



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COURT SERVICES AND OFFENDER SUPERVISION AGENCY &
PRETRIAL SERVICES AGENCY
RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE**

RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT

DATE: January 5, 2010

I. RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Principal Researcher: Heathcote W. Wales, Georgetown University Law Center; and Virginia Aldigé Hiday, North Carolina State University.

Title: DC Mental Health Court Evaluation

Institution: Georgetown University Law Center and North Carolina State University.

Description: This is a two-year pre-post design using PSA data to compare criminal activity for all MHDC participants in the first two years of the MHDC's existence for the two years preceding the charges leading to their MHC participation, with the two years after leaving MHDC. Three hypotheses will be tested: 1) Criminal activity will be significantly lower in the two years after MHC exit than in the two years prior to MHDC entry for defendants that graduate; 2) The change in criminal activity from pre-key arrest to two years after MHC exit for the MHC group and two years after court disposition for the comparison group will represent a significantly greater decline for the MHC group; and 3) MHDC defendants that perceive more deterrence, greater procedural justice, less coercion, greater effectiveness, more positive feelings, and greater satisfaction with MHDC processes and decisions will be more likely to graduate and will have greater declines in criminal activity than other MHC defendants.

Researchers plan to use a quasi-experimental design using a comparison group of defendants eligible for MHDC, but not enrolled. For a subsample of the MHDC group, we are currently conducting structured interviews while they are in MHC. The interview investigates their experiences in MHC with measures that drug court and mandated treatment studies have found to be predictive of behavior change.

This study applies to PSA only.

Type of Data, subjects and Analysis: Researchers propose a two-year pre-post quantitative analysis of criminal activity of all defendants who participated in the MHC in its first two years, accounting for defendant characteristics, treatment history, criminal justice history, and legal process variables; and a quasi-experimental design comparing the MHDC group to defendants eligible for MHDC during the same two-year window, but not enrolled in MHDC. Researchers also will use quantitative and qualitative analyses of interview data with MHDC defendants.

**CSOSA/PSA RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE
REVIEW RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT**

II. RECOMMENDATION

The RRC recommendation for this study:

Support **Support with Conditions** **Do Not Support**

The RRC finds that the proposed project is considered non-agency research as defined in Research and Evaluation Policy Statement 1201. The RRC recommends support of this request within the scope of one of the follow conditions.

- In order to provide the requested data at the individually identifiable level, the current informed consent form must be modified to include greater specificity regarding the exact information to be collected and over a specified period of time (*i.e.*, which confidential information will be sought from PSA for a two-year period); and signatures obtained for the new consent form from the study participants; or
- PSA provides the researchers the requested analysis dataset with no personal identifiers and with newly created record identifiers.

Further, the RRC notes that approval under either of these conditions will require a minimal commitment of Agency resources.

III. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Regulatory:

The proposed study has received approval from the Institutional Review Board of Georgetown University and North Carolina State University. However, it is the RRC's finding that the approved consent form used does not sufficiently specify the data to be requested and the nature of the use of the data. Therefore, it is not consistent with the standards of Agency policy pertaining to research and evaluation.

I ACCEPT the RRC recommendation 	I DO NOT ACCEPT the RRC recommendation
Susan W. Shaffer., Director, DC Pretrial Services Agency	
Comments: 	