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## NEBRASKA JUDICIAL BRANCH PROGRAM AND PROJECT QUICK LOOK

### Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts

Nebraska problem-solving courts are an institution of the Nebraska Supreme Court utilizing innovative court programs through which individuals and families thrive and all Nebraska communities become safer.

#### Origin & Authorization

Nebraska Revised Statute 24-1301 (*Problem-solving courts - alternatives to incarceration in Nebraska.*)  
Nebraska Revised Statute 29-2246 (*Authorized probation personnel to operate problem-solving courts.*)  
Nebraska Revised Statute 24-1301 and 24-1302, and section 29-2246 (*Expanded definition of problem-solving courts to include Veterans Treatment Courts, Mental Health Courts, and Reentry Court.*)  
Nebraska Supreme Court Rules § 6-1201 et seq. (*Rules on problem-solving courts.*)

#### Program Overview

Nebraska problem-solving courts operate within the district, county or juvenile courts in all 12 Nebraska Judicial Districts. Most problem-solving courts in Nebraska operate under the Administrative Office of Probation, with the exception of the Adult Drug Courts in Douglas and Lancaster Counties, and the Central Nebraska Adult Drug Court, which serves the 9th and 10th Judicial/Probation Districts. Family Drug Courts typically operate within both the Courts and the Department of Health and Human Services. Problem-solving courts are post-plea or post-adjudicatory, intensive supervision treatment programs designed for high-risk and high-need individuals. Nebraska problem-solving courts can only be established with the approval of the Nebraska Supreme Court. All Nebraska problem-solving courts are governed by the Nebraska Supreme Court Committee on Problem-Solving Courts under the direction of the Nebraska Supreme Court. Problem-solving courts reduce recidivism and increase community safety through a comprehensive and coordinated court response utilizing early assessment and intervention, individualized treatment, intensive community supervision and consistent judicial oversight. All Nebraska problem-solving courts adhere to established standards. Nebraska problem-solving court models include Adult Drug and DUI Courts, Veterans Treatment Courts, Reentry Courts, Juvenile Drug Courts, Young Adult Courts and Family Dependency Courts.

#### Priorities

##### » Reduce recidivism and increase community safety through a comprehensive and coordinated court response.

- Problem-solving courts in Nebraska operate under a team approach where a judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, coordinator, community supervision officer, law enforcement representative and treatment provider(s) work together to design an individualized program. Compliance with treatment and court orders is verified by frequent alcohol/drug testing, close community supervision and interaction with a Judge in non-adversarial court review hearings. Problem-solving courts enhance close monitoring of participants using home and field visits.

##### » Utilize evidence-based practices identified by scientific research, literature and best practice standards.

- All problem-solving court participants are screened and assessed for substance use, criminogenic risk to reoffend, mental health concerns, trauma history and trauma-related symptoms.

## Priorities

### » **Facilitate access to problem-solving courts regardless of an individual's geographical location, financial status, gender, age, race, religion, physical or mental disability or ethnicity.**

- In Fiscal Year 17-18 Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts served nearly 1400 individuals.
- The average per-day cost to supervise a PSC participant is approximately \$7.85 or \$2,856 per year.
- Due to resource limitations, not all individuals and families in Nebraska have access to problem-solving courts. Judges and community partners are currently working to organize and plan problem-solving court expansion in the event additional resources become available.
- In April 2016, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB919, which authorized the expansion of the definition of problem-solving courts to include Veterans Treatment Courts, Reentry Courts (for those leaving incarceration) and Mental Health Courts.
- The Nebraska Supreme Court's Committee on Problem-Solving Courts is presently working on standards for Mental Health and Family Dependency Courts with a target completion date of April 2019.

## Accomplishments

- ▶ In 2018, the 2012 Nebraska Problem-Solving Court Strategic Plan was closed successfully.
- ▶ The Nebraska Supreme Court authorized the establishment of Nebraska's first Reentry Court in the 9th Judicial District on August 23, 2017. The Nebraska Supreme Court authorized the establishment of the Reentry Court in the 2nd Judicial District on January 3, 2018.
- ▶ In 2017, all of Nebraska's Adult Drug Court and Veterans Treatment Court teams completed a two-day training on best practice standards.
- ▶ On November 4, 2016, Nebraska's first Veterans Treatment Court began operation in Douglas County. A second Veterans Court opened on April 19, 2017 in Lancaster County.
- ▶ Since 2015, best practice standards for Adult Drug and DUI Courts, Veterans Treatment Courts and Reentry Courts have been collaboratively developed by stakeholders across Nebraska and approved by the Nebraska Supreme Court.

## Looking Forward

### **Problem-solving courts continue to identify goals and policies required to ensure Nebraska's Problem-Solving Courts operate effectively and efficiently.**

- In 2019, stakeholders across Nebraska will partner with national experts to begin working on a 2019-2024 Nebraska Problem-Solving Court Strategic Plan.
- In 2019, Nebraska Problem-Solving Court teams will have increased access to local and national problem-solving court-specific training through a partnership with Nebraska Judicial Branch Education.
- Problem-solving courts must operate consistently and be offered in more jurisdictions if they are to continue to advance as one of Nebraska's most effective responses to the problems of drug addiction, mental health, and associated crime.

## Contacts

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## References

Nebraska Supreme Court Rules: [www.supremecourt.nebraska.gov/supreme-court-rules/ch6/art12](http://www.supremecourt.nebraska.gov/supreme-court-rules/ch6/art12)  
Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts: [www.court.nol.org/problem-solving/](http://www.court.nol.org/problem-solving/)