

Project Abstract: Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners

Pinellas County Human Services | 440 Court Street, 2nd floor, Clearwater, FL 33756
PinellasCounty.org | Grant #: .BJA-2016-9197

Project Title: Courage to Change
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Federal Funding Requested: \$100,000/per year for 3 years (BJA))

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is seeking applications to establish or enhance drug court services, coordination, offender management, and recovery support services. Applications are due April 19th and the Sixth Judicial Circuit is working closely with its partners Solutions Behavioral Health Consultants and USF's Florida Mental Health Institute to prepare the proposal.

The Pinellas County Adult Drug Court has been operating since January 2001. The cooperative effort of a team approach is a hallmark of the Sixth Judicial Circuit Adult Drug Court (ADC). The ADC is a court-supervised, comprehensive treatment court for non-violent felony defendants who have drug-related charges. This is a voluntary program that involves frequent appearances before the ADC judge, substance abuse and/or mental health treatment and frequent, random testing for substance abuse as applicable. It is a treatment-based approach with various treatment options. Successful completion of the ADC plan will result in the dismissal of charges against defendants entering the program through Pre-Trial Intervention (defendants facing a first-time, non-violent, third-degree felony and admitted at the sole discretion of the State Attorney). For defendants entering the ADC as a condition of probation (post-plea), successful completion may result in adjudication being withheld and/or a reduced length of probation. All participants are required to make frequent court appearances. Participants will appear before the ADC judge every 30 to 45 days. ADC is an 18 to 24 month program. Persons who have completed treatment and remain drug free and complete all of their Pre-Trial Intervention or probation requirements may petition the court for early termination.

Need: In 2015 the Pinellas ADC graduated 280 clients, or 62 percent of all exits. The ADC also has a four-year retention rate of 73 percent. However, despite these promising numbers, we are seeing a trend of many drug court clients failing drug court even after a significant time spent in drug court and also after successfully completing a course of drug court ordered treatment. In 2015 29 percent of all unsuccessful exits occurred 7 – 12 months into their drug court participation. And a full 47 percent (86) exited later – 17 percent between 13 and 18 months of participation and 30 percent (54) after more than 18 months of participation. This shows an ongoing effort to address underlying substance abuse while still resulting in failure. Often this occurs because the participants have not fully addressed their underlying criminological thinking and thus fall back into old patterns after successfully completing treatment. Most of these exits occur as a result of a new charge, a violation of probation or through voluntary withdrawal. This proposal seeks to increase the successful completion of these clients through new programming and intervention designed to address these issues as soon as they begin demonstrating problematic behaviors after their initial treatment regimen but while still in drug court and working on full recovery.

Population: The population of focus for the proposed project is adult clients of all ages, races and ethnicity who have demonstrated behavioral difficulties through various violations of drug court rules following a regimen of substance abuse treatment. We anticipate serving 110 clients under the grant.

Project Summary: Pinellas County has partnered with the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court, Solutions Behavioral Healthcare Consultants, and USF's Florida Mental Health Institute to enhance the Pinellas County Adult Drug Court (ADC) The project proposes an expansion an enhancement of the current Pinellas ADC model in an effort to successfully complete more of its participants, raising the graduation rate by 10-15 percent. The new model for the Pinellas ADC adds *The Courage to Change*

Interactive Journaling System for use by Solutions Behavioral Health Consultants to better address criminological thinking by drug court participants in danger of failing drug court after completing the initial intensive period of substance abuse treatment. Interactive Journaling, which is included in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, is a structured and experiential writing process that motivates and guides participants toward positive life change. *The Courage to Change* was developed in a collaboration between the United States Probation Offices in the Districts of Hawaii and Nevada and The Change Companies©. The project would use a criminological risk tool to assign drug court participants with a moderate to high risk of continued criminological thinking into one of or more of the Courage to Change journaling programs addressing what they call the "Big Six" Criminogenic Need Areas – Antisocial Values, Criminal Personality, Low Self-control, Criminal Peers, Dysfunctional Family Ties, and Substance Use. Each class takes six to eight weeks to complete, and it is anticipated that each Pinellas drug court client would be assigned to about 16 weeks of *The Courage To Change* classes.
