



NEBRASKA RESOURCE PROJECT
FOR VULNERABLE YOUNG CHILDREN



CENTER ON CHILDREN,
FAMILIES, AND THE LAW

Therapeutic Approaches to Juvenile Court

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Overview

- Introductions
- Psychological and social mechanisms of therapeutic approaches to courts
- Brief history of two therapeutic courts in Nebraska
 - Family Treatment Drug Court
 - FIRST Court
- Successes and barriers in therapeutic courts
- Do therapeutic approaches impact families and the process?
- Conclusions and future directions

Introductions

- Katherine Hazen, MA, JD
- Melanie Fessinger
- Laurel Johnson, JD
- Hon. Elizabeth Crnkovich

Literature review:

Psychological and social
mechanisms of therapeutic
approaches to juvenile court

Therapeutic Jurisprudence



- Jurisprudence:
 - The theory or philosophy of law
- Therapeutic Jurisprudence:
 - Understand the consequences of the law and increase the therapeutic impact
 - Interdisciplinary
- Identify and address psychological and social issues
- Diverse approaches and tools

Therapeutic Tools: Procedural Justice



- Evaluations of fairness

- Factors:
 - Voice
 - Impartiality
 - Trust
 - Respect

Therapeutic Tools: Reflective Practice



- Emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships
- Law as interpersonal conflict resolution
- Collaborative emotional processing and integration of experiences

Therapeutic Outcomes



- Experiences of fairness
 - Cooperation
 - Compliance
- Increased engagement
- Improved working relationships

Two therapeutic courts in Nebraska:

Lancaster County Family Treatment Drug Court
Douglas County Family Involved Rehabilitation and Service Track (FIRST) Court

Lancaster County Family Treatment Drug Court

- Established 2014
- Drug Court Enhancement Grant OJJDP Oct. 2016
- Components
 - Mandatory
 - Monthly team meetings
 - 90-day review hearings
 - Specialized trauma-informed substance abuse and parenting services
 - Corrective measures

Douglas County FIRST Court



- Established Jan. 2017
- Goals:
 - Improve professional and participant relationships
 - Increase contact between participants & court
- Defining characteristics
 - Family Finding
 - CASA
 - Mediation before case settlement
 - Court Family Team Meetings
- Reflective Practice for professionals

Successes and barriers:



Laurel Johnson
Hon. Elizabeth Crnkovich

Attorney Experiences



- Advantages and disadvantages to working together as a team
 - Balance advocacy and problem-solving
- Opportunity to work more closely with clients
 - Flexibility
 - Advocate & rehabilitate
- Refining the process
 - Keep client self-reflection
 - Working with specially-trained professionals
 - Consider client consent

Judge Experiences



- What have you observed as most impactful for the families and how have the therapeutic approaches impacted them?
- How have the therapeutic approaches changed how you approach your work?
- What about the therapeutic approaches has made your job as a judge easier or more rewarding?
- What would you do differently in the future? What would you do the same?

Program Evaluations:

Lancaster County Family Treatment Drug Court
Douglas County FIRST Court

Lancaster County Family Treatment Drug Court

Sample:

- FTDC families
- Traditional dependency court families

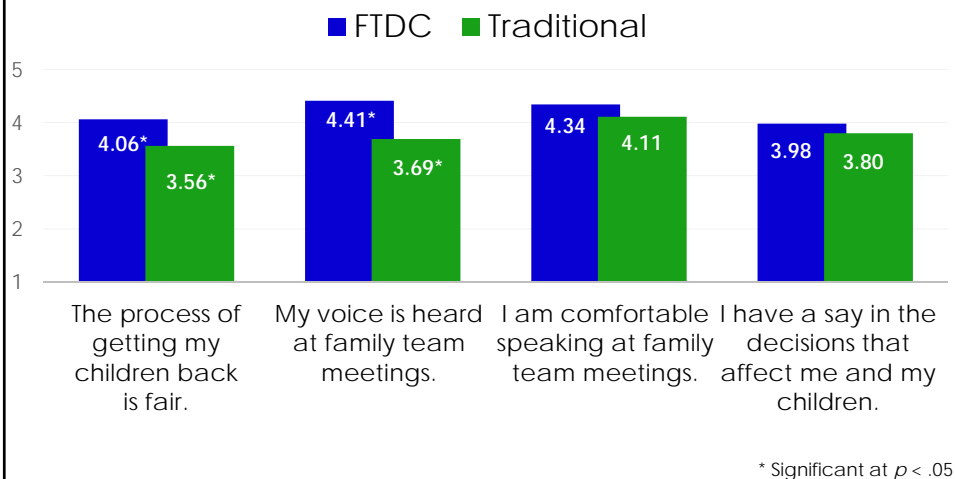
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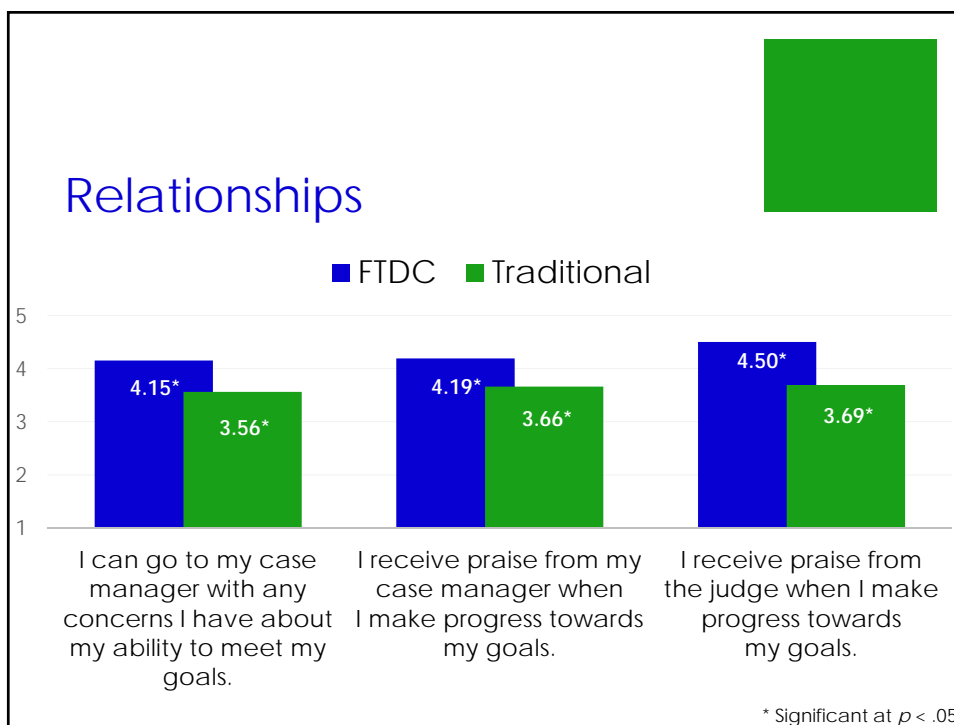
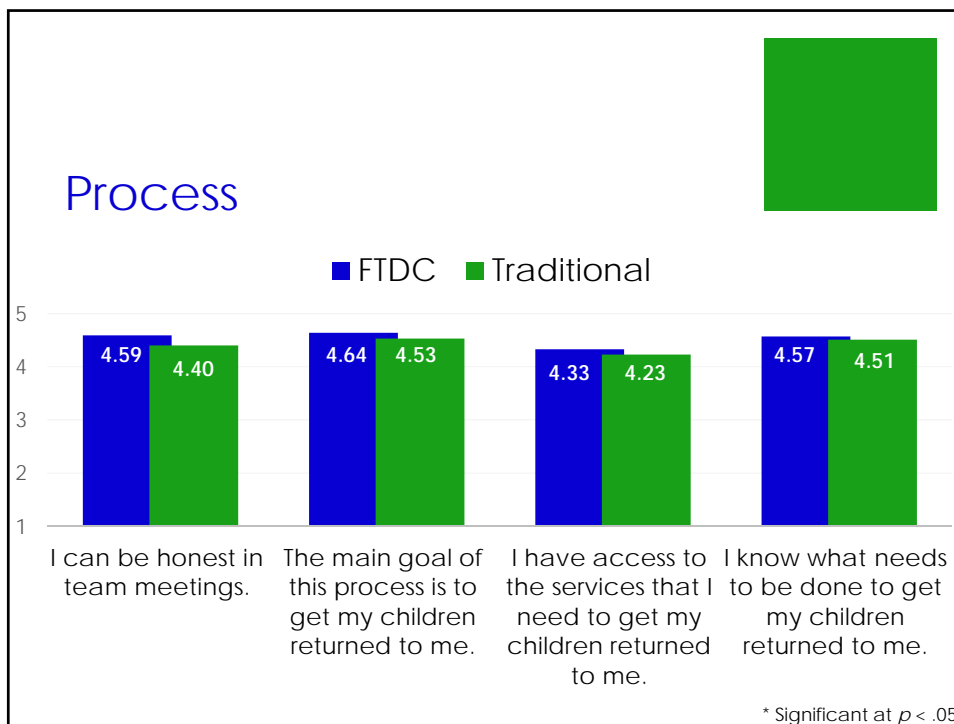
- Parent surveys
- Case file reviews

FTDC: Parent Surveys

- 11 items
- 5-point scale
 - 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree
- 139 unique surveys
 - 104 FTDC parents
 - 35 traditional dependency court parents

Voice

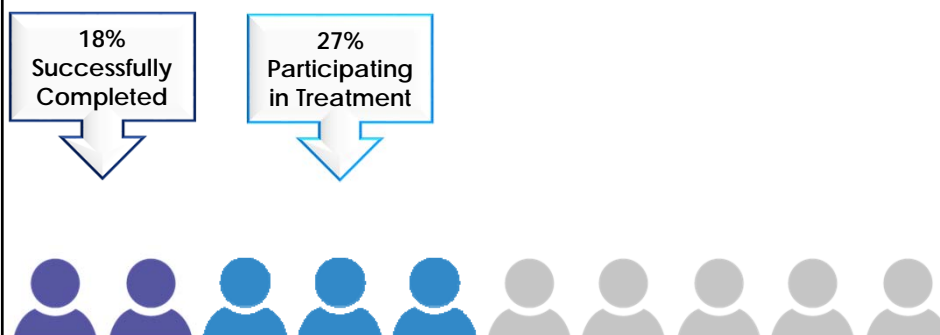


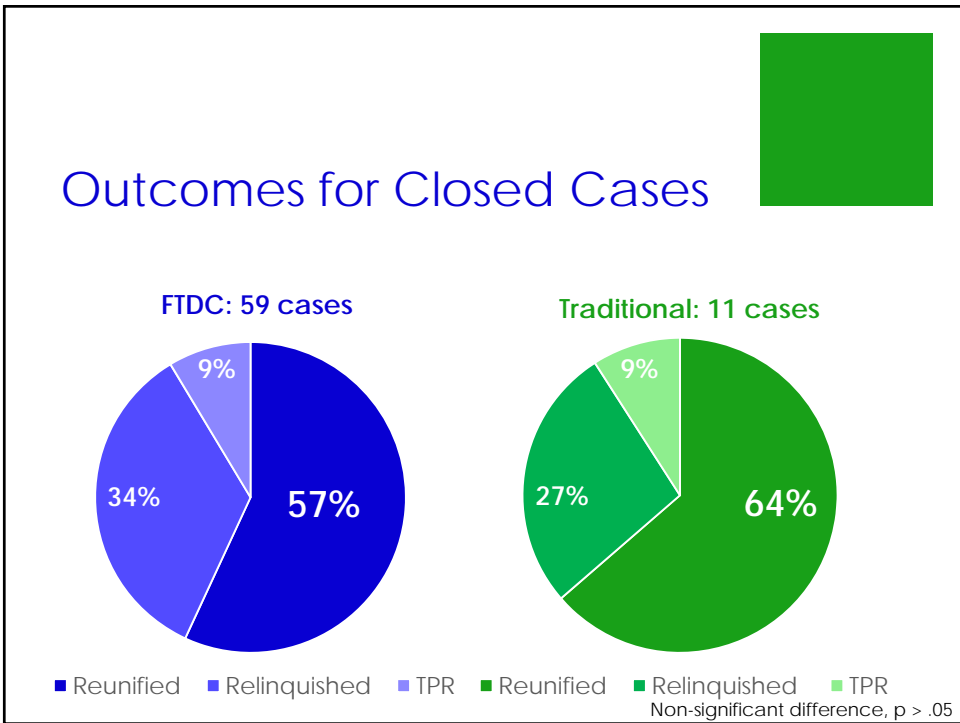


FTDC: Case File Reviews

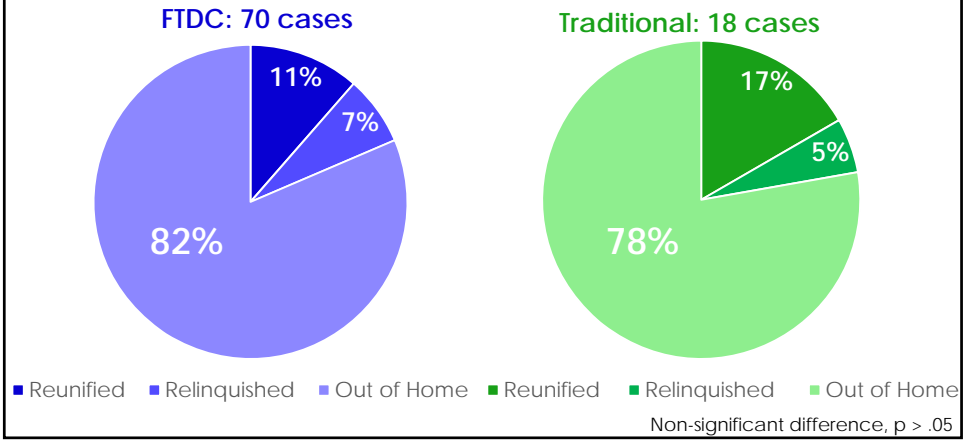
- Recorded important case dates, petition allegations, court orders, parents' participation in services, and case outcomes
- 158 files reviewed
 - 129 FTDC parents
 - 29 traditional dependency court parents

Participation in Substance Abuse Treatment

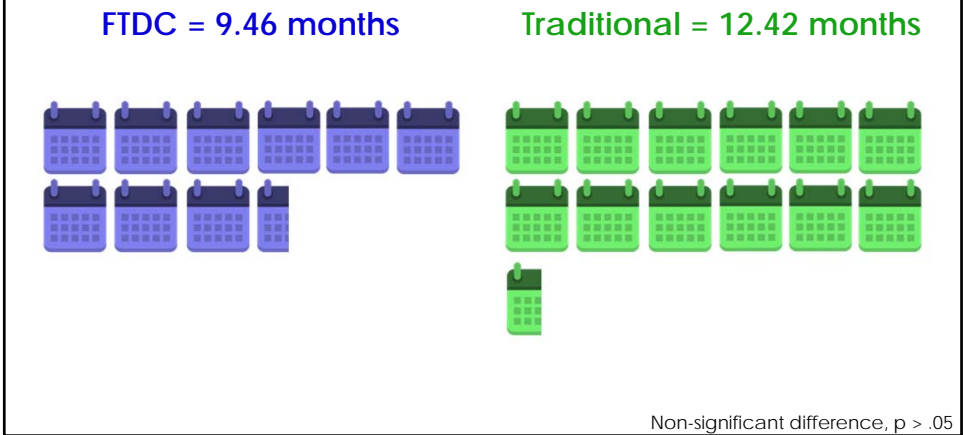




Status of Open Cases



Average Time from Petition to Reunification

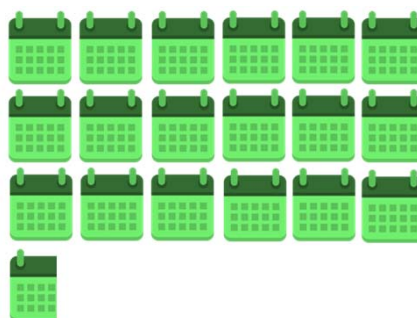
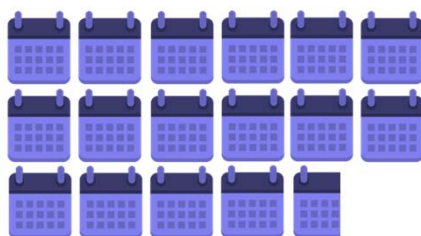


Time from Petition to Case Closure



FTDC = 16.77 months

Traditional = 18.35 months



Non-significant difference, $p > .05$

Douglas County FIRST Court



Sample

- FIRST Court
- Traditional dependency court

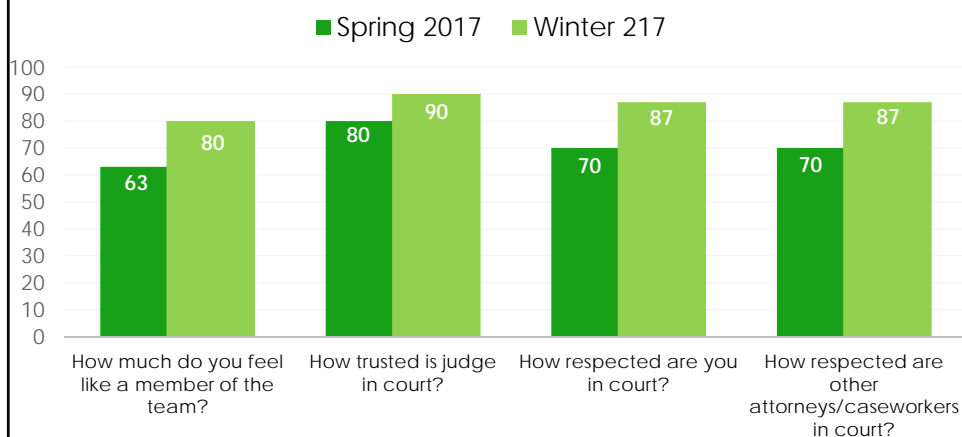
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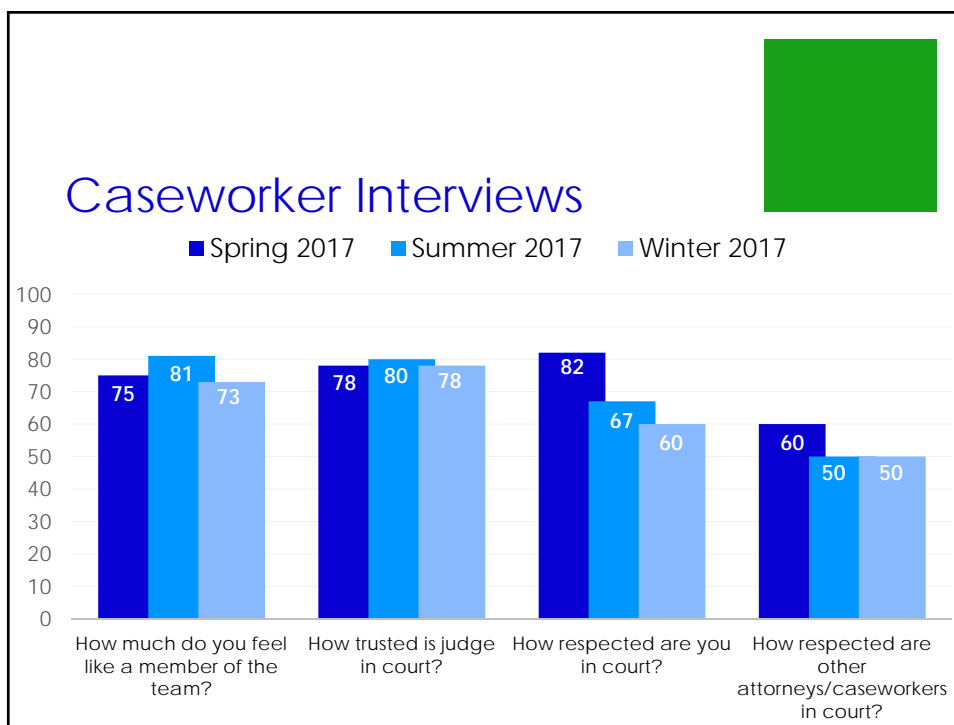
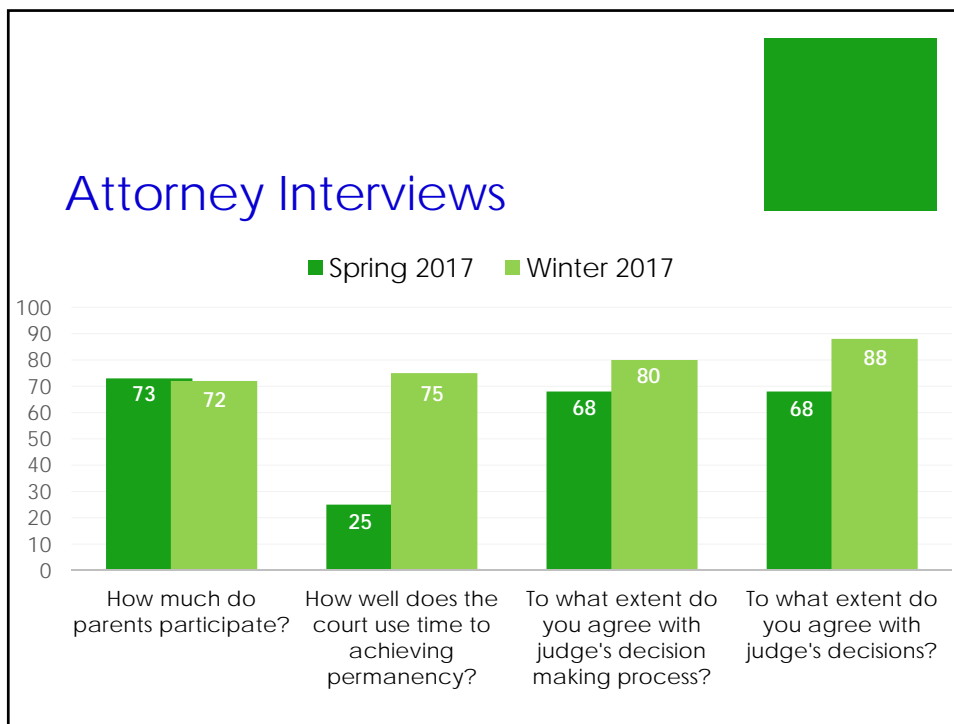
- Professional interviews
- Court observations

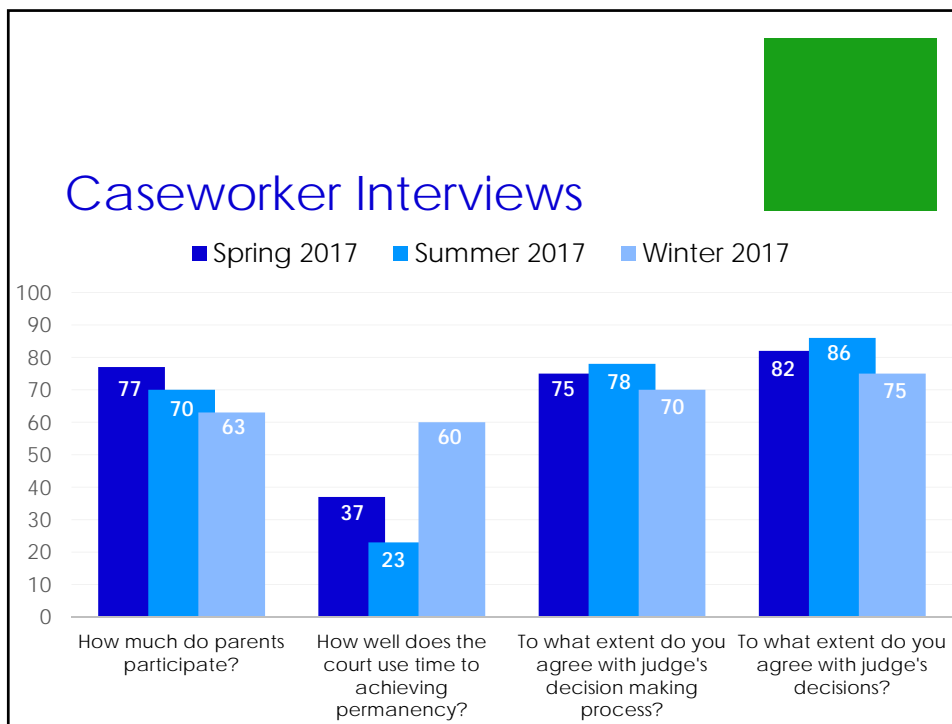
FIRST: Professional Interviews

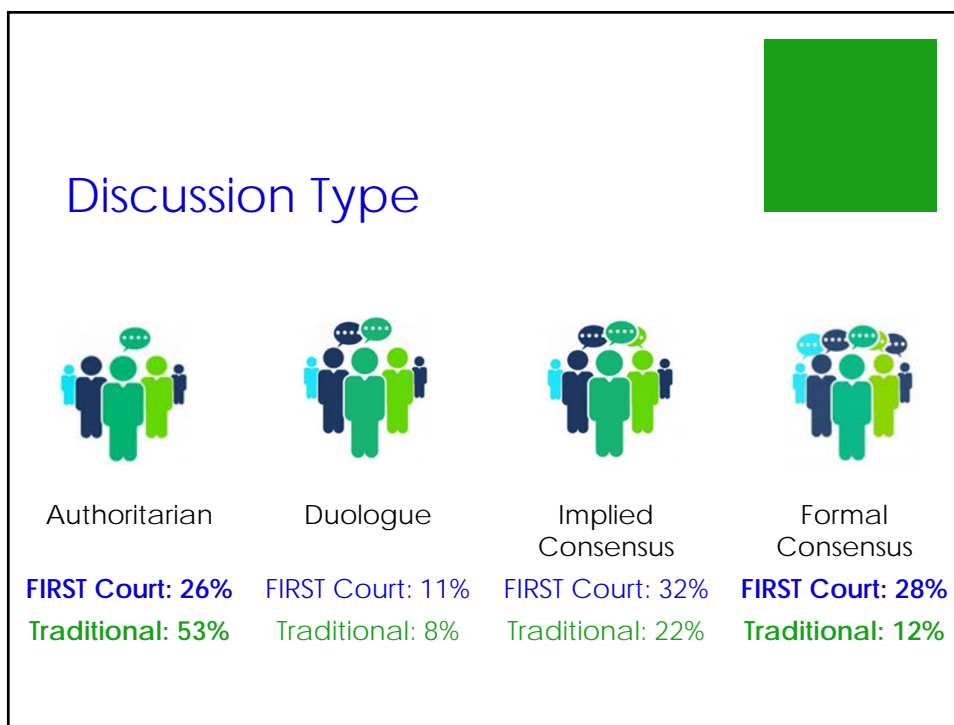
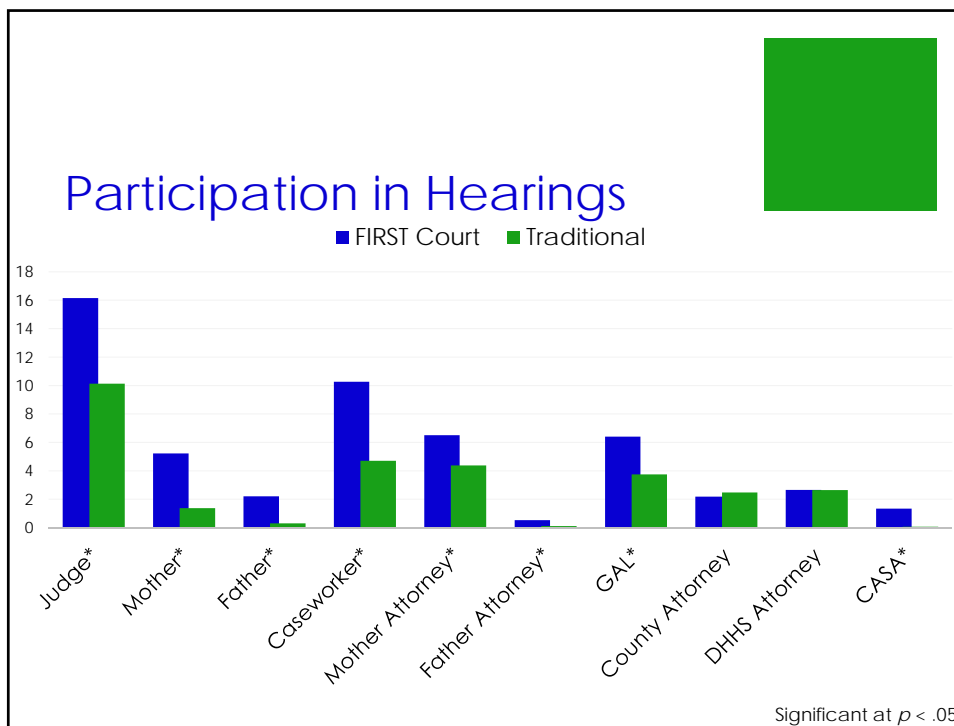
- Attorneys and caseworkers
- Every six months
 - Spring, Summer, & Winter 2017
- 23 questions about the court
 - 100 point scale (0 = not at all/completely disagree, 100 = extremely/completely agree)

Attorney Interviews









Conclusions:

Bringing it all together &
plans for the future

Conclusions

- Therapeutic approaches
 - Procedural justice
 - Reflective Practice
- Increased perceptions of fairness
- Increased engagement
 - Participation in services
 - Participation in court
 - Time to case closure
- Working relationships

Plans for the future



- Ongoing evaluation
- Share programs and results
- Expand reliance on therapeutic approaches