

**Plattsburgh and Clinton County
MENTAL HEALTH COURT**



***PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK
and AGREEMENT***

Your Name _____

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WELCOME



Welcome to the Plattsburgh and Clinton County Mental Health Court (MHC). This *Handbook* is designed to answer your questions and give information about the Mental Health Court (MHC) Program. You will be expected to follow the instructions given in Mental Health Court (MHC) by the Judge and follow the treatment plan set up for you by the MHC Team and BHSN.



This *Handbook* explains what is expected of you in MHC, and will give you general program information. If you are considering MHC, your acceptance into it will be based on a look at your history of mental health treatment and problems with the law. We will also be asking about your willingness to comply with medication and treatment recommendations. We believe that, if you work at it, MHC will help you learn how to make successful choices that will improve your quality of life.

OVERVIEW

Mental Health Court (MHC) is a four-part program for adults who have been charged with one or more criminal offenses and who are having difficulty with mental health issues. It is a joint effort of the Court, Probation, District Attorney's Office, defense attorneys, and Behavioral Health Services North, as well as the Mental Health Unit at CVPH, other mental health and substance abuse treatment providers and NAMI-CV. By working together, we will provide an individualized treatment plan to help you develop and maintain the coping skills to live life with reduced problems.

MHC involves frequent court appearances, active participation by you in the treatment plan, and random drug testing if necessary. The Court will give incentives for progress and sanctions for negative behavior. If you do not follow the rules, you may be moved back to the previous phase of MHC, spend a short time in jail, or face other sanctions. You may also be terminated from MHC. All of the staff working with MHC will help ensure that you understand what is expected of you and help you succeed.



THE MENTAL HEALTH COURT TEAM

The MHC Judge will make all decisions regarding your participation in the MHC Program with help from the MHC Team. In addition to Judge Clute, the MHC Team consists of the following members:

- General Defense Counsel- Michael Phillips & (your attorney)
- Assistant District Attorney- Jaime Douthat
- Paul Ferrari from BHSN - PROS

- Probation Officer-Carrie Turner
- CVPH Psychiatric Services Director- Mary Krakowski
- Director of Clinton County Community Mental Health and Addiction Services- Sherrie Gillette

Before each MHC session, the MHC Team members go over your progress and any concerns with the Judge. They will then discuss them with you during Court.

PROGRESS REPORTS



Before each Mental Health Court appearance, BHSN, Probation and other Team members will give the Judge a progress report. The progress report will discuss your attendance, participation and cooperation in the treatment program, employment or other requirements. The Judge may ask questions about your progress and discuss any problems you may be having. If you are doing well, program requirements may be reduced. If your progress reports show that you are not doing well, the Judge will discuss this with you and determine future action, which could include a sanction in order to help you remember your goals in the program. Sanctions range from increased program requirements, restrictions or jail.

MENTAL HEALTH COURT APPEARANCES

You will be required to appear in MHC on a regular basis; MHC meets every other Thursday afternoon. The number of times you must appear depends

upon the phase of MHC court you are currently in. Failure to appear may result in a warrant being issued for your arrest and detention in jail until you can appear before the court. If you have questions about your court appearances you should contact your Case Manager, Probation Officer or your Attorney.



PHASES OF MENTAL HEALTH COURT

Mental Health Court (MHC) will last approximately 18-36 months, depending on the treatment needed and on your progress. It is divided into four Phases, and may be followed by a Continuing Care Phase while on Probation. A participant must successfully complete each Phase before moving into the next Phase. Each Phase has a key concept or focus.

PHASE ONE	
Key Concept:	ENGAGEMENT
	Begin to identify personal strengths and goals, and barriers to achieving them; find safe, stable housing.
Requirements:	MHC attendance every two weeks ; follow all probation requirements; at least 60 consecutive days of compliance with medications, treatment and abstinence from alcohol and illegal drugs; regular attendance at PROS; no lies about anything!
PHASE TWO	
Key Concept:	EARLY RECOVERY

	Continue identifying strengths and barriers, develop supports.
Requirements:	Regular attendance at MHC and at PROS; begin substance abuse treatment at Champlain Valley Family Center if referred; follow all probation requirements; at least 90 consecutive days clean from alcohol and illegal drugs; at least 16 weeks of medication compliance, safe & stable housing, no new arrests, and no MHU hospitalization unless extraordinary circumstances; no lies about anything!
PHASE THREE	
Key Concept:	Wellness
	Include Wellness practices into daily life and further define life goals
Requirements:	Continue attending MHC and PROS; complete CVFC if referred there; at least 120 consecutive days clean from alcohol and illegal drugs; at least 6 months of medication compliance, safe & stable housing, no new arrests and no MHU hospitalization; no lies about anything!
PHASE FOUR	
Key Concept:	Active Recovery & Relapse Prevention
	Participate in goal-setting classes and value clarification; identify at least one intensive, time specific objective for work or education; continue to use supports appropriately.

Requirements:

Continue to attend MHC; complete highest level of PROS; comply with all probation requirements; abstinent from alcohol and illegal drugs for at least 10 months; at least 10 months medication compliant, no new criminal charges and no new MHU hospitalization; no lies about anything!

CONFIDENTIALITY

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

MENTAL HEALTH COURT PROGRAM RULES

You will be required to follow the rules outlined in the treatment contract, including, but not limited to the following:

1. Actively participate in the treatment plan developed by you and your case manager.
2. Attend Court sessions and treatment sessions as scheduled and ON TIME.
3. Do not possess any weapons while in the Mental Health Court program.
4. Totally abstain from the use of illegal drugs and alcohol; take observed random alcohol and drug testing when required by the Court, remain clean and sober.
5. Do not associate with people who use or possess drugs.

6. Keep the Mental Health Court team informed of your current address and phone number at all times.
7. Dress appropriately for court and treatment sessions. Clothing with violent, racist, sexist, drug or alcohol-related themes, or promoting or advertising alcohol or drug use is considered inappropriate.
8. Do not commit any criminal offenses.
9. Abide by all other rules and regulations imposed by the Mental Health Court Team.

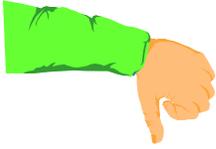
***FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH RULES
MAY RESULT IN SANCTIONS.***



SANCTIONS

Sanctions will be given to you if you fail to actively participate in your treatment plan. The purpose of a sanction is to emphasize the importance of compliance with treatment and of following through with the commitment that you made to yourself and the Mental Health Court team. Examples of sanctions include:

**ASSIGNMENT OF AN ESSAY,
INCREASED APPOINTMENTS WITH PROBATION OFFICER,
COMMUNITY SERVICE,
LOSS OF PRIVILEGES AT PROS OR COMMUNITY RESIDENCE,
MOVING BACK IN PHASES,
JAIL.**



TERMINATION FROM MENTAL HEALTH COURT

Warrants, new crimes or a violation of any aspect of your treatment plan can result in your being terminated from the MHC Program. Violations which can result in termination include the following:

- Missing and/or positive drug tests;
- Altered, tampering or attempted tampering of drug test;
- Demonstrating a lack of program response by failing to cooperate with the case manager or treatment program;
- Violence or threat of violence directed at treatment staff, other participants of the program or other clients of the treatment providers;



Drug Testing

You will be drug tested randomly during the Mental Health Court Program.

- You will be observed to ensure freedom from errors.
- If you miss a test without a valid excuse, it will count as a positive (dirty) test.
- If you have a positive test in any Mental Health Court phase, and tell the truth about your use, the Judge, based on recommendations from the Team members, may increase your treatment supports, add restrictions or impose immediate sanctions to help you stop your drug-using behavior.



If you do not lie, and are truthful with the Judge and Team about your relapse, then your sanction will not be jail. In MHC it is absolutely necessary to be completely honest about everything.

GRADUATION - The Silver Ribbon Ceremony



Upon your successful completion of all four Phases, as well as PROS and/or other treatment programs, and satisfaction of all other Court requirements, you will graduate from Mental Health Court.



Graduation from the Mental Health Court Program is a very important event. Your family and friends will be invited to join you at a special ceremony as the Mental Health Court Team congratulates you for successfully completing the program and achieving your goal to establish a healthier life using positive coping skills.

CONTINUING CARE.....

In order to provide you with a continuing support system and to ensure that you can maintain your healthy life using positive coping skills, you may be required to participate in a 6-month continuing care phase prior to completion of your probation. Please take advantage of this opportunity to prove to yourself and the Mental Health Court Team that you are ready to start your new life as a productive, law-abiding member of society.

The goal of the Plattsburgh and Clinton County Mental Health Court Program is to help you establish a healthy life. The Judge and the Mental Health Court Team are here to guide you through recommendations and to assist you, but the final responsibility is yours. To succeed, you must make a real commitment to treatment and to sobriety.

TREATMENT AGREEMENT

I agree to follow the Mental Health Court rules in this handbook.

Participant

Date

MENTAL HEALTH COURT PHONE NUMBERS

BHSN office #: 563-8000

CVFC: 563-8480

Probation Officer: 565-4640

Plattsburgh City Court: 563-7870

Your Attorney #: _____

Other: _____

November 9, 2007