



TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

**STATE OF FLORIDA
CHARLOTTE COUNTY**



**MENTAL HEALTH COURT PROGRAM
ADULT PARTICIPANT'S HANDBOOK**

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Charlotte County Mental Health Court to increase the safety of the public as well as improve the quality of life for individuals that reside in Charlotte County with a serious and persistent mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorder that have involvement with the criminal justice system by providing accessible and quality treatment and support services at an affordable cost to the individual.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Charlotte County Mental Health Court is to offer a Recovery-focused alternative to jail for individuals struggling with severe and chronic mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorder and have committed criminal offenses in order to increase involvement in the community while at the same time reducing recidivism through the criminal justice system.

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INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL HEALTH COURT

You have been arrested for a crime in Charlotte County, and you have been identified as an individual who may have a mental illness. You are therefore being offered an opportunity to participate in Charlotte County's Mental Health Court. This program is designed to help you.

This Handbook is designed to answer questions, address your concerns, and provide an overview of the Mental Health Court program. As a participant, you will be expected to follow the instructions given in Mental Health Court by the Judge and comply with the Intervention Plan developed for you. All participants are encouraged to share this handbook with his or her family and friends.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND TREATMENT PROCEDURES

Mentally ill offenders often spend unnecessary time in jail, lack access to mental health treatment services, and often become repeat offenders and cycle through the justice system again. The Mental Health Court represents an effort to identify and address the unique needs of the mentally ill offender. The Mental Health Court represents an effort to increase effective cooperation between the criminal justice system and the mental health treatment system, and hopes to achieve the following results for the benefit of the mentally ill offenders: Faster case processing time, improved access to mental health treatment services, improved well-being, and reduced recidivism. Another important outcome to be achieved by the program for the larger community is improved public safety.

This is a voluntary program, which includes regular court appearances before a designated Mental Health Court Judge, and mental health treatment in accordance with a Proposed Intervention Plan, which will be developed for you by mental health professionals, individualized to your needs in accordance with available resources.

Mental Health Court is an intensive outpatient program. An individualized temporary Intervention Plan will be made for you according to your individual

needs. Services available to you may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Psychiatric evaluation
- Psychotropic medication and medication clinic with monitoring
- Life Skills Counseling
- Substance Abuse treatment
- Drug testing
- Anger Management
- Case Management to assist you with housing, transportation, reinstatement or application of SSI/SSDI, food stamps, or any other community assistance that may be appropriate to fit your needs

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This is a voluntary program. Following arrest, if you are eligible for the Mental Health Court program, your Public Defender or private counsel will discuss the Mental Health Court Program with you and advise you in making your choice.

A temporary Intervention Plan will be developed for you at the time of your clinical screening. The temporary Intervention Plan will be designed specifically to address your needs and problems, taking into consideration your history, severity, and possible co-occurring substance abuse issues, in accordance with available resources existing in our community until your initial comprehensive assessment. You will be able to review these initial recommendations with your attorney and he or she will be able to advise you in making your choice. Entry into the Mental Health Court is voluntary, and your defense counsel will continue to represent you throughout your participation in the Mental Health Court Program. If you have entered into the program with a private attorney and can no longer afford this expense, you may request a court-appointed attorney to represent you.

After you are admitted to the Mental Health Court program, you will be given an appointment to meet with Mental Health Court program staff for a comprehensive assessment. A treatment plan will be developed according to your individual needs by the assessing counselor. Mental Health Court is a 4-level program with all participants beginning at Level 1. Advancement is based on each person's progress along with input from treatment team. As you comply with the expectations of your Intervention Plan and Treatment Plan, you will be advancing upward by levels in the program up to Level 4 and graduation. As you progress on your treatment plan, court hearings before the Judge are reduced as you advance up the level system.

Successful completion of the treatment plan will result in graduation from the Mental Health Court program. Failure to complete the Intervention Plan or unsuccessful discharge from the program will result in prosecution on the pending charges or violation of probation and/or community control.

MENTAL HEALTH COURT STAFFING AND SUPERVISION

As a Mental Health Court participant, you will be required to appear in Mental Health Court on a regular basis. This is for the purpose of monitoring your compliance with the treatment plan developed to help you.

Prior to your appearance in court, the Mental Health Court committee, consisting of MHC Treatment team, Presiding Judge, County Probation, Pretrial Services, Department of Corrections, State Attorney, and Public Defender will meet and discuss your case. At this time your progress with your treatment plan will be reviewed as well as, if applicable, possible changes, sanctions, modifications, and other legal obligations relevant to your case.

At each appearance, the Judge will be given a progress report prepared by the mental health treatment provider regarding your participation in the Mental Health Court treatment plan. The Judge will ask you questions about your progress and discuss any specific problems you may be experiencing. If you are doing well, you will be encouraged to continue with the program and work with your

treatment provider towards successful completion of the Intervention Plan. If you are not doing well, the Judge will discuss this with you and the treatment provider to determine further action.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity and privacy will be protected consistent with Florida law, and procedures have been developed by CBHC to safeguard these rights. Please be aware that your participation in group treatment processes means that you will also be responsible for ensuring the privacy of information about others in your group. You will be asked to sign a release authorizing the transfer of information among all participating Mental Health Court agencies. In some instances, your employment may be terminated if contacted by the probation officer. If you think this may happen, talk to your probation officer and the Mental Health Court Judge.

MENTAL HEALTH COURT PROGRAM RULES

As a Mental Health Court Program participant, you will be required to abide by the following rules:

1. Comply with the treatment plan developed for you.
2. Attend all status review hearings before the designated Mental Health Court Judge.
3. Be on time. (If you are late for a counseling session you may not be allowed to attend and will be considered an unexcused absence. If you are unable to attend a scheduled session, you must contact your counselor.)
4. Attend all ordered treatment sessions: This includes individual and group counseling, educational sessions and 12-step meetings. If you are unable to attend a scheduled session, you must contact your counselor.
5. Dress appropriately for Court and treatment sessions (shorts, tank or halter tops, undershirts, caps and hats are forbidden as well as clothing bearing drug or alcohol related themes. Sunglasses are not to be worn inside court or treatment sessions unless medically approved. Speak with your treatment team if you need assistance with clothing. In consideration that your attendance may be directly before or after hours of employment, jeans, uniforms, or other appropriate work related dress is permitted.

6. While in Court, remain seated and quiet until called upon to speak. Parties do not talk unless they are directed by the Judge or lawyer to speak. Children and/or family members are not permitted in the courtroom.
7. Do not make threats toward other participants or staff or behave in a violent manner: Violent or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and will be reported to the court.
8. Do not use or possess any illegal drugs and/or alcohol. Do not visit any place where the primary business is the sale of alcoholic beverages or any place where people are using illegal drugs and/or controlled substances. Any alcohol consumption including but not limited to mouthwash, cold remedies, food preparations, "nonalcoholic beers", etc. will be considered a relapse and will be handled accordingly. Wellness is the primary focus of this program and maintaining a drug-free lifestyle is very important for your recovery.
9. Do not use, possess, or fill prescriptions for prescription medications and/or controlled substances. This includes prescriptions and controlled substances that you have lawful prescriptions for. Any substances including but not limited to controlled substances, prescription medicine, vitamin, herbal, energy, or diet supplements, inhalants, solvents, designer drugs, synthetic drugs, and over-the-counter medicines are to be approved by the Mental Health Court Program Manager before you will be authorized to possess or take them. You will refrain from consumption of poppy seeds and you cannot possess or consume any substance not meant for human consumption. You will refrain from use or possession of any products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine.
10. Charlotte Behavioral Health Care must be provided a paper copy of every prescription written to you, if you plan to fill it or not. You must obtain permission from the Mental Health Court program manager prior to filling any prescription. In an emergency, if you are unsuccessful in reaching Mental Health Court program staff members and your probation officer and the prescription is not a controlled substance then follow doctor's orders and inform your treatment team and probation officer immediately. Any prescriptions that have been approved by the Mental Health Court treatment team for you to take must be ingested as prescribed, i.e. by mouth only.
11. You will not change your residence or employment or leave the county of your residence without first procuring the consent of your probation officer.

12. You are expected to adhere to Mental Health Court Group Rules and Expectations during the course of your treatment. It is very important that your behavior and language remain appropriate and courteous at all times.
13. It is important that members use the opportunity during treatment to focus on sobriety, healthy living, and to develop safe, healthy, and honest relationships with people in the Recovery community. Thus, socializing with Drug Court and Mental Health Court members outside of scheduled program activities may occur within the Recovery community, in the course of developing healthy, legal and safe substance free recreational activities. Members will be open and honest about activities outside of treatment, taking responsibility for their own compliance with probation and treatment expectations. All members have an ethical obligation to report honestly to treatment providers and probation their own or others' activities which may interfere with treatment including a substance free lifestyle. All interactions between Mental Health Court members and Drug Court members are subject to the discretion of your treatment team and probation officer.
14. Sexual and/or romantic relationships between Drug Court members are not permitted. Sexual and/or romantic relationships between Drug Court members and Mental Health Court members are not permitted. The destructive effects on newly clean and sober individuals and on the group process far outweigh the right of people to form new relationships during their year in treatment. Violation of this element of the contract may result in termination from the program.
15. Report to your probation officer as directed. You must be prepared to provide a urine sample at each visit. If you have any problem making an appointment, you are to call your probation officer. You will live and remain at liberty without violating any law. A conviction in a court of law shall not be necessary in order for such a violation to constitute a violation of your Mental Health Court Contract.
16. You will not possess, carry, or own any weapons or firearms.

ABSTINENCE AND RECOVERY

Mental Health Court requires that individuals remain substance-free while participating in the program. Unapproved use of unapproved substances while in the program may result in dismissal from the program or a modification of your treatment plan, or a sanction as determined by the Mental Health Court treatment team and the Judge.

To that end, Charlotte Behavioral Health Care commits to make every effort to prescribe substances that are not controlled for individuals recovering or in remission from a substance abuse problem or addiction. Prescription of controlled substances or use of unapproved substances while in the program will require staffing with and approval from the Chief Medical Officer/Medical Director.

Mental Health Court participants receiving medication or treatment from other medical providers in the community, including but not limited to, Pain Management Specialist or their Primary Care Provider (PCP) will be required to sign releases of information, so that Charlotte Behavioral Health Care may be directly in contact with the provider. Charlotte Behavioral Health Care will contact the medical provider via phone or letter to inform the provider of the participant's addiction issues and discuss treatment alternatives.

Mental Health Court clinical staff will provide education to participants about the risks inherent in use of controlled substances.

Mental Health Court participants' continued use of prescribed controlled substances that interferes with their ongoing recovery or poses a risk to the participant and/or community may result in a possible sanction at the discretion of the Mental Health Court Judge or dismissal from the program and subsequent legal action.

SANCTIONS

If you fail to comply with the Mental Health Court Contract or treatment plan or if you are arrested or a warrant is issued for your arrest for another charge, the Mental Health Court Judge may, at his or her discretion, impose sanctions to include, but are not limited to:

1. Modification of your treatment plan, which can include but is not limited to, an increase in services to possibly include more counseling, inpatient treatment, substance abuse treatment, increased drug testing, increased attendance at

AA/NA meetings, parenting classes, increased court appearances, returning to an earlier phase of treatment

2. Community service hours
3. Essays
4. Fines
5. Curfew
6. Incarceration at Charlotte County jail
7. Termination of your participation in the Mental Health Court Program. Noncompliance may result in prosecution on the original pending charges and/or violation of probation/community control.

PROGRAM FEES & INTAKE

Fees for services at Charlotte Behavioral Health Care are based on your income. A sliding scale fee is used to determine your costs, based on federal poverty guidelines. We will verify your income when you come for your initial intake appointment. You must provide proof of income at your first intake appointment. When applicable, we also accept private insurances, Value Options, Medicaid, and Medicare. Copayments are expected at the time of service. If you are unable to pay for your services, a payment plan can be arranged. We accept cash, personal checks, money orders, and Visa or MasterCard. You will be asked at each appointment for your co-pay if applicable. If you do not inform us of new insurance or provide updated financial information and charges are incurred we may not be able to get authorization for past appointments and you will be responsible for any incurred charges. Any fees and co-pays will not exceed \$1,500 per 52-week period.

Upon admission to Charlotte Behavioral Health Care, you will first meet with one of our intake personnel who will review intake paperwork and set you up in our system. You will be asked to provide necessary demographic and financial information at this time. Please be prepared to provide necessary paperwork. You will then meet with Mental Health Court staff and a comprehensive assessment will be conducted. During the assessment, you will be asked to provide information about your symptoms, substance use, treatment history, and other relevant topics. We ask that you be open and honest during this

assessment process. After your assessment, you will be given an orientation and overview of the Mental Health Court program. Please anticipate this initial appointment to last at least 3 hours.

TREATMENT PROCEDURES

Your treatment will be provided through a team approach with the combined resources of the probation office and the assigned treatment staff. The treatment team will assess what level of treatment will best meet your needs and recommend to the Mental Health Court Judge that you receive outpatient or residential treatment. If you are admitted to a residential treatment program, your treatment plan will include the requirements of that program. If you are not admitted into a residential treatment program, a multi-component, outpatient program has been developed which includes: group therapy, individual therapy, family therapy, monitored drug testing, life skills, and service coordination.

TREATMENT PLANS

A treatment plan will be developed by you and your treatment team following a comprehensive assessment of your problems and needs. The plan will act as a guide for your initial treatment phase and within it, you will set goals, select methods for meeting those goals, and develop target dates for achieving those goals. The plan will be maintained by your treatment team and will be updated as you progress through the program.

DRUG TESTING

You will be drug tested through the entire treatment process. You will be tested a minimum of one time per week. The Mental Health Court Judge will have access to all drug test results including any failures to test, and may order a drug test at any time. Tampering with the drug/urine test will be deemed a positive test and may result in your expulsion from the program (this includes flushing, diluting, using someone else's urine, using any devices, etc.) A positive or "dirty" test will not automatically disqualify you from the Mental Health Court Program. The Judge will be reviewing your overall performance in the program.

COUNSELING

Counseling comprises two separate formats: individual and group. As part of your treatment plan, you will be required to participate in both types of counseling. Together they are designed to develop self-awareness, realize self-worth, and develop the strength to practice self-discipline. The individual and group counseling sessions will include problem identification and alternative solutions. Your attendance at counseling sessions will be reported to the Judge as part of your progress report. You must have prior permission from your counselor to be excused from a counseling session (acceptable reason for absence - hospitalization; documentation from the hospital will be required).

TWELVE STEP MEETINGS

Attendance will be required at 12-Step meetings such as Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, and/or Cocaine Anonymous. The frequency of attendance requirement is determined by your progress in the program and your phase level. However, the requirement for attendance is a minimum of four meetings weekly. Attendance is an important part of your recovery process to help familiarize you with the 12-step philosophy, and help you develop levels of trust, to earn and create social bonds with other recovering addicts. Your treatment team will provide you with information regarding the time and location of 12-step meetings and will direct you to special interest and recovery events in the community. You must provide proof of attendance to the court probation officer at each court appearance. Your counselor may also require you to provide proof of attendance on a weekly basis.

EDUCATION, VOCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Recovery means developing self-sufficiency and becoming a productive and responsible member of the community. During the treatment program, you will be expected to be employed, or involved in an educational, volunteer or vocational training program. Your counselor and your probation officer will work

to assist you in obtaining an assessment of your needs and skills and will refer you to the proper agencies for education, training and job placement.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Upon your entry into the Mental Health Court Program, your treatment team will assess your housing, transportation, family and general living needs and when appropriate, your case manager will refer you to a local, state and/or county agency for assistance.

GRADUATION

Once you have successfully completed the treatment plan developed for you, you will graduate from the Mental Health Court program. You and your family will be invited to join the Court as the Mental Health Court Judge congratulates you on your successful completion of the Mental Health Court Contract and treatment plan and achieving your goals.

In order to graduate from the Mental Health Court program, you must meet the following criteria, or at the discretion of the Mental Health Court treatment team and committee:

- be compliant with treatment recommendations
- maintain acceptable level of sobriety (to include no positive and/or dilute drug tests) as determined by Mental Health Court treatment team
- obtain a reliable and adequate source of income and/or support
- be up to date on your court fines & fees
- complete required community service hours
- complete a Plan for Ongoing Recovery,
- write an essay of a minimum of 2 full written pages explaining about your experience with Mental Health Court and how the program impacted your life,
- complete all court-ordered Educational and/or Counseling programs (Batterers Intervention Program, Shoplifters Alternative, parenting classes, substance abuse education, DUI class, etc.) as outlined in your Intervention Plan
- demonstrate stability of your Mental Health symptoms as determined by a licensed mental health professional.

CONCLUSION

The Mental Health Court Program has been developed to help you and to return you to the community as a productive and responsible member. The Program is voluntary and is your personal choice. The Judge, the Court staff, and the treatment team are present to guide you and assist you but the final responsibility and the pride in accomplishment is yours.

We hope this Handbook has been helpful to you and answered your questions. If you have additional questions or concerns about the Mental Health Court Program, please feel free to ask them. The Mental Health Court number is listed below for easy access:

Kerry Fichthorn
Court Services Screener
Charlotte Behavioral Health Care, Inc
1700 Education Ave. Punta Gorda, FL 33950
Phone: 941-347-6439

Office of the Public Defender
350 E. Marion Avenue, 1st Floor
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
(941) 637-2181

Charlotte Behavioral Health Care Inc.
1700 Education Avenue
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
(941) 639-8300

Office of the State Attorney
350 E. Marion Avenue, 2nd Floor
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
(941) 637-2104

Charlotte County Court Administration
350 E. Marion Avenue
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
(941) 637-2281

Department of Corrections
Office of State Probation
121 E. Marion Avenue
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
(941) 575-5740

Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
7474 Utilities Road
Punta Gorda, FL 33982
(941) 639-2101

TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
STATE OF FLORIDA CHARLOTTE
COUNTY

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Charlotte County
Mental Health Court Handbook. I have read this
handbook and agree to its terms and conditions.

Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Date

EMERGENCY PLAN

In Case of Emergency Evacuate the Building using the Nearest Exit Away From Danger

Building A & Annex



- KEY**
- Alarm Pull
 - AED (Defibrillator)
 - Fire Alarm Station
 - Emergency Exit
 - Fire Escape
 - First Aid
 - Wheelchair
 - Ambulance