

# Drug Treatment Court

## Breaking the Cycle of Addiction and Crime in Alberta

The Alberta Court of Justice began the Drug Treatment Court (DTC) in December 2005 to help people break the cycle of addiction and crime.<sup>1,2</sup> The program allows people with non-violent offences to avoid jail by completing a drug treatment program, typically lasting 1–2 years, that supports their recovery.<sup>1</sup> The program includes things like detox, counselling, group therapy, and help with jobs, housing, and mental health.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Participants also learn skills like budgeting, building healthy relationships, and preventing relapse.<sup>3</sup> They must attend court regularly, take drug tests, and follow a structured plan with clear goals.<sup>1,3</sup> To graduate,

participants must complete at least 12 months, remain drug-free for 6 months, avoid new charges, and demonstrate a stable, healthy lifestyle.<sup>3</sup> Graduates typically avoid jail and are placed on 12 months of probation with continued support.<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows positive outcomes, including a more than 50% drop in drug-related sentencing in Vancouver DTC graduates.<sup>4</sup> In Winnipeg, 85.5% of DTC graduates avoided serious reoffending within two years, compared to 59.2% of those who did not complete the program.<sup>5</sup> Potential cost savings in Canada are estimated between 20% and 88% in reduced incarcerations.<sup>2</sup>

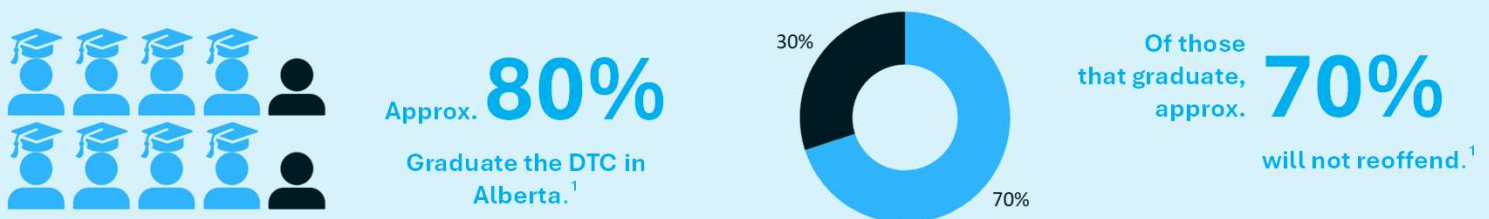
### Program Eligibility<sup>1,6</sup>

- Be 18 years or older
- Have committed a drug-driven crime (to support an addiction to substances like cocaine, heroin, meth, or other opiates)
- Face non-violent criminal charges
- Enter a guilty plea to the charges

### Commitment & Requirements<sup>1,6</sup>

- Duration: 12–24 months
- Court: Attend drug treatment court weekly
- Monitoring: Submit to frequent, random drug tests
- Community Service: Complete 100+ volunteer hours
- Treatment: Participate in residential/day programs and build recovery skills

**FIGURE 1. PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES FROM ALBERTA COURT OF JUSTICE.<sup>1</sup>**



**FIGURE 2. PARTICIPANT QUOTES FROM THE CALGARY DTC.<sup>3</sup>**

- “The judge looked me in the eye and listened. That was new for me.”
- “The alumni I met showed me it was possible.”
- “It’s hard, but prison doesn’t change you. Calgary Drug Treatment Court does.”
- “Before, I’d use as soon as I was anxious. Now I have other tools- breathing, writing, just talking it out.”
- “Now the only time I’m in court is for graduation or support meetings.”

#### References:

1. <https://albertacourts.ca/cj/areas-of-law/criminal/special-courts/DTCurt>
2. <https://www.ccsa.ca/drug-treatment-courts-evidence-based-review-recommendations-improvement>
3. CDTC-2025Evaluation-Final\_Sep15-25.pdf
4. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0306624X13479770>
5. <https://utppublishing.com/doi/10.3138/cjccj.2018-0035>
6. <https://calgarydrugtreatmentcourt.org/faqs/>

#### Resources:

- Addiction Helpline at 1-866-332-2322 or the Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP) at 1-844-383-7688.