



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

APRIL 2022

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ACCOUNTABILITY COURT NEWS

OGEECHEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT DRUG COURT

Submitted by Karen McClain, Ogeechee Judicial Circuit Mental Health Court & Drug Court Coordinator

Congratulations to the Ogeechee Judicial Circuit Drug Court! All participants from Bulloch County, Screven County, and Jenkins County were "violation free" at the March 14, 2022 court session. This was the first time there was a court session without any sanctions since the program's inception in 2018.

HENRY COUNTY DRUG COURT

Submitted by Michelle Vick, Judicial Assistant to the Honorable Holly W. Veal



Judge Holly W. Veal and the Henry County Adult Felony Drug Court Staff extend an invitation to you to attend the April 14, 2022 Henry County Adult Felony Drug Court graduation. The 2:00 p.m. graduation ceremony will take place in Courtroom A, 2nd Floor of the Henry County Superior Court building located at One Courthouse Square, McDonough, Georgia 30253. Please come and support our graduates!

MODEL COURTS FEATURE

The goal of Georgia's Accountability Court Model Court program is to recognize the great work of accountability courts across the state, as well as identify strong programs that may serve as mentors for other courts. Programs identified as Model Courts are those that have met and exceeded adherence to Georgia's Standards as dictated by strong performance on certification and peer review processes. To recognize the talent and expertise of the accountability court community, each month CACJ will recognize a model court or two and their work in the substance use and mental health fields.

Coweta County Drug Court

Court type: Adult Felony Drug Court

Presiding judge: Judge N. Markette Baker began presiding over the court two-and-a-half years ago.

Coordinator: Jennifer Barnett has been the coordinator for nine years.

Inception date: 2010

Number of graduates to date: 67

Current program census: 40

Recidivism rate: 29%

Innovative practices/unique programming:

Ms. Barnett: "Rocktober- Each staff member creates a playlist of favorite songs. The participants guess which playlist belongs to which staff member for prizes. Drug Court Awareness Month features month-long daily fun activities such as dress-up days (twins,



career day, decades), random acts of kindness, spirit day, etc. Christmas parties – our team provides gifts, a meal, activities for participants and families which helps to humanize staff and promote inclusion. Early groups/testing – we offer 6:00 a.m.-9:30 a.m. drug screening, as well as 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. groups so they can go to work afterward. Field trips/Reading program – Braves games, High Museum of Art, Botanical Gardens, Zoo Atlanta. We joined a program which gives tickets to non-profit organizations and take participants frequently. We offer a “Raising a Reader” program with the children of participants. We created a library and purchased the bags/kits for the program. In-house treatment/drug screening – “one stop shop” for ease, especially with transportation barriers.”

What are you most proud of in terms of the program’s success?

Ms. Barnett: “Most proud of how we have created a close knit, family-like, safe environment. We are treatment focused, trauma informed, respectful of our participants as humans rather than offenders or criminals. With this approach, we have proven to assist in life-long change for those who buy in. We have graduates come back regularly to check in and help mentor those currently in the program. We try to expose our participants to experiences otherwise not afforded to them...help them broaden their views and redefine their worlds.”

What would you like to highlight?

Ms. Barnett: “We have added a therapy dog component. The pup is still in his socialization training period, so he is not certified as a therapy dog yet, but he is well on his way! He has been coming to work with me and is soaking up all the attention from the participants. It lightens the atmosphere and seems to elevate moods of staff and participants!”

Colquitt County Accountability Court Team Members

Judge: Honorable N. Markette Baker

Coordinator: Jennifer Barnett

Prosecutor: Jared Parrish

Public Defender: Elizabeth Boswell

Probation Officer: Laura Stanford

Treatment Coordinator: Reggie Jordan

Clinical Case Manager: Donna Hansman

Law Enforcement Officer: Warren Miley



Model Adult Felony Drug Court (2020-2023)

Savannah-Chatham Mental Health Court

Court type: Mental Health Court

Presiding judge: Chief Judge Penny Haas Freesemann has presided over the court program since inception in 2007.

Coordinator: Steve Brown has served as coordinator since February 2015.

Inception date: September 27, 2007

Number of graduates to date: 101



Current program census: Prior to COVID-19, the SCMHC had a total of 35 active participants at the end of December 2019. Since the pandemic, the court has 10 active participants.

Recidivism rate: 13%

Innovative practices/unique programming:

Mr. Brown: "We have a very 'hands on' approach with our participants from every member of the team. Our involvement in their lives isn't limited only to treatment and court. We make sure they know we are available to assist them with hardships and congratulate them on accomplishments, including those outside of what we might see in the court setting. During court, we allow treatment to give the 'report' on each participant prior to the judge addressing them. This allows the treatment provider to express any concerns and also provide praise followed by a conversation with the judge. This method extends the participant's interaction during Court and gives the judge a roadmap of the most important topics to discuss with them. Some may see 'virtual court' as less than the full court experience. However, we have used it to our advantage. A greater selection of interested parties (participants in outside placement, family members, attorneys, etc.) are able to join us for court, graduations, and other hearings that could never have been present before. This adds to participant support necessary for successful completion of our program."

Why do you choose to preside over the accountability court?

Judge Freesemann: "I practiced law for 15 years and have been a judge since 1993. During that time, whether as a lawyer or as a judge, you would have some people on probation with mental health issues with a special condition of probation that they get 'such mental health treatment as deemed appropriate by probation'. I didn't know what that meant, and nobody else seemed to know what it meant. In reality, it had no real meaning. We were seeing a whole group of people that were just cycling in and cycling out, everybody knew who they were, but nothing was happening. So, it just seemed like something needed to change and we did."

What do you hope to accomplish as a model court?

Judge Freesemann: "The SCMHC team is made of a diverse group of individuals with equally diverse backgrounds and experiences. Likewise, the same applies to our past and current participants. As a judge, my job is to listen and rule on issues to the best of my ability. This is crucial in an accountability court setting as I have to listen and make rulings regarding my team, as well as participants. I hope to share my experiences with other accountability courts (new and established) to accomplish positive change for the participants they serve."

Mr. Brown: "While designated a 'model court', we are anything but perfect. Like every other accountability court in Georgia, we have successes and failures. I hope to motivate newer courts through those success stories and lessons learned from failures, as well as learn from other courts that are doing things I feel could improve our own program."

What are you most proud of in terms of the program's success?

Mr. Brown: "The SCMHC Team. Like any 'family', we have disagreements behind closed doors. But when teamwork is required (especially with challenges faced in a mental health court), we are united to accomplish the missions, usually at the drop of a hat when emergencies present themselves at inconvenient times."

What is something you wish you had known at program inception that you hope to impart to newer courts?

"Select and build your mental health court team with care. Select those familiar with mental health, the legal system, management experience, financial expertise, veterans issues, etc. But above all, find those that are motivated and committed to serving participants that truly want to succeed. New courts, like established courts, are a continuous work in progress. There will always be room for improvement."

Words of Advice: “Every prospective participant must observe a court session at least one time before they can enter the program. The judge always tells them we have a secret...we cheat. We cheat in that we only pick winners to be a part of our mental health court. Although not everyone graduates from the SCMHC, participants are motivated to succeed and are winners by accepting the challenge.”

Savannah-Chatham County Mental Health Court Team Members

Judge: Honorable Penny Haas Freeseemann

Coordinator: Steve Brown

Case Manager: Cordele Golden

Assistant District Attorney: Brittney Boston & Kristjan Whiteway

Assistant Public Defender: Fraser Klein

Treatment Case Manager: Frances Cerna

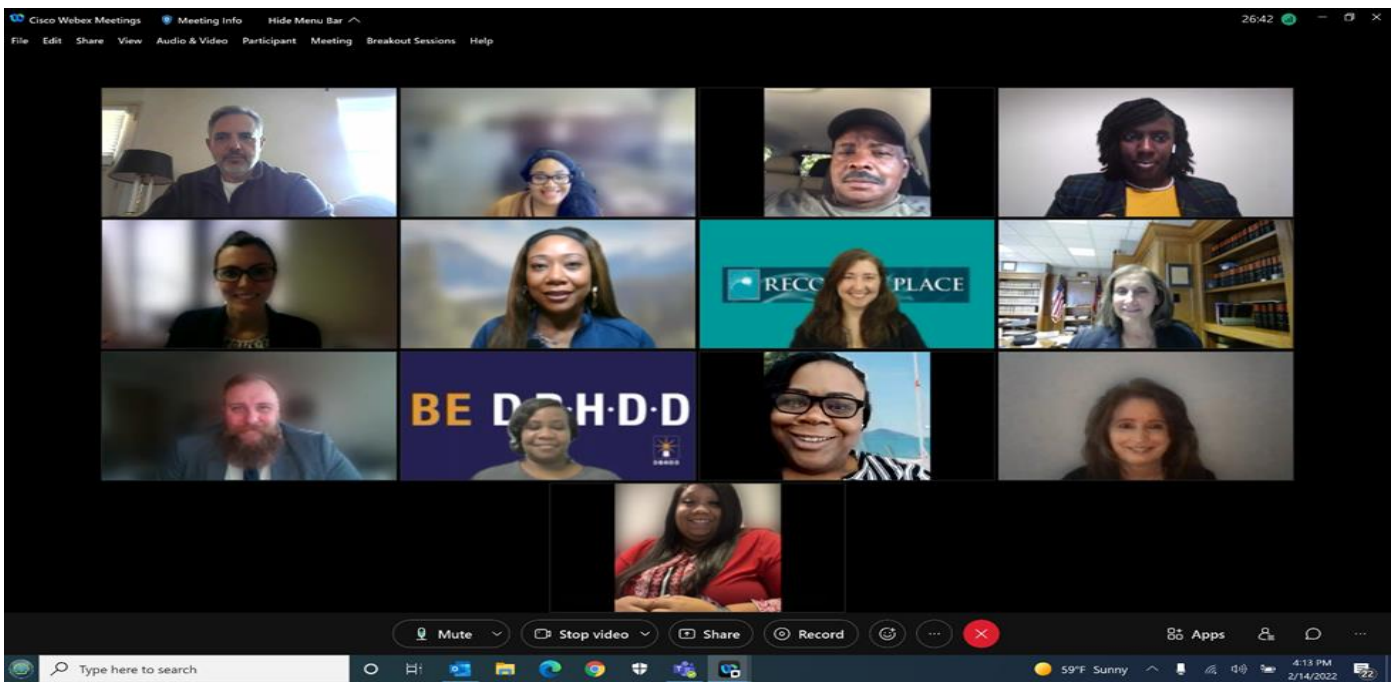
Clinical Social Worker: Juwana Taylor

Probation Officer: Tonsha Walker & Whitney Davis

Law Enforcement: Toni Geoghagan

DBHDD ADA Regional Transition Coordinator: Nicole Fields

ICM Specialist: Shayla Loadholt



Model Mental Health Court (2021-2024)

COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES NEWS

DATA COLLECTION TRAINING VIDEOS

Coming soon! CACJ will soon release three training videos to help prepare you for the upcoming FY23 data collection changes. The goal of these videos is to break down the changes into smaller, digestible pieces. They will be released over the next couple of months. Stay tuned!

MAY 2022 NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Please send submissions for the May 2022 newsletter to Debbie Mott (Debbie.Mott@GeorgiaCourts.gov) by Friday, April 29. If you plan to include a photo where participants can be identified, please be sure to send a signed photo consent with your submission.



CACJ 2022 Annual Training Conference
October 9-12, 2022
"Back to the Future of Accountability Courts"

The Council of Accountability Court Judges will host its 7th Annual Training Conference October 9-12, 2022. The conference is expected to host more than 900+ attendees from Georgia's accountability courts.

Registration and hotel room block information will become available as the information is finalized. Registration is expected to open in July 2022. Coordinators are the primary point of contact for attendee registration. Please continue to monitor the CACJ website for the most up-to-date information about the conference. The webpage is [here](#).

GEORGIA ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS JOB POSTINGS

Please see the Career Opportunities tab (under About Us) on the CACJ website for information about these job postings:

- *Carroll County Drug Court Case Manager
- *Rome Mental Health Court Coordinator
- *Carroll County Family Treatment Court Case Manager
- *Mountain Judicial Circuit Clinical Coordinator
- *Fulton County Behavioral Health Clinician I
- *Forsyth County Contract Counselors
- *Newton County Juvenile Court Case Manager
- *Cherokee County Case Manager
- *Gwinnett County Case Manager
- *Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Mental Health Court Coordinator
- *Fulton County Behavioral Health Clinician II
- *DeKalb County Misd. Mental Health Court Social Worker

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

Wondering about something? We are here to help Wednesday! Join CACJ Staff for virtual office hours!

Who: CACJ Teams – Data, Executive Director/Legal/Grants, Standards & Certification, Training, and Treatment

When: Every first Wednesday of the month from 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm (times changed as of February 23, 2022)

Where: Zoom – We are pleased to offer this new form of technical assistance!

Why: Virtual office hours give you the opportunity to ask your questions and receive support in a streamlined fashion. You can meet with CACJ Staff on a regular basis to stay informed and get the answers you need.



Meeting Schedule

- April 6, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Executive Director/Legal/Grants
 - Treatment
 - Training
- May 4, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Standards & Certification
 - Data
- June 1, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Executive Director/Legal/Grants
 - Treatment
 - Training
- July 6, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Standards & Certification
 - Data
- August 3, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Executive Director/Legal/Grants
 - Treatment
 - Training
- September 7, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Standards & Certification
 - Data
- October 5, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Executive Director/Legal/Grants
 - Treatment
 - Training
- November 2, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Standards & Certification
 - Data
- December 7, 2022** 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 - Executive Director/Legal/Grants
 - Treatment
 - Training