

# Introduction to Drug Court



Drug Court's aim is to help you address your issues with drugs and/or alcohol, especially if your substance use leads to trouble with the police or harming yourself or others.

You will be provided with support to take control of your drug and/or alcohol use and get your life back on track.

Your case manager will explain everything you need to know about Drug Court and what is expected of you.

## About Drug Court

Drug Court is a specialist court. Drug Court participants are sentenced to a period of imprisonment that they serve in the community on a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Order (DATO).

You may have been sentenced to a Community Corrections Order in the past, but a DATO is very different.

A DATO will provide you with treatment for your drug and/or alcohol issue. You will also receive help to tackle other issues that may have contributed to your offending such as anger management, lack of housing and unemployment. You will be closely supervised by a magistrate and the Drug Court team, who will make sure you comply with your order.

A DATO has many conditions attached to it. By signing a DATO, you agree to follow these conditions. It is important that you do.

If you comply with the conditions of your DATO and complete the order, you can avoid prison.

If you don't comply, then you could be required to serve some of the DATO in custody, or your DATO could be cancelled, and your original prison term could be reinstated.

Completing a DATO is not easy but is very rewarding. Sometimes you will experience setbacks, but you will have a team of people working with you to support you. It's important that you're honest with your team while you're on the DATO so they can help you achieve your goals, avoid going back to prison or getting into more trouble with the police.

It's also important to note that while the first phase of your DATO is quite intense, the appointments will ease off as you progress. You won't be super busy all the time!

## Your first week on a DATO

It can be very stressful coming to Drug Court for the first time. If you've come straight from custody, there is a lot to organise to set you up for your DATO.

One of the first things you'll do is attend the Therapeutic Recovery Centre where you will get some help organising what you need.

**You will need:**

-  **A working mobile phone**
-  **Somewhere safe to stay**
-  **Money to buy essentials**
-  **Transport to get you to your accommodation and appointments**

**Useful contacts**

Therapeutic Recovery Centre

Centrelink

Victoria Legal Aid

Housing

GP

DirectLine: 24-hour alcohol and drug counselling and referral

**Appointments**

You will also need to know which appointments to attend. There are a lot of appointments:

- drug testing
- counselling and other services
- meeting with your case manager
- meeting with your clinical advisor
- court review hearings.

Your case manager will give you a diary or weekly planner to help you keep track of your appointments. Try to get into the habit of writing all your appointments in your diary or weekly planner and then check it daily.

You can start by writing important dates below.

EVENT:

DATE:  TIME:

LOCATION:

EVENT:

DATE:  TIME:

LOCATION:

EVENT:

DATE:  TIME:

LOCATION:

# Your rights and obligations



## Respect, honesty, reliability

You will be treated with respect and you will be required to treat yourself and your Drug Court team with respect.

It is important that you are honest, especially about your drug use. You need to be reliable, go to all your appointments and arrive on time.

## Your obligations

You need to follow these conditions:



report to the Therapeutic Recovery Centre on release from custody



do not commit any crime



attend urine testing (drug and alcohol testing)



attend regular court review hearings as directed by the Drug Court magistrate



attend all appointments you are directed to, including at your GP, psychologist, and the Therapeutic Recovery Centre



undergo treatment for drug/alcohol dependency



accept any visits from the Drug Court team



notify the Drug Court team within two clear working days before you change your address



do not leave the state of Victoria without first getting permission from the magistrate



abide by any curfew, as directed



follow instructions from Drug Court staff



comply with all magistrates' orders and conditions



comply with the Code of Conduct provided by your case manager.

## Court review hearing

If you fail to attend a court review hearing on time, it may result in a warrant for your arrest being issued.

At a court review hearing, the Drug Court magistrate can impose or change the conditions of a DATO, such as a curfew. You can also ask the magistrate to consider changes to your DATO, but you must comply with existing conditions until changes can be made.

## Feedback and complaints

Drug Court is committed to listening to participants and providing good services. We know there will be times you want to raise specific issues about your DATO, and the regular court review hearing is an opportunity for you to do this.

If you have a complaint or objection about a DATO sanction, you will need to contact the Drug Court Victoria Legal Aid lawyer or represent yourself at the court review hearing. You have the right to appeal or contest any sanction decisions, but you must be able to provide evidence.

Please note, you should seek legal advice if you would like to appeal the DATO sentence made against you.

## Want to have more of a say?

If you are interested in helping Drug Court improve its services, you can join the Participant Representative Committee (PRC). This committee is made up of participants on a DATO who get together to share ideas, experiences and provide feedback to Drug Court management.

Please ask at reception if you are interested in joining the PRC.



### For any other complaints contact:

Feedback & Complaints Officer  
Magistrates' Court of Victoria  
GPO Box 882  
Melbourne Vic 3001

Email:  
[mcvfeedback@courts.vic.gov.au](mailto:mcvfeedback@courts.vic.gov.au)

**There are also suggestion boxes at  
the Therapeutic Recovery Centre**

# Drug Court team



The Drug Court team will be with you every step of the way through your Drug and Alcohol Treatment Order (DATO) journey.

The team is made up of professionals who work with you, and together, throughout the DATO.

## Who is the Drug Court team?



### Magistrate

#### What do they do?

Leads the Drug Court team and oversees your progress. The magistrate can give you incentives or sanctions depending on your progress. The magistrate can also give you homework or tasks to complete while you are on the DATO.

#### How often will I see them?\*

Once a week for review hearings at court.



### Case manager

#### What do they do?

Works closely with you to develop your DATO goals and explore your thoughts, feelings and behaviours to help reduce your risk of re-offending. The case manager supports you to participate in your DATO requirements.

#### How often will I see them?\*

Once a week at the beginning. You can also contact them if you have any issues or difficulty understanding what you need to do on the DATO. This person is your main contact point while on the DATO.



### Clinical advisor

#### What do they do?

Works with you and helps ensure you get the right treatment for your drug and/or alcohol problem (For example, if you need a prescription for methadone).

#### How often will I see them?\*

Once a week at the beginning. You can contact them for any medical or health issues that affect your compliance with your DATO, including mental health challenges or any issues relating to using drugs, such as needing a referral to in/out-patient programs.



### Drug and alcohol counsellor

#### What do they do?

Provides you with counselling to help you reduce and stop using drugs and/or alcohol. Can also provide family counselling.

#### How often will I see them?\*

Once a week at the beginning.



### **Housing services**

**What do they do?**

Helps you with emergency accommodation and provide referrals for longer-term housing.

**How often will I see them?\***

You will be referred to housing services as needed.



### **Lawyer**

**What do they do?**

Provides legal advice throughout the DATO.

**How often will I see them?\***

You might see this person at court review hearings. They are available to represent you as needed, for example if old charges come up.



### **Police prosecutor**

**What do they do?**

Represent the community in this process and help keep you accountable, as well as coordinating services for the conditions on your DATO, such as curfew checks. Like the rest of the Drug Court team, they genuinely want to see you progress and successfully complete your DATO.

**How often will I see them?\***

You will see this person at court review hearings.

\*As you progress through your order, you may not have to see the Drug Court team as often.

# DATO phases



Your DATO includes three phases:

## Phase one: stabilisation



Phase one concentrates on your immediate needs. These may include:

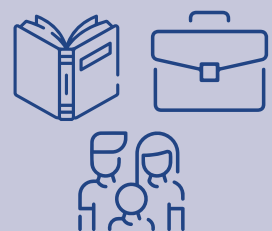
- housing
- medication
- harm reduction strategies
- mental health.

## Phase two: consolidation



Phase two is an opportunity for you to work on long-term goals for your recovery.

## Phase three: maintenance and reintegration



Phase three focuses on what life will look like at the end of your Drug and Alcohol Treatment Order.

Each phase is designed to help you take control of your substance issues and offending.

Each phase consists of:

- **ongoing requirements:** a set of core activities you must complete
- **goals:** bigger tasks that focus on your AOD recovery
- **outcomes:** what you want to achieve at the end of each phase.

To help you progress through the phases of your DATO, we will work with you on your goals and help you make a plan to achieve them.

This plan will help you progress through each phase of your DATO. The team will record this information in a treatment plan.

Your goals are yours, and decisions won't be made without you.

When you have achieved all the requirements involved in completing a phase, you will be eligible to move to the next phase.

## Phase one: stabilisation

In the stabilisation phase, we work with you on your immediate needs. This may include harm reduction, securing housing and mental health treatment. The focus is on getting to know the Drug Court team and how the program works. It is important to be honest with the team so we can put things in place to help you.

### Phase one: requirements, goals and outcomes

#### ONGOING REQUIREMENTS

You will attend:

-  supervised urine screenings three times per week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday
-  weekly court review hearings
-  weekly case management appointments
-  weekly counselling sessions
-  clinical advisor appointments and treatment planning meetings, as directed
-  any other appointments as directed by the Drug Court team.

#### GOALS

You will:

-  develop a detailed individual treatment plan
-  take part in drug treatment
-  reduce contact with people involved in illegal activities or who may tempt you to reoffend
-  take part in case management programs
-  take part in home visits by the Drug Court team
-  secure stable housing
-  obtain a regular income.

#### OUTCOMES

At the completion of phase one you will have:

-  reduced your offending
-  been honest about your drug use and treatment
-  reduced your drug use
-  proven you can arrive on time to appointments
-  engaged with housing services
-  obtained a stable income
-  stabilised your physical and mental health
-  reduced contact with illicit drug users and peers involved in illegal activities.