

House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government  
Outside Witness Testimony  
Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations

**Statement of Abby Frutchey**

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on behalf of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals  
May 21, 2021

Chairman Quigley, Ranking Member Womack, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am Abby Frutchey, substance use response coordinator at the Caring Community Collaborative in East Machias, Maine. I am honored to have the opportunity to submit my testimony on behalf of 40,000 treatment court professionals working in adult drug courts, family treatment courts, juvenile drug treatment courts, tribal healing to wellness courts, DWI courts, and veterans treatment courts. These lifesaving treatment court programs serve more than 150,000 people across the United States each year. **I am requesting the Congress provide level funding of \$3 million to the authorized Drug Court Training and Technical Assistance Program (Pub. L. 115-271) at the Office of National Drug Control Policy for fiscal year 2022.**

As an alternative to incarceration, treatment courts connect people in the justice system with individualized, evidence-based treatment and recovery support services. Key to ensuring fidelity to the successful treatment court model is continued education and training for the full multidisciplinary team, which includes the judge, treatment providers, defense attorney, prosecutor, law enforcement, community supervision, and others. In fact, research shows treatment courts whose full multidisciplinary team participates in training see a 55 percent

reduction in recidivism among its graduates. Treatment court programs must follow a robust national model shaped by more than 30 years of empirical research in order to achieve these successes.

In my role as a substance use response coordinator, I work closely with treatment court programs throughout Maine and see firsthand the role training and technical assistance plays in ensuring fidelity to the model. For example, training on medicated-assisted treatment has helped many programs improve their service delivery model.

I do not only attest to the importance of training in my professional capacity, but my personal capacity as well. In 2006, I completed the Washington County Adult Drug Court program in Machias, Maine. I began experimenting with substances at the age of 12, and by 17, I was selling drugs to support my addiction. Like so many, my struggle was generational. I saw the devastating toll alcohol took on my father, but it wasn't enough to keep me from using. Even an unexpected pregnancy couldn't curb my use. I was arrested for the first time while holding my infant son, and the shame and trauma of that moment would haunt me for years. It also marked the beginning of a vicious cycle of arrest, punishment, and resumed use. When I was arrested for what would be the last time, I had lost all hope for my future. I was ready to give up. But this time was different because I was offered treatment court. This time, when I came before a judge, he looked at me with compassion. He told me he and the team wanted to help me. There were rules I would have to follow, but the team would be with me every step of the way. I remember thinking that the judge and his team must have seen something in me I could not see in myself. They saw a future for me and were going to help me achieve it.

Early in the program, I began to believe I could change. The multidisciplinary treatment court team was highly functional and well trained, so they knew how to respond to every bump

in the road and how to work in concert with each other to ensure I had the support and accountability I needed to begin my life in recovery. While in the program, an individualized treatment plan was developed for me by the treatment providers; the court team ensured there was structure, accountability, and access to the services I needed; and the common goal of recovery and a life outside the justice system remained their focus.

The Washington County Adult Drug Court strives for fidelity to the model, and training is a critical component of its success. It's because of the program and its evidence-based methodology that today I am a mother to my children and use my experience to help others overcome their own hardships. In 2014, knowing just how effective treatment courts are, the governor of Maine awarded me a full pardon. In short, the program's commitment to the model and our community allows me to live my life today free of a criminal record. My story is not the only one—the evidence showing the effectiveness of these programs is clear. The Government Accountability Office finds the treatment court model reduces crime by up to 58 percent. Further, the Department of Justice Multi-Site Adult Drug Court Evaluation, the largest and most comprehensive multi-site evaluation of treatment courts ever conducted, confirmed treatment courts significantly reduce both drug use and crime, and found cost savings averaging \$6,000 for every individual served. Additional benefits include improved employment, housing, financial stability, and reduced foster care placements.

Finally, I am also honored to sit on the board of directors for the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), where I see the importance of training and technical assistance from a national perspective. The organization's *Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards*, released in two volumes in 2013 and 2015, bring together more than a quarter-century of empirical study on the addiction, pharmacology, behavioral health, and legal components that compose successful treatment court programs. Programs that adhere to NADCP's standards can

expect significantly greater positive outcomes for their participants and program. Treatment courts across the country are benefitting from training based on these groundbreaking standards.

Now, more than ever before, education and training for treatment courts is critical to ensure they have the best possible outcomes and can expand to meet a growing demand. For example, training provided through federal funds on issues such as medication-assisted treatment, overdose prevention, and ensuring racial and ethnic equity and inclusion are critical to all treatment court programs as they look to address the fallout their communities are facing from these crises.

Drug court training and technical assistance funding at the Office of National Drug Control Policy ensures treatment courts across the country can continue providing quality, evidence-based care to participants struggling with a mental health and substance use disorders. I encourage this committee to provide level funding of \$3 million for the Drug Court Training and Technical Assistance Program at the Office of National Drug Control Policy. There is no better example than treatment courts for proven programs that guarantee financial returns and measurable success.