



Agenda Action Form Overview

The Board is requested to approve Budget Ordinance Amendment No. 20BCC000005 to appropriate restricted funds received from the Durham County Alcohol Beverage Control Board in the amount of \$24,500 for the Durham Drug Treatment Court.

Background/Justification

Durham County's Criminal Justice Resource Center assumed operation and funding of the Durham Drug Treatment Court (DTC) Program in FY2011/12 when the NC Administrative Office of the Courts eliminated funding for all drug court programs across the state. As the field evolves, drug treatment courts across the country amend their programming to follow evidence-based practices. Some of the recommendations have been cost prohibitive for CJRC to implement. In 2019, staff approached the Durham County Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Board requesting an amendment to the type of agencies eligible to receive ABC Board grant funding. The ABC Board considered the request and the Drug Treatment Court was able to apply for funding.

This funding is intended to support and enhance critical program components. The components include alcohol and drug testing supplies, laboratory confirmation testing, medication assisted treatment, housing and transportation assistance, as well as client incentives.

Alcohol & Drug Testing Supplies and Laboratory Confirmations

Reliable alcohol and drug testing is essential to an effective DTC program. Alcohol and drug testing provide an accurate, timely, and comprehensive assessment of unauthorized substance use throughout participants' enrollment in the Drug Court. Alcohol and drug testing are performed frequently enough to ensure substance use is detected quickly and reliably. Urine tests are performed on each participant at a minimum of two times per week until participants are in the last phase of the program and preparing for graduation. The schedule of alcohol and drug testing is based on a color system and is random and unpredictable. DTC requires direct observations of drug testing. Test specimens are examined routinely for evidence of dilution and adulteration; this is achieved through laboratory confirmations. If a participant denies substance use in response to a positive result, the specimen is sent to the laboratory for confirmation. The ABC grant award will allow CJRC to purchase of a portable handheld breathalyzer as well as ethyl glucuronide (ETG) alcohol panel screening devices. Funding will also be used for the transition to exclusive use of 12 panel screening devices instead of 5, 8, 10 and 12 panel devices that are currently utilized due to limited funding. Twelve panel screening devices will allow DTC to more accurately detect the substance or combination of substances being used by participants.

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)

The current opioid crisis has highlighted the need for all treatment courts to adopt best practices related to medication assisted treatment (MAT). A study published in 2012 found that 56 percent of drug courts offer MAT; however, 98 percent of drug courts reported opiate-addicted participants. Barriers to supporting participants in MAT include cost, availability and court policy. Buprenorphine or methadone maintenance administered prior to and immediately after release from jail or prison has been shown to significantly increase opiate-addicted offenders' engagement in treatment; reduce illicit opiate use; reduce rearrests, technical probation/parole violations, and reincarceration rates; and reduce mortality and hepatitis C infections. Studies have reported significant reductions in heroin use and re-arrest rates for opiate-addicted probationers and



parolees who received naltrexone. In addition, at least two small-scale studies reported better outcomes for participants who received an injectable form of naltrexone called Vivitrol. DTC has changed its court policy to allow use of MAT, however it is still cost prohibitive for clients. Durham DTC will use grant funds to provide financial assistance for clients to receive MAT through partnerships with Lincoln Community Health Center and other MAT providers.

Housing and Transportation

Participants receive wrap around and supportive services for conditions that are likely to interfere with their compliance in Drug Court. Depending on participant needs, supportive services may include housing assistance, mental health treatment, trauma-informed services, criminal-thinking interventions, family or interpersonal counseling, vocational or educational services, transportation assistance and medical or dental treatment. Participants receive only those services for which they have a verified need. Participants are unlikely to succeed in treatment if they do not have a safe, stable, and drug-free place to live or adequate transportation to get there. The Durham DTC attempts to provide housing assistance as funds are available, beginning in the first phase of Drug Court and continuing as needed throughout participants' enrollment in the program. Short-term housing assistance is provided in the form of transitional and/or supportive housing and rental assistance for 30 to 90 days. Housing rates vary from \$125 to \$180 per week. Transportation assistance is provided in the form of bus tickets and can be used to attend treatment sessions, employment and/or to attend other supportive service appointments. Participants receive daily, 5 day weekly or monthly passes based on need. This grant will allow Durham DTC to increase housing assistance for participants who are homeless or living in environments that are not conducive for long-term sobriety, as well as, provide additional transportation assistance.

Incentives

It is essential to recognize that punishment and positive reinforcement serve different, but complementary functions. Punishment (or sanctions) is used to reduce undesirable behaviors, such as substance use and crime; whereas positive reinforcement (or incentives) is used to increase desirable behaviors, such as treatment attendance and employment, both are most likely to be effective when administered in combination. DTC places as much emphasis on incentivizing productive behaviors as it does on reducing crime, substance use, and other infractions. Studies have shown that Drug Courts achieve significantly better outcomes when they focus as much on incentivizing productive behaviors as they do on reducing undesirable behaviors. Studies have shown significantly better outcomes were achieved by Drug Courts that offered higher and more consistent levels of praise and positive incentives from the judge. Several other studies found that a 4:1 ratio of incentives to sanctions was associated with significantly better outcomes among drug participants. With this grant funding, CJRC will provide improved incentives to clients for program accomplishments and interim successes throughout the program.

Policy Impact

Accepting the grant funds is consistent with the County's policy to support the drug court program in order to provide positive and healthy outcomes for residents involved in the criminal justice system.



Procurement Background

N/A

Fiscal Impact

This grant does not require a County match. The grant period is July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

Recommendation

The County Manager recommends approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment No. 20BCC000005 to appropriate restricted funds in the amount of \$24,500 from the Durham ABC Board for the Durham Drug Treatment Court.