

# Evaluation Cafe:

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Unfunded mandates as an opportunity for evaluability assessment: Evaluating state funded drug courts in Michigan

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November 13, 2003

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# Three Tasks Today

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- Review evaluability issues
  - Review the SCAO project
  - Advise state legislative process on evaluation guides for drug courts
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# Acknowledgements

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- Evaluation Team - Hartmann, Kramer, Goetz, Sonnad, Rushlau, Anderson, and Neill from WMU
  - Student assistants - particularly Gayle Rhineberger, Paul Gregory, Kristin DeVall, and Yaschica Williams.
  - Professionals: the judges, administrators, counselors, data specialists, and other professionals from the active Drug Treatment Courts in Michigan.
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# Evaluability Assessment

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- Assessing the feasibility and likely usefulness of evaluation
  - explores the feasibility of evaluation
  - looks at the needs of the program, the kind and quality of available data, the probable costs of evaluation, and the likelihood of evaluation being used to affect the program
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# Barriers to evaluability

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- 1. clear goals, objectives, side effects - need clarity and agreement on the goals to be evaluated
  - 2. These are plausible as well as well defined - if not, need to rework them before evaluation
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# Barriers to evaluability

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- 3. Relevant performance data can be obtained - check it out thoroughly, do a pilot project
  - 4. Evaluators and clients agree on the intended uses of evaluation information - is change the goal, is publicizing their value, ... will the information be used
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# Steps in evaluability analysis

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- 1. involve intended users - work groups are data and operations people, policy groups are upper level administrators - both are needed to make sure there is clarity of goals and feasible data ...
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# Steps in evaluability analysis

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- 2. clarify program intent - discern intended design and operation of the program
    - program design includes how the program is supposed to operate - what the intermediate activities and outcomes are, what causal processes operate as seen by managers and policy makers
    - this intended design becomes a basis for evaluation and must be understood by the policy folks
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# Steps in evaluability analysis

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- 3. Explore program reality - actual operation may be different from intended - look at actual operations, site visits, data reports, talk to staff
  - 4. agree on needed changes in program design - especially if there is a lack of fit between intended and actual program design - the evaluability assessment may therefore lead to program changes and improved performance even before the actual full evaluation
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# Steps in evaluability analysis

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- 5. Explore alternative evaluation designs - given the design and available measures, what kind of evaluation is possible, would be used
  - 6. Agree on evaluation priorities and intended uses of evaluation information
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# Issues, Problems, Solutions

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- 1. getting and keeping the support of managers
    - trust is difficult to establish and keep - different backgrounds, vocabularies, ...
    - Having concrete credible information to report and to do so frequently is a good strategy
    - the evaluability analysis lends itself to this kind of report and feedback opportunities
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# Issues, Problems, Solutions

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- 2. clarifying program intent
    - specifying the program design you are uncovering can be enlightening to managers and others
    - detailed reports should be in writing and be very clear - in person briefings should be less detailed
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# Issues, Problems, Solutions

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- 3. Exploring program reality
    - use site visits - use actual data from the program on resources, outcomes, trouble spots
    - gives credibility
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# Issues, Problems, Solutions

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- 4. Agreeing on changes in program design
    - do a continuous iterative process of reporting, getting feedback, exploring alternatives so that program people have a great deal of input and control
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# Issues, Problems, Solutions

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- 5. Exploring alternative evaluation designs - explore costs and benefits - be as concrete as possible about what types of data will be produced and how it could be used
  - 6. At each step, document decisions made, who was involved, and reasons for the record
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# The SCAO Project

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2002-2003

# Acknowledgements

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- State Court Administrative Office - Margie Good in particular.
  - Finally - we acknowledge our gratitude and responsibility to the citizens of Michigan
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# Resources

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- National (Well known information resources like):
    - National Drug Court Institute
    - National Association of Drug Court Professionals
    - American University Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project
    - Particularly - Department of Justice publication, *Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components*
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# Resources

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- Local:
    - Evaluation of the Michigan Drug Court Grant Program.
    - Outcomes Analysis (report dated 2/8/02)
    - Benefit/Cost Analysis (report dated 2/15/02)
    - Process Evaluations (reports dated 8/02).
    - Project based evaluation reports
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# Evaluation Design for Outcomes Analysis

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- This part of the *Evaluation of the Michigan Drug Court Grant Program* was carried out to produce three deliverables or work products:
    - Deliverable 1. “Establish, with SCAO, the outcomes to be evaluated ... to answer two critical policy questions: 1) Are drug courts cost effective?” and “2) How can significant outcomes benefiting communities with established drug court programs be measured?”
    - Deliverable 2: “The results ...” **(NOT TODAY)**
    - Deliverable 3: “...as well as develop methodology for the SCAO to perform future continuous evaluation of program participants.”
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# Evaluation Design for Process Evaluation

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- The ten “key components” identified in the referenced DOJ publication were operationalized into a scoring rubric.
  - The presence and integrity of benchmark indicators for each component was assessed by a member of the evaluation team based on a short (one or two day) visit.
  - These assessments were authenticated by on-site professional staff.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- The core outcomes protocol requires:



# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 1. An electronic database which contains all variables that will be analyzed for outcomes evaluation purposes. This database should be distinct from the database(s) used for client processing. It should be maintained by evaluation staff with continuous data collection and coordination from other data sources. It should support statistical analysis and graphical displays of outcomes (e.g., in SPSS or SAS).
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 2. Each person referred to the drug court will have a record, which will include source of referral, precipitating offense, and reasons for selection/rejection from the program. Enrollment and reason for not enrolling for those selected should also be recorded. Demographic indicators should also be present. Although it is not likely that any full needs or risk assessment will be done on referrals, whatever is done and used should be recorded.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 3. A comparison or control group should be defined and comparable information recorded for those persons as will be kept for drug court clients. The location and type of program and supervision in place for each comparison/control group member should be specified. Access to those persons for data collection must be set up in advance and monitored for completeness.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 4. The comparison/control group can be drawn from referrals who refuse or from a matched group of other persons. We do not recommend a comparison group of referrals not selected for the drug court since there should be systematic differences in need/risk. A record in the evaluation database must be built for each comparison/control group member.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 5. Location information to be used for follow-up should be collected at intake and exit as should contact information for a collateral informant. Any required releases for data collection should be signed.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 6. The dates of transition points should be recorded (e.g., referral, enrollment, phase movements including aftercare, discharge, termination of probation, detentions). These are required so that time in program by component and time at risk variables can be constructed.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 7. Treatment (drug court) and comparison/control group members should have a multi-dimensional biopsychosocial needs assessment at intake and exit from programs. The ASI and BSAP are good examples that include substance dependency and history but also other domains of functioning.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 8. Treatment data, including type, dosage, and intensity should be recorded.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 9. In-program outcomes including recidivism, drug use, employment, days in detention, and education (particularly for juveniles) should be routinely recorded.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 10. Any changes in program or incarceration status associated with negative outcomes should be recorded (including dates).
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 11. Discharge status and dates must be recorded. Reasons for discharge, successful/unsuccessful status, and resultant placement (e.g., released from supervision, nature of supervision, incarceration) should also be recorded. Retention rates should be monitored and routinely reported.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 12. Both successful and unsuccessful discharges from the drug court remain in the database for continued data collection and analysis. The same is true for comparison/control group members.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 13. Follow-up data collection should begin when persons are discharged and are not incarcerated. If a person is unsuccessfully discharged and goes to a term of incarceration, that should be recorded but follow-up would wait until release from detention.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 14. Follow-up contacts should occur at least every six months and should ask respondents about substance use, employment, family and social functioning and any other outcomes deemed important. Official records of criminal activity should be accessed (e.g., LEIN) as should records of time spent in detention. Since official records can be incomplete for extended periods of time, they should be re-checked over time. Juvenile and adult criminal records must be checked for juveniles, particularly at follow-up where most will age out of the juvenile system.

# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 15. Both in-program and follow-up outcomes should be frequently and routinely monitored so that a culture of outcomes review is built.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 16. Outcomes should be related to demographic indicators, risk/needs scores, treatment received, and discharge status as well as membership in drug court or comparison/control group. Analysis of outcomes should include bivariate and multivariate explanations.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 17. To accomplish this ambitious and time-consuming protocol, evaluation expertise in the form of local partners should be contractually retained. Local evaluation plans should be submitted for review to SCAO to ensure the core elements are present and a feasible system will be created.
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# Summary of Lessons Learned on the Outcome Analysis

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- 18. An evaluability analysis should be conducted at each site as part of the preparation for outcomes evaluation.
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# Table 1: Assessment of Drug Court Compliance With The NADCP Key Components

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13 Michigan Drug Courts

	<i>The Component Was Addressed</i>	<i>The Component Was Partially Addressed</i>	<i>The Component Was Not Addressed</i>
<u>Key Component #1:</u> Integrate treatment with case processing.	13		
<u>Key Component #2:</u> Promote public safety, protect due process.	10	3	
<u>Key Component #3:</u> Early identification and placement.	6	7	
<u>Key Component #4:</u> Access to a continuum of treatment services.	11	2	
<u>Key Component #5:</u> Frequent alcohol and other drug testing.	13		
<u>Key Component #6:</u> Coordinated strategy for participants' compliance.	13		
<u>Key Component #7:</u> Judicial interaction with participants is essential.	13		
<u>Key Component #8:</u> Monitoring & Evaluation.	5	6	2
<u>Key Component #9:</u> Continuing education	10	3	
<u>Key Component 10:</u> Forging partnerships	6	6	1

# Recommendations for Improving Outcomes Analyses

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- We recommend:



# Recommendations for Improving Outcomes Analyses

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- 1. We recommend a list of “approved instruments” for key areas should be generated. All sites must have risk and need measures, pre and post measures of outcomes for all persons (referrals, enrollees, successful and unsuccessful discharges, comparison/control group), and other core data elements.
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# Recommendations for Improving Outcomes Analyses

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- 2. Additional staff and training to support evaluation functions
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# Recommendations for Improving Outcomes Analyses

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- 3. MIS – evaluation database to coordinate existing data sources and provide capacity for case and aggregate analysis including bivariate and multivariate analyses
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# Recommendations for Improving Outcomes Analyses

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- 4. Evaluation partner responsible for evaluability analysis, database design (modification), data collection, maintenance, reporting for outcomes analysis
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# Recommendations for Improving Outcomes Analyses

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- 5. Continuous outcome monitoring
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# Recommendations for Improving Outcomes Analyses

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- 6. Comparison/control group
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# Recommendations for Improving Outcomes Analyses

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- 7. Follow-up outcomes assessment for key outcomes (at least: recidivism, drug use, employment)
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# Recommendations for Improving Process Evaluations

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- Since the site visits identified more frequent concerns in three areas (monitoring and evaluation, early identification and placement, and forging partnerships) we recommend special attention to sharing of success stories in these areas (perhaps in sessions at the MADCP conferences) and to training. We must also point out that all ten components are potentially vulnerable in times of budget cutbacks. We certainly do not recommend complacency toward accomplishment on the other seven components.
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# Summary

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- Continual monitoring and feedback to program improvement must be the norm, not the occasional exception.
  - Our strongest recommendations are for support of local evaluation efforts, for required data collection and reporting protocols, and for steady support.
  - In that kind of environment, accountability and performance are both enhanced.
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# Summary

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- Evaluation should occur but must be reliable, regular, and fair
  - Short-run costs of evaluation are outweighed by accountability and program improvement
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# Advising the legislative process

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- Legislation being crafted on drug courts
  - Evaluation guides requested
  - Issues of flexibility, feasibility, and comparability
  - Structure: local partners with some central reporting
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