



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

May 31, 2016

The Honorable Nathan L. Hecht
Chief Justice, Texas Supreme Court &
Chair, Texas Judicial Council
P. O. Box 12066
Austin, TX 78711-2066

Dear Chief Justice Hecht:

In accordance with *Texas Government Code, Sec. 772.0061*, the Governor establishes the Specialty Court Advisory Council (SCAC) within the Governor's Criminal Justice Division (CJD) to evaluate grant applications and make funding recommendations for specialty courts in Texas. Additionally, all specialty courts under the provision of Chapter 121 and defined by Chapters 122-126 that receive state and/or federal funds must comply with the programmatic best practices the SCAC recommends to CJD that are approved by the Texas Judicial Council.

The SCAC met on January 29, 2016 and again on May 26, 2016 to set high-level strategic goals for the future on many issues pertaining to the court-based programs. Among these issues was recommending best practices and the plan for their adoption in Texas.

It is agreed that CJD and the SCAC should be the leaders in Texas to support and provide resources and vision for specialty court programs now and into the future and should lead training and technical assistance efforts to support these programs' growth and their careful application of best practices.

The SCAC believes that all best practices must be developed by experts using rigorous processes, methods, and are based on proven evidence. The SCAC and CJD should support the best practices that meet these minimal standards, identify promising practices, and foster the development of these approaches to fill the most important and common needs of specialty court programs.

As a result, after considerable and thorough review by the SCAC of the **Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards** (Volumes I & II and the specified Key Components) developed by the National Association of Drug Court Programs (NADCP), we are in agreement that these standards are the most recognized, longitudinally, and expertly researched programs available to be replicated and adapted by judicial jurisdictions in Texas.

Therefore, the Governor's Criminal Justice Division agrees and supports the Council's expert and responsible unanimous decision to recognize NADCP's **Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards** to serve as the programmatic best practice standards for Adult Drug Court Programs in Texas. Additionally, the SCAC and CJD have discussed the need to implement these best practices in a way that will allow all such court programs to carefully and thoughtfully achieve full compliance. Further, we recognize that

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there may be certain practices that are not practical for all programs because of their size or similar issue—such as the requirement for an automated case management system.

As a result, the SCAC and CJD respectfully requests the concurrence and approval of the Texas Judicial Council with the following recommendations:

- Adopt the *Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards* (Volumes I & II and the specified Key Components) as the best practice for adult drug court programs in Texas.
- Require implementation of the standards by all such programs no later August 31, 2019.
- Allow for CJD, with the advice and consent of the SCAC to waive or allow additional time for compliance with certain practices if, in the opinion of the majority of the membership of the SCAC, there are legitimate obstacles to timely compliance or that the methodology used by a program is functionally equivalent to the practice as stated in the adopted practice. (CJD will provide updates on the waivers or extensions granted upon request by the Judicial Council at any time.)

We will actively remain focused on the ongoing research from the field as well as support the evaluation of specialty court programs in Texas. We will keep the Council informed of the progress of the programs. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Camille Cain
Executive Director
Criminal Justice Division
Office of the Governor

CC: The Honorable Ray G. Wheless, Judge, Chairman, Specialty Court Advisory Committee
The Honorable Sharon Keller, Vice Chair, Texas Judicial Council
Mr. David Slayton, Executive Director, Office of Court Administration