



# Wisconsin State Public Defender

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## **Statement from State Public Defender Kelli Thompson on National Drug Court Month**

Courts that emphasize treatment of drug abuse are being recognized and honored across the country with the designation of May as National Drug Court Month. Wisconsin was an early adopter of such drug courts and, in recent years, has seen this treatment and research-based approach expand into other areas such as veterans treatment courts and mental health courts.

Our staff who work in these problem-solving courts see the positive impact these approaches have on the lives of our clients. We see individuals, with the support of the judge and other members of a collaborative treatment-court team, overcome addictions and other barriers to success. Treatment courts play an important role in reducing substance abuse, reducing criminal behavior that stems from the abuse, and ultimately enhancing public safety.

The agency also supports the Wisconsin Association of Treatment Court Professionals, which attracted an audience of almost 300 to its annual conference, including judges, prosecutors, court administrators, treatment providers, probation officers, and case workers in addition to public defenders.

The Statewide Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, a multi-disciplinary group of criminal justice system partners created by Governor Walker in 2012, also approved a resolution this week urging the expansion of the Treatment Alternatives and Diversion program. Recent Wisconsin-based research indicates that for every \$1.00 invested in treatment and diversion courts, \$1.93 is saved. As Wisconsin expands its commitment to treatment courts and provides additional assistance to local courts, the participants in need of services and the public as a whole will derive even greater benefits.