



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. William K. Taylor
Administrative Judge
Seventh Judicial District**

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Cayuga County Launches Innovative Court to Address Opioid Crisis

Auburn, New York—As part of the Court System’s ongoing efforts to address the State’s opioid crisis, Administrative Judge William K. Taylor today announced the opening of a specialized part in Auburn City Court tailored to eligible offenders at high risk of a drug overdose, providing this at-risk population immediate access to lifesaving treatment and support services. The new court is a collaboration of the Seventh Judicial District, the Cayuga County District Attorney’s Office, the County’s defense bar and other local justice system partners and stakeholders.

The Auburn Intervention Court (AIC) will accept violations, misdemeanors, probation violations and felonies from the Auburn City Court and the Cayuga County and Supreme Courts, with eligibility based largely on the offender’s clinical needs. The Court will consider referrals from any Cayuga County stakeholder, including police agencies, attorneys, probation officers, community service agencies, and family and friends of defendants. Sex offenders and individuals with a pending charge or prior conviction resulting in a fatality will not be eligible to participate.

Eligible offenders who opt to undergo screening and are found to be at high risk of opioid, heroin or synthetic drug overdose may be offered the opportunity to have their case proceed in the AIC, where they will be expeditiously admitted into a judicially monitored 90-day program and connected with treatment services and peer support. The AIC will work with a variety of treatment and peer support providers including CHAD/Nick's Ride 4 Friends, Syracuse Recovery Services, Unity House and Grace House.

The AIC will operate five days per week, with Auburn City Court Judge David B. Thurston presiding. Participants must appear before Judge Thurston three days per week and report to the AIC staff the other two days. The prosecution of a pending criminal matter will be stayed in an effort to focus on clinical stabilization of the participant. Upon completion of or termination from the program, the case will be returned to the court of original jurisdiction. Eligible AIC participants may have their matters transferred to another problem-solving court program, such as drug court, to allow for continued supervision and treatment.

"The AIC will serve high-risk offenders suffering from opioid use disorder, helping to avert overdoses and bringing greater safety and stability to Cayuga County," said Judge Taylor. "I am extremely proud of our treatment court team, and thankful for their efforts in providing critical intervention and treatment to this at-risk population. I am also very appreciative of the collaboration of all our justice system partners who aided in bringing this court program to Auburn."

"We are extremely grateful for the support and contributions of our community partners, including our local treatment and community service agencies, law enforcement, the District Attorney's office, the defense bar and others who have made this program possible, providing immediate intervention for those at serious risk of overdose," said Judge Thurston.

“We believe the AIC will reduce the risk of overdose and death by speeding up and supervising the process of getting those addicted to dangerous drugs into a safe and supportive treatment environment as quickly as possible. In addition to saving lives, we expect this program will help to reduce addiction-driven crimes in our community,” said Cayuga County District Attorney Jon E. Budelmann.

“We applaud Judge Thurston for his leading efforts in the fight against the opioid crisis in Cayuga County. By taking a therapeutic approach to addiction, the new court addresses the underlying issues of court-involved individuals with a drug dependency, offering them emergency treatment and other critical services,” said attorneys Rome Canzano and John Price, who represent AIC participants.

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