

Case Study: Hamilton County, TN

Hamilton County (TN) Reduces DUIs, Domestic Assaults With Multi-Technology Alcohol Program

Probation
Pretrial

Hamilton County, TN – Named after U.S. founding father Alexander Hamilton, Hamilton County, Tennessee, is located in the southeast corner of the state along the Tennessee/Georgia border. With the revitalization of Chattanooga—the area's largest city—the county's population has steadily grown over the past few decades to just over 350,000 residents.

The county's major employers include BlueCross Blue Shield, Amazon.com, Volkswagen, and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Hamilton County's most frequent alcohol-related crimes include drunk driving and domestic assault. The Tennessee Department of Safety reports that in 2014 the state highway patrol made nearly 250 drunk-driving arrests in Hamilton County—the seventh highest number of DUI arrests in the state.

The Hamilton County Corrections Department provides both pretrial and probationary supervision for clients and offenders within the Hamilton County court system. The department works with a court liaison to enact pretrial and probation orders from judges and prosecutors.

The department implemented a multi-technology program in October of 2014, introducing a combination of SCRAM Continuous Alcohol Monitoring and SCRAM Remote Breath in order to better customize the monitoring of alcohol-involved clients based on risk and need. The department switched to portable breath and transdermal technology from just house arrest or older testing methods like urinalysis in order to provide more robust and regular abstinence monitoring.

How is SCRAM Technology Being Used?

Remote breath testing, continuous transdermal monitoring, and transdermal monitoring with house arrest are assigned by the Hamilton County courts as a condition of bond or probation. The goal of monitoring is to deter re-offense while clients are being supervised. On any given day, the department monitors an average of 95 clients with SCRAM Remote Breath or SCRAM CAM.

Highlights of Success

- The Hamilton County Corrections Department works collaboratively with Hamilton County courts to facilitate supervision and integrate multiple alcohol monitoring options into supervision.
- 93.7% of scheduled Remote Breath tests are completed successfully, meaning that clients took the test on time and passed. The largest number of violations resulted from missed tests.
- On average 98.2% of clients monitored 24/7 with SCRAM CAM are sober and compliant each day.
- For clients who violate the terms of monitoring, the department's average time to a first violation on SCRAM CAM is 42 days, compared to just 10 days on breath testing.

OPTIONS in Alcohol Monitoring

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To determine the best technology for each client, judges and prosecutors consider the following criteria:

- Type and severity of the offense along with aggravating and mitigating factors
- Background and criminal history—the biggest determinant of future alcohol-involved offenses
- Financial circumstances

Low- to mid-risk alcohol offenders:

- First-time offenders and those who commit lesser offenses are generally assigned to SCRAM Remote Breath.
- The department requires breath testing clients to take an average of 4 tests per day, 7 days a week.



- The department works with clients to create a testing schedule that will allow them to meet their work and court obligations.
- Additional daily random tests are added to the testing schedule to help ensure that clients are not attempting to drink around testing.

Mid- to high-risk alcohol offenders:

- The court requires clients with multiple or severe offenses, or those with a history of alcohol-related problems, to wear SCRAM Continuous Alcohol Monitoring to ensure they are abiding by their abstinence orders.
- Violations are referred to the court and dealt with swiftly.
- As appropriate, the department uses the dual functionality of SCRAM CAM to impose both alcohol monitoring and house arrest.

Combining both testing systems on individual offenders

- The department also works with clients and the courts to use a step-up/step-down model for monitoring technology.
- Clients who fail or regularly miss breath tests may be ordered to use SCRAM CAM in lieu of or following a period of jail time.
- Conversely, judges may allow clients who have proven their sobriety through prolonged continuous monitoring to transition to less-intensive breath testing.

The department uses an offender-pay model for both technologies. Clients are required to pay two weeks in advance for monitoring, and the department works with clients to develop and maintain a payment plan.

Outcomes

Prior to their use of alcohol monitoring, the department relied on RF house arrest for much of their supervision of alcohol clients. Even though they have only recently implemented breath and transdermal technology into their program, Hamilton County is seeing significant results with clients who are going through and who have completed supervision.

Local officials are aware of the damage alcohol can do in the lives of their clients and have experienced the difficulty of enforcing mandated sobriety. According to Chris Jackson, Corrections Programs Superintendent for Hamilton County, "Some of these people would be sitting at home drinking and would create issues. They aren't doing that in this new monitoring program," he states. Jill Whaley, one of the department's probation officers, agrees. "SCRAM Remote Breath and the bracelet give probation officers additional tools in their belt to supervise clients and hold them accountable," she says.

Jackson and Whaley have also seen the difference alcohol monitoring makes to help clients successfully complete their supervision and get their lives back on track. Monitoring gives clients an additional measure of support to get and stay sober. According to Whaley, "Clients feel good when they are being successful with the technology and can prove their compliance."

Hamilton County's use of alcohol monitoring technology is expected to grow as the monitoring program matures.