



## 2013 SYNC Review

### Treatment Court Program of Sweetwater County

**Coordinator:** Sandi Henderson

**Founded:** 2005

**SYNC Evaluation Date:** 11/13/14-11/14/13

**Total Clients Interviewed:** 2; 1 Male and 1 Female. One client was a graduate of the program and the other client was on Phase 4 of the program. The clients ranged in age from 20's to 30's that were interviewed.

**Other Interviews:** Court coordinator, police officer, treatment provider, probation officer, prosecuting attorney, and Judge Prokos.

#### **Court Information Summary:**

The Treatment Court Program of Sweetwater County (TCPSC) invests in community members of Rock Springs and Green River to deliver coordinated services for substance abuse recovery through treatment and supervised probation. The staff of this treatment court shares a passion for improving the lives of individuals and creating a better community in which to live, which is evident by one staff's comment "it's how the law should work. The Treatment Court Program of Sweetwater County only directly employees one individual, the rest of the team members are all in-kind through their various places of employment. TCPSC is focusing on providing some new opportunities for graduates of the program. With the assistance of a recent graduate, the TCPSC is compiling an alumni group to help continued sobriety.

The TCPSC program is a minimum of 12 months consisting of four phases.

Phase I: Intensive supervision

Phase 2: Increased flexibility in participant schedules; complete IOP

Phase 3: Weekly schedules are no longer a requirement and flexibility is increased

Phase 4: Preparation for graduation

If an individual has a violation, a sanction is imposed. The court exercises the right to institute a variety of sanction options to fit the violation. A variety of incentives are used as rewards for successes.

Average Participation in the TCPSC program: 23 clients

Recidivism Rate for FY 14 (to this point in the year): 0%

Retention Rate for FY 14 (to this point in the year): 100%

In the last 12 months 13 participants have graduated and 4 were terminated from the program

**Eligibility:**

In order to be eligible for the Treatment Court Program of Sweetwater County you must be a resident of Sweetwater County and intend to remain in the county for the duration of the program. Referrals are received through the treatment court coordinator who then meets with the county attorney. All participants must have a substance abuse evaluation. The evaluation determines the required amount and intensity of the program. Upon completion of the evaluation, treatment provider, probation and court coordinator meet to discuss acceptance. Since the program is voluntary, once an individual agrees to participate in the program, the judge provides the court orders for completion of the program. Currently the court has never accepted a repeat client. If there was a request to repeat the program it would be considered on an individual basis.

**Financials:**

Total operation budget is \$149,674.56. The TCPSC receives their matching funds from the County Commissioners and some funding is received from the Cities of Green River and Rock Springs.

**SYNC Review Areas:**

*Access to Services:*

- At times there is a hold up in court proceedings of felony convictions so there is a delay in service initiation.
- Clients sometimes felt it difficult to access services in the program because they occur in two different locations (court is in Green River and treatment is in Rock Springs). It is particularly difficult for those individuals who do not have their own transportation.
- Court staff facilitates locating outside resources for services so that clients can have access to all available programming in the area that represents their needs.
- The program Judge was temporarily covering for another judge, so his schedule was sometimes difficult to access for face-to-face issues. That issue will be cleared by end of December.

### *Quality of Services:*

- Clients were grateful for this program and saw it as an opportunity to change
- Clients felt that staff was supportive of them even if they made a mistake. Clients felt that sanctions held them accountable but staff remained supportive and helped the clients continue to move through the program.
- All staff assisted with locating resources
- Sweetwater County Treatment Court is establishing an alumni program to help support continued sobriety after completion of the program.
- The Judge takes the time to know the clients and address them with respect.
- Treatment supported life changes. The combination of supervision and treatment is the key to sustained recovery.

### *Coordination of Services:*

- A DFS representative participates in weekly staffing. This allows for support of clients who have children while in the program, even if there is not an open DFS case. This is a tremendous resource for families.
- Coordination of services is imperative since parts of the program are located in Rock Springs and some are located in Green River. This separation is not evident in service delivery.
- Local law enforcement participates in weekly staffing and supports the concept of treatment court.
- Clients are empowered to utilize their resource network upon graduation but they are also aware that they continue to remain eligible to utilized services through treatment court after graduation.
- Treatment court works with employers and educators to assist clients in achieving employment and/or GED or higher education. Clients are more prepared to reenter the community upon graduation

### *Strengths:*

- The structure of the court system allows individuals an opportunity to “step down” their recovery and take more ownership as they progress. This allows for reintegration into the community with support so that the transition is successful.
- Staff of the treatment court focuses on communication so that all team members know the client’s status regardless of the location of the team member
- The Judge is supportive of the treatment court system and in fact would like to see it grow. The Judge feels that jail alone does not work and stated “how do we exist without treatment court?”
- Local law enforcement is supportive of the program.

- There is a contracted position for UAs for male clients only which makes it easier for the court to conduct UAs on a regular schedule.
- All staff is knowledgeable of the community resources to assist success from the program.
- Creation of a treatment court alumni program to assist alumni in connecting with each other through community activities that are not related to drugs and alcohol. Previous alumni are already engaged and active in creating the group.
- Acknowledgement of days of sobriety during court proceedings.
- Treatment, probation and coordinator meet to discuss referrals and acceptance
- 100% of clients fees are returned to the program

*Concerns/Areas of Growth:*

- Funding formula makes it difficult to sustain the program and does not allow for expansion.
- Addressing the unique needs of the younger population (18-25) is a challenge in the adult treatment court system
- Transportation is difficult for participants especially since clients need to participate in two separate communities. There is public transportation between Green River and Rock Springs however the hours are limited and may lead to extended wait times. This can also make it difficult for participants to find employment if they do not have transportation.
- There is a lack of low income housing options in the communities, especially those with substance abuse convictions.
- Some community members/referral sources are opposed to treatment court
- Lack of understanding of treatment court in the community and/or a negative perception of what treatment court means to the community
- Lack of staffing capacity for day to day operations (one employee of treatment court) which makes it difficult to keep up with paperwork and case management for the clients
- There appears to be a lack of consistency among the treatment courts in Wyoming.
- Lack of resources due to funding which would make the program more effective, such as electronic monitors.

*Recommendations/Requests:*

- State to assess funding formula
- State to assist with evaluation of program expansion around the state
- State to provide additional trainings and/or opportunities to participate in more conference related to the treatment court system
- Continue to educate community partners about the benefits of treatment court
- Continue to investigate additional ideas for sanctions (create a greater variety)
- Sweetwater County would like to investigate the possibility of creating a juvenile treatment court as there is a lack of services/support for youth in the community.
- Sweetwater County would like to investigate the possibility of expanding its capacity to enroll more individuals.

- Evaluate other funding options to assist with program materials/expansion
- State to assess the possibility of creating some uniformity to the treatment programs for consistency

*Overall Impression:*

Treatment Court Program of Sweetwater County has a dedicated team who believes in supporting sobriety for their clients. Team members focus on locating resources to allow clients to set themselves up for success and create accountability. Clients realize that this process is “not easy” but worth the effort. Clients and staff are dedicating to making a difference in the community to create opportunities for alumni to view the community through a new lens by participating in drug and alcohol free activities. Sweetwater County focuses on quality while having a vision of program expansion to serve more individuals. One client sums up the importance of creating a supportive balance between probation and treatment that truly sets it apart from just a punitive approach is that “they want you to succeed”. Sweetwater County has a stable building block and hopefully will be able to expand their programming to meet the needs of their communities.