



BALTIMORE CITY MENTAL HEALTH COURT

Baltimore City District Court
John R. Hargrove Sr. Courthouse
700 East Patapsco Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21225
410-878-8300

The Baltimore City Mental Health Court is a collaborative effort of:

- District Court for Baltimore City
- Circuit Court for Baltimore City, Medical Services Division
- Office of the Public Defender
- Office of the State's Attorney
- Division of Parole and Probation
- Division of Pretrial Detention and Services
- Forensic Alternative Services Team
- Community Forensic Aftercare Program
- Baltimore City Police Department
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration
- Baltimore Mental Health Systems, Inc.
- Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems
- Developmental Disabilities Administration
- Mental Hygiene Administration
- Office of Problem Solving Courts

Referrals

For further information or to make a referral, contact the FAST program at 410-878-8328.

BALTIMORE CITY MENTAL HEALTH COURT



**An alternative approach to
offenders with mental illness**

The problem

The large number of offenders with serious and chronic mental illnesses entering the criminal justice system each year creates a growing social problem affecting both the criminal justice system and the public mental health system. These offenders often spend unnecessary time in jail, and, without access to mental health services upon release, tend to be rearrested and cycle through the system over and over again. While incarcerated, mentally ill offenders are at risk of worsening psychiatric symptoms resulting in increased vulnerability and/or increased agitation impacting the stability and safety of the general jail population. The needs of the community are not addressed, the costs to the taxpayer escalate, and the defendant continues to have the same problems and associated risks as before.

The Mental Health Court partner agencies recognize the need to positively impact this alarming trend. We are determined to focus resources, training and expertise on the unique needs of these individuals. Most important, every effort is made to encourage the involvement of the individual in all aspects of the process.

Participants are offered a treatment-based sentencing alternative, which utilizes judicial oversight as a component of the program. A comprehensive approach is taken in order to provide an array of services designed to address the many needs of this population.

Our purpose

The court works to direct eligible offenders with serious mental illness away from incarceration and into appropriate community treatment. The Mental Health Court has four broad purposes:

- To preserve public safety
- To reduce inappropriate incarceration of mentally ill offenders and promote their safety and well being
- To reduce repeated criminal activity by offenders with mental illness (legal recidivism)
- To reduce length and frequency of hospitalization of mentally ill offenders (clinical recidivism)

Who is eligible?

- Must be Baltimore City resident
- Diagnosed with a serious mental illness and/or trauma-related disorder
- Eligible for public mental health services
- Agrees to comply with program requirements
- Charged with a misdemeanor or a felony within the jurisdiction of the District Court
- Has never been convicted of a crime of violence
- Is not charged with a domestic violence crime

Participation is voluntary and is subject to review by the Forensic Alternative Services Team (FAST). Once accepted into the court, the defendant is assisted in developing an appropriate community-based treatment plan that addresses his/her specific behavioral and mental health needs. The treatment plan is presented to the court for approval. If approved, the treatment recommendations are court-ordered as conditions of pretrial release or probation.

Outcomes

The defendant, the clinical court coordinator and the supervising agent attend review hearings to report on progress, along with various members of the treatment team. If noncompliance occurs, the court may adjust the plan to motivate adherence, employ non-jail-based sanctions or order incarceration. Participants who are successful in complying with their treatment plan may be eligible for a nol pros, stet, probation before judgment, probation in lieu of incarceration, or early termination of probation.

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