Analysis of Court Filings for Drug Court for Subgroups

NW HIDTA/DASA Drug Court Evaluation
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Issue

Court filings are significant points in the justice system process, indicating that a Prosecutor feels that sufficient evidence of a crime exists to justify prosecution. As such, a filing is a step more serious than an arrest, and is another indicator of involvement with criminal justice. It is therefore the type of event the occurrence of which would be reduced by a successful drug court intervention.

Method.

Data for this analysis come originally from the Office of the Administrator (OAC) for the Courts, by way of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP). WSIPP receives data from OAC, does some matching and processing, and uses the data for their own policy oriented analyses. Data used in this analysis are the records of all filings for felonies and misdemeanors in Superior Courts statewide.

Drug Court Outcome Groups. Subjects are grouped as follows: **Ineligibles** are persons who passed an initial legal screen and were referred to the court, but on closer examination were found to be ineligible on either legal or clinical grounds. **Opt Outs** are persons who met all criteria, and were offered entry to the court, but who personally declined to participate. **Graduates** are individuals who graduated from a drug court. **Did Not Finish** (DNF) are individuals who had been admitted to a drug court program and either failed or dropped out. **Active** cases are those still involved with the drug court program.

Attached are graphs showing the mean number of filings per offender in each outcome group, for each of three years before referral to drug court, and each of three years after referral to drug court. For most Graduates the first year and some part of the second year post referral is spent in the drug court program. Separate graphs are presented for felony plus misdemeanor, felony only, and misdemeanor only filings, but the discussion will focus on the felony only results.

Results.

Felony filings are more common than misdemeanor filings in this data set. We will focus on results from the felony filings. Misdemeanor filings results are similar, but less pronounced because of the overall lower rates.

- The graphical results:

  - The Graduate groups have low pre-referral filing rates, sometimes the lowest among the groups (e.g., in King and Pierce), and low or the lowest (King, Pierce and Spokane) rates after referral. The post-referral rates are lower than the pre-referral rates.

- Except in Spokane, nearly all groups in all counties show a decline in filings in the first year post-referral relative to the first year pre-referral. In Spokane all groups show an increase in the first year post. This is probably because in Spokane the filings that led to the drug court referral routinely appear to be dated after the referral, so they appear to occur in the first year post referral rather than the first year pre.

- The Active group tends to follow the Graduate curve, except with a little higher rate of filing in the post-referral period. There is variability across counties in this.

- The Ineligible, Opt Out and DNF groups are not uniformly highest in the pre-referral period, but generally have the highest filing rate in the post-referral period. Which of these group has the highest filing rate varies across counties.

- The statistical analysis:

  - Only Pierce County shows an overall statistically significant difference among mean number of filings for the drug court outcome groups. In none of the other counties do the groups show statistically significant differences.

  - In Pierce County, the outcome groups cluster into two sets. The Graduate, Active and DNF groups are similar to each other (and are not significantly different from each other), are significantly different from the Opt Out and Ineligible groups (which in turn are not different from each other), and show more decline in filings (more improvement) than the Opt Out/Ineligible set.

King County, All Crimes

King County, Felonies

King County, Misdemeanors

Pierce County, All Crimes

Filings per Drug Court Client per Year

Legend: Active, Did Not Finish, Graduated, Ineligible, Opted out

X-axis: -2 to -1, -1 to start, start to +1, +1 to +2, +2 to +3

Pierce County, Felonies

Filings per Drug Court Client per Year

Legend: Active, Did Not Finish, Graduated, Ineligible, Opted out

X-axis: -2 to -1, -1 to start, start to +1, +1 to +2, +2 to +3

Pierce County, Misdemeanors

Filings per Drug Court Client per Year

Legend: Active, Did Not Finish, Graduated, Ineligible, Opted out

X-axis: -2 to -1, -1 to start, start to +1, +1 to +2, +2 to +3

Spokane County, All Crimes

Spokane County, Felonies

Spokane County, Misdemeanors

Thurston County, All Crimes

Thurston County, Felonies

Thurston County, Misdemeanors

Skagit County, All Crimes

Skagit County, Felonies

Skagit County, Misdemeanors

Kitsap County, All Crimes

Kitsap County, Felonies

Kitsap County, Misdemeanors