

Jurisdictions Served: Cuyahoga County

Mission Statement: Promote early identification of defendants with severe mental health/developmental disabilities in order to promote coordination and cooperation among law enforcement, jails, community treatment providers, attorneys and the courts for defendants during the legal process and achieve outcomes that both protect society and support the mental health care and disability needs of the defendant.

The development of the Mental Health Developmental Disability Court Docket became a critical collaborative initiative between the criminal justice and the mental health treatment systems. In 2002, the Court of Common Pleas along with Suburban Court partners developed the Mental Health Court Docket model for presentation and ultimate acceptance at the Eighth District Judicial Conference. The focus of this collaboration is to identify existing programs and services that serve these populations; to identify the gaps in services, and expand resources; to enhance communication and training which ultimately provides an efficient, effective and consistent criminal response. The objectives of the collaboration are early identification and linkages to treatment services for offenders with mental illness or those offenders that are developmentally disabled. Services include screening, assessment and sentencing responses, assertive community treatment, and crisis intervention teams.

To be eligible for the Mental Health Court Docket, clients must meet the following criteria per the diagnosis of a mental health professional:

1. A defendant is deemed to have a confirmed serious mental illness if within the previous six months, prior to arraignment, there is a clinical diagnosis of severe mental illness with a psychotic feature. This includes schizophrenia, schizoaffective, and other psychotic disorders. Clients diagnosed as having a mental disorder other than psychosis are ineligible for the clinical components but may be eligible and supervised by the probation component.
2. A defendant is deemed to be eligible if there is a clinical diagnosis that the defendant meets current Developmentally Disabled Offender eligibility of an IQ of 75 or less and/or an adaptive skills deficit.

Program Highlights:

- Mental Health Liaisons provide recommendations to assist the Suburban Courts and Police Departments with the mentally ill and developmentally disabled offender.
- Mental Health Liaisons visit the jails within 24 hours to provide evaluations and recommendations to the Police and Courts.
- Access to the jails psychiatric ward and NorthCoast Behavioral Healthcare for stabilization.
- Attorney consistency; an attorney appointed to defend the offender in the suburban courts is the same attorney who represents the offender at the Common Pleas felony level.

- The County Prosecutor and Public Defenders office have a designated point person for the Mental Health Court Docket.
- Specialized training for all individuals who interact with the offender; Judges, Attorneys, Police Officers, Probation Officers, etc.
- Improved and enhanced communication with the County Mental Health Board, Associated Boards and linkages to appropriate resources.
- Specialized judicial practices to address the mentally ill offender.