

A Probation Officer's View

Duffy Arter | Municipal Drug Court | Fairfield County, Ohio



Suboxone Helps Remove Obstacles to Success

Duffy Arter has been supervising the participants in Fairfield County's Fresh Start drug court program since it started in February 2007. He works with the judge, drug court coordinator and counselors at the Recovery Center, which provides group and individual therapy, to monitor participants' progress.

Throughout the year-long program, he meets with the 38 participants one to three times a week to discuss the judge's orders, explain the program requirements and work through barriers to their success. He makes sure they attend 12-step meetings, counseling sessions and court hearings.

He also helps arrange transportation, housing, medical care and gives them his cell phone number so they can reach him at any time. He guides them in learning to manage emotions and solve problems without resorting to illicit drugs—a job made easier by Suboxone.

“ For our participants addicted to heroin and other opiate medication, cravings are taking precedent in their lives. They're walking around with the shakes and they want to use to stop feeling sick. They have to get over the huge hill of those withdrawals. It's incredibly painful and they can't hear anything else besides that hurt.

Suboxone helps get them over that hump. It takes care of the chemical dependency so they can start focusing on the underlying problems that caused them to start using drugs in the first place. They're a bunch of kids who had it rough. They didn't know how to handle the emotions they've had in life, from divorces in their families to rape and other stuff. They found a way to cope through drugs, then got caught in it and didn't know how to get out.

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succeed in our drug court program because it takes care of the cravings. They are more reliable in making their court dates, counseling appointments and 12-step meetings. Those not taking the medication will miss appointments because they're high.

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A major part of my job is removing obstacles, and Suboxone is part of that. Those taking it are more focused and able to move forward. Once they get

clearheaded, they start to see the problems. Some of them get depressed and think, 'Wow, my life is crap. I don't have an education, I don't have this, I don't have that.' That's where I like to encourage them and say, 'You know there's a problem here. How are you going to fix it?' Drugs aren't an option anymore.

When our participants start on Suboxone, I tell them they need to have a game plan for when they're eventually weaned off. I tell them what's going to keep them normalized is their 12-step meetings, talking to their sponsors and counselors about things instead of holding them in, learning time management and being responsible. These are the things that are going to keep them from relapsing. They need to learn to deal with life on life's terms. ”