

# Cook County Mental Health Court Program: Outcomes and Cost Savings

The data in this brief were provided by the Office of the Cook County (IL) State's Attorney and represent the combination of outcomes from all seven operational mental health courtrooms in the county.

## Program Description

The Cook County Mental Health Court program was launched in the Circuit Court of Cook County in April 2004 to improve successful outcomes among felony probationers who have chronic mental illness, most of whom also have substance use disorders. The program seeks to increase successful probation and community reentry for participants, measured by decreases in their subsequent arrests, incarcerations, and hospitalizations. Using a "systems approach" to identify eligible individuals early and link them to community-based services, the program model includes intensive treatment, interventions, and supervision. Between 2004 and 2011, there have been 369 participants active in the program.

As a member of the Mental Health Court team, TASC, Inc. (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities) provides clinical case management, client outreach, care coordination, court and treatment advocacy, and service planning for community stabilization that addresses mental health, substance abuse, public benefits, and housing needs.

## Program Outcomes

- **Arrests decreased 81%.** Among the 369 participants, the average number of arrests per participant decreased from a pre-participation rate of 2.8 in the year prior to admission to 0.50 during program enrollment.<sup>‡</sup> This resulted in an overall reduction of 772 arrests, an 81% decrease.
- **Days in custody decreased 71%.** Among the 369 participants, the average number of days in custody per participant decreased from a pre-participation rate of 120 in the year prior to admission to 35\* during program enrollment. This resulted in an overall reduction of 29,866 custody days, a 71% decrease.
- **The program saved taxpayers \$4.2 million in custody costs.** The average pre-participation cost of custody<sup>†</sup> per participant in the year prior to admission was an estimated \$17,200, compared to \$5,000 during program participation. This resulted in an estimated overall savings of \$4.2 million, or a 70% decrease.<sup>◇</sup>
- **Recidivism rates dropped significantly.** Among program graduates, 70% had no new arrests and 82 percent had no new convictions in the year following program completion.

## Reduction in Arrests, Days Incarcerated, and Incarceration Costs Among 369 CCMHC Program Participants, December 2011

Measure	Year Prior to CCMHC Admission		During CCMHC Participation (Annualized)	
	Aggregate	Per Participant Average	Aggregate	Per Participant Average
Number of arrests	956	2.8	184	0.50
Days in custody	42,226	120	12,360	35*
Public cost of custody <sup>†</sup>	\$6.0M	\$17.2K	\$1.8M	\$5.0K

\* Average length of participation is 14.1 months per participant.

\* This reflects the per-participant average number of days incarcerated for new crimes as well as number of days incarcerated for symptomatic regression or non-compliance with treatment. When only new-crime incarceration days are counted, the per-participant average was 9.6 days.

† Costs are based on an estimate of \$143/day average per Cook County jail inmate. It is assumed that daily costs for the CCMHC program population are significantly higher based on special needs and costs of medication.

◇ Savings estimates do not take into account the potential additional cost savings associated with prevented arrests and adjudication resulting from program participation, nor the savings associated with participants who had been in the program for less than one year who minimized their contact with the criminal justice system in terms of arrests and incarceration days compared with their pre-enrollment levels.

**Sources:**

Braude, L. (2005). The Cook County Mental Health Court: Development, Implementation, and Initial Implications. *Offender Substance Abuse Report*. Volume V, No. 5, Sept/Oct 2005.

Office of the State's Attorney, Cook County, Illinois. (2012). Cook County (Countywide) Mental Health Treatment Court System. January 17, 2012.

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**Prepared by TASC, Inc.** TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities) is a not-for-profit organization that provides recovery management services for individuals with substance use and mental health disorders. Serving approximately 20,000 clients in Illinois each year, TASC's statewide infrastructure is designed to intervene when alcohol or other drug use has caused people to become involved with the criminal justice system, juvenile justice system, corrections, child welfare and/or public aid. Pursuant to Illinois statute and administrative rule, TASC is the agency designated to assess offenders with substance abuse issues and make treatment recommendations and referrals for the Illinois criminal justice system. For more information, please visit [www.tasc.org](http://www.tasc.org).

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