



Skagit County Mental Health Court

Participant Handbook

Introduction

Welcome to the Skagit County Mental Health Court program. The Skagit County Mental Health Court is a collaborative, problem-solving court that strives to promote stability, sobriety and safety for criminal justice involved individuals with mental illness through an intensive program of evaluation, treatment and frequent monitoring of compliance, while ensuring the security and well-being of the community.

This handbook will detail what is expected of you as a Mental Health Court participant and review general program information. As a participant, you will be expected to follow the instructions given to you by the judge and the Mental Health Court Team, as well as to comply with the treatment plan developed for you by the Treatment Team. Some guidelines may vary at the discretion of the Mental Health Court Team. All participants are encouraged to share this handbook with family and friends.

The Skagit County Mental Health Court is a voluntary program. The four phase program consists of intensive judicial supervision that includes frequent appearances before the Mental Health Court judge, mandatory mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment if indicated. As you complete requirements for each particular phase, you will become eligible to advance to the next phase.

Program Length

The program length is a minimum of twenty-four (24) months for both misdemeanor and felony charges.

Program Rules

As a Mental Health Court participant, you will be required to abide by the following rules:

1. Attend all scheduled Mental Health Court sessions. An unexcused absence may result in issuance of a bench warrant.
2. Behave appropriately during the court sessions. Mental Health Court participants are expected to support one another and pay attention to the court proceedings. Listen to the judge and to one another.
3. Dress appropriately for court. No torn clothing, shorts, or flip-flops.
4. Attend all treatment sessions. This includes individual and group counseling, educational sessions, and other treatment as directed. Unexcused, missed treatment sessions will likely result in a sanction. If you are unable to make a scheduled appointment, you must notify your provider immediately. You must make all reasonable efforts to give your provider as much notice as possible of cancellation and to provide a reason for the cancellation.
5. Do not make threats towards other participants or staff or behave in a violent manner. Violent or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and will be reported

to the Court. This behavior will likely result in a sanction and may result in termination from the Mental Health Court program.

6. Submit to random urinalysis and/or breath tests as requested.
7. *You must abstain from alcohol and all non-prescribed medications or drugs, including any food or over the counter medications that contain alcohol, or any foods, such as poppy seeds, that can result in a positive UA.*
8. Maintain confidentiality of other Mental Health Court participants.

Termination from the Program

This is a voluntary program. You can decide to **voluntarily terminate** from the program at any time. The judge can also **involuntarily terminate** you from the program for non-compliance with treatment plan, repeated failure to appear in court, new criminal charges, or use of non-prescribe drugs and/or alcohol. The Mental Health Court Team will jointly make all decisions regarding involuntary termination.

If you are terminated from the program for any reason, voluntary or involuntary, the judge will review the police reports and decide whether or not you are guilty.

If the judge agrees that the reports support a finding of guilt, you will be convicted of the crime you have been charged with and the recommended sentence will be imposed.

Schedule and Location

Court will be held on alternate Mondays at 3:00 pm unless otherwise scheduled. Court will be held in one of the courtrooms in Superior Court at 205 W. Kincaid Street, Mount Vernon, WA or as otherwise determined. You will be advised of the court's location prior to the hearing. If you do not know where court will be held, call Skagit County Superior Court at 336-9320 the morning of the regularly scheduled court hearing.

Mental Health Court Requirements

Progressing Through Treatment

MHC consists of phases that include judicial oversight, individual treatment requirements, possible drug testing, and rewards and sanctions. Phases are designed to build upon the skills acquired in the previous phase, allowing you to learn to effectively manage your mental illness (and substance abuse, where applicable). As you move through the phases of the program, you will be evaluated and promoted based on successful completion of each phase.

Because all treatment plans are individualized, the requirements may vary. This is a general guideline and is subject to modification by the MHC Treatment Team and MHC Judge.

1. Intake/Assessment

- Complete mental health assessment
- Complete CD assessment if indicated; enter detoxification or inpatient treatment if indicated; submit to random UAs
- Observe minimum of two consecutive MHC dockets and appear in court as scheduled
- Sign Agreement to Participate in Mental Health Court and Stipulation to Facts

2. Phase I (minimum of 3 months)

- Appear in court as scheduled
- Follow treatment plan for mental health and substance abuse
- Comply with medications regimen
- Engage in individual and group counseling
- Engage in relapse prevention techniques
- Submit to random UAs as required
- Address payment of court fees and fines if necessary
- Complete employment assessment
- Maintains safe, appropriate housing and reliable transportation
- Engage in family counseling, parenting class, life management skills as recommended
- Explore Service Project

3. Phase II (minimum of 3 months)

- Appear in court as scheduled
- Follow treatment plan for mental health and substance abuse
- Comply with medications regimen
- Engage in individual and group counseling
- Engage in relapse prevention techniques
- Random UAs as required
- Obtain sponsor if applicable
- Address payment of court fees and fines; complete community service
- Develop employment/education/vocational plan; follow through with objectives identified
- Begin to explore and engage in volunteer opportunities
- Safe, appropriate housing & reliable transportation
- Engage in family counseling, parenting class, life management skills as recommended
- Develop Service Project

4. Phase III (minimum of 3 months)

- Appear in court as scheduled; may attend alternate court dockets
- Address court fees and fines as necessary
- Demonstrate skills learned in earlier phases
- Comply with medication and treatment plan
- Complete a Relapse Prevention Plan, which recognizes triggers for old patterns of thinking and behavior and what to do during periods of high stress or personal vulnerability to mental decline or criminal behavior
- Implement employment/vocational/educational plan or volunteer activity as approved by court
- Safe, appropriate housing & reliable transportation
- Engage in pro-social behavior
- Design and present Service Project to Court

5. Transitional Phase

- Appear in court as scheduled; may attend alternate court dockets
- Demonstrate skills learned in earlier stages of Mental Health Court Program; may serve as mentor for participants in earlier phases
- Comply with medication and treatment plan
- Follow Relapse Prevention Plan
- Complete Wellness Plan
- Implement Service Project
- Maintain employment or educational activity, or other activity as approved by court
- Actively engage in community service work for court fees and fines if necessary, or have plan to pay off outstanding balance
- Has means to maintain stable housing
- Meets all basic needs
- Engage in pro-social behavior

Graduation Requirements

Program Participation and Cooperation – The participant will be engaged in an ongoing therapeutic support system and will have complied with treatment plans.

Drugs and Medications - The participant will have complied with the treatment plan including appropriate use of medications and drugs.

Triggers – The participant will be able to identify and understand those circumstances and/or events which are likely to trigger relapse behaviors. S/he will develop new responses to those signs, including a list of significant others who will be helpful when the triggers are present.

Legal - The participant will have addressed outstanding matters in the criminal justice system.

Basic Life Needs – The participant has evidenced the skills to secure food, clothing and shelter. Participant makes every effort to insure that the residential environment is one that will promote ongoing recovery, and is safe and stable.

Reliability - No excessive or unexcused absences from appointments, employment, training classes or other obligations.

Financial or Community Service Responsibility – Has made all payments or performed all community service hours required for MHC participation.

Service Project - Taking into consideration individual capabilities, each MHC participant shall be responsible for developing and implementing a Service Project before they are eligible for graduation from MHC that reflects their interests and provides a benefit to the community. The Service Project might be participation in a panel discussion regarding MHC and/or the needs of community members with mental illness, becoming a Peer Counselor, forming an "aftercare" group for MHC graduates, developing a new program or class at the Peer Center, starting a new program for low income or disadvantaged individuals in the community or developing an individual project approved by the MHC team. The participants should start working on the development of their Service Project during the first two phases of the program and should begin implementation during Phase III and into the Transitional Phase. Participants are encouraged to develop a Service Project that is ongoing and continues beyond graduation from MHC.

Transition/Wellness Plan – The participant must meet with all Treatment Team members, including Mental Health Professional, Chemical Dependency Professional, Case Manager, and Supported Employment Specialist, and solicit input to help him/her complete a Wellness Plan for the Court that describes how s/he will maintain stability after graduation. The Wellness Plan will describe what participant must do every day to keep well, triggers that could make participant feel worse, and an action plan to stabilize the situation. The Plan should also describe their goals for their future life and a plan to achieve those goals. The Plan must address the following elements:

- Crisis Management and Mental Health Treatment
- Chemical Dependency Treatment
- Employment or Vocational
- Housing and Income
- Natural Supports
- Socialization
- Legal Issues
- What participant has learned through the Mental Health Court Program
- Future Goals

Exit Interview – Client must meet with Mental Health Court Coordinator and complete Exit Interview.

Mental Health Court Phone Numbers

Public Defender's Office	360-336-9405
Sunrise Services	360-336-3762
24-Hour Care Crisis Line	1-800-584-3578

Conclusion

The Mental Health Court program has been developed to help you achieve stability in your life. The program is designed to promote self-sufficiency and to return you to the community as a productive and responsible citizen. The Mental Health Court Team, Treatment Team, and community resources are here to guide and assist you, but the final responsibility is yours. If you have any additional questions or concerns about the Mental Health Court program, please contact your attorney.