



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

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ACCOUNTABILITY COURT NEWS & SPECIAL EVENTS

FULTON COUNTY ACCOUNTABILITY COURT

Submitted by John Collins, Fulton County Accountability Court Director

The Fulton County Accountability Court was very busy this holiday season. The team hosted two holiday parties for clients that included a three-course dinner, raffles, and entertainment. The clients appreciated the opportunity to experience holiday festivities that modeled sober fun! Additionally, the team collected donations to stock a holiday incentive store. The store provided a unique way to incentivize clients' progress and also relieved some of the financial burdens and stress associated with the holiday season. Finally, in association with the Atlanta Bar Association Family Law Section, 93 clients' children received a very special holiday delivery through an adopt-a-family program. Many of the clients were overwhelmed by the bounty and expressed how this would ease stress and allow them to celebrate a truly family-orientated holiday season.



WESTERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT TREATMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COURT

Submitted by Elisa Zarate, Western Judicial Circuit Treatment and Accountability Court Coordinator

The Western Judicial Circuit Treatment and Accountability Court (TAC) was recently awarded grant funds in the amount of \$44,000 from Mental Health America of Northeast Georgia (MHA). Grant funds will be used for direct services, primarily for crisis respite housing, but it also includes funds for a "pay it forward" loan, basic dental treatment, and program fees for residential substance abuse treatment. For years, TAC has been a recipient of mini grants from MHA to help fund our incentive program. The financial support from MHA has been instrumental in helping TAC enhance program operations and achieve its objectives.



The MHA funds, in addition to funds awarded by the State, have helped TAC to meet some critical needs in our community, most notably for stable housing. TAC has historically served individuals with a Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI), and many of these individuals have been homeless or at risk of homelessness. Potential participants were sitting in jail for extended periods due to lack of stable housing. The TAC respite program emerged as a way to address this need by moving individuals out of jail and into the community faster. Many accountability court participants who lack stable housing face overwhelming challenges to get to appointments, keep and take medication on time, and stay sober. Funds for crisis respite housing allow TAC to rent an apartment within a building managed by TAC's CSB, Advantage Behavioral Health Systems (ABHS). After jail release, a participant without housing would be allowed to stay in the respite apartment for a limited time, while the TAC Clinical Case Manager coordinates with Advantage for a permanent placement. In addition to support from TAC staff, participants staying in the respite receive additional support from Advantage's on-site staff which provides 24/7 accessibility.

While housing affordability and homelessness are challenges currently being addressed by community leaders in Athens-Clarke County, TAC staff have taken initiative to bridge this gap with a collaborative effort with our CSB to provide immediate respite housing to participants facing homelessness while providing them with the support services and stability needed to help them improve their lives. In addition to the MHA grant, TAC has also been a recipient of CACJ funding and other local grants to help TAC achieve its program objectives

CLAYTON COUNTY JUDICIAL CIRCUIT ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

Submitted by Carline Scutt, Clayton County Drug Court Clinical Director

The Clayton Judicial Circuit's Adult Felony Drug Court and DUI Court finished the last quarter of 2019 with events centered on the programs' participants. The events highlighted how an enjoyable celebration could be had without the use of drugs and/or alcohol.

The Clayton County Adult Felony Drug Court had a year-end celebration with a bowling event on December 11, 2019. The Drug Court judge, prosecutor, public defender, and remaining Drug Court team members spent the day together at Pin Strikes in Stockbridge being engaged in friendly bowling competition with food and games. The Drug Court team contributed to the program, and proceeds were used to purchase gifts. During the event, all of the participants and recent graduates received gifts. Twelve participants won a second gift in the 12 Days of Giving random drawing. The Drug Court team contributed to the program to make the gift giving possible. Judge Mason and his bowling team remain undefeated and are looking forward to many more years of service to the community by igniting hope in the lives of the people we serve.

Submitted by Deborah Boddie, Clayton Judicial Circuit Coordinator

In recognition of National Impaired Driving Prevention Month, the Clayton County Driving Under the Influence Court invited Ms. Kali Robinson from MADD to address the court. The audience was filled with many parents. Learning about alcohol begins at home with the parents. Thus, parents should speak to their children regarding the legal drinking age and drug use as early as middle school. Parents in the audience were encouraged to explain to their children why they themselves are in a mandated DUI Court program. The court audience was encouraged to be advocates for not drinking and driving as two out three people will be impacted by drinking while driving.



In keeping with the theme of the Twelve Days of Giving, Judge Margaret Spencer and the DUI team also presented each program participant with a practical gift. Community partners and the DUI team donated to the gift purchases, which contributed to the success of the event. The little things the court does mean so much and go a long way. One participant stated, "This was really nice. I have no family here and for the courts to do this for us was really nice". The year-end event gave the participants an opportunity to see that the judge and team really do care.



ACCOUNTABILITY COURT GRADUATIONS

HENRY COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Appeared on 11alive.com; Submitted by Eric A. Turner, Henry County Veterans Treatment Court Coordinator



[First graduation held for Henry County Veterans Treatment Program | 11alive.com](#)

Henry County Veterans Treatment Court held the program's first graduation on December 19, 2019. Please click on the link above to watch the video.

FORSYTH COUNTY C.A.R.E. PROGRAM

Submitted by Julie Puckett, Forsyth County C.A.R.E. Program Coordinator

The Forsyth County C.A.R.E. Program was implemented in March 2014 under the direction of State Court Judge Leslie Abernathy-Maddox, as designated by Chief Superior Court Judge Jeffrey S. Bagley. The recent ceremony, held on January 24, graduated six participants and was the program's largest graduation to date. The graduates shared the following statements: "At first, my family was planning my funeral and now they are planning my wedding"; "I am sober for myself because I matter"; and "I learned to put plans into action and to show up."



HALL COUNTY H.E.L.P. PROGRAM

Submitted by Jason Bennett, Hall County H.E.L.P. Program Coordinator

On January 27, the Hall County H.E.L.P. Program celebrated the graduation of two participants. Both expressed appreciation for their recovery and the critical role that their participation in the H.E.L.P. Program played. Each graduate talked about the amazing changes in their lives and expressed gratitude for the skills they learned and will take with them. One graduate said he was able to accept a promotion at his work because of his positive changes and increased confidence in himself. The other graduate is about to deliver her first child into a safe, sober, and supportive environment, which she states would not have been possible without the program.

CLAYTON COUNTY DRUG COURT

Submitted by Carline Scutt, Clayton County Drug Court Clinical Director

On November 14, 2019, Clayton County Adult Felony Drug Court celebrated its 10th year anniversary and graduated five participants who have successfully completed the rigorous program. The Honorable Aaron B. Mason and former Georgia Governor Nathan Deal passionately addressed the graduates who have overcome many struggles in their lives. Kudos to our graduates! All of them now hold full-time employment, one obtained a GED while in the program, and all have maintained over 12 months of sobriety. One graduate is proud of being a homeowner and two others are working on gaining custody of their children. The participants, their family members, friends, staff, and community leaders are proud of their accomplishments and wish them continuous success in their recovery and personal growth.



CLAYTON COUNTY DUI COURT

Submitted by Amanda Tape, Clayton County DUI Court Case Manager

The Clayton Judicial Circuit began the New Year with a graduation ceremony. On January 22, Judge Margaret L. Spencer and the Clayton County DUI Court Team celebrated its 47th DUI Court Graduation. The judge recognized seven graduates. Each graduate spoke about his or her greatest challenges and successes in the DUI Court Program. The keynote speaker for the ceremony was Mrs. Darcy Kamau, Cobb County DUI Court Program Coordinator. Ms. Kamau addressed the graduates with encouraging words to maintain a sober lifestyle and shared her personal story involving her brother who was killed in a DUI-related accident. Ms. Kamau stated, "It is good for the participants to know that we experience some of the same struggles they go through. Our lives are not perfect. We just choose to handle the stresses differently".



HALL COUNTY DRUG COURT

Submitted by Jessi Emmett, Treatment Services Director

January 31 marked the 100th graduation ceremony for Hall County Drug Court. Founded in 2001 under the direction of Superior Court Judge John Girardeau, Hall County Drug Court has welcomed 818 graduates into its ranks. Today the program operates under the direction of Superior Court Judges Jason J. Deal and Clint G. Bearden. The program currently serves over 170 participants and is one of nine accountability court programs in the Northeastern Judicial Circuit. The graduation celebration brought together several individuals who have worked with the program over the years including some original team members and past graduates. Program participants and guests heard from former Governor Nathan Deal, the program's founding judge, the Honorable John Girardeau, and former Treatment Services Director, Mike Devine. Local dignitaries, community partners, and representatives from State agencies also attended the ceremony to show their support of the program. Each of the 13 graduates expressed a sense of

accomplishment and excitement. "[I'm] extremely excited," said Graduate Kevin Young. "It's just a great sense of accomplishment, honestly."

The 100th graduation ceremony was covered by Access WDUN. Please click the link to watch the video:

<https://accesswdun.com/article/2020/1/872448/hall-county-drug-court-celebrates-100th-commencement-ceremony>.

CHATHAM COUNTY ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

Submitted by Tiffany Shuff, Chatham County Accountability Court Case Manager

On January 26, the Chatham County Veterans Court and Savannah-Chatham County Drug Court held two commencement ceremonies to honor participants, in each of the courts, who have successfully completed the accountability court program. Judge James F. Bass, Superior Court Judge for the Eastern Judicial Circuit, presides over the dual-track Court which holds separate, weekly sessions for the Veterans and Drug Court participants. Three participants completed the Veterans Court track and four complete the Drug Court track.



The parent of a Savannah-Chatham County Drug Court graduate thanked the Court and Judge James F. Bass for the support and guidance that he and the team gave her son during his journey through the Court program.



The award-winning Color Guard of the George K. Gannam Post 184 of the American Legion has provided ceremony services to the Chatham County Veterans Court since 2011. Post 184 is instrumental in creating a military presence and atmosphere during Veterans Court graduations. The Color Guard willingly provides services for civic and veterans events throughout the Savannah area and beyond when requested. Their presence at our graduation ceremonies is a necessity which we will continue to utilize to make our program distinguishable from all others.

February Graduations

Feb. 6 – Carroll County Family Treatment Court

Feb. 7 – DeKalb County Drug Court

Feb. 14 – Cobb County Veterans Treatment Court

Feb. 17 – Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Family Treatment Court

Feb. 25 – Cobb County DUI Court

Save the Date!



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES NEWS

On January 25, Judge Jason Deal of the Northeastern Judicial Circuit, Chief Judge Russell McClelland of the Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit, Alison Lerner of the Administrative Office of the Courts, and Taylor Jones of the Council of Accountability Court Judges attended the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers' Winter Seminar. The speakers facilitated a panel to discuss recent developments and best practices in accountability courts.



TREATMENT CORNER - THE UTILIZATION OF ASSESSMENTS TO DETERMINE A PARTICIPANT'S ELIGIBILITY

Written by Tara Zellous, CACJ Treatment Fidelity Program Monitor

When employed appropriately, information gathered during an assessment is useful for making a preliminary evaluation that can help court teams to determine a participant's eligibility and whether he or she is a good fit for the program. Information gathered during the assessment is also indicative of the level of supervision and treatment resources that may be needed for program success (Taxman, Cropsey, Young, & Wexler, 2007). Specifically, the utilization of drug court assessments helps to gauge the severity of substance use, dosage of treatment, and the risk for recidivism. Likewise, mental health assessments can be essential to identifying who should be connected or reconnected to treatment and services to address their behavioral health needs, which may also decrease the likelihood that they return to jail (Stepping Up Initiative, 2018).

The Standards for Georgia Accountability Courts has clear guidelines on eligibility, screening, and recommended assessment tools for each court type. For example, drug courts' recommended screening tools include the *Texas Christian University, Substance Abuse II (TCUDS)*, *Addiction Severity Index-Drug Use Subscale (ASI-Drug)*, *Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory-2 (SASSI-2)*, and the *Brief Jail Mental Health Screen, National GAINS Center*. The recommended drug court assessment tools geared toward capturing offender's risk of recidivism and treatment include the *Level of Service-Case Management Inventory (LS-CMI)* and the *Correctional Offender Management and Profiling Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS)*. Finally, the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) developed the *ASAM Patient Placement Criteria for the Treatment of Substance-Related Disorders (PPC-2R)*, which the Standards recommend as a tool to determine the appropriate level of substance use treatment (Council of Accountability Court Judges, 2018).

While none of the listed assessments will provide a clinical diagnosis, these tools can and should be utilized to determine a participant's eligibility based on his or her unique needs.

References

- Council of Accountability Court Judges (2018, January). STANDARDS FOR GEORGIA ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS. Retrieved January 21, 2020 from <https://www.gaaccountabilitycourts.org/>
- Stepping Up Initiative: Implementing Mental Health Screening and Assessment. (2018, July 31). Retrieved January 21, 2020 from <https://stepuptogether.org/wp-content/uploads/In-Focus-MH-Screening-Assessment-7.31.18-FINAL.pdf>
- Taxman, F. S., Cropsey, K. L., Young, D. W., & Wexler, H. (2007, September). SCREENING, ASSESSMENT, AND REFERRAL PRACTICES IN ADULT CORRECTIONAL SETTINGS: A National Perspective. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2367319/>

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- ✓ The **FY21 Court Operating Profile** is due February 14. The Court Operating Profile is mandatory must be submitted to CACJ.
- ✓ The **FY21 Accountability Court Grant** will be released on February 17.
- ✓ The **new standard mileage rate** for business travel is 57.5¢ per mile for 2020. The new rate went into effect on January 1, 2020.

CACJ DIRECTORY UPDATES

CACJ has a new procedure to update staff of a change in key roles - judge, coordinator, director - for accountability courts. Please complete the Change in Personnel Form located on the website. You can find the form on the Court Resources page under the Georgia Accountability Court Directory tab.

TO INCLUDE A COURT PROGRAM IN THE CACJ NEWSLETTER OR TO SHARE AN IDEA FOR A FUTURE SUBMISSION, PLEASE SEND IDEAS TO DEBBIE.MOTT@GEORGIACOURTS.ORG.