The In-Practice Tip Sheets are resources for Juvenile Drug Treatment Court (JDTC) teams and are meant to provide operational steps to implementing the Strategies in Practice. This is not an exhaustive list of practice tips. Juvenile drug treatment court teams are encouraged to use these Tip Sheets as a starting point as they strive to make program enhancements or operationalize the Strategies.

Clearly Defined Target Population and Eligibility Criteria

**CASE STUDY:** The Lee County JDTC has been operational since 2004. During this time, the team has experienced a lot of turnover. Currently there is only one team member, the coordinator, who was part of the original planning team. The coordinator takes the lead on many of the program’s procedures and expectations. The team trusts her abilities and allows her the freedom to do what’s right for the program, mostly because other team members are too busy with their own responsibilities outside of JDTC. Recently, the judge read a publication that challenged the effectiveness of a JDTC compared to traditional juvenile probation. The judge also wanted to know why there were only six participants in the program, even though the program’s capacity is set at 25. He asked the coordinator to provide the team with the success rate during the past nine years and an explanation as to why there were so few participants. The findings were eye-opening and alarming, and two areas are of particular concern: the team’s success rate was less than 20%, and referrals were down 60%.

Solution-focused Tips to help teams define their target population and eligibility criteria:

1. **Tip No. 1:** The JDTC team should collect and analyze juvenile justice and social indicator data to determine need and alignment with the JDTC Guidelines recommended target population.
   - Collecting and reviewing data is the key to success – collect data that the team will use to inform target population and eligibility criteria.
   - Ask the questions: Does the data collected indicate a need to implement a JDTC? Is there a portion of the population that meets the criminogenic risk and the substance abuse/use treatment need recommended in the JDTC Guidelines?
   - Draft (or revisit) a mission statement with the JDTC team that states who the program will serve.
   - Regularly analyze data to monitor for shifts in culture of substance abuse/use by youth and codify this process in the policy and procedure manual. Data review takes place annually at the close of the fiscal year.
     - Keep community partners, JDTC stakeholders, and the JDTC team informed of any changes and/or recommendations derived from the yearly analysis.
   - Keep in mind that the data may simply indicate that there is not a need for a JDTC. Planning or operating JDTC teams are cautioned not to widen the net, by taking low-risk offenders to boost numbers. Let the data drive the need for the program!

2. **Tip No. 2:** The JDTC team should utilize validated screening and assessment tools to make well-informed decisions about program acceptance.
   - Use timely screening/intake forms to filter youth, with the goal being to place youth into the right program the first time.
   - Develop a matrix with indicators recommended in the JDTC Guidelines that can be used to match the youth’s needs with an appropriate response, for example:
     - First indicator – youth who are 14 years old or older
     - Second indicator – youth who have a moderate to high risk of re-offending, identified using a validated instrument
     - Third indicator – youth with a substance use disorder, identified using a validated, culturally responsive screening assessment
   - Each indicator will further filter youth from the total pool of youth coming in contact with the juvenile justice system to the youth appropriate for JDTC, for example:
     - First indicator – 2,524 youth meet the criteria
     - Second indicator – 414 youth meet the criteria
     - Third indicator – 132 youth meet the criteria (youth eligible for JDTC review and assessment)
Tip No. 3: The JDTC team’s eligibility criteria should stem from the data collected and analyzed.

- Define eligibility criteria based on the recommendations in the JDTC Guidelines. Keep in mind that JDTCs should serve youth who are moderate/high in both substance abuse/use need and criminogenic risk.
- For youth who do not meet the moderate/high risk criteria and do not have a substance use disorder but use substances, consider diverting them to early intervention programs if one is available in the community.
- Determine if the resources available in the community can address the needs of the target population; conduct a community mapping exercise with the target population in mind.

Tip No. 4: The JDTC team should determine, based on the target population, who can refer potential youth. Ask these questions:

- Who can refer potential youth?
  - Referral sources can be prosecutors (often the gatekeepers), defense attorneys, or probation/intake officers.
- How will referrals get to the court/team?
  - Draft a checklist, based on qualifiers and disqualifiers, for referral sources to use to quickly determine broad eligibility requirements – the checklist should reference specific JDTC team members to send referrals to.
- How will the team educate referral sources?
  - Host brown-bag lunches educating referral sources on JDTC philosophy, referral procedures, and success rates – codify this education process in the policy and procedure manual (i.e., brown-bag education lunch will be held on a quarterly basis; JDTC coordinator facilitates this process).
  - If there is “push-back” from referral sources regarding the program itself (i.e., too punitive or too lenient), invite them to articulate specific perceived issues – it may be something that just needs further clarification and/or consensus building to alleviate any fears.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING: What steps need to be taken to find a solution for Lee County’s lack of referrals and low success rate?

ANSWER: The judge and the coordinator should hold a strategic planning meeting for the operational team members. The meeting will give the team an opportunity to review juvenile justice and social indicator data. The team is encouraged to take a hard look at the need in their community. If there is a definite need, the next steps would be to adjust capacity and review eligibility criteria, based on data. Eligibility criteria should be defined and codified as a team and include concrete qualifiers and disqualifiers – defining this criteria decreases net-widening. The team should determine available resources – conducting a community resource reality check is a perfect team-building activity, where the team would work together to update their community map. A tip would be to assign reach-out duties to each member of the team, so the process isn’t heaped onto the JDTC coordinator. Finally, the team should review their referral process and identify any gaps. If it is simply a matter of educating natural referral sources, the JDTC team members should draft a brown-bag lunch schedule where each team member would participate in educating colleagues in their particular field.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE(S):
- The Right Youth for Your Juvenile Drug Treatment Court - [http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/NCJFCJ%20JDC%20Right%20Youth%20Final%200.pdf](http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/NCJFCJ%20JDC%20Right%20Youth%20Final%200.pdf)
- Just Who Are the Right Youth for Juvenile Drug Court Anyway? (7 Deadly Sins) - [http://www.ncjfcj.org/7-Deadly-Sins-03](http://www.ncjfcj.org/7-Deadly-Sins-03)
- Reinforcing Behaviors that Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Teams Want to See in Youth (Guide to the Guidelines) - [https://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/Objective%205%20NCJFCJ%20Guide%20to%20JDTC%20Guidelines.pdf](https://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/Objective%205%20NCJFCJ%20Guide%20to%20JDTC%20Guidelines.pdf)

EXTERNAL RESOURCE(S):
- [https://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/250368.pdf](https://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/250368.pdf)