

Itasca County

Mental Health Court

Minnesota Ninth Judicial District

Participant Handbook



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Termination from the Program

This is a voluntary program. The Judge and MHC team can terminate participants from the program for non-compliance. The Judge and MHC team will make all decisions jointly regarding termination. If terminated from the program, the original sentence may be imposed.

Confidentiality

State law requires that your identity and privacy be protected. The Itasca County Mental Health Court team has developed policies and procedures that guard your privacy. To participate in this program, you will be required to sign Release of Information forms for treatment providers and a Consent of Disclosure of Confidential Information form. This disclosure of information is for the sole purpose of reports concerning your Itasca County Mental Health Court case.

Conclusion

The Mental Health Court Program has been developed to help achieve stability in the lives of participants through assistance with mental health, chemical use problems, and basic living needs. This program is designed to promote self-sufficiency and return participants to the community as productive and responsible citizens.

Graduation Requirements

Participants who graduate have successfully completed all MHC phases and program requirements, court-ordered treatment, and probation terms.

To graduate from the MHC, you will be required to complete a graduation application. The graduation application is designed to help you reflect on your progress within treatment court, and your plans to maintain stability in your life after you depart from MHC.

- Symbolic Rewards
- Tangible Rewards/Prizes
- Reduced Community Restrictions
- Reduced Supervision Restrictions

Service Adjustments

The Mental Health Court program will use service adjustments to support participants. Service Adjustments are changes to case plans, supervision, and treatment programming. Services Adjustments are not punishments but are tools to help participants achieve their goals.

Examples of Service Adjustments:

- Letters of Apology
- Essay Assignments
- Activity Logs
- Journaling
- Life Skills Assignments
- Increasing Supervision
- Updated Assessments
- Changes in Treatment Delivery
- New or Updated Service Referrals

Sanctions

The Mental Health Court program will use sanctions for non-compliance with program rules. Multiple minor violations may result in increasingly stronger consequences.

Examples of Sanctions:

- Verbal Admonishments and Warnings from the Judge
- Community Service Work
- Electronic Surveillance/Home Detention/Jail Time
- Program Termination

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Mission Statement

Our mission is to improve public safety and support stability by connecting individuals facing mental health and addiction challenges to court-supervised treatment. We collaborate with community resources to help participants meet treatment goals, reduce recidivism, and encourage more responsible behavior through greater self-sufficiency and an improved quality of life.

Welcome

Welcome to the Itasca County Mental Health Court Program. This handbook is designed to answer questions, address concerns, and provide overall information about the Mental Health Court (MHC) Program. As a participant, you will be expected to follow the instructions given to you by the Judge, probation officer, mental health case manager and comply with the treatment plan developed with you by all approved treatment providers. This handbook will detail the expectations of a Mental Health Court participant and review general program information. It is intended to be a guide for Mental Health Court participants within Itasca County. However, some guidelines may vary for specific participants at the discretion of the Mental Health Court team. All participants are encouraged to share this handbook with family and friends.

The Judge, MHC team, treatment providers, and community resources are present to guide and assist you, but the final responsibility rests with you.

Important Contact Information:

Probation: Grant Paulson (O) 218-327-7419 (C) 218-360-4893

Tina Longoria (O) 218-322-2920 (C) 218-910-6816

UA Line: (218) 327-2816

Coordinator:

Case manager: Shannon Bruley (O) 218-327-6706 (C) 218-398-2373

Assistant County Attorney: Cassidy Villeneuve (O) 218-327-2867

Defense Attorney: Karl Sundquist (C) 218-290-1663

You are responsible for all that you consume, including over-the-counter medications which may cause urinalysis sample conflicts. This may be considered a rule violation. The team can take action to make sure a participant is following the medication policy. For example, the team may require participants to give all medications to their agent or case manager for review or pill counts.

Phases

The Itasca County Mental Health Court is a five-phased, highly structured program. Length of time varies depending upon your individual progress.

Each phase consists of specific goals and milestones for transition into the next phase. Phase advancement will be the result of you meeting your goals as determined by your case plan, specific phase requirements and other responsibilities as discussed with your treatment team. If the MHC team sees no progress and/or motivation to change, phase advancement could be delayed.

The phase advancement application is to be filled out completely and submitted to the team at least 1 week prior. The MHC team will review your status and your case plan determination for phase advancement based on your performance.

Incentives

Incentives are individualized and used to reward positive behavior changes and the completion of program requirements. The type of incentive will vary depending on the behavior that is being recognized. The Mental Health Court Judge will acknowledge your achievements during court review hearings. We will also recognize and provide incentives for your accomplishments above and beyond program requirements.

Examples of Incentives:

- Verbal Praise
- Recognition in Court
- Certificate of Achievement

Drug/Alcohol Testing Rules

1. Abstain from the use of alcohol and mood-altering substances not prescribed by a physician. Any prescription medication must be reported to the Mental Health Court team for review. Abuse or diversion of prescription medications could result in a service adjustment or sanction.
2. Submit to urinalysis, breath tests and/or mouth swabs as requested or directed. Altered and/or diluted urine will be considered as a positive test. If you miss a test, it is considered a positive test.
3. Certain participants are subject to Color Code testing and are required to contact the UA line daily (including weekends) between **6am to 8am**.
 - Call **(218) 327-2816**
 - Text your probation agent with the color

Prescription Medication Policy

Participants must take prescription medications exactly as directed by their medical provider. Participants must report all medications to the program team. Any changes in the amount or type of medication must first be approved by the provider who prescribed it. If a provider decides to stop a medication, the participant must get and share a letter from the medical provider saying that the medication should be stopped. Participants will use the ICMHC Prescription Use Form and Medication Cards as directed.

Medical cannabis is a medicine that can be used for certain health problems. Because of this, it is treated like other medications; participants with a prescription for medical cannabis must follow the same rules. Only people with a medical condition that qualifies can be part of the medical cannabis program. Participants must show proof that they are registered to use medical cannabis and give receipts from an approved dispensary. The MHC team will make sure that the participant's use of medical cannabis follows state laws.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of the program are simple. We believe that if you follow them, you will succeed.

1. **Be Honest.** Although seemingly simple, this is often the most difficult principle to follow. The team expects you to be honest at all times, in all areas of your life.
2. **Take Ownership.** When you make a mistake, we expect you to acknowledge it and learn from it. Taking ownership also includes the positive things you are doing to succeed in the program. When you do something right, take pride in the fact that you are the one making the choices to succeed.
3. **Show Up.** It is vital that you show up on time for all your scheduled appointments required by the program. It will be your responsibility to monitor these appointments and make sure you show up, asking for assistance as needed.

About the Mental Health Court Program

The Itasca County Mental Health Court is a pre & post-adjudication program for offenders based on a voluntary screening for participants that meet eligibility criteria and are appropriate for participation by the Mental Health Court team. This five-phase program consists of intensive supervision by the Mental Health Court team, frequent appearances before the MHC Judge and appropriate treatment planning. In addition, participants will be required to participate in a mental health assessment and follow all recommendations.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to participate in the Mental Health Court program, an offender:

- Must have a serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and meet the statutory designation of SPMI for purposes of Adult Mental Health Case Management Services
- Maintain Itasca County residency
- Meet high-risk/high-need criteria as determined by the MHC Team
- Must be charged with a felony, gross misdemeanor, or misdemeanor offense.
- Must be legally competent. If found incompetent on a Rule 20 assessment, the defendant is unable to proceed with Itasca County Mental Health Court program until competency is restored.

Note:

- The Prosecutor's Office has the authority to decline cases based on level of offense, criminal history, and/or concerns related to public safety.
- The Mental Health Court team may use discretion to determine a participant's appropriateness for the Mental Health Court program or standard probation if deemed necessary on a case-by-case basis.
- Defendants may not be sentenced to Mental Health Court for certain offenses. Mental Health Court will not be an option for sentencing or disposition for files where the Defendant has pled guilty to: Murder, Manslaughter, Aggravated Robbery, Felony Criminal Sexual offense, Felony Malicious punishment of a child, or Child Torture.

Guilty Plea and Sentencing

Under most circumstances, participants will be required to plead guilty and be sentenced before participating in the Mental Health Court Program. Participants will not be allowed to withdraw a guilty plea on the basis that they were terminated from the Mental Health Court Program.

Program Rules

Mental Health Court participants will be required to abide by the following rules:

1. Attend and actively participate in all court ordered treatment sessions/services and court hearings.
 - Unexcused or missed sessions may result in a sanction.
 - Failure to appear in court may result in a bench warrant being issued for your arrest.
2. All absences from court will need to be pre-approved by the MHC team.
3. Any change or discontinuation from treatment services must be discussed prior with the team.
4. Immediately notify probation if you have contact with law enforcement for any reason.
5. Out of county travel requests must be pre-approved by probation.
6. Maintain confidentiality of other Mental Health Court participants.
7. Be respectful of participants and team members. Violent, threatening or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.
8. Maintain adherence of phase guidelines.

Courtroom Rules

1. Attend all scheduled Mental Health Court sessions and be on time. **Court is held on Fridays at 1pm.**
2. Dress appropriately for court. Clothing bearing violence, sexual, drug, or alcohol related themes is inappropriate. Hats shall not be worn in court. Sunglasses are not to be worn in court unless medically approved. Bulky jackets are not allowed to be worn in the courtroom.
3. Adhere to all courthouse policies.
4. No sleeping.
5. Refrain from side conversations with other participants or interrupting other participants or the Judge during hearings.
6. Respect the Judge and the courtroom environment.