8-2019

Case Closure Among the Lancaster County’s Family Treatment Drug Court: The Role of Personal Relationships

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Case Closure Among the Lancaster County’s Family Treatment Drug Court: The Role of Personal Relationships
Chelsey Wisehart, Katherine Hazen, & Matthew Carlson

Parent relationship with court professionals has a significant impact on time to case closure for those in the FTDC.

### Introduction

- Parent substance use is the second-leading cause for children’s removal from the home in Nebraska (Voices for Children, 2018) with 10-30% being removed again later on (Wulczyn et al., 2007).
- The theory of Therapeutic Jurisprudence suggests using a treatment-oriented approach to reduce recidivism and mitigate the negative psychological effects that the legal system may have on offenders (Fessinger et al., 2018).
- The Judge acts as a team leader for caseworkers and attorneys who use a collaborative approach in the Family Treatment Drug Court (FTDC).
- Team meetings between parents and court professionals include discussion about parents’ progress to help ensure a rehabilitative environment.
- Social exchange theory says that interpersonal relationships form with the exchange of emotional resources (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002).
- Preliminary findings suggest that FTDC participants who receive support in high quality relationships may have a faster time to case closure (Fessinger et al., 2018).
- **Research question:** Do the high quality relationships between adjudicated parents and court professionals explain faster time to case closure in FTDC?

### Method

**Participants**
- N = 227
  - FTDC: n = 231 (81.6%)
  - Control: n = 46 (16.3%)
- Surveyed participants: n = 183
  - Father: n = 60 (21.2%)
  - Mother: n = 122 (43.1%)

**Materials**
- Parents’ experience survey: 11-items, 5-point agreement Likert-type scale
- Caseworker relationships (2-item, α = 0.93)
- Judge relationship (1-item)
- Content coding legal files in JUSTICE
- Number of days between petition and case closure date (Time to Close)

### Results

![Figure 1: Mean relationship scores (5-point scale)](image)

- FTDC Time to Close: 523.55 days
- Control Time to Close: 686.97 days

FTDC participants had significantly shorter time to case closure.

- FTDC participants tended to have more positive relationships with the judge and caseworker.
- More positive relationships were associated with shorter time to case closure.
- This aligns with Social Exchange Theory which says that the formation of high quality relationships with superiors may lead to more success (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002).
- This means that through adjusting the dynamic between the adjudicated and court professionals, those involved can foster relationships that appear to enhance a rehabilitative process.

### Discussion

- FTDC participants had significantly shorter time to case closure.
- FTDC participants tended to have more positive relationships with the judge and caseworker.
- More positive relationships were associated with shorter time to case closure.
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- This means that through adjusting the dynamic between the adjudicated and court professionals, those involved can foster relationships that appear to enhance a rehabilitative process.

### Limitations & Future Direction

- **Limitations**
  - Self-report data has variability that can cause concern.
  - Self-selection bias.
  - No random assignment.
- **Future Direction**
  - Examine the role of service participation in explaining time to case closure.
  - How do relationships affect participation in services?

### Acknowledgements

Thank you to the University of Nebraska – Lincoln UCARE program for funding this research, the Lancaster County Family Treatment Drug Court for allowing this project, and to the team at the Nebraska Research Project for Vulnerable Young Children for all their support (Kelli Hauptman, Jennie Cole-Mossman, and Jamie Bahm).

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