



## Board of Directors Statement

### Public Radio's *This American Life* "Very Tough Love"

On March 25, 2011, Public Radio International aired "Very Tough Love", a segment of its award-winning program, *This American Life*, chronicling disturbing events alleged to have occurred in a Drug Court in Georgia. The story reported that participants received excessively punitive jail sanctions of several weeks to several months' duration without receiving treatment for drug use, and were retained in the program for more than five years for offenses that would ordinarily have netted considerably less severe sentences at trial. Throughout the story, the reporter, Ira Glass, made it clear that this Drug Court is "run differently than any other Drug Court in the country".

Nonetheless, it is a heartbreaking story that carries with it the potential to negatively affect the outstanding reputation Drug Courts have rightfully earned with exemplary outcomes over the past 22 years. Understandably, many who have listened to the story have contacted NADCP outraged by its account. **The NADCP Board of Directors is confident that the entire story has yet to be told and we ask Drug Court professionals and the public alike to temper their reactions until all concerned have been heard.**

### Drug Courts Work

Numerous studies confirm the vast majority of Drug Courts apply evidence-based practices and effectively treat seriously addicted individuals entangled in the criminal justice system. Six meta-analyses conducted by independent scientific teams found that 80% to 85% of Drug Courts significantly reduce crime, reduce drug use, and return net cost savings to taxpayers. Exemplary Drug Courts cut crime rates nearly in half and return \$27 to their communities for every \$1 invested.

Unfortunately, a small minority of the 2,459 Drug Courts currently in operation (6% by last account) do not follow evidence-based practices and may actually make outcomes worse. These "outlier" Drug Courts have watered down or dropped core ingredients of the Drug Court model, or apply inappropriate practices in contraindication to accepted teachings in the field. And they have paid dearly for it in terms of lower cost savings, lower graduation rates, higher recidivism rates, and a reputation for unfairness and ineffectiveness.

As a professional membership association, NADCP has no enforcement authority over these outlier Drug Courts. The sole authority to regulate and discipline these programs is vested

in the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) or State Supreme Court in each jurisdiction. Nevertheless, NADCP does have the standing and responsibility to define for the field what constitutes acceptable conduct and evidence-based practices.

We urge every Drug Court professional to double their efforts to ensure all Drug Courts follow research-based best practices, maintain fidelity to the Ten Key Components, and strive to compassionately help those with the greatest need.