

**P**roblem-solving courts were created to address the underlying issues that result in criminal behavior and to divert participants away from traditional prosecution, incarceration, and other criminal justice system involvement. Of the 3,052 U.S. problem-solving courts in 2012, nearly half (44%) were drug courts or mental health courts (11%).

More than half of courts (53%) reported that they were created prior to 2005, including youth specialty (65%), drug (64%), hybrid DWI/drug (63%), and domestic violence (56%) courts. Fifty-five percent of veterans courts reported being established in 2011 or 2012, and 54% of DWI courts reported being established between 2006 and 2010.

### Characteristics of problem-solving courts

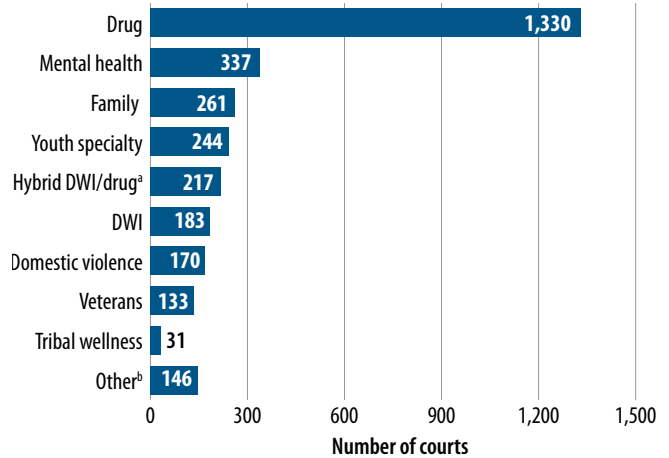
The distribution of problem-solving courts varied depending on the type of court and the size of the population it served. In 2012, about a quarter of courts were either in jurisdictions with populations greater than 500,000 or 50,000 or fewer. More than a third (36%) were located in jurisdictions with populations between 100,001 and 500,000. Large jurisdictions had a high number of veterans, domestic violence, and mental health courts. In comparison, small jurisdictions had a high number of hybrid DWI/drug courts and a disproportionately low number of mental health, domestic violence, and veterans courts.

### Admissions to problem-solving courts

Problem-solving courts also vary by the point at which they intervene in a case. In 2012, more than a third (35%) of problem-solving courts accepted a case at filing or prior to a plea, and nearly two-thirds (64%) accepted a case after a plea was entered. Participants must meet certain criteria to be accepted into a problem-solving court. Individuals with a history of violent (57%) or sex (65%) offenses were ineligible for most problem-solving courts, with the exception of domestic violence and veterans courts.

Juvenile participants remained in problem-solving court programs for a significantly shorter time than adults. The average time in programs was less than 1 year in about two-thirds of juvenile drug courts (65%) and juvenile mental health courts (70%), compared to about a third of adult drug courts (31%) and nearly half of adult mental health courts (49%). Most problem-solving courts reported that

**Problem-solving courts, by type of court, 2012**



<sup>a</sup>Handles alcohol- or drug-dependent offenders also charged with a driving offense.

<sup>b</sup>Includes other courts not shown.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Census of Problem-Solving Courts, 2012.

participants used individual counseling sessions (89%), substance abuse treatment (87%), or life skills training (72%) while in the program.

### Exits from problem-solving court programs

In 2012, more than half (57%) of problem-solving courts reported that 51% or more of exits were by successful program completion. Two-thirds of hybrid DWI/drug courts reported that half or more of exits were by successful program completion. In comparison, 62% of family problem-solving courts had 50% or fewer exits by successful program completion. Tribal wellness (26%) courts reported that no participants successfully completed the court program in 2012.

Most (93%) problem-solving courts reported at least one benefit to participants for successful completion of the program in 2012. Reported benefits included case dismissal (61%), a suspended sentence (40%), and having records expunged (22%). Less than half (44%) of all problem-solving courts tracked graduates after successful program completion in 2012, ranging from 11% of domestic violence courts to 59% of DWI courts.

The full report (*Census of Problem-Solving Courts, 2012*, NCJ 249803), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics can be found at [www.bjs.gov](http://www.bjs.gov).

