



emergence
addiction and behavioral therapies

March 31, 2025

Oregon House Committee on Judiciary
Representative Jason Kropf, Chair
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Task Force on Specialty Courts review and House Bill 2632 support

Dear Chair Kropf and Members of the Committee,

As Executive Director at Emergence Addiction and Behavioral Therapies—and as a member of the Specialty Courts Task Force that met during the interim—I am writing to express support for House Bill 2632. Emergence was a founding partner when the Lane County Drug Court was established in 1994. Today, we serve as the primary contract treatment provider for the Lane County Adult (Drug) Treatment Court, Lane County Veterans Treatment Court, Lane County Mental Health Court, and Springfield Municipal Adult Recovery and Treatment (SMART) Court.

Specialty courts are resource-intensive but highly cost-effective in reducing recidivism. They require significant resources for multidisciplinary teams to oversee participants through judicial review, community supervision, and treatment. Despite the higher initial costs, specialty courts achieve substantial savings by reducing incarceration rates and future justice system involvements. Studies show that Oregon's specialty courts save taxpayers millions and significantly lower recidivism rates compared to traditional criminal justice approaches like probation, jail, or prison sentences.

Specialty court participants often require more intensive and prolonged treatment interventions than those typically covered by CCOs administering the Oregon Health Plan. Additionally, the current grant funding timelines create significant gaps, forcing providers to operate without guaranteed funding for extended periods. These challenges underscore the critical need for sufficient funding to ensure that specialty courts can adhere to best practice standards and effectively support participants' recovery and reintegration.

Many essential services for specialty court participants, such as wraparound services addressing social determinants of health, progress reporting during court hearings, and treatment-adjacent activities, are not billable to insurance and must be covered by specialty courts' budgets. The Task Force recommends approving a billing modifier to reimburse providers at an enhanced rate to ensure these critical services are adequately funded, supporting the successful operation of specialty courts and the sustained recovery of their participants.

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Agencies delivering treatment services for specialty court participants can face significant bureaucratic hurdles with CCOs, including denials for sufficient duration of substance use treatment proven to reduce recidivism and determined medically necessary by certified providers. To address this, the Task Force recommends that the Legislature include a budget note instructing CCOs to adhere to the recommendations of treatment court providers regarding treatment specifics. This would ensure that specialty court participants receive the intensive care they need, reducing bureaucratic barriers, lowering recidivism, and improving life functioning for program participants.

The current inconsistent approach to funding decisions across treatment court systems often overlooks essential operations. The Task Force recommends directing funding to certified behavioral health treatment agencies to support Court Liaisons, who bridge the information flow between treatment providers and the courts, ensuring effective communication and coordination. This funding would provide immediate stability to treatment courts, addressing the crisis of underfunded services and supporting the successful operation and sustainability of specialty courts.

The Specialty Courts Task Force has provided clear and actionable recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of Oregon treatment courts. By passing House Bill 2632, the Legislature can ensure that these courts receive the support necessary to continue reducing recidivism and improving public safety. I encourage the Committee to act on these recommendations and pass HB 2632 to secure the future success of our specialty courts.

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to serve on the Task Force and provide feedback and recommendations. I look forward to working with you to build a safer and healthier Oregon.

With gratitude,

Chris Wig
Executive Director