



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Kathie E. Davidson
Administrative Judge
Ninth Judicial District**

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Dutchess County Launches Innovative Court to Address Opioid Crisis

Beacon, New York—As part of the Court System’s ongoing efforts to address the State’s opioid crisis, Ninth Judicial District Administrative Judge Kathie E. Davidson today announced the opening of a specialized part in Beacon City Court tailored to eligible offenders at high risk of opioid overdose, providing this at-risk population immediate access to community-based resources, lifesaving treatment and support services. The new court is a collaboration of the New York State Court System, Dutchess County District Attorney William V. Grady’s Office, the local defense bar and other justice system partners and stakeholders.

The Beacon Recovery Court is a pre-plea diversion program targeting nonviolent offenders with a substance use disorder who live in Dutchess County and are willing to engage in treatment and comply with the terms of the Court’s recovery program. Individuals charged with or who have a criminal history of assault, domestic violence, sex crimes, a crime against a child, arson, violent felonies, criminal sale of a controlled substance or criminal contempt are ineligible for participation.

Eligible defendants who opt to undergo screening and are found to be at high risk will have the case proceed in the Beacon Recovery Court and will be expeditiously admitted into judicially monitored treatment, with the District Attorney suspending prosecution of the case during the stabilization process. Participants who comply with the Court's requirements, which include meaningful engagement with services designed to address their substance use disorder, will have the case dismissed and sealed, or in some instances will receive an adjournment in contemplation of dismissal. For those participants who fail to meet the agreed-upon conditions, the case will move forward with prosecution.

Effectively treating opioid use disorder (OUD) and preventing overdose requires a cross-disciplinary approach, with the Beacon Recovery Court partnering with community health and medical providers to help stabilize participants and offer them a broad range of clinical services. The Court will work closely with Sun River Health to rapidly connect participants to specialized treatment, including peer support.

The Beacon Recovery Court, which began accepting participants earlier this week, will operate with existing court resources. Beacon City Court Judge Timothy G. Pagones, who presides over the Beacon Drug Treatment Court, will preside over the new court. While in-person operations are currently limited, the Beacon Recovery Court is accepting participants and conducting all screenings, assessments and case management visits virtually. The Court will also be connecting participants to treatment and other recovery support services without delay using telehealth services.

"The new Beacon Recovery Court was created to specifically address the public health issue of opioid addiction in our communities. This innovative court will address addiction in a therapeutic model. Research indicates that a therapeutic court model produces greater positive outcomes for individuals than the traditional punitive court model. Judge Pagones brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and empathy to the new court. I am thankful to our stakeholders and community partners for their support of this new court," said Judge Davidson, whose judicial district comprises Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties.

“My office is fully supportive of Judge Pagones and the Beacon Recovery Court, which offers nonviolent offenders immediate professional and medical help to address their drug dependency, resulting in better case outcomes and keeping our community safer,” said Dutchess County District Attorney Grady.

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