

## Washington

The first of the therapeutic courts in Washington were established in 1994 as adult drug courts in King and Pierce Counties. Today, Washington state has expanded therapeutic courts to 29 counties and include over 112 programs including Drug Courts, Family Treatment Courts, Mental Health Courts, and innovative calendars. In addition, 13 counties have specialized calendars that include community courts, domestic violence courts, and relicensing courts as well as court programs to address truancy and crimes committed by individuals who are experiencing homelessness.

In 2002, Washington State Legislature created [RCW 71.24.580](#) Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA) with a goal of supporting the implementation and enhancement of therapeutic courts. The appropriation is available to all 39 counties and may be used to provide treatment, treatment support (e.g. childcare and transportation), and recovery support services. Since the creation of the CJTA, the Legislature has authorized [RCW 82.14.460](#) to allow jurisdictions to adopt an additional .1% sales tax to be used for chemical dependency treatment, mental health treatment, or to operate therapeutic courts.

Medicaid expansion has also greatly benefited the provision of services related to individuals enrolled in therapeutic courts and other treatment alternatives within the criminal legal system. Before Medicaid expansion, coverage was essentially limited to low-income children, people with disabilities or devastating illnesses, and those whose incomes were far below the federal poverty level. Today, Apple Health covers adults with incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level. In April 2020 that translated to about \$17,609 for a single person or \$36,156 for a family of four. For the first time, many low-income adults suffering from chronic conditions, such as behavioral health disorders, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, and other diseases have better options than waiting until they are sick enough to go to the emergency room. People living on the edge financially don't have to choose between going to the doctor and paying the electric bill.

The [Administrative Office of the Courts \(AOC\)](#) and [Washington State Health Care Authority, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery \(DBHR\)](#) collaborate in providing support, guidance, technical assistance and training for therapeutic courts in the state. These agencies share the goal of improving coordination and communication with therapeutic courts in the state of Washington. DBHR has worked closely with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis (DSHS-RDA) since 2016 in creating data analytic dashboards relative to Adult Drug Courts in Washington State. The [Recidivism and Key Outcome Measures](#) dashboards help inform statewide and local policy, program decision making, and the reports are updated on an annual basis. One of the hallmark justifications for therapeutic court expansion is their effectiveness in reducing crime, to which these data indicate that thirty-six months after program enrollment, 77% of drug court participants in Washington had no new felonies.

Therapeutic courts in Washington state have also demonstrated a cost-savings benefit. RDA's paper titled: [Drug Court Outcomes](#), found analysis of drug court participants in Washington found reductions in crime following entry into drug court, translated into a net benefit to taxpayers of \$22,000 per participant or a \$4 return for every \$1 invested. In addition, a Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) [analysis](#) concluded drug courts are an evidence-based intervention that produces a return on investment 100% of the time.