

House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government

Outside Witness Testimony  
Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations

**Statement of Hon. Neera Walsh  
Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County**

On behalf of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals  
May 27, 2022

Chairman Quigley, Ranking Member Womack, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to have the opportunity to submit my testimony on behalf of 40,000 treatment court professionals working in adult drug courts, family treatment courts, juvenile drug treatment courts, tribal healing to wellness courts, impaired-driving courts, and veterans treatment courts. These lifesaving treatment court programs serve more than 150,000 people across the United States each year. **I am requesting Congress provide level funding of \$3 million to the authorized Drug Court Training and Technical Assistance Program (Pub. L. 115-271) at the Office of National Drug Control Policy for fiscal year 2023.**

In Cook County, Illinois, treatment courts, like drug courts and veterans treatment courts, are on the front lines of saving lives, reuniting families, cutting crime, and saving money. Treatment courts unite public health and public safety to transform the justice system's response to substance use and mental health disorders by offering an evidence-based alternative to incarceration that combines treatment and accountability. Key to ensuring fidelity to the successful treatment court model is continued education and training for the multidisciplinary treatment court team, which includes the judge, treatment providers, defense, prosecution, law enforcement, community supervision, and others. In fact, research shows treatment courts whose teams participate in training see a 55% reduction in recidivism among program graduates.

Now more than ever, training and technical assistance are needed to educate treatment courts on critical issues such as medication for addiction treatment, overdose prevention, and equity and inclusion. Understanding and implementing best practices improves service delivery and outcomes and helps treatment courts address the most pressing issues facing our justice system.

I know firsthand the importance of training and technical assistance for treatment courts. I have the privilege of presiding over the Access to Community Treatment Court in Chicago, Illinois. I make sure my treatment court team takes part in regular training and technical assistance in order to meet the rigorous, evidence-based standards proven to increase positive outcomes. The training we receive at the local and national level proves critical to ensuring fidelity to the model and enables us to most effectively serve the unique needs of the participants in our program.

My team's ongoing training ensures we are prepared to respond to the unique needs of every participant. One graduate of our program, Angelique, came to the treatment court after decades of substance use disorder and homelessness. She began drinking at the age of nine to numb the pain caused by her childhood trauma and sexual abuse, and drinking quickly escalated into drug use. When she arrived in the program, she was lost and did not have the will to continue to live. Our training ensured we were prepared to identify and address her specific and complex needs with compassion, accountability, and a personalized treatment plan. Together, we addressed her mental health and substance use disorder needs and provided additional recovery support.

Today, Angelique has a strong relationship with her family, including all three of her children, and has a loving, trusting relationship with herself. She is now a peer support specialist helping people in similar circumstances as she was when she came to the treatment court program.

Angelique is just one of 1.5 million people who have found long-term recovery through treatment courts. Supporting training and technical assistance for treatment courts is critical to ensuring these programs continue providing quality, evidence-based care to participants struggling with mental health and substance use disorders. I encourage this committee to provide level funding of \$3 million for the Drug Court Training and Technical Assistance Program at the Office of National Drug Control Policy.