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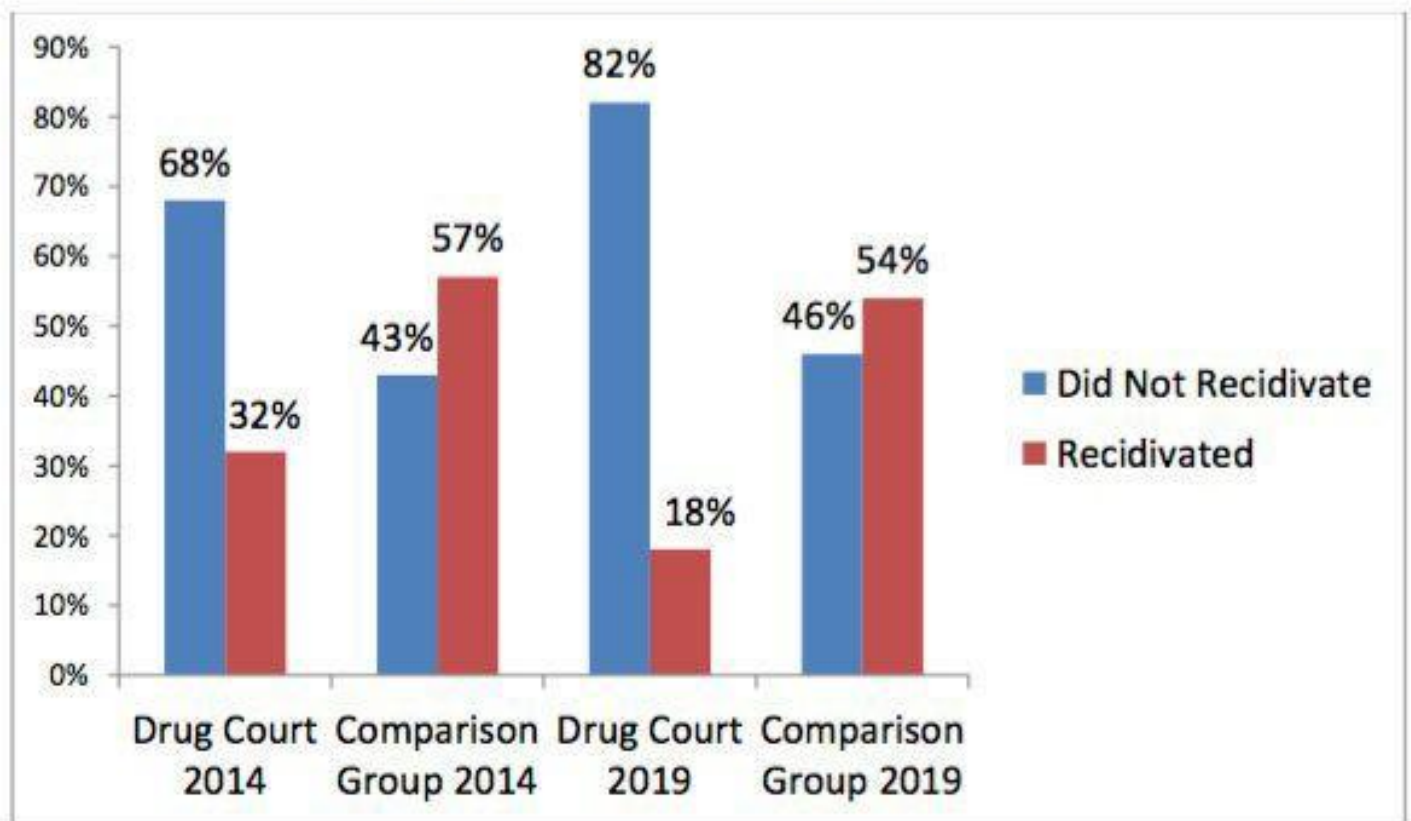
Study says drug court remakes lives

By Laura Lane The Herald-Times Apr 3, 2019

Drug court, it pays off.

An Indiana University School of Social Work professor's evaluation of Monroe County's 20-year-old Drug Treatment Court found that participants are much less likely to commit other crimes than drug offenders who do not participate in drug court.

***Drug Court and Comparison Group Recidivism Rates
Comparing the 2014 and 2019 Program Evaluations***

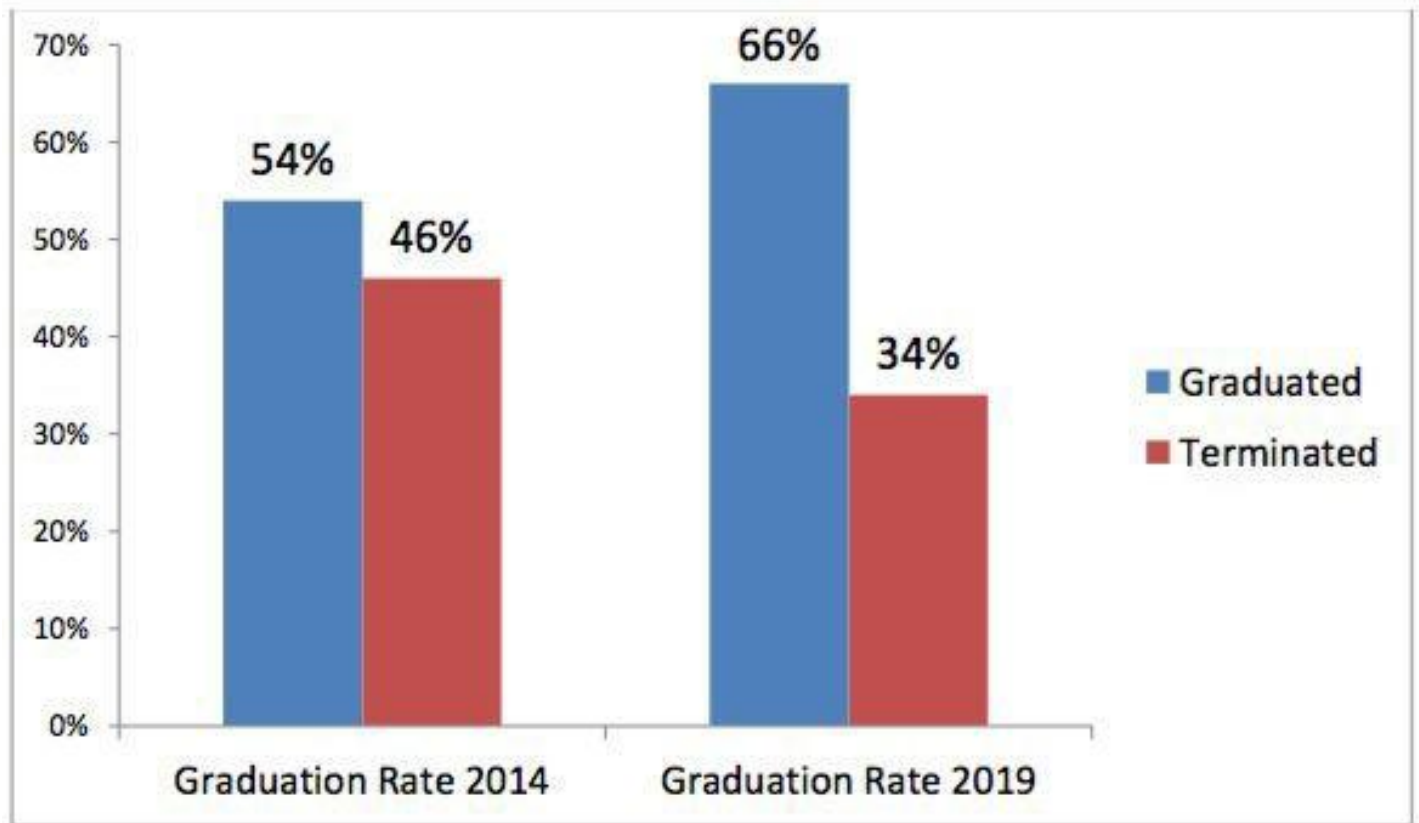


From the Program Evaluation of the Monroe County (Indiana) Drug Court, by Dr. John R. Gallagher, Indiana University School of Social Work.

While 54 percent of non-drug court participants got arrested again, just 18 percent of those in drug court committed further crimes. What is called the recidivism rate has decreased dramatically in recent years, associate professor John R. Gallagher's study showed; it was 32 percent in 2014 and 18 percent as of 2019.

More participants are finding success in drug court as well. In 2014, 54 percent graduated. In 2018, the graduation rate was 66 percent.

***Drug Court Graduation Rates
Comparing the 2014 and 2019 Program Evaluations***



From the Program Evaluation of the Monroe County (Indiana) Drug Court, by Dr. John R. Gallagher, Indiana University School of Social Work.

Women are more likely to succeed than men, he found, and married people are more successful in drug court as well.

The study surveyed 116 drug court participants and 54 other drug offenders who were eligible but chose not to participate in drug court.

A news release about the study from the county probation department said drug court “is an effective program at reducing recidivism and a valuable resource for individuals who have substance use disorders, the community, and other stakeholders.”

The study revealed that drug court personnel, and the judge in particular, play a vital role in helping participants find a way to address and end their addiction to drugs. “Respondents felt that praise from the judge was one of the most helpful incentives they received,” Gallagher wrote in a summary.

Monroe County Chief Probation Officer Linda Brady said the evaluation confirmed some things and provided insights directly from people in the drug court program.

“I was surprised to learn the importance to program participants of receiving praise and positive words from the judge,” Brady said. “If you watch a drug court session, you can see how Judge Diekhoff is able to connect with each participant on a personal level, even when she is delivering a consequence for failure to obey program rules.”

That would be Monroe Circuit Judge MaryEllen Diekhoff, who oversees drug court every Wednesday morning starting at 7 a.m.

“I have seen participants improve their lives and the lives of their family members,” Diekhoff said in the news release about the study. “Graduating participants provide inspiration to participants who may be struggling through tough situations. This program improves community safety by reducing re-offending and diverts offenders from incarceration so that they are able to make positive contributions to their families and the community.”

Gallagher’s 24-page report features quotes from drug court participants about how the program has affected their lives. Several said encouragement from the judge was vital to their success, and that they look forward to updating her every week about their challenges and hopes for the future without drugs.

“I believe the judge is very supportive and I like seeing her each week,” said a woman in the program three months. “I came into drug court eight months pregnant. When the time came for me to have my baby, and after the fact and up until now, they have been supportive. I feel like I can have a real conversation with the judge about my life and parenting. She gives good advice and I enjoy checking in with her. I feel like I can reach out to her and know she will be there and be super supportive.”

Steve Malone is the drug court director. "This evaluation shows that the program is getting better at reducing recidivism, graduating more felony offenders, and is a valuable resource for those individuals who have substance use disorders and for the Monroe County community," he said, "using effective and innovative tools to help those suffering from addiction."

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