



# A Problem-Solving Child Support Court

*Engaging Support Obligor*

**Maryland Judiciary Child Support Symposium  
April 4, 2025**

## Disclaimer

This presentation reflects the individual thoughts and opinions of the presenter. It should not be construed to reflect the official position of the Maryland Judiciary or any other branch of government. This presentation is not intended to serve as legal advice.

## OUTLINE:

1. Problem-Solving Court  
Concept

2. Application to Child  
Support Engagement

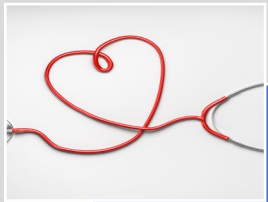
3. Next Steps and  
Resources



# 1. Problem-Solving Court Defined

- The Maryland Judiciary has defined a “problem-solving court program” to mean “a specialized docket or program that addresses matters under a court’s jurisdiction through a **multi-disciplinary** and **integrated approach** incorporating **collaboration** by the court with other governmental entities, community organizations, and parties.” See Maryland Rule 16-207(a).

# PROBLEM SOLVING COURTS



## HEALTH

- Drug Courts
- DUI Courts
- Mental Health Courts



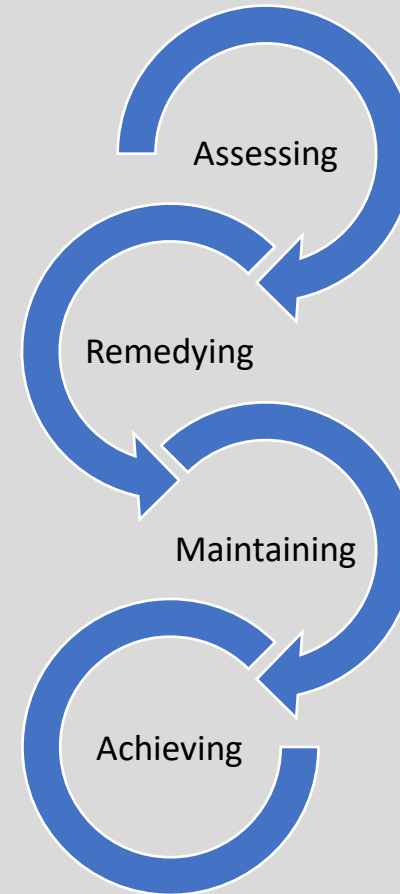
## FAMILIES

- Family Treatment Courts
- Domestic Violence Courts
- Truancy Courts

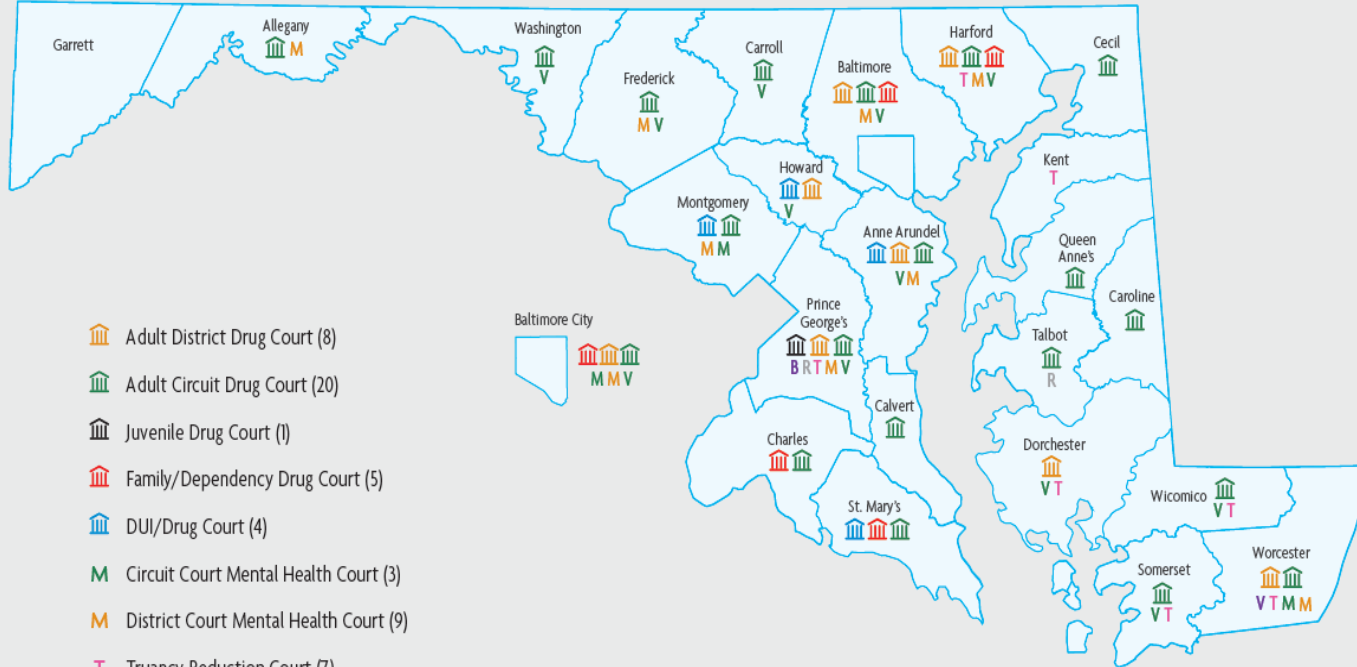


## STATUS

- Veteran's Courts
- Re-Entry Courts
- Homeless Courts



## Operational Problem-Solving Courts in Maryland



# Principles for Success

Targeted population with high-risks/high-needs requiring intensive combination of services and supervision

A non-adversarial approach that avoids stigmatizing, shaming or retraumatizing participants

Equitable access, services and outcomes for all sociodemographic and sociocultural groups

Access to a continuum of professional rehabilitative treatment and recovery services

Regular, consistent monitoring of program participant performance

Delivering fair, effective and safe responses to program performance (Incentives, Sanctions & Service Adjustments)

Access to complementary services to help develop personal, familial, social, cultural and financial recovery capital needed for sustained recovery

Regularly scheduled hearings for judicial oversight and engagement

Monitoring and evaluation of goals, adherence to best practices and outcomes

A coordinated multi-disciplinary team that shares in the mission, values and goals of the program

Partnerships among community organizations and agencies that generate support and enhance programming.



# The Problem-Solving Court Planning Team





# A Problem-Solving Court Process

## Screening/Eligibility

- Identify eligibility
- Appropriateness for program participation

## Phase 1

- Orientation
- Sign Program Agreement (required for all Problem-Solving Court programs)
- Identify service needs with assessments

## Phase 2

- Stabilization
- Engagement with services
- Frequent review hearings

## Phase 3

- Transformation
- Demonstrated improvement with benchmarks
- Less frequent review hearings

## Phase 4

- Maintenance
- Demonstrates consistent compliance with benchmarks
- Achievement/Graduation from program

# Why Problem-Solving Courts?

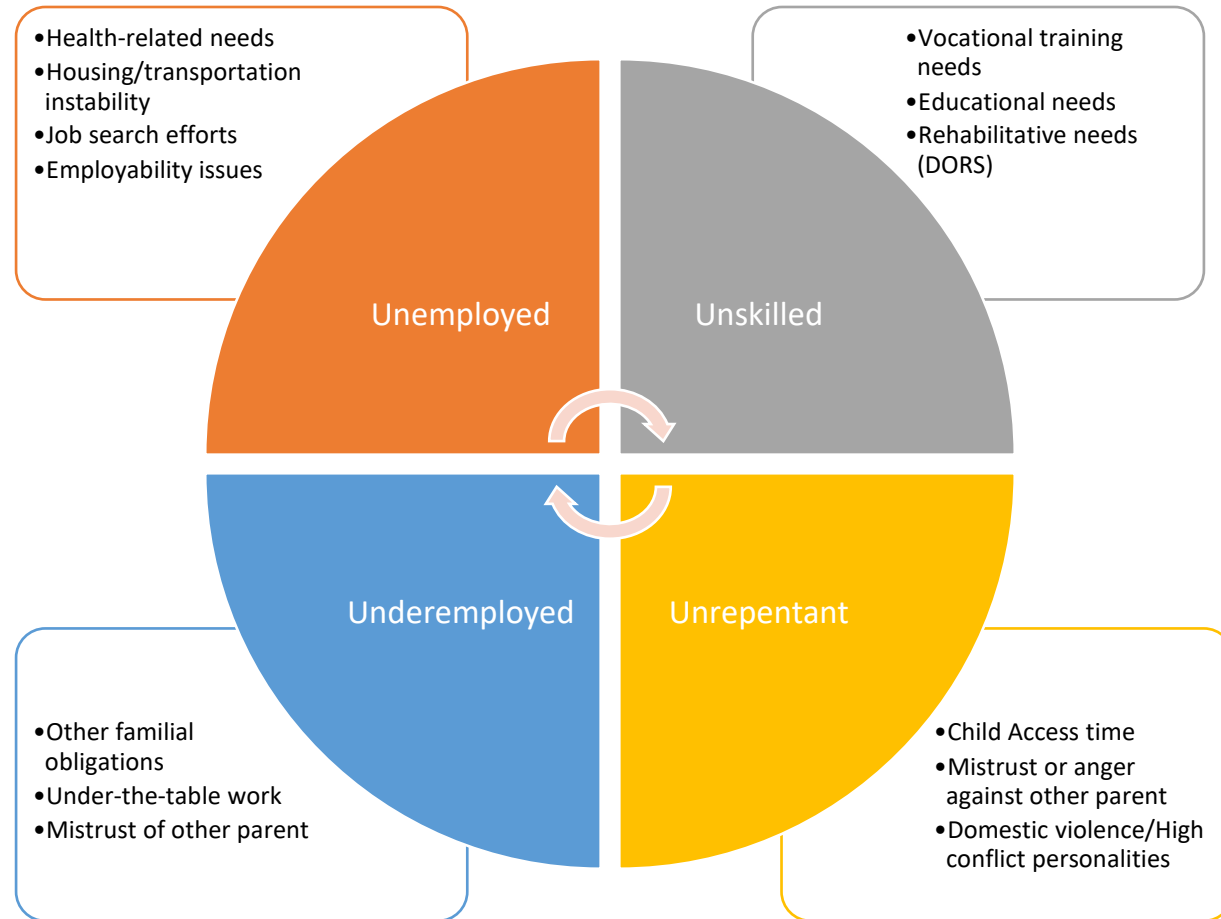
- Ineffective alternatives (i.e. civil contempt)
- Better coordination and tracking of services
- More efficient, targeted use of funding sources
  - NPC Research which found that adult drug courts in Maryland cost \$14,352 less in spending per person than usual criminal justice and societal cost outcomes experienced within the traditional court system. See *FY2024 OPSC Annual Report*.
- Better accountability for program participants and program members
- Successful history with model use (demonstrated modest impact on recidivism in drug courts; positive family outcomes for family-treatment court participants)



## 2. A Child Support Engagement Court

What Could It Look Like?

# Target Population – Support Obligor



# Possible Services – Community Collaboration

Academic/GED/Vocational	Case Management (ID Card; Public Assistance Applications; Etc.)	Childcare	Day Treatment Programs (PHP; IOP; Medication Maintenance Programs)	Developmental Disabilities supports (DORS)	Family Therapy
Food Instability Supports	Group/Individual Counseling	Halfway House	Job Counseling and Training	Legal Assistance (i.e. expungement, custody/visitation, landlord/tenant, etc.)	Life-skills Training (i.e. parenting classes; budgeting & personal finance; resume writing; etc.)
Mediation	Mental Health	Parenting time plans	Primary Healthcare & Dental Healthcare	Substance Abuse Treatment	Supportive Employment services
		Transportation Assistance	Utility Assistance		

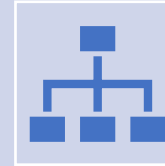
## Why would they participate?

- Dismissal of civil contempt if successfully complete program
- Increased access to numerous supportive services and therefore increased likelihood of more achievement in life
- Impact on IV-D administrative sanctions? (i.e. driver's license suspension; financial intercepts; credit reporting, etc.)
- Reduction of state-owed arrearages?
- Impact on charging of support obligation? (due process considerations for support oblige)
- Avoid referral for criminal contempt/criminal non-support
- Others?

# Case Management



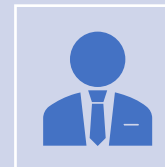
A program/case manager serves as a central point for referral to an array of ancillary services to support treatment court participants. The manager arranges, coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and advocates for a package of services designed to meet the specific complex needs of a client and his/her family.



The individualized service plan identifies priorities, desired outcomes, and strategies and resources to be used to obtain outcomes. The manager must periodically reassess the client to update the individual service plan for its effectiveness and the progress of attaining desired outcomes.



Although at least a bachelor's degree in a field such as psychology, social work, counseling or other similar human services field would be preferred, experience with work in case management in these areas could be substituted for educational qualifications based on the needs and expectations of the particular program. Standard background checks (including criminal history) should be included as part of the recruitment process.



Applicants for the position should understand the duality of their role with case management. At some level, they should expect to advocate for their program participants. However, the court will need to have reporting of non-compliant behaviors to address participant accountability.



# Incentives & Sanctions

Awards

Prizes

All Star Board

Paying for  
services/needs

Virtual  
Appearance

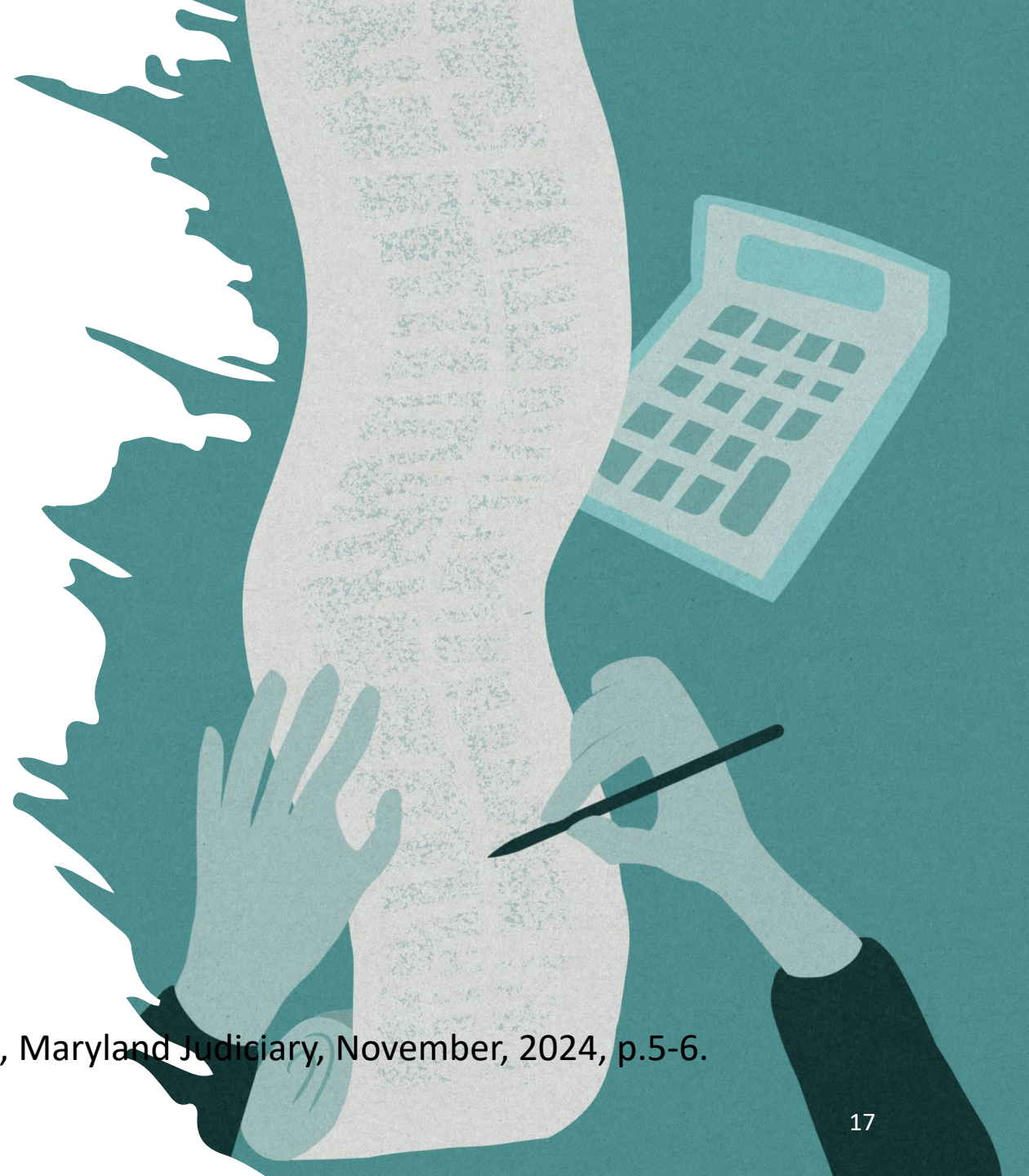
Incentive  
Events (i.e.  
pizza party)

- Writing Assignments
- Increased review hearings
- Holding hearing over
- Community Service
- Phase demotion\*
- Removal from program
- Referral for criminal contempt/non-support

# Funding

- Office of Problem-Solving Courts (OPSC), Maryland Judiciary
  - In FY2024, OPSC provided \$8.2 million in grants to directly support problem-solving courts across Maryland. Funds were used for staffing, treatment, drug testing, travel and training, remote court needs, and ancillary services that directly benefit PSC participants.
  - OPSC provides direct assistance, expertise, and guidance to PSCs, helping them to improve operations, services, and communications. PSC teams may address protocol development, ancillary and treatment services, funding opportunities, court proceedings, and role clarification through this assistance. Teams also discuss and devise plans to institute new research and evidence-based practices into their current operations.

See: *Fiscal Year 2024 Problem-Solving Courts Annual Report*, Maryland Judiciary, November, 2024, p.5-6.





# Funding (cont.)

- Family Jurisdictional Grants, Family & Juvenile Services, Administrative Office of the Courts
  - Every county has a family services program that provides a variety of case management and supplementary administrative services in support of litigants in domestic cases. Circuit Courts may considers submitting some of the costs associated with a child support problem-solving courts through this grant request.





# Funding (cont.)

- Cooperative Reimbursement Agreement (CRA) (45 C.F.R. 302.34)
  - Federal law provides that every state child support program must enter into cooperative reimbursement agreements with appropriate courts to establish reimbursable expenses for court services provided to the child support agency in carrying out the functions of the program, including establishing paternity and securing support. These CRA's are administered through the cooperative efforts of the IV-D agency and the Administrative Office of the Courts.
  - Example: Baltimore County's Family Employment and Support Program's case manager is covered 66% by a CRA, and the remaining 33% is covered through that court's Family Jurisdictional Grant request.





# Funding (cont.)

- Federal Waivers through Child Support Administration (42 U.S.C. 1315)
  - Section 1115 of the Social Security Act provides the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with the waiver authority to fund demonstration projects for the IV-D child support program. These time-limited projects must promote the objectives of the program and be designed to improve the financial well-being of children or the operation of the program. This waiver program requires the requesting agency to invest new funds to pay their share of the cost (one-third) of the pilot activities, and private funding sources may be used for this purpose.
  - There are evaluation requirements on the IV-D agency that are part of the planning and application process for this funding.



# Funding (cont.)

- Employment and Training Services for Noncustodial Parents in the Child Support Program (45 C.F.R. 302, 303, 304 & 309)
  - Effective January 13, 2025, this rule allows state IV-D programs the option to use Federal financial participation (FFP) available under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to provide the following employment and training services to eligible non-custodial parents:
    - Job search assistance
    - Job development and placement services
    - Job retention services
    - Occupational training
    - Job readiness training
    - Skills assessments
    - Work supports
    - Other skills training directly related to work

The IV-D agency would need to submit an updated State Plan for federal approval upon electing to provide these employment and training services. The Plan must address how the IV-D agency has consulted with other enumerated employment-related program agencies (WIOA, TANF, SNAP, etc.) to avoid duplication of public services.

# Evaluation & Monitoring

- Funding sources may have different reporting requirements
- Planning Team should establish data benchmarks for tracking, such as:
- Length of time in the program? Current phase status?
- How many jobs?
- How many interviews they went on?
- How much child support?
- How many payments? Regularity of payments?
- Maintaining sobriety/Attending a substance abuse program?
- Attend Mental health services program?
- How many classes? Continuing education? Training? GED obtained?
- Interview skills training attended?
- Parenting classes attended?
- Potential Certificates obtained?
- Referred versus Completed?
- Increased time with child?
- Expungement program attended?
- Mediation attended?





# 3. Next steps?



Reach out to the Office of Problem-Solving Courts for technical guidance



Meet with your County Administrative Judge



Create a local planning team



Draft a detailed plan for a Problem-Solving Court program in your county with involvement of all appropriate team partners



Submission of the plan in a form approved by the State Court Administrator to the Office of Problem-Solving Courts



Approval by Chief Justice

# Top Ten Tips for Program Planning

1. Active involvement of the Court, IV-D agency and community partners (such as employers) is important.
2. Be flexible.
3. Have well-defined structure to the program establishing clear expectations and boundaries.
4. The program does not have to be an approved Problem-Solving Court to exist, but if approved, will benefit from added planning and funding opportunities.
5. Committed and consistent court leadership (assigned judge).

# Top Ten Tips for Program Planning (cont.)

6. Be open to exploring all funding sources, including federal, state and local opportunities.
7. Focus on the primary goal – consistent payment of support through steady, long-term employment, with possible consideration of second goal – improving family relationships.
8. With good collaboration with community partners, successful programs do not require a large staff.
9. Collaboration is critical!
10. Be prepared to sell the idea to skeptics (including prospective program participants).

# QUESTIONS?

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