

MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY COURT

MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY COURT GOALS

- ✓ Reduce crime in the community and protect public safety by reducing the re-arrest rate of the mentally ill.
- ✓ Improve the mental health of program participants by connecting them with appropriate services in the community, increasing their treatment engagement and monitoring their progress while enrolled in the diversion program.
- ✓ Reduce the criminal justice involvement of the mentally ill, including jail detention and involuntary forensic hospitalizations of program participants, thus reducing overall cost in the criminal justice system.

All defendants in the program are asked to comply with the following requirements:

- ✓ Attend all scheduled court hearings.
- ✓ Check-in with their Specialized Supervision Unit Pretrial Service Officer, as scheduled.
- ✓ Adhere to mental health treatment requirements.
- ✓ Comply with drug and alcohol testing and treatment, as required.

“Personal growth is not a journey of a thousand days or a journey of a lifetime; it is a journey of one day at a time.”

RESOURCES

Court Urgent Care Clinic
Moultrie Courthouse
1st floor; room 1230
202.879.1620

D.C. Department of Behavior Health
24-Hour Access Helpline
1.888.7WE-HELP (888.793.4357)

Suicide Hotline
1.800. SUICIDE (800.784.2433)

**D.C. Department of Behavioral
Health - Comprehensive Psychiatric
Emergency Program (CPEP)**
202.673.9319

The Mental Health Community Court program is a collaborative effort of:

- D.C. Superior Court**
- Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia**
- D.C. Department of Behavioral Health**
- United States Attorney's Office – D.C.**
- Superior Court Trial Lawyers Association**
- Public Defender Service of D.C.**

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUPERIOR COURT MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY COURT



Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All

Moultrie Courthouse
500 Indiana Ave., N.W.
2nd floor; courtroom 211
Washington, D.C. 20001

BACKGROUND

The D.C. Superior Court Mental Health Community Court (MHCC) program began hearing cases in November 2007 to address the needs of an increasing number of mentally ill defendants charged with misdemeanors. In October 2010, MHCC also began hearing non-violent felony cases.

The Mental Health Community Court program's main objective has been to reduce crime by identifying and serving defendants experiencing mental illness, including some defendants with co-occurring substance abuse disorders, and to connect defendants with appropriate treatment services. If compliance with these services are maintained, as well as the other conditions set by the court, the D.C. US Attorney's Office may ask the court to dismiss or reduce a defendant's criminal charges after successful completion of the program.

Mental Health Community Court hearings are generally held Monday through Thursday at 10am and 2pm. The frequency of an individual's hearings will vary depending on his or her progress in the program. All cases are held in courtroom 211 before Judge Heidi M. Pasichow.

Contact Information

**Mental Health Community Court
Moultrie Courthouse, Courtroom 211
Heidi M. Pasichow, Presiding**

**Cleonia Terry, MSW, LICSW
Mental Health Community Court
Coordinator
DC Superior Court
202. 879.8769
cleonia.terry@dcsc.gov**

A defendant is eligible for MHCC if he or she meets the following criteria:

- ❖ Has a diagnosis of mental illness. The defendant may also have a co-occurring substance use disorder.
- ❖ Has no pending charge for domestic violence, gun offense or violent felony.
- ❖ Has no violent felony or gun charge conviction within the last five years.
- ❖ Is not on probation, parole or supervised release relating to a violent felony or gun charge conviction.
- ❖ Is not detained in jail, prison or a mental health institution. Those defendants placed in halfway houses are eligible.
- ❖ Is competent to participate in the program.

Quick Check Eligibility

- Case(s) has been approved by USAO?
- Defendant is eligible for supervision in PSA's Specialized Supervision Unit and has been placed into SSU?
- Defendant is competent?
- Defendant is willing to engage in mental health and substance services?
- Defendant has submitted a "full screen" drug test (that includes marijuana and alcohol)?

Cases cannot be certified to MHCC until the answers to all the questions above are YES!

PROCESS

A defendant experiencing serious and persistent mental illness symptoms charged with a misdemeanor or non-violent felony crime may have his/her case(s) transferred to Mental Health Community Court (MHCC) after the defendant is determined eligible by the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) and the D.C. Pretrial Service Agency (PSA).

The USAO reviews the defendant's pending charges and criminal history to determine eligibility for MHCC. The defendant is also screened by PSA to establish whether there is a history of, or need for, mental health treatment. Once found eligible for MHCC, the defendant must be compliant with mental health treatment, and provide negative drug tests before being permitted to enter an agreement with the USAO. Once admitted into MHCC, defendant has an opportunity to have his/her criminal charges dismissed or reduced after successful completion of the program.

A defendant with misdemeanor charges may be offered a Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) or a Deferred Sentencing Agreement (DSA) and a felony defendant may be offered an Amended Sentencing Agreement (ASA). A DPA, DSA or ASA can be terminated if the defendant does not remain compliant with the program requirements or decides to voluntarily withdraw from the treatment program.

The MHCC program is a voluntary court program and is not sanctions-based. A defendant may be rewarded for his/her exceptional compliance with fewer weekly check-ins with their SSU Officer or fewer drug tests. The MHCC program recognizes that individuals' mental health conditions may be unstable, and that it may take some time to identify the most appropriate treatment.