

Drug Treatment Courts

Canada's Drug Strategy is the federal response to the harmful use of substances. These include illegal drugs, alcohol, pharmaceuticals, inhalants and solvents. The Strategy takes a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for, and the supply of, drugs and substances. It contributes to a healthier, safer Canada through prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction initiatives.

Drug Treatment Courts

Canada's Drug Strategy seeks to ensure that Canadians can live in a society increasingly free of the harms associated with substance abuse. Among the most worrisome of these harms are the crimes committed by people seeking to support their drug dependency. The individuals may be incarcerated but, upon their release, too often return to substance abuse and the criminal behaviour needed to support their addiction. By emphasizing treatment over incarceration for certain drug-involved offenders, drug treatment courts address the root causes of this type of crime, and help to break the cycle.

Drug treatment courts aim to help eligible non-violent offenders deal with their addiction and improve their social stability. These special courts take a comprehensive approach to drug-addicted offenders, combining judicial supervision with frequent drug testing, substance abuse treatment, clinical case management, and social services support. Drug treatment court staff also work with community partners to address participants other needs, such as safe housing, stable employment and job training.

Two drug treatment courts are already in operation in Canada, in Toronto and Vancouver. They were established as pilot demonstration projects. By helping eligible offenders overcome their addictions and improve their social stability, the program helps to reduce the criminal behavior associated with substance abuse.

As part of the renewal of Canada's Drug Strategy in May 2003, the Government of Canada committed to expanding the use of drug treatment courts in Canada in order to promote and strengthen the use of alternatives to incarceration, with a particular focus on youth, Aboriginal men and women and street prostitutes. Under the Drug Treatment Court Funding Program, the federal government will contribute funding for four new courts located in Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg and Ottawa. Partnerships at the provincial and local levels are essential to ensuring adequate funding and the ultimate success of drug treatment courts in achieving their objectives.

One of the objectives of the DTC Funding Program is to collect information and data on the effectiveness of drug treatment courts in order to promote best practices and the continuing refinement of approaches. By carefully monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the new courts in reducing the harms associated with substance abuse and enhancing community safety, the Drug Treatment Court Funding Program will also contribute to the ongoing refinement of alternatives to incarceration for drug-dependent offenders. Canada's success and expertise with Drug Treatment Courts has been internationally recognized. A team from the Toronto Drug Treatment Court has assisted Caribbean countries in setting up their system.

More information on Drug Treatment Courts is available at <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/pb/prog/dtc/>

To learn more about Canada's Drug Strategy, please visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds

Find out what governments, non-governmental organizations, and other partners are doing – National Framework for Action – Visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds-nfa

