



THE ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACTS  
AND BENEFITS OF

# ACCOUNTABILITY COURT PROGRAMS

IN GEORGIA



EVIDENCE FROM A SURVEY  
OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

# ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND BENEFITS OF 1,729 PROGRAM GRADUATES



In FY 2017

**1,729**

participants graduated from Georgia's  
accountability court programs

Each graduate produces

**\$22,129**

in economic benefits  
to the state



“**Drug Court** has given me a second chance at life and allowed me to **learn the tools to stay sober**. I now live a normal life, not just for myself, but also for my **children, parents, and siblings**. They feel like Drug Court has helped them to get their son and brother back. If it wasn't for the program, there is no telling where I would be. **Thank you for holding me accountable for all my actions.**”

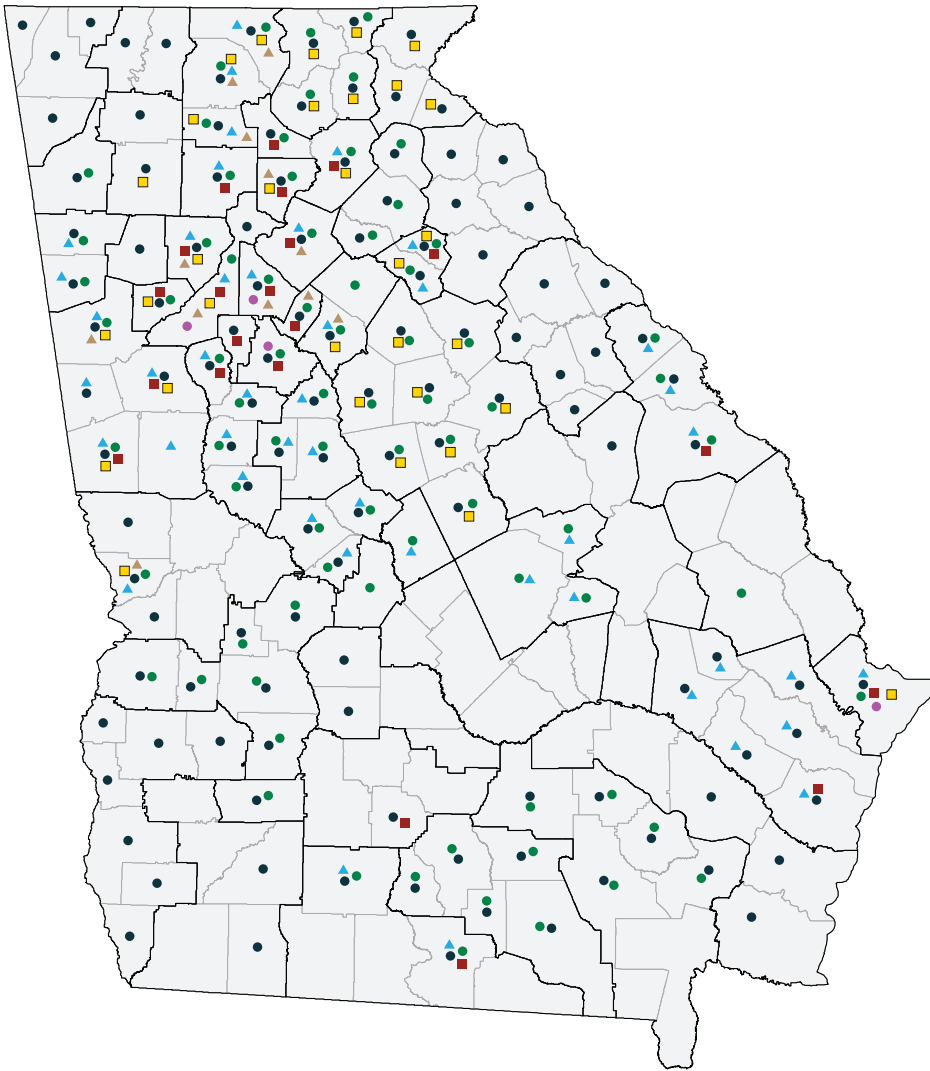
“**Family Treatment Court** has helped me **change my life**. I have almost 10 months clean, a good job, got out of my domestic violence relationship, and am in the process of getting my daughter back. **I am happy and living a real life.**”

“ I was originally supposed to go to prison on this sentence, so I fought to get the **Mental Health Court**. **Going to prison just teaches you more how to be a criminal, and I'm not a criminal**. Mental Health Court has **given me another chance at life.**”

## TEN KEY COMPONENTS OF A DRUG COURT

- 1 Drug courts integrate alcohol and other drug treatment services with justice system case processing.
- 2 Using a non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights.
- 3 Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the drug court program.
- 4 Drug courts provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.
- 5 Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.
- 6 A coordinated strategy governs drug court responses to participants' compliance.
- 7 Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant is essential.
- 8 Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness.
- 9 Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court planning, implementation, and operations.
- 10 Forging partnerships among drug courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances drug court effectiveness.

# ACCOUNTABILITY COURT PROGRAM LOCATIONS



## MAP LEGEND

- Felony/Drug
- Mental Health
- ▲ Veterans Treatment
- DUI/Drug
- Family Treatment
- ▲ Juvenile Drug
- Juvenile Mental Health

**Drug Court** provides an alternative to traditional justice system case processing. These programs keep individuals in treatment long enough for it to work, while supervising them closely. For a period of 18 to 24 months, participants are provided with intensive treatment, held accountable by the Drug Court judge for meeting their obligations to the court, society, themselves and their families through random drug tests, regular court appearances, and sanctions for failure to meet their obligations.

**DUI Court** is an accountability court program designed to change the behavior of repeat offenders arrested for DUI. The purpose of the program is to protect public safety by combining treatment of the underlying substance abuse problem with intensive supervision and testing to address the root cause of impaired driving.

**Mental Health Court** participants agree to take responsibility for the criminal charge by following a personalized treatment program that addresses their mental health condition and any substance abuse issues. Like drug court programs, participants are monitored closely by staff as they progress through the program.

**Family Treatment Court** is a program that uses individualized assessment, comprehensive behavioral and substance abuse treatment, and family support services to help break the cycle of addiction, stabilize families, and ensure the wellbeing of children.

**Veterans Court** programs are based on the drug court and mental health court models. They seek to keep veterans out of the criminal justice system by providing them with counseling, substance abuse treatment, and mental health treatment. These programs often incorporate veterans as mentors to assist in helping each participant with their individual needs.



The first **DUI courts** in Georgia were in **Chatham, Hall, and Clarke** counties in **2002**. There are now **149 accountability court programs** including **10** that began operations in **2017**.

# SPENDING FOR ACCOUNTABILITY COURT PARTICIPANTS SAVES ALMOST \$5,000

## ACCOUNTABILITY COURT PROGRAM GRADUATE

**\$15,523**

**\$9,682** state funds

- **\$8,123** state grant
- **\$1,559** prosecutors/public defenders

**\$5,841** local/federal funds

- Court costs
- Counseling
- Drug tests
- Supervision

## TRADITIONAL ADJUDICATION AND INCARCERATION

**\$20,230**

- Incarceration
- Probation

## OTHER ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

### ADDITIONAL BENEFITS PER GRADUATE

- **\$1,932** in fees paid
- **\$700** in Georgia income tax paid
- **\$1,134** in community service

### COSTS AVOIDED PER GRADUATE

- **\$4,685** health care
- **\$2,300** foster care system
- **\$6,700** victim and societal costs from recidivism





**CJCC** has been the administrating agency of the funding directed towards accountability courts in Georgia since Governor Deal's Criminal Justice Reform efforts began in 2011. CJCC awards and administers funding, as directed by the Council of Accountability Court Judges, along with providing technical assistance in grants management to local courts throughout the state. The CJCC staff works in conjunction with the CACJ and local courts to provide resources and to ensure the success of Georgia's accountability courts.

In 2015, the General Assembly passed HB 328 and created the **Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ)**, leading to increased statewide collaboration among courts. The purpose of the council will be to effectively carry forth the constitutional by-laws and legislative responsibility to improve accountability courts and their quality through the expertise of judges. Another purpose and focus will be to establish standards and practices for all Accountability Court divisions based on the National Drug Court Institute and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration with a state goal of reducing recidivism of offenders with drug abuse problems. Further still, the CACJ strives to make accountability courts work for all Georgians by providing a unified framework that promotes and improves the quality, accessibility and administration of accountability courts. CACJ membership consists of judges who preside over Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Veterans Treatment Court, DUI Court, and Family Treatment Court divisions.

This report was developed  
and designed by the



Carl Vinson  
Institute of Government  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Since 1927, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government has been an integral part of the University of Georgia. A public service and outreach unit of the university, the Institute of Government is the largest and most comprehensive university-based organization serving governments in the United States through research services, customized assistance, training and development, and the application of technology.

Revised July 2018