

Family Treatment Court Research: Developmental Needs and Practice Implications

Joanne Cannavo, PhD,
MSSA, LCSW-R
Daemen College

Presented at the NADCP
15th Annual Training Conference
Anaheim, CA
June 12, 2009

Child Welfare System

- There have been increasing numbers of children coming into the child welfare system because of the consequences of parental substance-related or mental health problems that place children at risk because of the limitations this places on the parents' ability to care for or protect their children.

(Denby & Curtis, 2003; McNichol & Tash, 2001).

Family Treatment Court (FTC)

- Family Treatment Court:
 - A drug court that was created to deal with parents who have a substance abuse problem and are involved with the child welfare system due to having an indicated neglect case.

(Worcel et al., 2006)

Family Treatment Court (FTC)

- FTC is a voluntary program; it becomes mandatory once the individuals agree to enroll.
- Participants must frequently appear in front of the judge whose monitoring is central to FTC.
- FTC programs provide a menu of services to the clients, including parenting classes, anger management programming, domestic violence training, individual mental health treatment, in addition to the mandatory substance abuse treatment for all participants.

FTC Literature

- FTC literature is minimal; lack of published literature.
- Thirteen FTC studies reviewed
- Only a few studies focused on outcomes
 - (ADP's (2005) summary evaluation of the Drug Dependency Courts through the Comprehensive Drug Court Implementation Program (CDCI) in the State of California), Ashford's study (2004) of the Pima FTC; Boles & Young, 2006; Haack et al.'s (2004) study of FTCs in three cities, (Miami, Kansas City, and New York), and Worcel's (2006) study of 4 FTC cites in 4 different counties (San Diego County, CA; Santa Clara County, CA; Suffolk County, NY; & Washoe County, NV)

FTC Literature

- Most of the prior research of FTCs generally did not consider outcomes of enrollment, completion, or recidivism. (Innovation Research & Training, Inc. 2005; Washousky & Pirowski, 2003)
- Others discussed subsequent neglect petitions but did not examine the factors that possibly predicted this outcome.
(Boles & Young, 2006; Worcel et al., 2006)

FTC Status Groups

- FTC status groups:
 - Completers (Graduates) (32)
 - In-Program (20)
 - Failures (66)
 - Refusers (53)
- Ineligible participants (n=15) were excluded from the study except for recidivism analysis
 - Under age 18 years
 - Mental illness issues
 - No substance abuse problem

Definitions of Dependent Variables

- **Enrollment** - a participant formally being accepted into, signing the contract for, and thus starting the FTC program, beyond solely completing the intake assessment.
 - Enrollment for this FTC is voluntary; however, once the contract to enroll is signed, participation becomes mandatory

Definitions of Dependent Variables

- **Completion** – One has graduated and completed the program if he or she has been compliant with the rules and procedures of the FTC program, and has successfully completed the menu of required treatment interventions specified for the participant.

Research Questions

- **RQ 1**: What factors contribute to the FTC participants' enrollment in the program?
- **RQ 2**: What factors are associated with Completion/Graduation from the Family Treatment Court?

Methodology: Current FTC Study

- Non-equivalent comparison group design with data from records from the Erie County FTC program.
- After IRB approval was obtained, FTC database was accessed with permission.
- As with many record studies, much of the data sought was not present in database.
- There were generally 130-132 individuals available for data analysis involving the intake assessment.

Methodology

- Record data: the intake and program data that were available for all individuals who were referred to the FTC program during the years 2003, 2004, and 2005 (n=186).

Methodology

- Selection of the years 2003, 2004, and 2005:
 - (a) Although this FTC was initiated in May of 2001, the implementation process and adjustment was still taking place during 2001- 2002.
- The intent was to begin with a year where the intake and programming procedures were fully implemented.

Methodology

- (b) Interest in reducing the number of participants who were still involved with the program.
- Individuals who choose to enter the FTC are generally involved with the program for at least an 18-month period.

Methodology: Data

- (1) Intake assessment (self-reported by offender)
- Variables from the intake assessment included:
- Demographics (gender, age, ethnicity, employment status)
- Parenting Factors
- Substance Use
- Mental Health
- Judicial Monitoring
- Motivational Items

Methodology: Data

- (2) FTC program information on participants
- positive toxes
- sanctions
- rewards
- missed appointments

Methodology: Sample

- FTC status groups:
 - Completers (Graduates) (32)
 - In-Program (20)
 - Failures (66)
 - Refusers (53)
 - Ineligibles (15)

Sample: Demographics

- Female 80%
- Caucasian 40%
- African American 24%
- Hispanic 7.5%
- Mean Age: 33 years
- Unemployed 53%

Sample: Substance Use

Drug of Choice	n	%
Crack	29	15.6
Cocaine	16	8.6
Marijuana	36	19.4
Heroin/Opiates	14	7.6
Prescription Drugs	3	1.6
Alcohol	34	18.3
Missing/Unknown	54	29.0

Sample: Mental Health Screening

- 10% did not screen positive for a mental health disorder
- 16% screened positive for one mental health disorder
- 49% screened positive for two or more mental health disorders

Methodology

- Database Abstraction Form created
- Interrater Reliability: 99.81% agreement
- While in the process of data abstraction, it was found that in some cases the information sought was not present.
- Low n's per FTC status group would not allow sufficient power to test a full causal model

Data Analysis

- Both primary research questions utilized Binary Logistic Regression as the primary method of analysis.
- 2x2 Contingency Tables and One-Way Anovas were also used.

Findings: RQ 1 – Binary Logistic Regression for Enrollment

Variable	B	SE	Wald	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Employed (yes) *	.877	.458	3.658	2.403	.979	5.903
Parent-Child Activities ** (5>)	.943	.438	4.629	2.567	1.088	6.061
Recognize impact - alcohol /drug use on parenting ** (no)	-.105	.438	5.770	.349	.148	.824

* $p \leq .10$; ** $p \leq .05$; *** $p \leq .01$

Findings: RQ 1 – Enrollment – In Sum

- Employment status – employed individuals → 2.4 times more likely to enroll in the FTC Program
- Parenting Factors -
 - parents who engaged in 5 or more activities with their children → over 2.5 times more likely to enroll in the program
 - recognizing the impact of substance use on parenting → 65% more likely to enroll in the program

Findings: Final Model - Enrollment

Variable	B	SE	Wald	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Parent-Child Activities ** (5>)	1.055	.473	4.975	2.871	1.136	7.255
Recognize impact - alcohol /drug use on parenting ** (no)	-1.196	.458	6.821	.302	.123	.742

* $p \leq .10$; ** $p \leq .05$; *** $p \leq .01$

Findings: RQ 2 – Binary Logistic Regression for Completion

Variable	B	SE	Wald	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Freq. Subs. Use * (<x1/wk vs. 1x wk)	-.793	.463	2.931	.452	.182	1.122
Drug Prob. Indication *	-1.015	5.65	3.224	.362	.120	1.097
Missed Appts. *	-.035	.020	3.039	.965	.928	1.004
Sanctions ****	-.810	.255	10.109	.445	.270	.733
Rewards ****	.815	.230	12.529	2.258	1.438	3.545

* $p \leq .10$; ** $p \leq .05$; *** $p \leq .01$; **** $p \leq .001$

Findings: RQ 2 – Completion – In Sum

- Frequency of Use - marginally significant
 - those have a greater frequency of substance use (once per week or more) were approximately 55% less likely to graduate.
- Drug Problem Indicators – marginally significant
 - individuals who endorsed at least one of the drug problem items were approximately 64% less likely to graduate (OR = .362; 95% CI .120 – 1.097, $p = .073$).

Findings: RQ 2 – Completion – In Sum

- **Missed appointments** - marginal significance
 - for every unit increase in missed appointments, there was a 3.5% increase in the likelihood of failing the program.
- **Sanctions** – highly significant ****
 - for every unit increase in the number of sanctions received, the likelihood the individual would fail the program increased by 55%.
- Relative to receiving no sanctions, the odds of successfully completing the FTC program did not significantly change if an individual received only one sanction ($p = .716$).
- Second sanction - the odds of success decreased by over 90% ($p = .014$)

Findings: RQ 2 – Completion – In Sum

- Rewards - highly significant ****
 - for every unit increase in the number of rewards received in the program, the individual was over twice as likely to graduate than fail the program.
- One reward - the individual was over four times more likely to graduate ($p = .024$)
- Second reward - the individual was over six times more likely to graduate than fail the FTC program
- Three or more rewards - the individual was over 15 times more likely to graduate than fail the program ($p = .001$).

Findings: Final Model - Completion

Variable	B	SE	Wald	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
At least one drug problem **	-1.765	.765	5.322	.171	.038	.767
Sanctions ****	-1.263	.373	11.459	.283	.136	.588
Rewards ****	.933	2.93	10.106	2.541	1.430	4.517
* $p \leq .10$; ** $p \leq .05$; *** $p \leq .01$						

Limitations

- Missing Data
- Low power, thus yielding the need for medium to large effect sizes; lower alpha levels may at times be considered
- No random assignment of participants to the FTC
- Lack of access to some of the critical data
 - DSS
 - Family Court
 - Follow-up Substance Use

Addressing the Issues

- This study has the potential to begin building an understanding of the factors associated with the main outcomes (enrollment and completion) in addition to determining effect sizes for use in future studies.

Addressing the Issues

- Rounsaville et al. (2001) suggest the value in preliminary exploratory study methodology that will assist with “understanding behavioral change process as well as developing interventions to promote positive change processes” (pp. 133-134).
- Rounsaville et al. (2001) states that having the standard of only conducting randomized clinical trials and full-scale efficacy designs do not allow such exploratory study which thus eliminates greater understanding of variables and relationships that may exist.

Implications: Enrollment

- Unemployment may be a proxy for poverty that may lead to neglect; therefore, the concern exists for subsequent petitions for those who do not become more financially self-sufficient and gain employment.
- Employed participants could view enrolling in the FTC program as a method of eliminating their addiction, being motivated to keep their jobs, and ultimate self-sufficiency.

Implications: Enrollment

- Significance of both parenting factors suggests the importance of the family system within FTCs
 - Implications for attachment, family relationships, parenting, and visitation

Implications: Enrollment

- Researchers should ensure that the practice community is aware of such FTC findings so that practitioners may implement motivational interviewing and contribute to increased enrollment of those referred to the FTC.

Implications: FTC Completion

- Although there was only marginal significance, failures were more likely than graduates to receive a subsequent neglect petition, which reflects that getting individuals to complete the FTC program is advantageous.

Implications: Completion

- More frequent substance use and those who endorse more drug problem indicators will have greater likelihood of failure, yielding implications for more intensified treatment for the frequent and severe drug users who simply begin recovery with greater odds of failing.
- Given the subsequent findings that failures were the most likely to get a subsequent petition, it suggests a strong need for greater focus on relapse and how relapse is handled within the FTC program.

Implications: Completion

- Judicial Monitoring:
 - treatment providers need to provide thorough and timely information to the court so as to guide further programming recommendations, as well as provision of rewards and sanctions by the judge.
 - Researchers should investigate true judicial monitoring in the court room given the instrumental role of the judge.
 - Benefits of rewards in the FTC should be recognized and use of rewards could be extended.

Implications

- No significance for mental health; however,
 - Comorbidity should not be minimized
 - Programming should accommodate those with dual diagnoses.
 - Possibly extend the court to work with those who have severe mental health problems but are not using alcohol or other drugs in a hazardous fashion.
 - Future research should address these two components to better inform practice.

Implications

- Consistent with Prochaska and DiClemente (1982), it is important that the stakeholders of the FTC understand the individuals' motivation levels when they come in contact with the court and potentially increase the motivation for change within the individual.

Implications

- Policies can be put in place to stipulate legal consequences for lack of follow-up and compliance given the real concern of recidivism and the potential harm to the children.
- Gaps that exist between research and practice should be minimized.

Implications

- Cost effectiveness of FTC is not just measured by the parents and subsequent petitions; it is also measured by the subsequent behavior of the children and their outcomes as a result of FTC (i.e.) parenting, parent-child attachment, etc.
- This research still needs to be accomplished.

Future Study

- Will seek to obtain data through other means including both parent and child information, since FTC data was primarily focused on parents.
- Will seek greater effect size due to acquiring such data and therefore enabling a larger n.
- Due to decreased cell sizes when increasing data, plan is to move away from main effect outcomes and build a model for mediators and moderators.

Future Study

- Will start to enable a predictive model from the current study's research conclusions about what specific factors contribute to certain outcomes.
- Will examine visitation as well as assess parent-child relationship as it relates to sobriety.