

TEAM ASAC

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ASAC staffing occurs on Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m., 17th floor courthouse. Court is held in on Thursdays in Courtroom 131B, 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Second Judicial District

Ramsey County Adult Substance Abuse Court



Program Overview

Ramsey County Courthouse
15 West Kellogg Boulevard
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102
Telephone 651.266.9254
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2002-2009 Summary Statistics

- ❑ **The Ramsey County Adult Substance Abuse Court (ASAC)** is a program designed to provide individuals the opportunity to change life circumstances and break the cycle of substance abuse. The program is unique because it represents a closer working union between criminal justice system partners (judge, prosecuting and defense attorneys, case managers, treatment providers) than is traditionally seen in criminal courts.

The program began in October, 2002 with a grant from the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs. It went on to receive an Implementation Grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance and has received various grant funding from the State of Minnesota. For all practical purposes, the program is self-sustaining, with resources donated as “in-kind” service from the partner agencies. Ramsey County Adult Substance Abuse Court was one of the first four adult drug courts in the state of Minnesota.

- ❑ **Entrance to the program** is obtained one of four ways; Tracks 1-2 through Project Remand, Tracks 3-4 through Ramsey County Community Corrections (probation).
- ❑ **The eligibility criteria for all tracks are:** Ramsey County residency, charged with non-violent felony offense, no violent felony criminal history and have a substance abuse problem. Additionally, there is specific eligibility criteria for each track:

- Track 1 (Diversion): No prior offenses; low level alcohol-drug-and/or drug-related property charge; identified substance abuse problem; other general Diversion criteria
- Track 2 (Pocket Plea): Participant with multiple misdemeanor offenses; low-level alcohol-drug or drug-related property charges, including felonies;
- Track 3 (Post-Plea): Some prior felony offenses; commission of a 3rd, 4th, or 5th degree drug offense or drug-related property offense (e.g. felony theft, forgery or some burglaries)(third degree will be eligible on a case-by-case basis); participant pleads guilty.
- Track 4 (Probation Violation): Technical violation; recommendation of probation officer and approval by sentencing judge; participant admits violation; criminal record of present/past violent offenses will be staffed on a case by case basis.

Number of participants served in the program: 213
Number of active participants: 45 (21%)
Number of graduates: 89 (42%)
Number of non-completers¹: 79 (37%)

Average length of time in the program for graduates: 646.25 days (1.77 years).

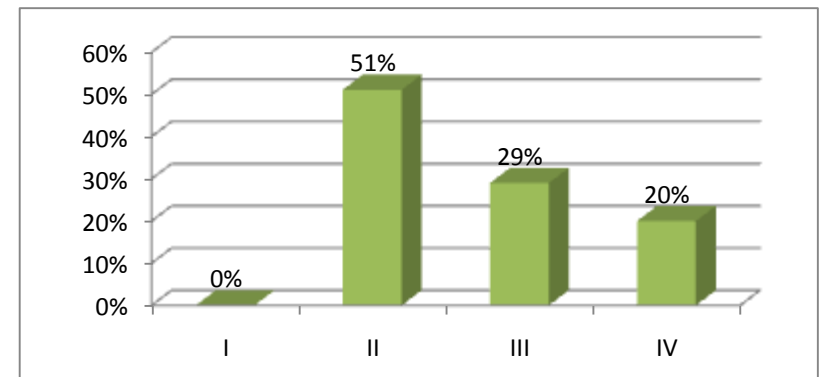
Average length of time in the program for non-completers: 330.56 days (0.91 years).

Average age of Current ASAC Participants: 33.16 years

Race and Gender of Current ASAC Participants

White	African American	Hispanic	Asian
64.4%	24.4%	4.4%	6.7%
Women	Men		
42.2%	57.8%		

Percentage of Participants by Track



¹ The ASAC program is voluntary; therefore, the number of non-completers reflects anyone who was accepted into the program, but did not graduate. This includes participants who: failed to comply with the program, chose to no longer participate, absconded, died, or had their cases transferred out of Ramsey County.

“Fishbowl” drawings are held prior to the start of the calendar starting. If a participant has completed all requirements and responsibilities for the week, their name is entered in a drawing. Possible prizes (one winner each court session) include tee-shirts, baseball caps, household items, gift cards.

- **Participants receive a “Passport” during court from their case manager.** The “passport” is a summary of their responsibilities and requirements as well as program goals they should be working on. It needs to be filled out and turned in each court session when they will receive a new one for the upcoming week(s).
- **Participants are called to the bench and talk with the judge** regarding their progress as discussed during staffing. Those participants that are “fishbowl” compliant may be called at the beginning of the calendar with those needing program adjustments or sanctions called later in the calendar.

Sanctions are administered immediately for program or case plan non-compliance. ASAC uses a “graduated” approach to applying sanctions, utilizing the least invasive measure first and gradually moving towards a higher level of response. Sanctions can include: increased case management meetings, court appearances, drug testing; writing assignments; community work service; Sentence to Service; return to earlier phase requirements, curfew, escalating periods of jail.

- **The team will staff unforeseen situations** during court with the judge, who then administers the necessary action. If warranted, participants are taken into custody from court, or given a date and time to turn themselves in to jail as the result of being non-compliant.
- **Sobriety milestones** are acknowledged by giving participants a medallion corresponding with the anniversary (example, thirty days, one year). Other sober dates are also noted. **Phase movements** occur once an individual’s application has been approved by the team. **Graduations** are celebrated in court by the team and all participants. Cake, cap and gown, graduation certificate and a custom made ASAC medallion are all provided for the participant. Graduates encouraged to invite guests to witness their accomplishment.

We all have changes in our lives that are more or less second chances

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□ **Disposition of cases** varies according to Track and successful completion of the program:

- Track 1: there will not be a finding of guilt or conviction;
- Track 2: the guilty plea will not be accepted and the charges dismissed;
- Track 3: there will not be an initial requirement to complete jail or prison time (as part of the sentence) and are eligible for early discharge from probation;
- Track 4: there is not an execution of sentence (prison term) based on the violation and are eligible for early discharge from probation.

Making a positive change

If deemed eligible, this is the process for the participant (Tracks 1-3):

- Upon arrest, Project Remand conducts a bail evaluation, discusses alcohol/drug use and screens the case for ASAC eligibility using the appropriate criteria.
- If fully eligible, the participant is placed on Conditional Release to Project Remand staff and the case continued for two weeks.
- The participant is instructed to obtain a chemical health assessment (through Project Remand, Ramsey County Chemical Health or their health insurance provider). Project Remand staff will assist them in getting involved in treatment as soon as possible.
- The case is referred to the ASAC Court Team for discussion and program consideration. The participant is given a date to observe the court process (the next possible Thursday upon release from jail or after initial hearing) and meet the team. Cases are reviewed by the Team on a weekly basis, with new participants entering the program on a continual basis.
- If the participant is not found eligible or approved at any point, the case is referred back to the regular court process.

Track 4: The supervising probation officer or original sentencing judge can make a referral to the ASAC team to consider the case for the program. Should the defendant not be accepted or decide not to participate, the case will proceed along the routine probation violation process (which may include execution of sentence).

Structure

- ❑ **Program requirements for the abstinence-based program include:** chemical dependency assessment and treatment, assessment for participation in other programming (cognitive learning groups, mental health interventions), random alcohol and drug testing, regular court appearances, case management meetings, attendance of community support groups, obtain employment or pursue education, participate in pro-social activities, pay restitution and program fees.
- ❑ **The program is 16-24 months in length** and divided into three phases, each minimally four months in length. Participants are required to apply for movement through the program using a formal application process. They must demonstrate completion of general phase requirements as well as specific case plan goals. Advancing through the phases will result in decreased court appearances, reduced random drug testing and case management meetings. In order to graduate, they must have a minimum of six months sobriety and fill out a “Life Plan” graduation application. A formal graduation ceremony takes place after successful completion of the program.
- ❑ The Alumni Group is a mandatory support meeting for all Phase 3 participants. The meetings are held once per month in the community, facilitated by a volunteer. The structure of the meeting promotes honesty and self-disclosure away from the court process and team in a confidential and safe place. Failure to follow through with attendance results in a sanction.
- ❑ **Program fees are:** Track 1-2 - \$300.00; Track 3-4 - \$200.00. Fees must be paid in full upon acceptance or on a scheduled payment plan (payments minimally once per month). Participants are also responsible for repaying any restitution prior to graduation.

Staffing and Court

- **Ramsey County Substance Abuse Court (ASAC) staffing** occurs each week on Thursday morning from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m., 17th floor conference room of the Ramsey County Courthouse.
- **The disciplines represented at the staffing table include:** judge, county attorney, defense attorney, case managers (Project Remand, Tracks 1-2, Ramsey County Community Corrections (probation) Tracks 3-4), case screener, chemical health assessor, treatment provider, psychiatric nurse, coordinator.
- **Case managers prepare brief, written updates** on each participant which is provided to and reviewed with the entire team. Input on sanctions, incentives or other program related responsibilities imposed on participants is provided, with decisions arrived at by consensus.
- **The Psychiatric Court Clinic (PCC) provides psychiatric services** that are intended to bridge the gap between immediate intervention and community resources. Any participant that is referred by their case manager, regardless of insurance status is eligible to receive service if there is a belief psychiatric intervention is necessary or would be beneficial.

The PCC is staffed by a psychiatrist and psychiatric nurse with intakes occurring on a weekly basis. Participants meet with the doctor and nurse during court sessions for case review and medication checks. Updates are provided at staffing provided for all active PCC patients (i.e. court participants) verbally during staffing by the nurse.
- **Court review hearings** occur each week on Thursday afternoon from 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. in Courtroom 131B, first floor of the Ramsey County Courthouse. Members of the staffing team are present during the sessions (with the exception of the treatment representative).
- **Participants sit together (jury box and gallery) and are instructed to keep conversation to a minimum** to learn and provide peer support to each other. Family and significant others are welcome to observe court. Children are permitted in the courtroom if the parent is unable to obtain childcare.