

WYANDOTTE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COURT

OVERVIEW

The Wyandotte County Behavioral Health Court began in October 2017. The Behavioral Health Court (BHC) assists high risk/high needs adult participants who reside in Wyandotte County, are on felony probation in Wyandotte County, and who are diagnosed with a Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI). It is a collaborative effort by members of the Behavioral Health Court including the Wyandotte County District Court; Wyandotte County Community Corrections; the Wyandotte County District Attorney's office; Wyandot BHN; Mirror, Inc.; members of the defense bar; and the Wyandotte County Sheriff's Department.

BHC is designed to work with participants in creating individualized treatment plans to access appropriate community-based services, including mental health and substance abuse treatment; successfully complete probation; reduce time spent in the criminal justice system; reduce recidivism rates; and protect public safety. It is a voluntary, four-phase program which may take 12-18 months to complete. As participants progress through the phases, they are awarded incentives for compliance or interventions are imposed for noncompliance with the program. Upon successful completion of the program phases, participants graduate from the program.

MISSION

The mission of BHC is to reduce recidivism for those with an SPMI who are currently on felony probation with Community Corrections. BHC seeks to increase public safety by implementation of a cost-effective continuum of individualized care through the utilization of this specialized court. The BHC will hold participants accountable for their actions and assist participants in achieving long-term stability to become successful members of the community.

GOALS

1. Identify and address defendants who suffer from SPMI.
2. Improve services to participants with SPMI by providing access to appropriate community-based services, including mental health and substance abuse treatment services.
3. Reduce time spent involved in the criminal justice system.
4. Promote evidence-based practices for recovery among participants served by the Behavioral Health Court.
5. Reduce recidivism and protect public safety by supervising participants on felony probation who suffer from SPMI.

ELIGIBILITY

Behavioral Health Court is limited to residents of Wyandotte County who are 18 or older. To participate in BHC, participants must have an SPMI diagnosis. The potential participant must also be on felony probation through Wyandotte County Community Corrections and considered to be high risk/high need.

Potential participants on felony SB 123 probation may also be eligible. Any variance will be determined by discretionary decisions of the judge and court team.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA

- No past or present dead bodies.
- No past or present felony sex crimes.
- No past or present form of kidnapping.
- If the offender's current crime is a "forcible felony" as defined in K.S.A 21-5111 (n), then the entry of the offender will be determined by discretion of the sentencing judge and/or program judge.

Each application/referral to the Wyandotte County Behavioral Health Court will be reviewed on an individual case-by-case basis.

APPLICATION AND REFERRAL PROCESS

A potential participant may be referred to the Behavioral Health Court by the sentencing judge, prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, community corrections or a family member. When the referral is received, an initial screening will be conducted by Community Corrections. As an individual treatment plan is developed for the admitted participant, both long-term goals as well as an incremental success plan will be developed.

The decision of the Behavioral Health Court team whether to accept or reject an applicant based on relevant criteria will be final.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COURT HEARINGS

Participants will be required to appear on a regular basis. The frequency of appearances depends upon the phase of Behavioral Health Court a participant is currently in and their compliance in the program. Failure to appear may result in a warrant being issued for a participant's arrest. Before each Behavioral Health Court hearing, the team members meet to go over participant progress for those who are scheduled to appear on that docket. The intensive supervision officer will give the judge a progress report. The progress report will discuss attendance, participation, and cooperation in the treatment program; employment; pro-social activities and/or other requirements. The team is encouraged to ask questions about individual participant progress and discuss any problems or barriers facing participants. When participants are doing well, program requirements may be reduced or other incentives may be provided. If progress reports show that a participant is not doing well, the judge will discuss the issues with the participant during the status hearing and determine future action, which could include an intervention.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COURT INCENTIVES AND SANCTIONS

During a participant's term of participation in the Behavioral Health Court, a participant may be rewarded for progress in the program by receiving incentives. If conditions of supervision or progress in Behavioral Health Court are not met, then a participant may be subject to interventions.

INCENTIVES

Upon the recommendation of the Behavioral Health Court team, participants may be given rewards or incentives for progress on supervision or for progress in the program that may include but are not limited to the following:

- Positive verbal feedback and/or handshakes from the judge.
- Round of applause for significant achievements.
- Name listed on A+ board for participants in compliance.
- Basket with small tangible items for compliant participants.
- First in First Out among participants during court appearances.
- Certificates of Completion for promotion to the next phase.
- Decrease in the number of docket appearances.
- Graduation celebration.

INTERVENTIONS

Interventions may be imposed on participants who are failing to actively participate in required treatment plan or when they do not meet conditions of supervision. The purpose of an intervention is to encourage participants to follow through with the commitment they made to the Behavioral Health Court team and to their personal progress. Interventions may include but are not limited to the following:

- Increased appearances in court.
- Increased participation in treatment activities.
- Increased reporting to intensive supervision officer.
- Community service.
- Court-ordered drug testing.
- Loss of privileges (curfew, travel restrictions).
- Jail sanctions.
- Termination from program/removal.

PHASES

Behavioral Health Court will take at least 12 to 18 months to complete. The duration of the program will be dependent on what treatment individual participants need and upon participant success. It is divided into four phases. Participants must successfully complete each phase before moving into the next phase. Each phase has a key concept or focus. Attached is the phase chart for Behavioral Health Court.

GRADUATION

Upon successful completion of a participant's treatment program and satisfaction of all other court requirements, the participant will graduate from Behavioral Health Court.

Graduation from the Behavioral Health Court program is recognized as a very important event. A participant's family and friends will be invited to attend a special ceremony as the Behavioral Health Court team congratulates the successful participant for completing the program and achieving individualized goals.

Graduation Requirements:

- Compliant with mental health treatment.
- Compliant with substance abuse treatment and no positive UAs in the final phase.
- Compliant with payment of court costs and fees.
- Completed community service hours.
- Completion of all court-ordered programs.
- Completed aftercare program plan.
- Demonstrate stability with mental health symptoms.
- Any other completion requirements specified by the judge.