedings and staffing sessions.

To learn more about the FTC Peer Learning Court Program or to participate in a peer-to-peer connection, contact us peerlearningcourts@cffutures.org



Course #1: May 25, 2021

Applying a Family-Centered,
Problem-Solving Approach to Family
Treatment Court Staffing and Court
Hearings

Course #2: July 8, 2021

Disrupting Stigma to Support
Meaningful Change for Families
in Family Treatment Court



Course #3: October 12, 2021



Harnessing the Power of Parenting
Time to Strengthen the Parent-Child
Relationship and Support Reunification
Efforts in Your Family Treatment Court

11:00 – 12:30pm PT | 2:00 – 3:30pm ET

Questions? Email us at fdc@cffutures.org

Register at: cffutures.org/ftc-practice-academy



Previously named the Family Drug Court Learning Academy