

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNCIL OF
**ACCOUNTABILITY
COURT JUDGES**

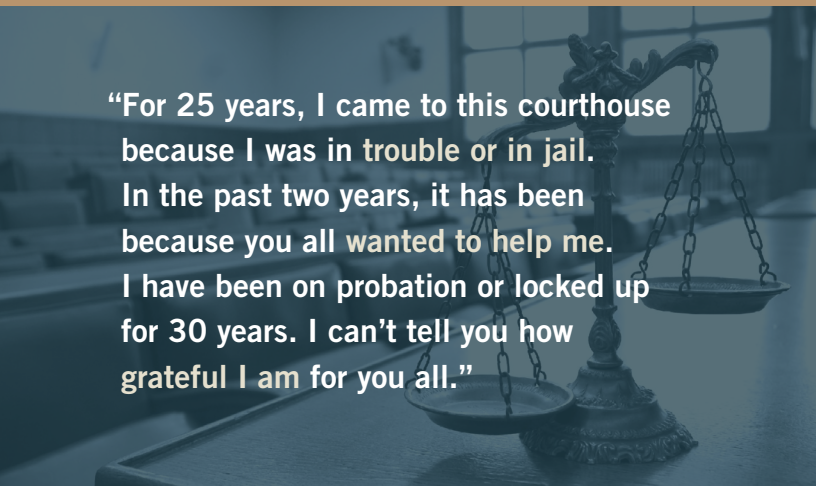
**PROCESSES
AND OUTCOMES**

WHY ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS?

- Accountability courts provide **alternative sentencing** for qualifying persons, typically those who have a mental illness and/or a substance use disorder.
- Accountability courts work to lower recidivism and prison costs by **breaking the cycle of addiction and mental illness, which are the root causes of many offenses.**
- The courts require regular check-ins with a judge, intensive treatment, counseling, drug testing, curfews, and court supervision to **hold offenders accountable** for their rehabilitation.
- The goal of accountability courts is to **restore participants to productive, working, tax-paying citizens who provide for their families,** thereby reducing costs to social services and the penal system.
- Court officials who work with accountability courts report that **participants receive more scrutiny than those sentenced to prison.**

Accountability courts help lower recidivism and help people return to productive lives, supporting their families and paying taxes.

Accountability courts cost approximately \$5,000 less per participant compared to incarceration.



“For 25 years, I came to this courthouse because I was in trouble or in jail. In the past two years, it has been because you all wanted to help me. I have been on probation or locked up for 30 years. I can’t tell you how grateful I am for you all.”

ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND BENEFITS OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT GRADUATES

In FY 2017
1,729
participants graduated from
accountability courts in Georgia

Each graduate produced **\$22,129** in
economic benefits to the state, totaling
\$38.2 million

Accountability courts save almost
\$5,000 per participant
over traditional adjudication
and incarceration¹

RECIDIVISM

Applied Research Services, Inc. has conducted two recidivism studies of accountability court participants in Georgia.

Study #1 compared accountability court graduates to those terminated from such programs.

Study #2 compared accountability court participants (whether or not they graduated) to probationers in adjacent counties who did not enter an accountability court program.

Court Type	Study #1		Study #2	
	Graduated	Terminated	Participants	Non-Participants
Drug	27%	74%	44%	54%
Mental Health	32%	72%	35%	49%
Veterans Treatment	19%	54%	29%	46%
DUI	21%	63%	22%	39%
Family Treatment	12%	84%	N/A	N/A

- Participants who graduate from an accountability court program do far better than terminated participants after being discharged from a program.
- Recidivism rates of offenders that have some participation in an accountability court program are lower compared to similarly situated offenders who did not participate in a program.
- **Any amount of participation in an accountability court, regardless of completion, leads to lower recidivism.**

THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES

STANDARDS

The CACJ establishes operating standards for each type of accountability court. State standards align with the federal 10 Key Components of Drug Courts, published by the US Department of Justice, as well as best practices based on national research. These standards are the basis for certification, peer review, and funding.

PEER REVIEW

The CACJ provides for a peer review process to ensure courts adhere to best practices and state accountability court standards. Each certified court is required to be peer reviewed every three years. A peer review team typically consists of a judge, a court coordinator, a clinician/treatment provider, and a CACJ staff member, all of whom come from the same type of accountability court being visited. Peer review is a cost-effective way to perform a program evaluation to support the improvement of program outcomes. All involved can bring innovative practices back to their own court.

CERTIFICATION

The CACJ Standards & Certification Committee certifies new and renewing courts every two years. An accountability court must be certified by the CACJ to be eligible to receive state grant funding. The certification process ensures that accountability courts adhere to best practices and CACJ standards. Courts can receive a certification waiver, provisional certification, or full certification, all of which qualify the court to apply for state grant funding. Those that receive a waiver or provisional certification must provide additional information within a specified period of time to receive full certification.

PERFORMANCE TRACKING

The CACJ collects 120 data elements every quarter from each accountability court to continually monitor and improve program outcomes, efficiency, and overall court effectiveness. Data elements include recidivism, the number of moderate- and high-risk participants, drug testing results, and the number of successful and unsuccessful program completions.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS



FUNDING

The CACJ manages state grants to local accountability courts. Three grant funding opportunities are offered throughout the year:

- **Fiscal Year Operating Grant**
Annual funds to operate an accountability court
- **Supplemental Grant**
Additional funds to meet workload needs
- **Emergency Grant**
Additional funds for drug testing supplies and treatment due to an unanticipated increase in the number of program participants

Grant applications are put together by the court and submitted by the county in which the court operates. Grant funds are paid on a reimbursable basis. Both the operating and supplemental grants require a 10% county match.

While grant funding rests in the CJCC budget, all funding decisions are made by the CACJ Funding Committee. Since FY 2012, state funding for accountability courts has increased from \$2.3 million to \$32 million in FY 2019.

In addition to state grants, accountability courts receive funding from a variety of other sources including county funds, fees paid by participants, and any other funding they may bring in independently.

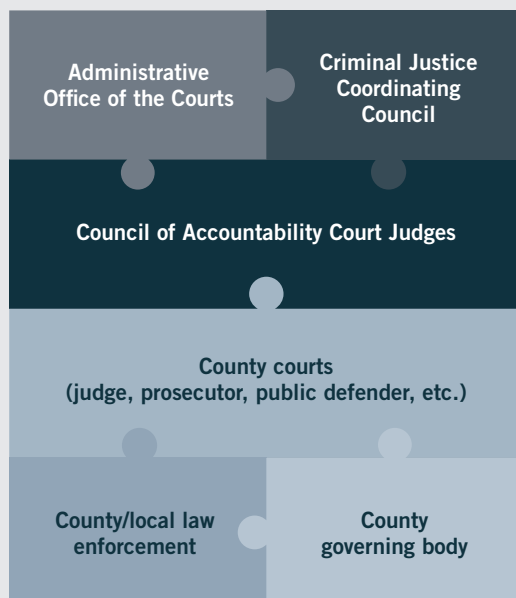
“Drug Court has changed my life. It has given me direction in my life. I’ve learned to deal with my feelings rather than using drugs. I’m happier than I’ve been in a very long time. I’m sober and I’m clean. I have also made lifelong friends.”

TRAINING

The CACJ ensures court personnel are trained. New court teams are given the opportunity to undergo implementation training from the National Drug Court Institute; the judge must attend judicial training from the CACJ; and the coordinator must attend coordinator-specific training. In addition, all members of a court should attend “tune-up” training every three years. There are additional trainings throughout the year for each member of the court team, including for clinicians on evidence-based practices.

ADMINISTERING ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS IS A TEAM EFFORT

BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE COUNTIES...



AND WITHIN EACH COUNTY



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES

The Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ) was created by House Bill 328 in 2015 and is made up of all judges, senior judges, and judge emeriti who preside over accountability courts around the state. There are currently 157 member judges. In addition to an Executive Committee, the CACJ has five standing committees: Funding, Legislation, Nominations, Standards & Certification, and Training.

THE CACJ HAS SIX PRIMARY OBJECTIVES



To take Georgia's accountability courts to scale

The number of courts has grown from 29 in 2010 to 156 in 2018.

In 2013, just over 3,100 people participated in accountability courts. In 2018, there were 9,771 participants.



To reduce incarceration rates

Any amount of participation in an accountability court, regardless of completion, leads to lower recidivism.



To determine funding priorities

The CACJ distributes more than \$30 million in state grants to help local accountability courts operate. A recent study showed that accountability courts cost \$5,000 less per participant than traditional adjudication and incarceration.



To encourage adherence to standards

The CACJ ensures compliance with state standards through court certification every two years and peer review every three years.



To save lives and restore families

Court participants are working and being treated for the root causes leading to arrest.



To perform ongoing review and measurement

The CACJ collects 120 data elements quarterly from each court to monitor and improve program outcomes.

A 2010 Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts report analyzed a cohort of 2005 drug court participants.

The report found that:

Only **7% were reconvicted** two years after graduation compared to 29% for a similar cohort sentenced to state prison.

The “average daily cost of drug court is **72% to 80% less** than the average daily cost of other traditional sentencing options.”²

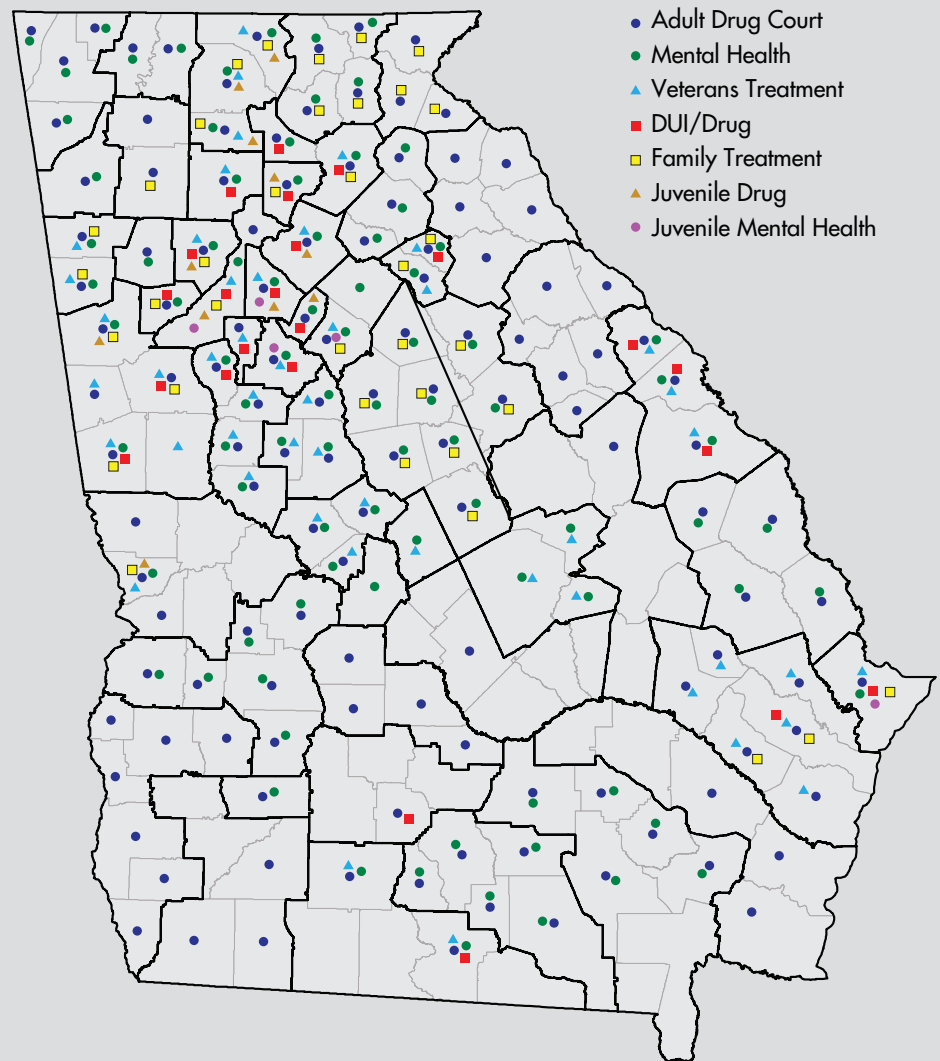
CACJ MISSION STATEMENT
TO PROVIDE A UNIFIED
FRAMEWORK THAT PROMOTES
AND IMPROVES THE
QUALITY, ACCESSIBILITY,
AND ADMINISTRATION OF
ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS.

References

1. Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia. 2018, July. *The Estimated Economic Impacts and Benefits of Accountability Court Programs in Georgia*. Retrieved from gaaccountabilitycourts.org/economic-impact-study.
2. Performance and Audit Division, Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts. 2010, September. “Judicial Branch: Adult-Felony Drug Court.”
3. Ibid.

As of July 1, 2018, Georgia had **156** certified and/or funded accountability courts (including juvenile accountability courts), with at least one in every judicial circuit in the state. In FY 2010, Georgia had only **29** adult drug courts in **75** counties.³

The number of participants in accountability courts throughout Georgia has grown steadily since FY 2013, when there were just over **3,100**, to **9,771** in FY 2017. An average of **1,700** participants graduated each year between FY 2015 and FY 2017.



TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

Currently, Georgia has five types of adult accountability courts and two types of juvenile accountability courts:

Adult drug courts are designed for participants arrested for drug crimes or whose addiction to drugs and/or alcohol led them to criminal behavior.

Adult mental health courts serve participants with significant mental health diagnoses and/or co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, and whose crime is related to their mental health issue.

Veterans treatment courts follow the drug court model but are designed to address unique issues veterans face as a result of their military service, often in a war zone.

Operating under the influence courts, commonly called DUI or DUI/drug courts, are intended to treat people convicted of operating a vehicle under the influence of drugs or alcohol multiple times.

Family treatment courts are intended to bring families back together by treating adults who have lost or will lose their children to foster care due to substance abuse issues.

Juvenile drug courts are designed to treat the unique needs of court-involved youth who use drugs or alcohol.

Juvenile mental health courts are designed to treat the unique needs of court-involved youth with serious unmet mental health needs.

This report was developed and designed by the



Carl Vinson Institute of Government
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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