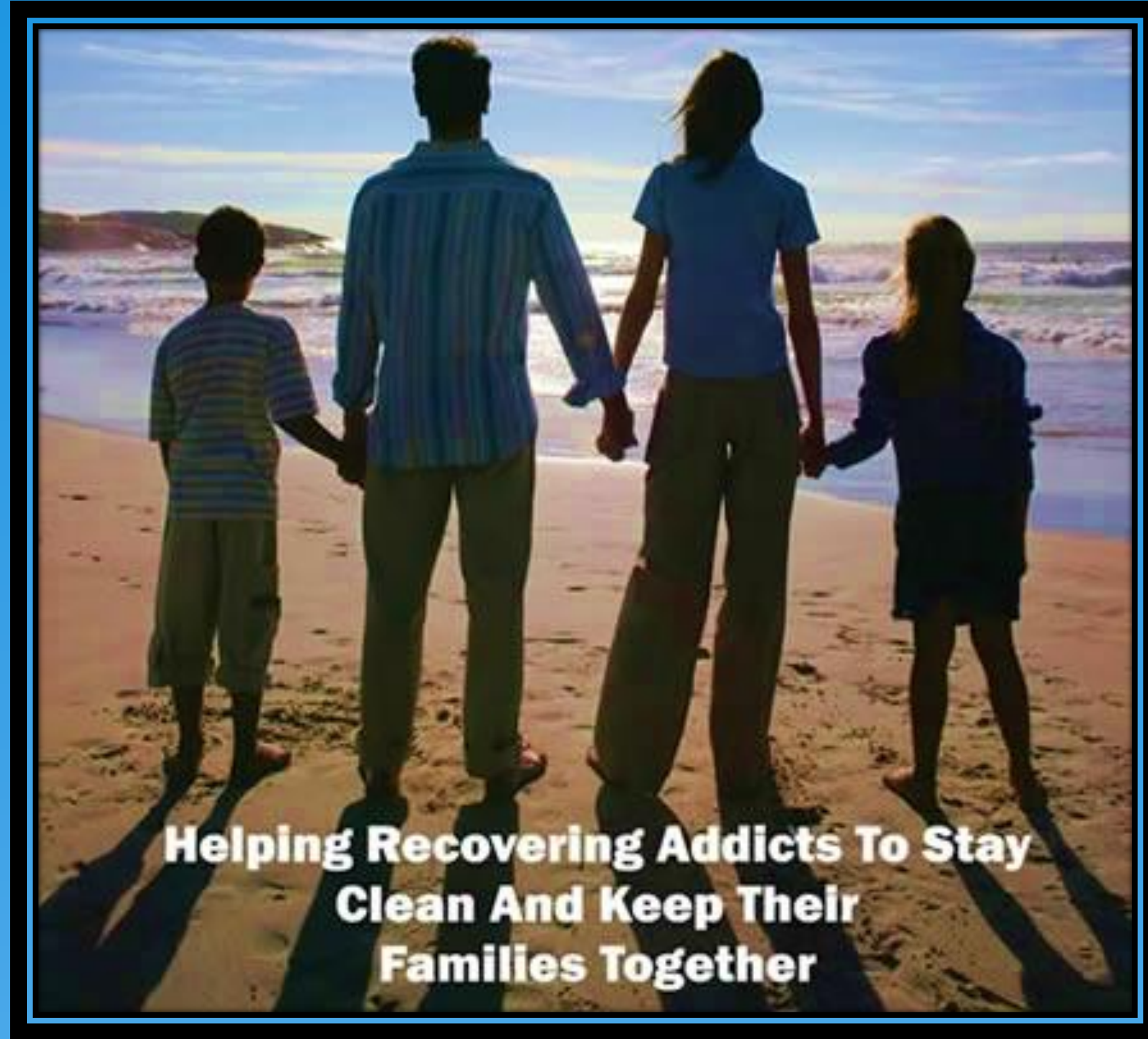


How Drug Court Benefits Offenders and Society



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"After the individual is accepted into the program, they will learn to live a very structured life, something many of the offenders have never experienced."

"By Keeping people in their community, they learn to become productive members of society and often times give back to the community they reside in."

Results

Interview Questions and Themes Derived from Interviews

Questions	Themes
What does the offender gain from attending drug court?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased jail sentence (DJS) New lifestyle (NEL) Offender support (OFS) Skills classes (SKC)
What does society gain by offering drug court program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Societal debts (SOD) Client debts (CLD) Community adaptations (COA)
What motivates clients to comply with the rules of drug court?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased jail (DEJ) Goal achievement (GOA) Client consequences (CLC)
What rewards are offered to clients for compliance with drug court regulations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive reinforcements (POR) Incentive-sanction ratio (ISR) Program advancement (PAD)
In what ways are offenders held accountable for their actions in drug court?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards/rules (STR) Client sanctions (CLS)
Why is drug court more effective for some people compared to others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted population (TAP)
What role does strict supervision play in an individual's success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drug court team (DCT) Drug testing (DRT) Offender sanctions (OSA)
What specifically do offenders need to do to avoid recidivist behavior?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support meetings (SUM) Low recidivism (LOR)
What kind of aftercare plan is suggested to graduating drug court clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings and sponsor (MAS) Graduate group (GRG)
Is there anything else you would like us to know? If so, please add your comments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open to public (OTP)

Demographic Characteristics of Participant

Gender	Female
Age	Did not identify
What is your job title?	Drug court coordinator
How long have you been working in the drug court?	7 years
Approximately how many clients have you worked with over the years?	70

Literature Review

Brown (2011) found that drug courts were more effective than other forms of judiciary discipline and decreased rates of recidivism.

Patra et al. (2010) found that personal, social, and economic conditions all play a role in influencing a person to misuse drugs. Although some participants had high intrinsic motivation to stay out of jail, which increased success, this study suggested that the drug courts should also have more extrinsic ways of motivating participants.

Lindquist, Krebs, Warner, & Lattimore (2009) found that drug courts provide more strict supervision, which enhances the likeliness of success for participants.

Wolfer and Roberts (2008) found that motivation to stay out of jail, positive relations with court officials, and corrective action all played a role in the success of participants.

Hartman, Listwan, & Shaffer (2007) attempted to compare the differences in the effectiveness of a community based drug court program between male and female methamphetamine users. Comparing gender, women were more likely to be successful than their male counterparts on numerous outcome measures.

Methods

Qualitative Email Interview (Meho, 2006)

Participant Sampling Types: Purposive and Snowball

Research Design: Phenomenology (Patton, 2002)

Data Analysis Plan: Thematic Analysis (Kvale, 1996)

Implications

For practitioners: In order to ensure that drug courts continue to benefit offenders and society, they should have high standards and rules that clients agree to abide by. Random drug tests should be administered to guarantee client compliance. There should also be a 4:1 ratio of incentives over sanctions for participants as this has been shown to increase motivation. Jail should be a last resort as a sanction, and only last for a maximum of 48 hours.

For Research: Mixed methods using a large random sample to be able to generalize and qualitative interviews with drug court participants as well as drug court supervisors for their unique perspectives..

Conclusions

This study gives the first-hand, rich lived experience of a drug court coordinator who talked of how drug court improves the lives of both offenders and society. Drug court gives offenders the guidelines and tools they need to reintegrate into society and change their lifestyle. *"Drug Court is often a program which assists people in achieving and overcoming obstacles they never thought possible, making the motivator Drug Court itself. Many people say that completing Drug Court is the first thing they don't give up on."*



Research Problem and Question

Problem: There are now thousands of drug courts existing within the United States alone (Brown, 2011). Because drug courts have been increasing so rapidly, it is important to understand how they benefit both offenders and society so that these programs may continue to grow.

Many studies previously conducted focused on whether or not drug courts lower the rates of drug-related crime (Wolfer & Roberts, 2008). These studies have shown that drug-related crime is lowered, but little focus is placed on the ways in which offenders and society are benefitted.

Question: How are drug courts beneficial to offenders and society?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was three-fold:

- 1.) to examine how drug courts are beneficial to offenders and society using the perspective of a drug court coordinator
- 2) to develop a reliable qualitative interview to collect data about the benefits provided from drug court
- 3) to increase awareness of how drug courts benefit both offenders and society, which will promote and improve drug courts

Theoretical Framework

The theory used to inform this study was Social Exchange Theory (Plunkett, 2012). Social Exchange Theory is based on the idea that individuals enter into, and maintain, relationships in which they can maximize the benefits of said relationship while minimizing the costs of the relationship.

As applied to our study, Social Exchange Theory would predict that in order to live a sober lifestyle, drug offenders will need to find exchanges in relationships that are more rewarding than the feelings they receive while using because people want to maximize their own personal rewards (Plunkett, 2012).