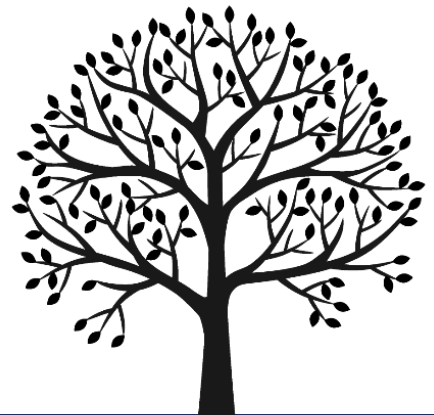


Massachusetts Juvenile Court

FAMILY TREATMENT COURT MANUAL FOR PARENTS



*A supportive and therapeutic approach to recovery
focused on reuniting families*



Massachusetts Juvenile Court
Chief Justice Amy L. Nechtem
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Boston, MA 02108

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INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY TREATMENT COURT

The Family Treatment Court is a unique voluntary therapeutic Juvenile Court session to support families where parental substance misuse affects parenting. It is open to eligible parents (over age 18) who have a care and protection case pending in the Juvenile Court.

The goal of the Family Treatment Court is to provide access to structured, supportive treatment services and judicial oversight to allow you to recover from substance use disorder, reclaim a life of meaning and purpose, and to build a brighter future for yourself and your children. If your children have been removed, the Family Treatment Court assists children, parents and family members in getting the services they need for the family to reunify.

The Family Treatment Court team is made up of professionals from the court, substance use disorder and mental health treatment, DCF and other health and community services that work together to help you reach your goals. The team works together to provide you with early access to comprehensive care, including peer support, with the goal of helping you achieve and maintain reunification. Your lawyer will continue to represent you and will be part of the team.

Before Family Treatment Court I had no idea how was going to manage my sobriety and a newborn. This program has shown me support, compassion, and confidence in my recovery. It helped me in ways that I could have never imagined. I wouldn't be where I am today without the Family Treatment Court. It is like a family of its own."

-Keisha, mom of 2, FTC graduate



SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Substance use disorder is a disease that affects many individuals and families worldwide. When people develop substance use disorders, their brains change in ways that can lead to intense cravings and a compulsion to continue using the substance, even if it causes harm to themselves or others.

The good news is that substance use disorder is treatable. Just like other diseases, such as diabetes or asthma, it can be managed with treatment that matches your needs. In some cases, medication can be used to assist with the recovery process. These medications can help reduce cravings, manage withdrawal symptoms, and restore brain function.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

The Family Treatment Court understands that substance use disorders and mental health conditions often occur at the same time. We will work with you to see if you need any mental health services and make sure you are connected with them. We will help you develop a plan that includes services to allow you to reach your goals to have a long life in recovery and to provide a safe home for your family.

Substance use disorder can happen to anyone, regardless of their age, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or income.

Substance use disorder is not a sign of weakness or lack of willpower, but rather a medical condition that requires proper understanding and treatment.

Research shows that 22 million Americans are living in recovery from substance use disorder.

Many people with substance use disorder have experienced trauma.

The mental health problems that most commonly co-occur with substance use disorder are depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders.

RECOVERY

Hope is the foundation of recovery. Recovery is more than not using drugs or alcohol; it is growth and improvement in your health and wellbeing. A recovery community plays a vital role in recovery by providing you with connections, mutual support, and a sense of belonging.

You will be assigned a trained, certified peer recovery coach, who is someone who has navigated the challenges of substance misuse and achieved long-term recovery. Your peer recovery coach will help you find your recovery community and will provide support to you on your path to recovery.

“When you are in Family Treatment Court, you’re part of a community that supports you. It’s good to know that you are not alone.”

-Sarah, mother of 2, current FTC participant

Community support is a cornerstone of successful recovery. It provides emotional support, accountability, shared wisdom, and a sense of belonging that empowers you to build a healthier, more fulfilling life for yourself and your children.



PHOTO BY NATALIE PEDIGO ON UPSPLASH

Recovery is about renewing your life, finding purpose, and regaining control from substance misuse.

Setbacks are a natural part of life, resilience is a key component of recovery.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Family Treatment Court team collaborates and shares information as necessary to support your recovery. This information exchange is crucial to ensure that everyone involved has a complete understanding of your family's progress and needs, allowing for a more effective and supportive approach.

However, it's essential to emphasize that your information shared within the FTC team is treated with utmost respect for confidentiality and privacy. This confidentiality ensures that you feel safe and comfortable sharing your challenges, progress, and personal information with the team. It promotes open communication and trust between you and the professionals involved, which are essential elements for successful recovery and reunification.

“While enrolled in Family Treatment Court I learned the tools and the value of connection that ultimately helped save my life. I hope that Family Treatment Court services continue to help others on their recovery journey.”

-Tabi, mother of 2, FTC graduate

While the Family Treatment Court team respects confidentiality and privacy, there are legal obligations in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the children involved.

In cases where the treatment team becomes aware of information that suggests a child may be at risk, they are required by law to make a report to DCF, the child protective services agency. This report is commonly referred to as a "51A report" and is designed to ensure that children in potentially dangerous situations receive the necessary intervention and support. It's important for families involved in the Family Treatment Court program to be aware of these reporting requirements and understand that the safety of the children is of utmost importance. While the treatment team respects confidentiality, their obligation to report concerns that may affect a child's safety takes precedence. If you have questions about this, you are encouraged to talk to your lawyer.

If a 51A report has to be filed, the treatment team will talk to you about the reasons they are required to file and will work with you to resolve the issues that could affect the safety of your children.

RANDOM TESTING

Random drug and/or alcohol testing plays a crucial role in supporting you in Family Treatment Court. While it might initially seem intimidating, random testing is a valuable tool that helps you in several ways:

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MOTIVATION: Random testing fosters a sense of accountability. Knowing that you may be tested at any time encourages you to stay committed to your recovery and sobriety.

PROVIDES ENCOURAGEMENT: Random testing reinforces the positive changes you've made in your recovery because it provides tangible evidence of your efforts and achievements.

EARLY INTERVENTION: Random testing allows for early intervention in case of potential relapses or lapses. If a positive result occurs, it becomes an opportunity for support and increased assistance.

REDUCES RELAPSE RISK: The knowledge that random testing is a possibility acts as a deterrent to substance use. You are more likely to resist temptations and avoid situations that could lead to relapse if you know you may be tested.

TRUST-BUILDING: As you consistently pass random tests, you build trust not only with your treatment team and DCF, but also with yourself and your loved ones. This trust is a crucial foundation for your personal growth, stronger relationships, and successful reunification with your children.

"At first it made me mad to have to take drug tests as part of the Family Treatment Court. But it was really inspiring when other participants' test results were read out loud in the courtroom and were negative for all substances. I really wanted that for myself and made up my mind to work hard to achieve it. I was so proud to hear my own negative drug test results read out loud in court."

-Brittany, mother of 3, FTC Graduate



PHOTO BY VARDAN PAPIKYAN ON UPSPLASH

COURT HEARINGS

Court hearings are held approximately every other week. We understand that attending court this often can be demanding, and we want you to know that we are here to support you through this process. Court appearances are an important part of the Family Treatment Court, designed to ensure that you have the necessary resources and guidance to overcome the difficulties you're facing.

We recognize that each family's journey is unique, and we want to work together to help you achieve positive outcomes. The court sessions are an opportunity for us to stay connected, to address any challenges you might encounter and to celebrate your successes.

Court sessions take place with other participants so that you can learn what's working for others and build a network of support.

FAMILY TREATMENT COURT PHASES

The Family Treatment Court follows a five-phase system that is designed to provide a structured and supportive approach to help you in recovery and to help you complete your DCF case plan. The phase system allows us to break down the recovery process into manageable steps, acknowledging that everyone's journey is unique and requires personalized attention. Rather than

"You give so much in this program, but the program gives you so much back. It doesn't just happen at graduation - your successes are recognized and celebrated at each phase of the program."

-Sarah, mother of 2, current FTC participant

a one-size-fits-all approach, the phase system helps us identify and address specific needs and challenges that you may encounter.

At the beginning of each phase in the Family Treatment Court, you will receive a handout specifically tailored to that phase. This handout is designed to provide you with a clear understanding of the objectives, activities, and expectations for that particular phase. The purpose of these handouts is to

offer guidance and support as you progress through the phases, ensuring you are well-informed and prepared for what lies ahead.

At the end of each phase, you will have the opportunity to write an essay that reflects on your experiences, progress, and growth during that phase. This essay will serve as a personal reflection on your journey towards recovery and reunification with your children. Reading this essay in court allows you to share your accomplishments, challenges, and goals with the team and your fellow participants. Essays give you a chance to celebrate your achievements and the positive changes you have made in your life.

You are encouraged to ask for support to assist you with writing your essay and with reading your essay in court.

Scan with your mobile device to learn more about Family Treatment Court phases.



PARENTING TIME REVIEWS

At the end of each phase in the Family Treatment Court program, the court will review parenting time and make recommendations to DCF. These recommendations are based on the progress you have made in your recovery journey, your parenting skills, and the resolution of any safety issues that may have been present.

This could mean gradually increasing parenting time as you progress and demonstrate stability in your recovery and parenting skills. The court's recommendations are intended to facilitate family reunification while ensuring the children's safety and welfare.



PHOTO BY ROD LONG ON UPSPLASH

GRADUATION

Graduation from Family Treatment Court represents a pivotal moment in the lives of you and your children and is a time for celebration. It is a significant milestone and a proud moment for you, your family, your recovery community and the program. Family Treatment Court graduation marks the culmination of your hard work, commitment, and dedication to overcoming challenges and building a healthier future for your family.



PHOTO BY RONAK VALOBHAI ON UPSPLASH

“Family Treatment Court came into my life when it was turned upside down. Without them, I would not be where I am today. I went into this thinking this was just another regular program. I couldn’t have been more wrong. The passion, dedication, caring, respect and positive motivation every person from the Family Treatment Court showed me was better than any program out there. People believed in me and my ability to be successful.”

-Rob, father of 2, FTC graduate

Graduation from Family Treatment Court is a celebration of hope for the future.