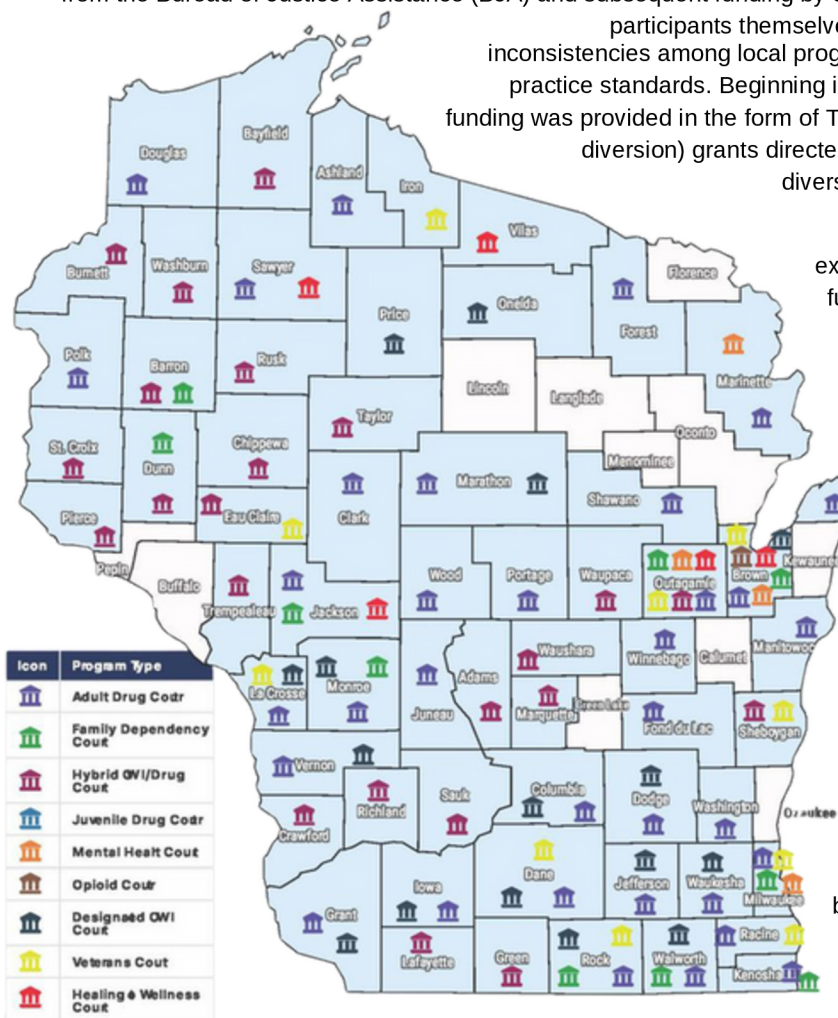




**WORKING  
BETTER,  
TOGETHER**

## Wisconsin's Treatment Court Evolution

In 1996, under the leadership of Judge Jack Aulik, Dane County started Wisconsin's first Adult Drug Treatment Court. Since then more than 105 treatment courts serving 61 of Wisconsin's 72 counties and five Tribal Nations are operating in Wisconsin. The first treatment courts historically developed locally, often without funding or oversight from a state coordinator or governing body. Many were the product of start-up or enhancement grants from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and subsequent funding by counties, donations or even the participants themselves. This sometimes resulted in inconsistencies among local programs and failure to adopt best practice standards. Beginning in 2005, \$1 million in statewide funding was provided in the form of TAD (treatment alternatives and diversion) grants directed at treatment courts and other diversion programs in nine counties.



Today, TAD Programming has expanded to \$10.4 million dollars funding 61 treatment courts and 30 diversion programs with permanent support staff to oversee these programs through DOJ and the State Courts.

In 2008, recognizing that veterans in the criminal justice system face unique issues, a collaborative effort between State and Federal DVA, the State Courts, Public Defender's office and other state agencies worked to create Veteran Treatment Courts to provide better, more effective solutions for veterans impacted by the criminal justice system. Other treatment courts in Wisconsin now include: Family Treatment

Founded in 2004, the Wisconsin Association of Treatment Court Professionals (WATCP) is a professional organization representing the interests of treatment or problem-solving courts in the State of Wisconsin. Its membership (over 1000 individuals) and governing board includes representatives from each of the disciplines traditionally found in a treatment court team.

WATCP provides training for entire teams and coordinators, during each of its two annually held conferences. Additionally, WATCP partners with other agencies to conduct standalone training events such as introductory (101) standards training, and training for judicial officers and veteran mentors. WATCP also provides input for the Effective Justice Strategies Subcommittee for the Wisconsin Supreme Court Policy and Planning Advisory Committee as well as the Behavioral Changes Subcommittee for the Statewide Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

**Want to help  
Wisconsin's  
Treatment Courts?  
Tip the scales against  
addiction, donate today!**

WATCP is a  
501 (c)(3)  
Non-Profit  
organization



Courts with some grant funding by DCF & TAD, Mental Health Courts with some funding through DHS, Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts and OWI Courts. Recognizing how evidenced based programs help reduce recidivism, strengthen communities and families through lasting recovery, many counties also lend financial support to these courts. WATCP's goal is to see every individual with a substance use disorder or mental health issue who finds themselves impacted by the justice system receive the help they need, whether through a treatment court or diversion program. Through education and advocacy, WATCP is helping unite public safety and public health, prevent fatal overdoses, strengthen families, and make communities safer--all while saving taxpayer dollars.



# Treatment Courts



## Progress over prison

For more than 35 years, Treatment Courts have seen a rapid expansion on both the national and state levels. As of 2024 more than 4,200 treatment courts exist in the US. Adult Drug courts remain the most common type.

All treatment courts have similar characteristics. They employ a multi-phased process with a focus on treatment and motivating behavioral change through the use of incentives and sanctions. A multidisciplinary team consisting of a prosecutor, defense attorney, treatment provider, probation agent, law enforcement officer and coordinator assist the judge with participant staffing and decision making. The goal of treatment courts is to engage individuals in treatment long enough to successfully address addiction and/or mental health concerns and end the cycle of recidivism.

Treatment court teams also understand that participants will often relapse, particularly in the early phases of the program as sobriety is considered a distal goal. However, participants who do not make progress or who engage in further criminal conduct are sanctioned or even expelled from treatment court and in turn held accountable for their actions.

## Data Driven

National data on the benefits of treatment courts is readily available and clear. According to All Rise and National Institute of Justice, 75% of drug court graduates remain arrest free compared to 30% released from prison. Drug courts reduce recidivism by as much as 45%. Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) courts reduce recidivism by as much as 60% and the likelihood of being involved in a future auto accident by half.



**3 out of 4 drug court graduates remain arrest free**

**For every dollar invested, up to \$27 are saved.**



Family drug courts reduce the likelihood of re-entry into foster care by two-thirds. Treatment courts are also cost effective saving on average \$6,000 as compared to traditional probation and up to \$13,000 per year for a prison sentence. While estimates vary, for every dollar invested in these programs up to \$27 are saved.



## The National Movement

The nation's first treatment (or problem-solving) court was developed in 1989 in Miami-Dade County, FL. This adult drug court was a direct response to the war on drugs, and the product of justice and treatment professionals who noted how failing to treat substance abuse and the conditions which contributed to it led to a vicious cycle of relapse and recidivism. Wisconsin's first treatment court, also an adult drug court, was established in 1996 in Dane County. While adult drug courts are still the most common, a wide range of specialized courts have since been developed locally and nationally, including hybrid courts, OWI (operating while intoxicated) courts, mental health courts, juvenile drug courts, family dependency courts, tribal healing to wellness courts, and veterans courts. Each court addresses the underlying issues related to criminal behavior in the context of a specific population or offense type.