NATIONAL DRUG COURT MONTH

TOOLKIT

1989 to 2019
Celebrating 30 Years of Treatment Courts
Dear colleagues,

I love National Drug Court Month. It’s our best opportunity to be seen and heard. It’s a month full of encouragement, inspiration and hope. It reflects the deep commitment of professionals like you to reimagining justice for some of our most vulnerable. And it’s an annual reminder that treatment courts are making an indelible impact on our communities, making them healthier and safer one life at a time.

Each May—through graduation ceremonies, recovery rallies, walks, volunteer projects, picnics, festivals and other creative events—you educate elected officials, grab the attention of the media, win over skeptics and honor the lifesaving work being accomplished in treatment courts across the country. And this year is extra special as we mark the 30th anniversary of treatment courts, even more reason to celebrate!

This toolkit from NADCP will help make your voices heard. It offers proven strategies for reaching the right audience in the best ways. We’re here to serve you, so if you need further assistance, just ask. We also want to amplify your success to the nation; tag us on social media, and be sure to send us your photos, videos and news reports.

By the end of the month, we want the world to know that your programs are successfully leading people out of the justice system and into long-term recovery. On behalf of every past, present and future treatment court graduate, thank you.

Sincerely,

Carson Fox
Chief Executive Officer
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National Drug Court Month is our chance to celebrate the lifesaving work that you do, engage our stakeholders and inspire our communities. And now is the time to start planning! The earlier you plan, the greater your impact will be.

FOUR WAYS TO MAKE AN IMPACT:

1. **HOLD A GRADUATION CEREMONY**

   Graduations are the most effective way to build support in the community and among elected officials. Schedule a ceremony during the month of May, and invite local, state and federal officials and the media to come see the positive effects of your program on the community. Elected officials’ schedules fill up months in advance, so you need to send event invitations soon! [Click here for tips](#).

2. **WRITE AN OP-ED**

   Submit an opinion piece to your local, state and regional newspapers to share your success. National Drug Court Month is a great hook for op-eds, and outlets are likely to publish what you send them. [Click here to get started](#).

3. **ISSUE A PROCLAMATION**

   A Drug Court Month proclamation is a great way to garner support at the city, county or state level. Proclamations can also help generate media coverage. [Click here for a sample](#).

4. **TELL NADCP ABOUT YOUR EVENTS**

   We want to amplify your success to the rest of the country; tell us how your program is celebrating National Drug Court Month, and send us your photos, videos and news reports.
BE AN ADVOCATE

HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

There’s no better way to build lasting support for your program than by holding a graduation ceremony and inviting elected officials—such as your members of Congress, governor and mayor—to attend. Program graduates’ deeply moving stories will leave an indelible impression, and National Drug Court Month events are an opportunity to express gratitude to elected officials for the support they provide.

Congress has been unwavering in its support of treatment courts, and the most recent appropriations process allotted a historic amount of funding for these lifesaving programs. Your members of Congress are rarely thanked for their public service, and they deserve gratitude for their commitment to seeing families and communities restored through our programs.

HOW TO GET YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS OR OTHER ELECTED OFFICIAL TO ATTEND:

Invite the media to cover the event. Elected officials are always looking for positive media coverage. Treatment court graduations and National Drug Court Month events are perfect for acknowledging one way your members of Congress and other officials are making a positive impact on their constituents. Make it clear that you will do everything you can to obtain media coverage of the event you’re asking them to attend.

Give them an award. If your members of Congress or other elected officials have been particularly vocal and public in their support of treatment courts, present them with an award acknowledging their leadership on issues of public health and public safety. This is a great way to entice them to attend your graduation ceremony or other event!

Schedule your ceremony based on when your members of Congress will be in their districts.

Senate members will be in their districts May 25-31, 2019.

House members will be in their districts May 3-6 and again May 24-31, 2019.

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker greets a veterans treatment court participant.
## FOLLOW THESE THREE EASY STEPS TO CONNECT WITH EACH OF YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS (OR ANY ELECTED OFFICIAL):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. CALL YOUR MEMBER’S OFFICE</th>
<th>2. WE’RE HERE TO HELP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>› Click <a href="#">here</a> to get your member’s contact information in Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>If your elected official agrees to attend the event, contact Greg Loeffler, NADCP public affairs associate, at <a href="mailto:gloeffler@allrise.org">gloeffler@allrise.org</a>. We can help promote your event with the press and on social media, assist with local and national talking points, and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>› Ask to speak to the person handling judiciary issues, most often the judicial legislative assistant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>› When speaking to the judicial legislative assistant:</td>
<td>3. AFTER THE EVENT, SEND A PERSONAL THANK-YOU LETTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› Introduce yourself. Tell them a little about your treatment court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› Invite your member to attend and deliver the keynote address for your program’s graduation ceremony or other event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› Provide the date, time and location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› Follow up with an email to the judicial legislative assistant:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› Adapt the <a href="#">sample invitation email</a> and attach the <a href="#">official event invitation</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› Send background information on your treatment court (a brochure, local news story or video of a graduate or graduation).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>› Follow up after a few days to confirm receipt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider asking your graduates and participants to send letters of appreciation as well.</td>
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</tbody>
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**West Virginia Senator Shelley Moore Capito greets drug court graduate Chelsea Carter**
SAMPLE EMAIL: EVENT INVITATION

Dear [staff member]:

May is National Drug Court Month, a celebration of one of the most successful strategies for cutting crime and saving lives and valuable tax dollars. As [Senator/Representative/Governor/Mayor etc.] [last name] represents our community, we need [his/her] continued support for drug courts and the 150,000 lives they restore each year.

It is my honor to invite [Senator/Representative/Governor/Mayor] [last name] to provide the keynote address at the [graduation ceremony or event] of the [treatment court] on [time and date]. Media will be invited. Attached please find the event invitation and [recent news stories, brochure, etc].

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, or to confirm the event details, please contact me at [phone number] or [email address].

Sincerely,

[Your name]
[Your title]
To: [Senator/Representative/Governor/Mayor]
Attn: [Scheduler]
CC: [Judiciary legislative assistant/staff member]
From: [Judge name, city, state]
Subject: Visit with Constituents
Date: [Current date]

Dear [Senator/Representative/Governor/Mayor] [last name]:

As the presiding judge of the [treatment court], it is my honor to invite you to deliver the keynote address during a special ceremony celebrating National Drug Court Month [and honoring our most recent program graduates] on [date] at [time] at [location].

Your support for drug court is critical to giving our participants an opportunity to address their substance use disorder and become productive citizens. [We would like to honor your support and show our gratitude for your commitment to drug court by presenting you with the [title] award during the event.] The media will be invited, and we would be happy to coordinate with your communications staff to prepare for media coverage.

Our drug court is one of more than 3,000 nationwide annually serving 150,000 people. Drug courts are now the most successful justice program for reducing addiction, crime and recidivism while saving taxpayer dollars. Our drug court graduates entered the program addicted to drugs and often facing long-term incarceration, but because of the combination of accountability and treatment they received in drug court, they are now going back to school, reuniting with their families, finding employment and paying taxes. They want to thank you for your continued support of drug court, support that will help future graduates receive the same opportunity.

[Add basic information/statistics on your program.]

As our [Senator/Representative/Governor/Mayor etc.] for [location], it would be an honor to have you in attendance. Thank you for your service to our community and for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, or to confirm the event details, please contact [me or other staff member] at [phone number] or [email address].

Sincerely,

[Judge name]
[Judge title]
HOW TO GRAB THE MEDIA’S ATTENTION

Your court’s graduation ceremony or community event is newsworthy. If members of Congress or other high-level elected officials attend, it’s the perfect opportunity to highlight your success in the media. Start planning now so you have an event the media can’t wait to cover.

To make sure your court is prepared to manage the media and the message, designate a media coordinator and a spokesperson for your court. The media coordinator is responsible for identifying and contacting media for your court. The media spokesperson is the individual providing quotes and interviews to the media. The spokesperson must be knowledgeable about your court and able to speak from a position of authority. This is often the judge but could be another key member of the team.

THREE WAYS TO GET NOTICED:

1. SEND A MEDIA ADVISORY

Adapt our sample media advisory and identify which media outlets to contact, including local, state and regional. If you’ve worked with reporters in the past, or know of reporters covering criminal justice issues, reach out to them directly. Otherwise, contact the outlet and ask for the assignment desk.

If one or more of your members of Congress have agreed to attend, let them know you plan to send a media advisory, as their offices may need to review it before sending.

Email your advisory to each media outlet 5 to 10 days prior to the event. Include the advisory in the body of the email, not as an attachment.

Make repeated follow-up calls. This is often what it takes to get noticed.
2. WRITE AN OP-ED

- Start by adapting our sample op-ed. Give your graduation ceremony or community event an extra news hook by relating it to the broader discussion of criminal justice reform or the addiction epidemic.
- Know the word limit. Check the specific outlet’s op-ed guidelines, usually 500 to 700 words.
- Humanize your piece. Anecdotes and personal stories help illustrate and bring clarity to complicated issues. Use names only with permission.
- Make a single strong point clearly and persuasively. Your first paragraph should draw the reader in, but if you choose to open with an anecdote, get to the point quickly.
- Make a specific recommendation about what’s needed to ensure your court can operate effectively.
- End with a bang. Your final paragraph is as important as your opening paragraph and should summarize your argument.
- Follow up. If you haven’t had a response from the opinion editor in one week, or if your piece is time-sensitive, follow up with a phone call to be sure it was received, and ask about its status.

3. ISSUE A PROCLAMATION

- Ask your governor, county commissioners, city council, mayor or even judge to make a proclamation declaring May as Drug Court Month.

We’re here to help! If you need assistance with media outreach or drafting an op-ed or media advisory, contact Brooke Glisson, NADCP associate director of communications, at bglisson@allrise.org.
For Immediate Release
Contact:
[Your name]
[Your title]
[Your phone number and email address]

[Your treatment court] to Celebrate National Drug Court Month with special graduation ceremony
[Name] Will Deliver Keynote Address

[[CITY, STATE, DATE]–]In celebration of National Drug Court Month, the [treatment court] will hold a [graduation ceremony/event] on [date] at [location]. [Name (judge, member of Congress, etc.)] will deliver the keynote address. The event will recognize [#] individuals whose lives have been transformed by the treatment and support provided by the program. Media is invited to attend. To RSVP please contact [contact information].

What: National Drug Court Month Celebration
When: [Date, time]
Where: [Location]
Why: Treatment courts across the nation are holding special events to celebrate National Drug Court Month. Drug courts and other treatment courts are considered the most effective strategy for reducing addiction, crime and recidivism while saving taxpayer dollars.

With their friends and families in attendance, this graduation will honor men and women who have completed an intensive program of comprehensive substance use disorder treatment, close supervision and accountability.

[If you have information on a few graduates willing to share their story, include 3-5 sentences on each here.]

National Drug Court Month is coordinated by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP). This year marks the 30th anniversary of treatment courts. In recognition, treatment courts throughout the nation are advocating to ensure continued federal and state funding for these effective, evidence-based programs. Our uplifting graduation is evidence of the tremendous impact the [your treatment court] has had on our community and will send a powerful message that these programs are vital to the health and well-being of our state.

There are more than 3,000 treatment courts in the United States annually serving 150,000 people. Since 1989, treatment courts have served 1.5 million people and saved billions of tax dollars. Learn more at NADCP.org.

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National Drug Court Month Toolkit
SAMPLE OP-ED

Celebrating National Drug Court Month

A courtroom is not a place where you expect to find scenes of celebration and tears of joy. Unless, of course, it’s drug court. This May, drug courts throughout [state] will join more than 3,000 such programs nationwide in celebrating National Drug Court Month. This year alone, more than 150,000 individuals nationwide who entered the justice system due to addiction will receive lifesaving treatment and the chance to repair their lives, reconnect with their families and find long-term recovery. National Drug Court Month is a celebration of the lives restored by drug court, and it sends the powerful message that these programs must be expanded to reach more people in need.

Nearly 30 years ago, the first drug court opened its doors with a simple premise: Rather than continue to allow individuals with long histories of addiction and crime to cycle through the justice system at great expense to the public, use the leverage of the court to keep them engaged in treatment long enough to be successful. Today, drug courts and other treatment courts have proven that a combination of accountability and compassion saves lives while also saving valuable resources and reducing exorbitant criminal justice costs.

[Insert a brief graduate success story. Example: Several years ago, a young woman entered our treatment court. After years of struggling with a substance use disorder, she resorted to stealing to support her addiction. She was arrested numerous times, but nothing changed. She was facing years in prison when she got the chance to participate in our treatment court. In treatment court, she met regularly with a case manager and received rigorous treatment and counseling. With the help of the court team, including community-based treatment providers, she began to put her life back together. While in the program, we helped her enroll in college and find part-time work. She completed the treatment court program and went on to get her bachelor’s degree and reconnect with her family. Today, she has no criminal record holding her back. She is happy, healthy, employed and contributing to our community.]

This is just one of the thousands of individual stories that demonstrate why treatment courts are so critical in the effort to address addiction and related crime. And the scientific research agrees: Numerous studies have found that treatment courts reduce crime and drug use and save money. Research shows treatment courts also improve education, employment, housing, financial stability and family reunification, which reduces foster care placements.

Treatment courts represent a compassionate approach to the ravages of addiction. This year’s National Drug Court Month celebration should signal that the time has come to reap the economic and societal benefits of expanding this proven budget solution to all in need.
SAMPLE PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS this year marks the 30th anniversary of treatment courts; and
WHEREAS there are now more than 3,000 treatment courts nationwide; and
WHEREAS treatment courts are the cornerstone of justice reform sweeping the nation; and
WHEREAS treatment courts have served 1.5 million individuals; and
WHEREAS they are now recognized as the most successful justice system intervention in our nation’s history; and
WHEREAS they save an average of $6,000 for every individual they serve; and
WHEREAS treatment courts significantly improve substance use disorder treatment outcomes, substantially reduce addiction and related crime, and do so at less expense than any other criminal justice strategy; and
WHEREAS treatment courts improve education, employment, housing and financial stability, promote family reunification, reduce foster care placements and increase the rate of addicted mothers delivering babies who are fully drug free; and
WHEREAS treatment courts facilitate community-wide partnerships, bringing together public safety and public health professionals; and
WHEREAS treatment courts demonstrate that when one person rises out of substance use and crime, we all rise.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that __________________ declares that Drug Court Month be established during the month of May.
HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Social media is one of the best ways to make your court program visible to the community it serves. Done right, social media is an indispensable tool to promote your impact, engage elected officials, broaden support, strategically connect with partner agencies and make your voices heard.

FOUR WAYS TO MAKE SOCIAL MEDIA WORK FOR YOU:

1. **USE WHAT’S ALREADY IN PLACE**

   If your state supreme court, judicial district or circuit have social media accounts, reach out to the individuals responsible for them and ask them to help you promote National Drug Court Month by sharing your program’s positive news, events and success stories.

2. **GET THE ATTENTION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS**

   Most elected officials and all members of Congress have social media accounts. Click here to get your members’ social media information, and don’t forget to thank them publicly for their support, especially if they attend your event.

3. **TAP INTO NADCP’S VAST RESOURCES**

   Use the samples provided to generate content, and follow our All Rise and Justice For Vets Facebook pages and All Rise and Justice For Vets Twitter accounts for content you can easily share and retweet. Our YouTube channel also has our powerful Voices of Reform video series, celebrity PSAs, conference clips, media compilation videos and much more.

4. **LET US HELP YOU**

   Tag us on Facebook or Twitter so that we can like, share or retweet your content. And send us your photos, videos and media coverage so that we can promote what you’re doing.

Remember that posts on social media (including text, photos and videos) are public content. Put a system in place to ensure that content posted or shared is factual, appropriate and in accordance with the principles and responsibilities of your court and the U.S. judicial system.
SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

We’re celebrating the lifesaving work of veterans treatment courts across the U.S. the entire month of May. Most veterans return home strengthened by their service. But for those who struggle with the transition, the [veterans treatment court] provides accountability, treatment and mentoring by other veterans to help get their lives back on track.

We’re celebrating the lifesaving work of DWI courts across the country the entire month of May. Every day, DWI courts keep our roads and communities safer while providing accountability and treatment to help repeat impaired drivers get back on track.

This National Drug Court Month, [treatment court] joins more than 3,000 treatment courts across the country to celebrate 30 years of leading people out of the justice system and into long-term recovery!

It’s National Drug Court Month! The [treatment court] is saving lives and reducing crime by offering evidence-based treatment and accountability to people struggling with substance use and mental health disorders.

We know that [jurisdiction] has been hit hard by the opioid epidemic. We can’t incarcerate our way out of this problem. That’s why the [treatment court] is so critical. We provide intense supervision and treatment to lead people out of the justice system and into long-term recovery.
SAMPLE TWEETS

We can’t arrest our way out of the opioid epidemic. Treatment courts provide evidence-based treatment to lead people out of the justice system and provide hope and healing through recovery. Celebrating National #DrugCourtMonth all month long!

#Veterans treatment courts save lives. As part of National #DrugCourtMonth, we’re celebrating serving those who've served us. #Justice4Vets

DWI courts make our streets safer and are working to end impaired driving by addressing the root of the problem: addiction. May is National #DrugCourtMonth, and we’re celebrating lives and families saved through recovery!

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This National #DrugCourtMonth, [treatment court] joins more than 3,000 treatment courts across the U.S. to celebrate 30 years of leading people out of the justice system and into long-term recovery!

It’s National #DrugCourtMonth! Thank you @[member of Congress] for supporting treatment courts that save lives, reduce crime and save taxpayer dollars.

May is National #DrugCourtMonth: All month long, we're celebrating leading people out of the justice system and into long-term recovery through effective treatment courts!

May is National #DrugCourtMonth! More than 3,000 treatment courts across the country are breaking the cycle of addiction and crime, providing hope and healing through recovery to people with substance use disorders.
OTHER WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Want your program to get noticed? The sky’s the limit on ways you can promote National Drug Court Month and the treatment court serving your community. Below are a few ideas to get you started.

**Recovery walk, run or bike ride:** This is a fun community event that can easily become an annual tradition and fundraising opportunity.

**Sports competition:** Host a softball game, basketball tournament, or other team sport event that pits program participants and alumni against court staff and/or law enforcement. Consider making it an annual tradition; make team shirts or award trophies.

**Community picnic:** Invite the public to join treatment court staff, participants, program alumni and family members at a picnic. Offer free food and children’s activities, and take a few minutes to discuss your program’s role in and value to the community.

**Community cleanup project:** Invite your community to join treatment court staff, participants, program alumni and family members cleaning up a local park, roadway or school grounds.

**Donation drive:** Choose a local food bank or charity and hold a donation drive for the month of May. Use this opportunity to connect with local business owners and garner support for your court program.

**School assembly:** Outreach to local schools is a great way for your court alumni and participants to give back to the community and spread a positive message to local youth.

Remember to invite elected officials and the media to these events, and send us photos, videos and news coverage of your events.
HOW TO CHECK ALL THE BOXES

Want to make sure you’ve got everything covered in preparation for May? Use this checklist to help with planning, advertising and engaging your community during the month’s events.

☐ Schedule your court’s next graduation ceremony during the month of May.

☐ Schedule other National Drug Court Month events to engage your community stakeholders. Click here for ideas.

☐ Invite your elected officials to your graduation ceremony or other event(s).

☐ If your member of Congress or governor plans to attend, notify NADCP via public affairs associate Greg Loeffler at gloeffler@allrise.org.

☐ Send a media advisory to your list of targeted media outlets 5-10 days before each event you hold.

☐ Prepare and submit an op-ed to your list of targeted print media outlets.

☐ Prepare a proclamation for your state and local leaders.

☐ Print the latest national treatment court fact sheets and/or fact sheets about your court program to hand to elected officials and media that attend your graduation ceremony or other event(s).

☐ Send NADCP your stories, news media clips and event photos and/or videos so that we can share your accomplishments with others!

☐ Send news media clips to your elected officials, and include a thank-you letter if they attended your graduation ceremony or other event(s).
Drug courts are the single most successful criminal justice intervention for seriously addicted offenders. Proven to save lives, save money, and reduce crime, these courts:

- Treat substance use disorders
- Treat mental health needs
- Deliver services for lifelong recovery
- Secure education, employment, and housing
- Produce tax-paying, productive citizens
- Break the cycle of addiction in families
- Reduce re-arrests and re-incarcerations
- Reduce substance use and overdose
- Reduce emergency room admissions
- Reduce foster care placements

Learn more: AllRise.org
CHAPTER 6

THE NATIONAL FACTS

NCDC NATIONAL CENTER FOR DWI COURTS

Top DWI courts reduce recidivism by 60%4

2+ million drivers in the US with 3 or more DWI convictions3

$3.19 saved for every $1 invested in DWI courts6

726 DWI courts in the US5

The estimated cost of alcohol-impaired crashes in the US in 2010 was $44 billion1

10,874 alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in 20172

IMPAIRED DRIVING EPIDEMIC

There is a disturbing upward trend in the number of annual impaired-driving-related fatalities due to repeat driving while intoxicated (DWI) offenders and drivers with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .15 or higher. However, the criminal justice system’s traditional response of incarceration and other punishment does not deter these offenders because it does not address the root cause of the problem: addiction.

DWI court participants are 19 times less likely to reoffend7 DWI courts are changing the criminal justice system’s approach to impaired driving:

- Provide intense supervision
- Provide individualized, long-term treatment
- Change participants’ thinking and behavior
- Demand accountability
- Save taxpayers’ money
- Improve public safety

Learn more: DWICourts.org

2 Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) (2009). New Data Shows Disturbing Number of Repeat Drunk Drivers on America’s Roadways.
The majority of our veterans return home strengthened by their military service, but many struggle with trauma, mental illness (such as PTSD), and substance use disorders. These issues can be exacerbated by the loss of structure and camaraderie found in the military. Veterans treatment courts (VTCs) provide treatment, accountability, and mentoring, and they help connect justice-involved veterans with the benefits they’ve earned. VTCs save the lives, families, and futures of our veterans while also saving taxpayer dollars.

The most recent study, published by the *Community Mental Health Journal*, found that *veterans who participate in veterans treatment courts experience significant improvement* in:

- Depression
- PTSD
- Substance use
- Mental and emotional health
- Housing
- Relationships and social connection
- Overall functioning and well-being

![Benefit Statistics](image_url)

**Benefits**

- **they've earned**
- **Support**

**they deserve**

- 15,000 currently served by veterans treatment courts
- 5,700 volunteer veteran mentors in VTCs
- 354 VTCs in the US
- 460,000 Iraq/Afghanistan veterans suffer from PTSD or depression
- 345,000 Iraq/Afghanistan veterans have a substance use disorder
- 181,500 incarcerated veterans in the US
- 15,000 currently served by veterans treatment courts
- 5,700 volunteer veteran mentors in VTCs

Learn more: JusticeForVets.org

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