

Therapeutic Perspectives: Harm minimisation; Therapeutic jurisprudence and Punishment.

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Dandenong Drug Court

Harm Minimisation, Therapeutic Jurisprudence and Punishment: using an individual and holistic approach to case planning.

- This presentation will discuss Drug Court participants' perspectives on information sharing, case planning and treatment and how this affects the Drug Court's capacity to respond to the individual needs of the participants.
- The study explored the view of treatment agencies on the process and content of participants' information exchanged to and from the Drug Court.
- The key approach adopted with participants is an individual and holistic one in order to tailor a unique treatment and case management plan.

Objectives of the Study:

- The study used questionnaires with ranking and identifying questions to examine:
 - a) Treatment agencies', including D&A counsellors', home-based withdrawal nurses', and GPs' perspectives on the current process and content of information that is exchanged and expected to be exchanged in relation to Drug Court participants;
 - b) Drug Court participants' perspectives on information that is shared about them between the Drug Court and their treatment agencies, as well as, what information they think should be shared but they perceive is not; and,
 - c) The perception of the effectiveness and how comfortable they are with the current information exchange practices and possible areas for development.

Preliminary findings/results treatment providers:

Based on responses to a 12 question mixed qualitative and quantitative questionnaire.



Question 2: How satisfied are you with the current information sharing process between treatment staff and the Court (from -2 very unsatisfied through 0 being neutral to +2 very satisfied)

Results:

Mean: 0.666 **Agency 1: 0.4** **Agency 2: 1.5** **GPs: 0**

Question 5: How concerned are you in relation to breaching client confidentiality by passing on the above information (see question 4) (from -2: very unconcerned through 0: neutral to +2 very concerned)

Results:

Mean: 0.091 **Agency 1: 0.5** **Agency 2: 0** **GPs: -0.3**

Question 8: How important do you think it is for treatment professionals to participate in case planning meetings with the Drug Court? (from -2: very unimportant through 0: neutral to +2 very important)

Results:

Mean: 0.72 **Agency 1: 0.5** **Agency 2: 1.75** **GPs: -0.3**

Question 9: How feasible is it for you to attend regular meetings in relation to client progress with the Drug Court? (from -2: very unfeasible through 0: neutral to +2: very feasible)

Results:

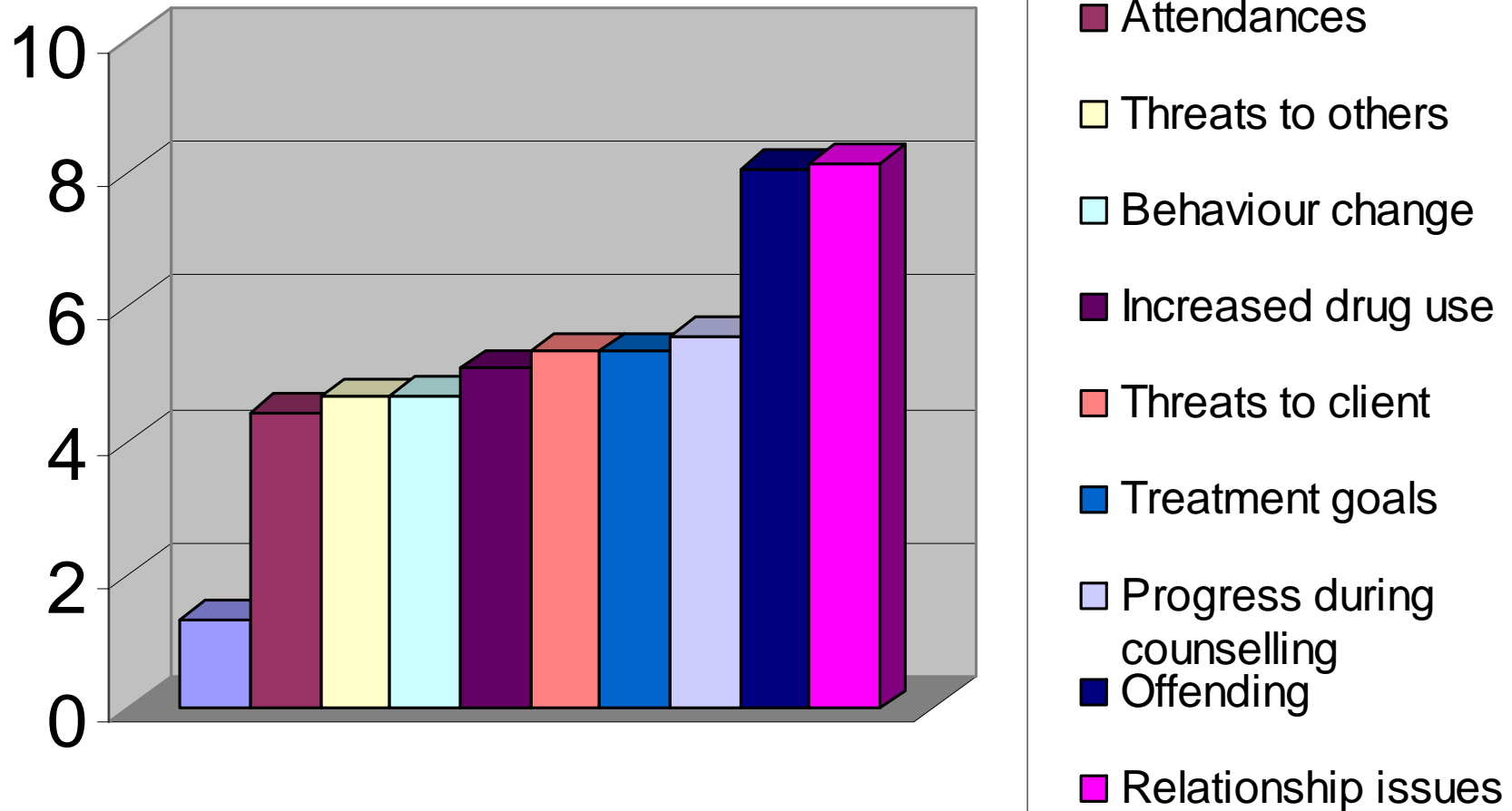
Mean: -0.33 **Agency 1: -0.6** **Agency 2: 0.75** **GPs: -1.3**

Question 10: How important is it for you to be involved in crisis management planning? (from -2: very unimportant through 0: neutral to +2: very important)

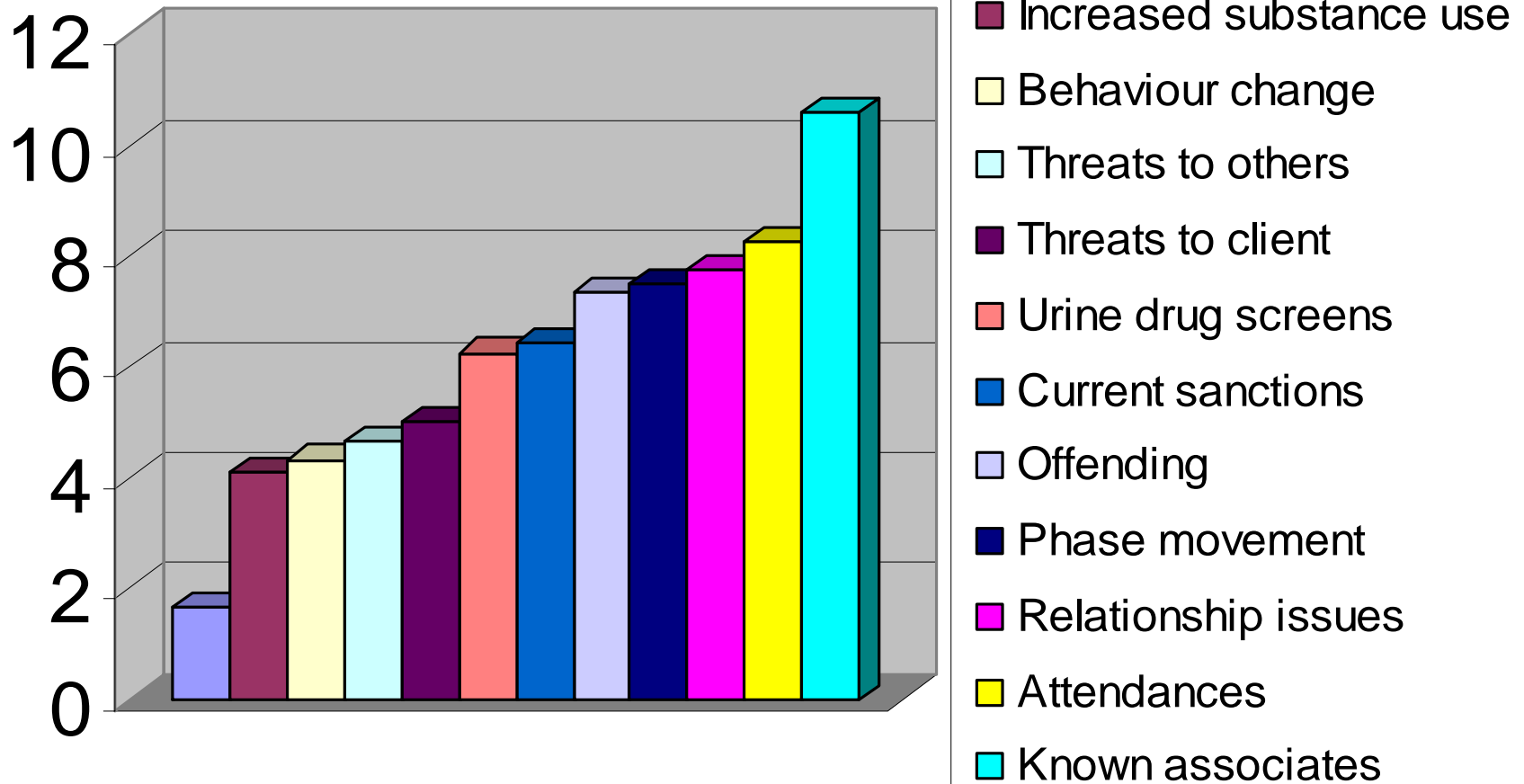
Results:

Mean: 0.16 **Agency 1: -0.4** **Agency 2: 1** **GPs: 0**

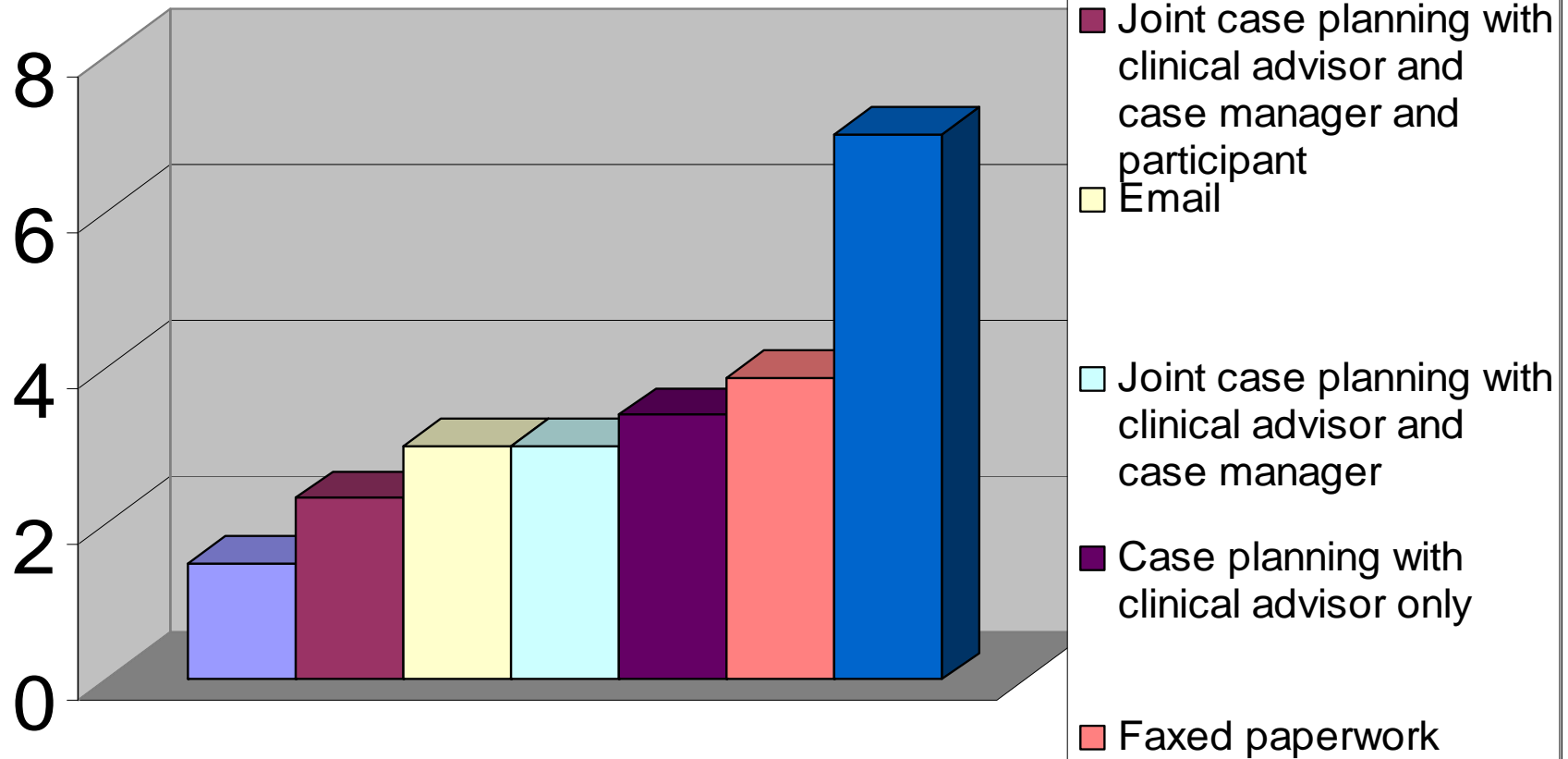
Ranked order of importance for information exchanged between agencies and Drug Court



Ranked order of importance for information exchanged from Drug Court to agencies



Ranked order of importance for preferred communication method

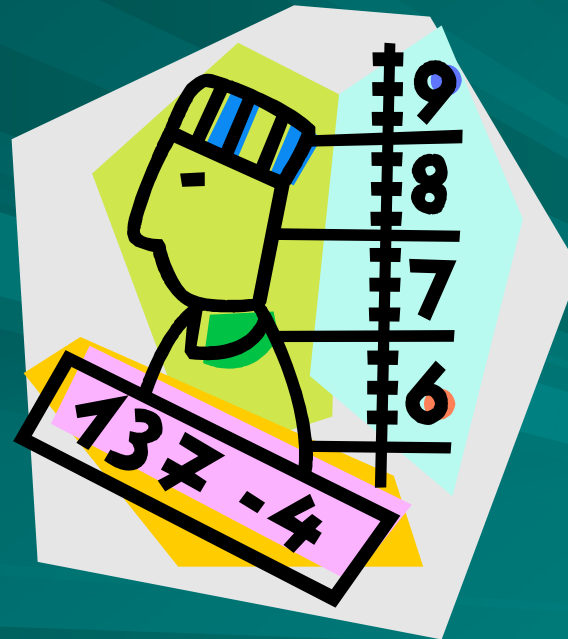


Preliminary findings/results treatment providers:

- Level of satisfaction with current practices of information exchange varied depending on the individual treatment modalities.
- Individual agency differences were also present with respect to ratings of importance for participating in case planning meetings and attendance at such meetings. This highlights a need to develop specific methods of case planning to suit agency needs and availability.
- The importance of exchanging information regarding suicide risk remained a constant with this being considered most important to pass on both to and from the Drug Court. Otherwise, responses were varied with respect to what treatment agencies want from the Drug Court versus what they will share with the Drug Court.
- The preferred method of information exchange was via the telephone then case planning meetings with the participant present. However, two thirds of the agencies felt it would be difficult to attend meetings.

Preliminary findings/results participants/clients:

Based on response to a 6 question mixed quantitative/qualitative questionnaire



Question 1: How comfortable are you about current information sharing practices between your case manager or other workers at the Drug Court (from -2 very uncomfortable through 0 being neutral to +2 very comfortable)

Results:

Mean: 0.416

Standard Deviation: 1.505

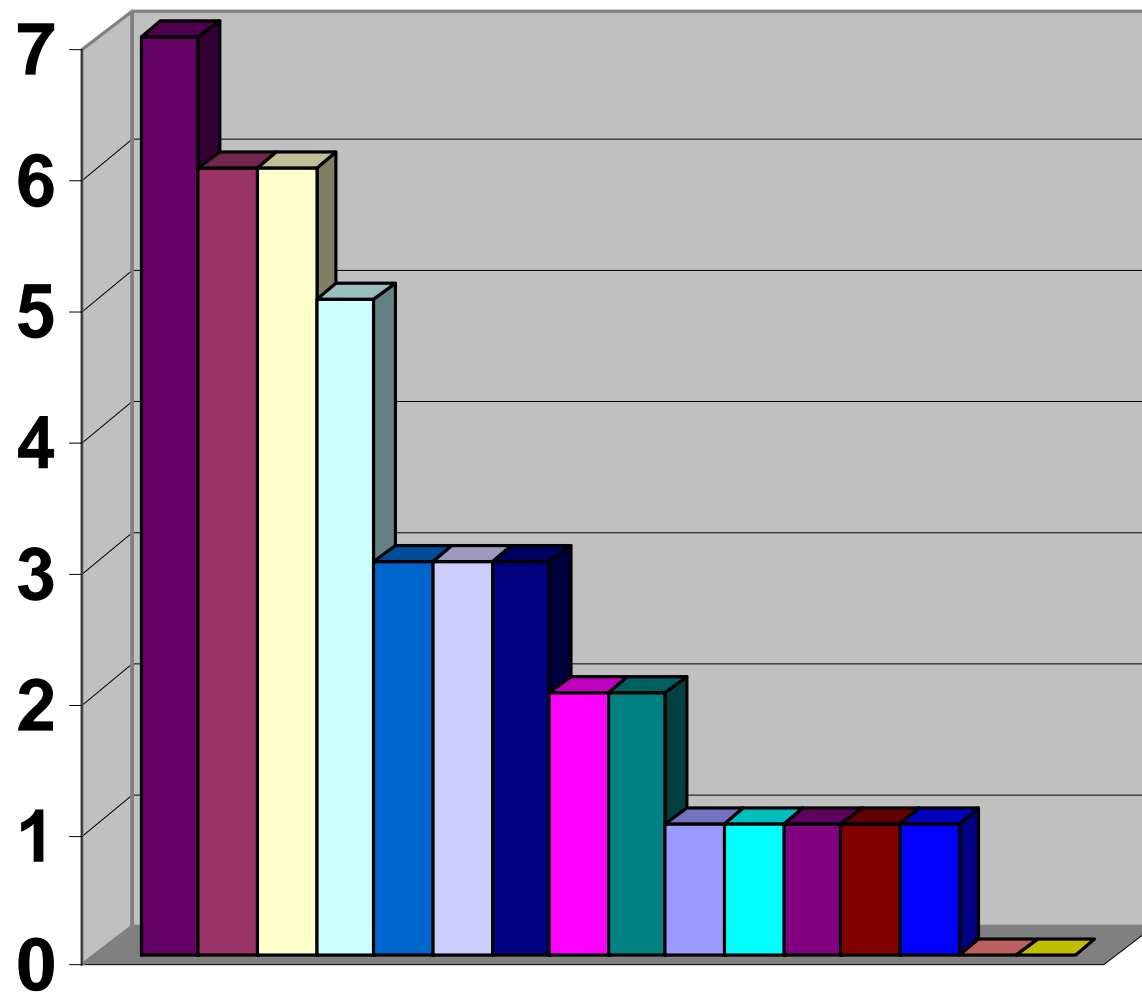
Question 2: How important is it for you to be consulted prior to information being passed on (from -2: very unimportant through 0: neutral to +2 very important)

Results:

Mean: -0.16

Standard Deviation: 1.466

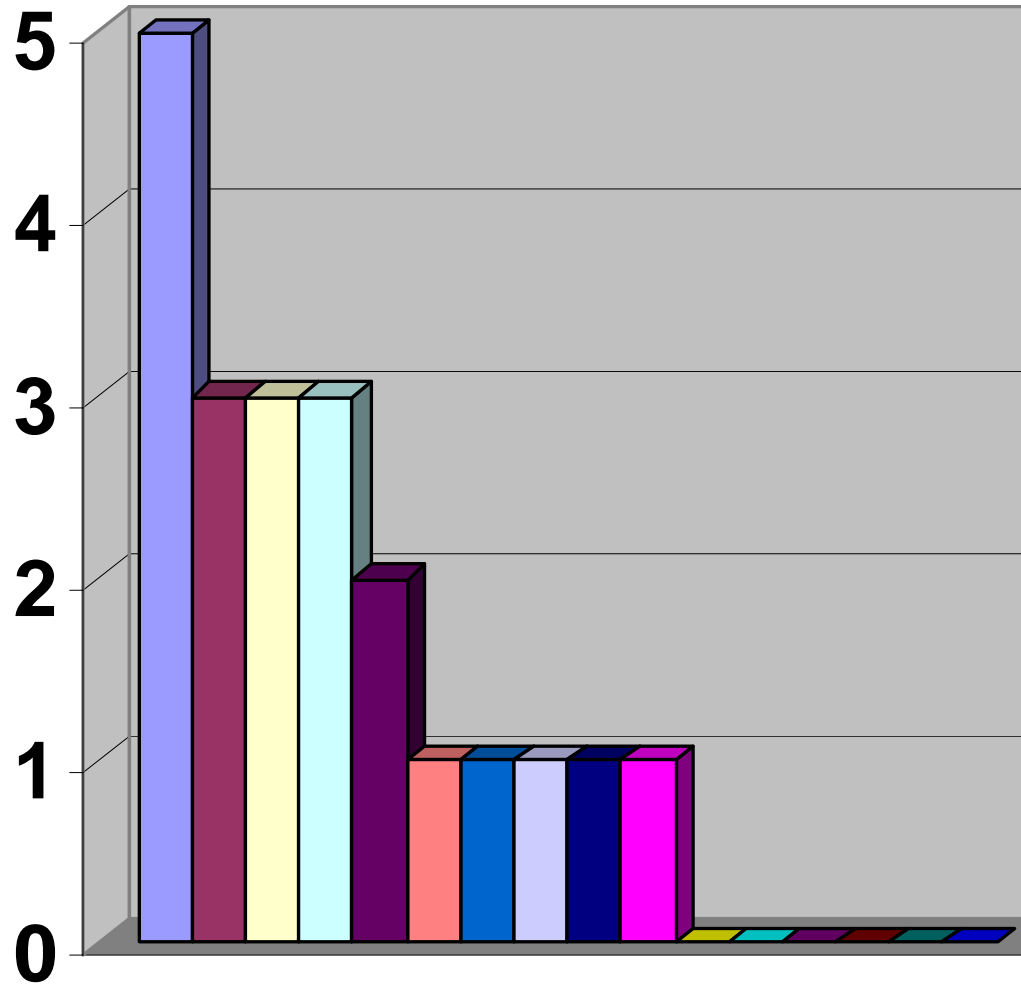
Information that is being passed between counsellors and case managers



- Sanctions
- Drug use
- Test results
- Attendances
- Pending criminal matters
- Applications to cancel
- Relationship difficulties
- Family issues
- Phase movement
- None
- Risk of self harm
- Risk of overdose
- Unsafe substance use behaviour
- Other (letting go)
- Personal hygiene and grooming
- Bad language/grammar

N=12

Information that isn't being passed on but should be



- None
- Applications to cancel
- Relationship difficulties
- Family issues
- Attendances
- Personal hygiene and grooming
- Drug use
- Unsafe substance use behaviour
- Risk of self harm
- Phase movement
- Bad language/grammar
- Sanctions
- Risk of overdose
- Test results
- Pending criminal matters
- Other

Preliminary findings/results participants/clients:

- The degree of comfort and importance of being consulted about information exchange appears to follow no specific pattern and is unique to the individual participant.
- Participants generally believed that information about their drug use was being shared, followed by test results and attendances.
- Participants felt that information about applications to cancel, relationship difficulties and family issues should be exchanged more than they perceive they are.
- Several quotes from participants expressed a view that it is “ok” for information to be exchanged and that they are hopeful that it would be especially if they were doing well.

Study limitations/ Opportunities for further research:

- While the sample for this particular study was relatively small, this represents a 50% response rate for agencies involved with the Drug Court and approximately 20% of participants.
- There appears to be a difference in the information that professionals expect should be shared versus what the participants expect. Most professionals were not concerned that they were breaching confidentiality in relation to information they exchange currently.
- There are significant differences between what information treatment agencies want versus what information the Drug Court might believe treatment agencies would find helpful in working with these participants.
- Drug Court clients represent a specialised client group so results are not necessarily reflective of all statutory clients or even forensic clients as a whole. This may allow for an expansion of the study at a future date.

Study limitations/ Opportunities for further research ... ctd:

- This study further highlights a need for a consistent suicide risk assessment tool that would be targeted to address the needs of Drug Court participants.
- It is also noted that the current method of case planning with treatment agencies may need to be refined in order to ensure consistent processes for all participants regardless of which agency they are linked to.

With thanks:

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Further information relating to the Drug Court in Victoria can be found at the Magistrates' Court Website via www.justice.vic.gov.au

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