



PROGRAM & PROJECT QUICK LOOK

NEBRASKA JUDICIAL BRANCH

PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

Nebraska problem-solving courts are an institution of the Nebraska Supreme Court utilizing innovative court programs through which individuals and families thrive and all Nebraska communities become safer.

ORIGIN & AUTHORIZATION

- Nebraska Revised Statute 24-1301 (Problem-solving courts - alternatives to incarceration in Nebraska.)
- Nebraska Revised Statute 29-2246 (Authorized probation personnel to operate problem-solving courts.)
- Nebraska Revised Statute 24-1301 and 24-1302, and section 29-2246 (Expanded definition of problem-solving courts to include Veterans Treatment Courts, Mental Health Courts, and Reentry Court.)
- Nebraska Supreme Court Rules § 6-1201 et seq. (Rules on problem-solving courts.)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Nebraska problem-solving courts operate within the district, county, or juvenile courts in all 12 Nebraska Judicial Districts. Most problem-solving courts in Nebraska operate under the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP), with the exception of the Adult Drug Court in Douglas County. Family Treatment Courts (FTC) typically operate within both the Courts and the Department of Health and Human Services. Problem-solving courts are post-plea or post-adjudicatory, intensive supervision treatment programs designed for high-risk to reoffend and high-need individuals. Nebraska problem-solving courts can only be established with the approval of the Nebraska Supreme Court. All Nebraska problem-solving courts are governed by the Nebraska Supreme Court Committee on Problem-Solving Courts under the direction of the Nebraska Supreme Court. Problem-solving courts reduce recidivism and increase community safety through a comprehensive and coordinated court response utilizing early assessment and intervention, individualized treatment, intensive community supervision and consistent judicial oversight. All Nebraska problem-solving courts adhere to established standards. Nebraska problem-solving court models include Adult Drug and DUI Courts, Veterans Treatment Courts, Reentry Courts, Juvenile Drug Courts, Young Adult Courts, Mental Health Courts, and Family Treatment Courts.

PRIORITIES

Reduce recidivism and increase community safety through a comprehensive and coordinated court response.

- Problem-solving courts in Nebraska operate under a team approach where a judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, coordinator(s), community supervision officer(s), law enforcement representative(s) and treatment provider(s) work together to design an individualized program. Compliance with treatment and court orders is verified by frequent alcohol/drug testing, close community supervision and interaction with a Judge in non-adversarial court review hearings. Problem-solving courts enhance close monitoring of participants using home and field visits.

Utilize evidence-based practices identified by scientific research, literature, and best practice standards.

- All problem-solving court participants are screened and assessed for behavioral health needs, criminogenic risk to reoffend, trauma history and trauma-related symptoms.
- All adult and family treatment court models adhere to approved best practice standards approved by the Nebraska Supreme Court.

Facilitate access to problem-solving courts regardless of an individual's geographical location, financial status, gender, age, race, religion, physical or mental disability or ethnicity.

- In Fiscal Year 2025, Nebraska's 35 Problem-Solving Courts served over 1900 individuals.
- The average per-day cost to supervise a problem-solving court participant is approximately \$13.71 per day or \$5,000 per year (the approximate cost per day to supervise an individual is based on the total cost of probation personnel and operating expenses divided by the total population of individuals supervised).

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since Fiscal Year 2020, Nebraska has seen a 41% increase in the number of adult and juvenile problem-solving court participants.

On June 2, 2021, the Nebraska Supreme Court approved an Audit Process to assess all Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts' adherence to the current and revised Nebraska Best Practice Standards. Between September 2021, and March 2022, every Nebraska Problem-Solving Court Team participated in the Audit Process. Following the release of the audit results, the AOCP provided technical assistance to each problem-solving court to improve alignment with Nebraska Best Practice Standards.

On May 3, 2023, the Nebraska Supreme Court approved the updated Nebraska Adult Drug and DUI Court Best Practice Standards.

In 2024, a process evaluation of the pilot Sarpy County Wellness Court was completed by the AOCP and Rulo Strategies.

In collaboration with the AOCP Research and Data Division, the AOCP completed and submitted the annual Problem-Solving Court LB50 Report for the Nebraska Legislature beginning in 2024.

In May of 2024, stakeholders from across Nebraska participated in a Problem-Solving Court Summit hosted by the Nebraska Supreme Court and facilitated by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

In 2025, the AOCP and Nebraska Stakeholders began implementation of recommendations from the 2024 Problem-Solving Court Summit including progression to 5-phase programs, shortening the time from arrest to program participation, and building stakeholder support.

In April 2025, AllRise and the AOCP hosted a Problem-Solving Court Judicial Education Event in Nebraska.

In 2025, a Nebraska Adult Problem-Solving Court Recidivism Study was completed by the AOCP and Rulo Strategies.

LOOKING FORWARD

Problem-solving courts must operate consistently, effectively, and be offered in more jurisdictions if they are to continue to advance as one of Nebraska's most effective responses in addressing behavioral health needs and associated crime.

Problem-solving courts continue to identify goals and policies required to ensure Nebraska's Problem-Solving Courts operate effectively and efficiently.

The AOCP will continue to collaborate with stakeholders across Nebraska to create a new Nebraska Problem-Solving Court Strategic Plan, utilizing recommendations from the 2024 Problem-Solving Court Summit.

Research strongly supports the idea that Problem-Solving Courts produce better outcomes and are more cost-effective when they conduct routine program monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Timely and accurate data collection and reporting will continue to be a priority for Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts.

To ensure fidelity to Best Practice Standards, all Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts will adhere to the Nebraska Supreme Court approved Audit Process.

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REFERENCES

Nebraska Supreme Court Rules: <https://nebraskajudicial.gov/supreme-court-rules/chapter-6-trial-courts/article-12-problem-solving-courts>
Nebraska Problem-Solving Courts: <https://nebraskajudicial.gov/courts/problem-solving-courts>

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