



Innovations in Criminal Justice Summit
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Mental Health Courts

Program Start Date: 2005

Website: <http://www.courtinnovation.org/project/brooklyn-mental-health-court>
http://www.consensusproject.org/issue_areas/courts

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Evaluation/Research: http://consensusproject.org/jc_publications/mental-health-courts-a-guide-to-research-informed-policy-and-practice/Mental_Health_Court_Research_Guide.pdf
<http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/BMHCevaluation.pdf>
<http://archpsyc.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/archgenpsychiatry.2010.134v1>

Information: Mental health courts are specialized criminal court dockets for certain defendants with mental illnesses that substitute a problem-solving model for traditional criminal court processing. Mental health courts seek to improve public safety, court operations, and the well-being of people with mental illness by linking to court-supervised, community-based treatment defendants whose mental illness is related to their current criminal justice involvement and whose participation in the mental health court will not create an increased risk to public safety. Participants are identified through mental health screening and assessment and voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan developed jointly by a team of court staff and mental health professionals. Judicial responses to progress and problems are used to promote adherence to community-based treatment and compliance with court requirements.

Approximately 300 mental health courts – handling both felony and misdemeanor cases – are in operation across the United States. A small but growing body of research indicates that mental health courts, compared to traditional courts:

- can help to reduce recidivism, even after graduation when individuals are no longer under court supervision;
- are more effective at connecting offenders with mental health treatment services; and
- have the potential to save money through reduced recidivism (and the associated jail and court costs that are avoided) and the decreased use of the most expensive treatment options, such as inpatient care.

Additional resources: http://www.consensusproject.org/jc_publications/mental-health-courts-a-primer-for-policy-makers-and-practitioners/mhc-primer.pdf
http://www.consensusproject.org/jc_publications/essential-elements-of-a-mental-health-court/mhc-essential-elements.pdf
http://www.consensusproject.org/jc_publications/guide-to-mental-health-court-implementation/Guide-MHC-Design.pdf