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Milwaukee County Family Drug Treatment Court draws national support

Milwaukee, Wis. (March 3, 2017) – A growing and successful Milwaukee County court program is being recognized nationally as a model for its family-centered, team approach to the handling of child abuse or neglect cases in which parental substance abuse is a contributing factor.

The Milwaukee County Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTC) program is one of just four family drug treatment courts nationwide to be awarded a \$300,000 [Prevention and Family Recovery](#) (PFR) grant by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Duke Endowment.

The funds, to be disbursed over three years, will be used to enhance the Milwaukee County FDTC by improving the availability of appropriate therapeutic interventions for children in need of protection due to parental substance abuse.

The grant includes technical support provided by [Children and Family Futures](#), a California-based not-for-profit organization that specializes in implementing and evaluating innovative human service programs and policies.

Family drug treatment courts are designed to help break the cycle of substance use through treatment and support services with the ultimate goal of protecting children and creating more stable home environments.

“This grant recognizes the progress that the Milwaukee County Family Drug Treatment Court has made in providing a trauma-informed court setting that integrates evidence-based services and cross systems collaborations,” said Chief Judge Maxine A. White, Milwaukee County Circuit Court. “It also reinforces our confidence in the capacity of our vulnerable families to rebuild in the face of overwhelming odds, when we provide supportive judicial leadership,” White added.

Statistics gathered by the Milwaukee County FDTC program during its first five years in operation demonstrate success. Children in the FDTC are 2.5 times more likely to be reunified with their parents and are nearly 50 percent less likely to continue in out-of-home care after a year as compared to children of substance using parents in a traditional court setting.

Deputy Chief Judge Mary Triggiano, Milwaukee County Circuit Court, presides over the Milwaukee County FDTC. Other team members include representatives from the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services, the Milwaukee County District Attorney’s office, private

bar attorneys representing parents, and Guardians ad Litem, as well as substance abuse treatment specialists.

In addition to directly helping participants, the program has created unexpected benefits in how different parts of the justice system relate to each other. The result has been more consistent, honest and open communication among key stakeholders.

“This is all rooted in a shared commitment to doing things differently and better,” Triggiano said.

The Milwaukee County FDTC, which opened its doors on Oct. 1, 2011, was the first of its kind in Wisconsin. It serves as a model for family drug treatment courts developing across the state. Initially, Milwaukee County’s FDTC was projected to serve 94 parents over the course of three years. The program has far exceeded its goal, having served more than 265 parents, with an average of about 50 active participants.

Statewide, Wisconsin judges are involved in operating more than 70 problem-solving courts, most aimed addressing adult drug and alcohol abuse that may contribute toward criminal behavior.

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