



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

MAY 2017

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NADCP NEWS!

NADCP released, in March, an update to the Adult Drug Court ten Best Practice Standards. Let these Evidence - Based Standards build and update your court's policy and procedures. A pdf link to the standards can be found at www.nadcp.org/standards.

As May marks National Drug Court Month, NADCP released, in early April, their "Field Kit" (www.nadcp.org/NDCM). The field kit is a resource to help courts in creating and achieving sustainability within their local communities. Sample emails, letters, and press releases are all included for courts to modify and share with their community stakeholders. Instructions and steps on how to get your local congress representatives involved in your court. The CACJ staff encourages all courts to take a look at this national resource.

DOUGLAS COUNTY DUI/DRUG COURT – HR 571



State Representative Kimberly Alexander contacted Judge Barker some time ago about recognizing the program and recent graduates. Our local politicians are very interested in what our Accountability courts are doing and are vested in us being successful. We went on August 13, 2017 and all met in a conference room with Ms. Alexander and some of her staff. She questioned us about the needs of our Accountability courts and asked how the legislature could help. She filled us in on some of the things she was working on with other representatives for our communities. This was the day of the suspicious package so there was a lot of stuff going on around the buildings. We were scheduled for a picture with the governor and then went in and sat in the gallery during the session. Rep Alexander recognized us from the floor and we stood and the proclamation was then given to the Judge in Ms. Alexander's office. - Anita Grainger, Douglas DUI Court Coordinator

THE 36TH CLAYTON DUI COURT GRADUATION

Ms. Sacha Greene was asked to be the keynote speaker at Clayton County's DUI Court Graduation. She served as a probation officer from 2008-2012 and as a program case manager from 2012 – early 2016. She did a phenomenal job providing parting advice to the last group of eight participants she served. "Now is the time to implement the tools you've learned and the great support systems you've built to help you maintain your sobriety. Just because you've completed the program doesn't mean it's over by any means."



(L to R) Deborah Boddie, Judge Cowan, and Sacha Greene

Congratulations to all April Graduations!

- Clayton County DUI Court
- Cherokee County DUI/Drug Court
- Forsyth County DUI Court
- Fulton County Family Treatment Court
- Gwinnett County DUI Court
- Hall County HELP Court
- Towaliga Accountability Court

Congratulations to Athens – Clarke County DUI Court for being selected by NADCP's National Center for DWI Courts (NCDC) Academy Court Network!

JUDGES CORNER: HONORABLE MARY STALEY CLARK

Cobb County Mental Health Court

PROGRAM BEGAN IN 2013

CURRENT PARTICIPANTS: 35

GRADUATED: 18

WHAT WAS YOUR INITIAL INTEREST IN BEING AN ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGE?

Cobb County began its Accountability Court program 14 years ago. I was asked to back up Judge George Kreeger who was the presiding judge of the Cobb County Drug Court. I enjoyed that service and appreciated watching each participant's growth in sobriety and maturity through the program. It was clear to me that Accountability Courts work to make communities safer and work to improve lives. I have always had a lot of compassion for the mentally ill. People who use drugs make a conscious decision to use drugs usually with knowledge of the dangers of drug usage. Conversely, mentally ill people do not decide one day to become schizophrenic or have PTSD. To me, the mentally ill need as much or more than anyone else to have the opportunity to serve their sentence in an accountability court. That the Cobb County jail is the largest mental hospital in northwest Georgia is appalling to me. So I marshalled the team to put together a Mental Health Court for Cobb County. It has been a true pleasure to work with the local CSB, our court team, sheriff representative and community supervision personnel to develop our court.

WAS THERE A SPECIFIC MOMENT/EVENT THAT HAPPENED THAT LET YOU KNOW YOU WERE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT FOR YOUR PROGRAM?

Several in fact. We joke that the court/law enforcement team is the brain and the treatment team is the heart of our program. The ah-ha moments occur when we flip rolls and the court team is speaking passionately for a court participant and the treatment team is talking about the importance of the rules and need for a participant to be sanctioned for failure to follow program rules. It is so healthy and strong when we stand as a team. And the participants know we are a team and accept our decisions because the decisions we make are vetted and sound and helpful to their lives. Two weeks ago in court, I observed that one of our phase 1 participants was so very afraid of me. So I asked her if she was afraid of me and she said yes. Then I asked her if she had noticed that participants in phase 2, 3 and 4 were largely comfortable with me. Her face opened up with awareness. I told her we would be comfortable with each other soon if she kept working. Another time I was taking a plea on a new participant to the program. She was severely schizophrenic with auditory hallucinations. Luckily I spent a lot of time listening to our mental health team discuss what it's like to have auditory hallucinations and how best to take her plea. In the middle of the plea she shut down and quit speaking to me and looking at me. Because of the advice of our mental health team, I stopped the hearing and asked our participant if the voices were telling her not to trust me. She looked up at me and said yes they were telling her that. I told her that was reasonable since she didn't know me and asked if we could continue on the condition that she could quit talking to me whenever she wanted. The plea went forward without any further problem.

TO DATE, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS YOUR COURT'S BIGGEST PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENT?

Learning to work as a team has been a challenge. There are big differences in philosophy between court and treatment teams. Each team knows how to work together and what best practices should be followed in their discipline. But learning to understand each other and how an accountability court should work was a learning curve for treatment, in particular since mental health treatment is voluntary and a court system is coercive in nature. We had to learn to accommodate and use each of these different philosophies to enhance our program. We also had to learn to trust each other and educate each other about our respective fields. We have been very successful in this merger of approach using the voluntary aspect of treatment and the coercive nature of court to insist our participants achieve their highest potential in our program.

DOES YOUR PROGRAM HAVE ANY SORT OF SPECIAL INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY?

We do extensive community service through a program administered by our Sheriff's department...CSA or Community Service as an Alternative to Incarceration. Our participants clean littered roadways and work at the animal shelter.

SPECIAL EVENTS YOUR PARTICIPANTS TAKE PART IN?

Graduation is a special event for us. We have a very nice celebration with a speaker, coins for each participant and graduation certificate. Each graduate is celebrated and invited to share their thoughts with the crowd and their family and friends are also invited to speak. Then we have a cake and refreshments. Also, the CSB takes them on a picnic annually and participants through the PEEF group go bowling or to movies.