



### *From participant to therapist*

#### A successful case from Chilean Drug Treatment Courts

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In this short article we describe the rehabilitation process of a Drug Court participant who successfully graduated in January 2010. This case highlights how the Drug Courts in Chile have been consolidated by developing their own therapeutic strategies to promote changes in the participants. Furthermore, it shows how an active collaboration between the court and the treatment provider is a key component for success.

Jaime, a 44 years old man, arrived at the first interview with obvious physical deterioration, related to a long history of drug and alcohol abuse. His addiction had affected all areas of his life, especially his family.

Jaime had a severe addiction to cocaine, crack and alcohol. He used drugs at least 4 times per week. He was divorced, had lost contact with his daughters and had been unemployed for several years. Regarding his criminal records, he had several convictions for domestic violence, whose victim was his mother, with whom he was living at that time.

After the interview we decided that Jaime was an adequate candidate for the program, especially because his addiction was strongly related to his crimes. In the first Drug Court hearing, Jaime made a commitment with the court to make efforts in the therapeutic process and achieve changes in his lifestyle. At that moment he had been attending in-patient treatment for three weeks, a difficult process for him in terms of compliance with the standards and requirements of living in a treatment center.

Over time, both the court and the treatment provider's team noticed his real motivation for rehabilitation. Nevertheless, he faced hard difficulties during treatment, especially because of his lack of impulse control, and problems facing and solving conflicts in a different and healthier way.

The follow-up hearings focused primarily on strengthening Jaime's achievements, such as his abstinence, commitment, responsibility, improvements in family relations and parental role, among others. Each month, he set goals that were evaluated with the court and treatment team. The Drug Court helped and supported Jaime throughout the treatment. At the beginning, the program diverted him quickly to drug treatment rehabilitation and motivated him to keep trying and complying, reinforcing his achievements. Moreover, the court always included the suggestions from the treatment provider and included them in the Drug Court hearings as strategies that contributed to the therapeutic process.

Jaime successfully graduated from the Drug Court program when he was in the final phase of the treatment. The end of the legal procedure strengthened his adherence and continuity with rehabilitation until the end of the therapeutic process.

It can be argued that several factors contributed to Jaime's success. Firstly, the court's flexibility to adapt its requirements to Jaime's changing process, the communication with the treatment center and the strengthening of therapeutic issues during the hearings. Secondly, a key element was that the court was very careful setting goals that were consistent with Jaime's capabilities and interests, and providing an atmosphere of trust and support. After graduation, Jaime re-integrated into society; he began to work as a mechanic. Moreover, he realized that he was interested in continuing being linked to the world of rehabilitation by giving his life experience to help other people with drug problems. With support from the treatment center, in 2011 he joined university and started studying to be a technician in drug rehabilitation. Today he works at the same treatment center from which he graduated and he helps all the new participants that go into the program.

Two months ago the drug court team - judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, social worker and coordinator -, with the intention of knowing the current status of graduates, organized an informal lunch with Jaime. There he said "I thank you all, because without the court's help I would never have rehabilitated, I could even be dead. Today I am happy, I am a renewed person".

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