



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

DECEMBER 2021

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ACCOUNTABILITY COURT GRADUATIONS

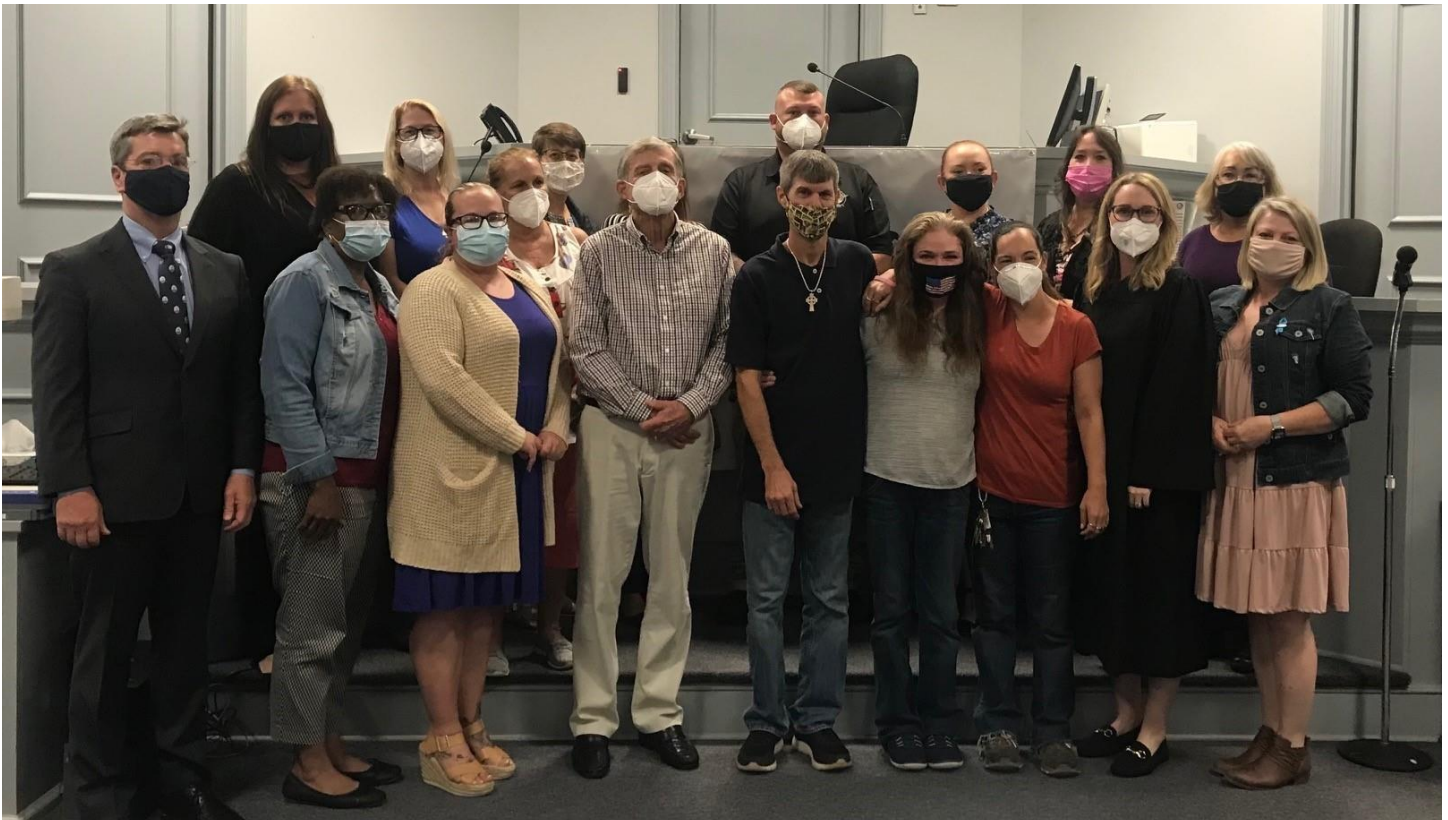
TALLAPOOSA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT FAMILY TREATMENT COURT

Submitted by Chief Judge Laura Wheale, Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit Juvenile Court

The Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit Family Treatment Court successfully graduated three participants on October 4, 2021 in its first graduation since the court's formation. The graduation took place at Polk County Courthouse #2 with family members, members of the community, and the Family Treatment Court team in attendance. The graduation was also made special due to the ability to have the ceremony in-person with COVID-19 protocols in place.

Graduates addressed those attending by thanking their support system and expressing gratitude for the program and their journey towards recovery. Coordinator Stephanie Deese expressed her congratulations to the participants and each of the participant's commitment to recovery and family. Judge Laura Lundy Wheale acknowledged each of the participants for their growth, commitment, and change during their participation through the Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit Family Treatment Court, and participants were presented with a certificate of completion.

Chief Judge Laura Lundy Wheale presides over the Court, and Stephanie Deese serves as the Coordinator. The Family Treatment Court is also comprised of the following team members: Carmen Bolden, Cpl. Kevin Chandler, Lisa Dowda, Tammy Floyd, Sherika Johnson, Deputy John Jones, Carlton Lanier, Larke Lanier, Judge Pro Tempore Charles E. Morris, Jr., Susan Ollis, Danielle Schiffbauer, and Sarah Steele.



FULTON COUNTY ACCOUNTABILITY COURT

Submitted by John Collins, Fulton County Accountability Court Director



On October 29, Fulton County Accountability Court was delighted to celebrate the transition of six graduates representing the Drug, Veteran, and Behavioral Health Treatment Court Programs. The graduates were able to celebrate with their assigned judges, the Honorable Robert McBurney, the Honorable Rachel Krause, the Honorable Ural Glanville, and the Honorable Emily Richardson, and select family members. Mr. Michael Scott, an alumnus of Behavioral Health Treatment Court, was on hand to deliver the invocation, and Drug Court alumnus and current peer mentor with the Court, Mr. Aenri "Karim" McPherson, delivered a powerful testimonial.



The programs' partners and supporters were also on hand to congratulate the graduates. The Fulton County Board of Commissioners' Vice Chair Natalie Hall, representing district 4, was once again on hand and spoke of her unwavering commitment to the Accountability Court Programs while congratulating and encouraging the graduates. The District Attorney's Office Deputy - Accountability Courts, Ms. Rewa Collier, was also there and encouraged the graduates to continue their path of success. Each graduate was presented with a gift bag, and guests enjoyed refreshments sponsored by the Hope and Healing Foundation of Fulton County, the Programs' charitable arm.



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES NEWS

CACJ STAFF UPDATES

The Council of Accountability Court Judges is pleased to welcome two new members to the team!



Ms. Ashley Perry joined CACJ on November 1, 2021 as the new Statewide MAT Coordinator. Ms. Perry has 11 years of direct practice and leadership experience providing substance use disorder treatment services in residential, outpatient, and corrections settings. She earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Marietta College (Marietta, OH) and is a Certified Alcohol & Drug Counselor Level II with ADACBGA. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Work from West Virginia University.

When asked what made her interested in the Statewide MAT Coordinator position, Ms. Perry said, "All of my prior work experiences instilled in me a strong passion for and belief in the Accountability Court model. After returning home from the NADCP Conference this year, I knew I wanted to get back to working with the Accountability Courts full-time. I have a strong passion for working with individuals who are navigating their personal recovery journeys while

involved in the criminal justice system, but I found myself wanting to impact a larger audience by getting involved on a macro level. The Statewide MAT Coordinator position caught my eye because it blends all my past experiences and current interests into one position. My early work experiences in West Virginia, the heart of the Opioid Epidemic, along with my passion for treatment services and the Accountability Court model, truly make this position a match made in heaven. This position offers me the opportunity to provide consultation and technical support to various Accountability Court programs across the State, while increasing awareness about the many benefits of MAT services. It is exciting to have another treatment option available to assist program participants on their recovery journeys."

Ms. Perry is certified in several evidence-based curricula, including Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT) and SAMHSA's MATRIX Model, and she is trained to administer the Addiction Severity Index (ASI), a comprehensive biopsychosocial assessment tool. Her approach to training and mentoring others is very hands-on, as she believes that collaboration and sharing knowledge is critical to program success. "When staff feel competent and confident, they produce their best work, and when staff are at their best, they offer our program participants the greatest chance of success," she said.

In working with CACJ in this new role, she said, "First and foremost, I hope to increase awareness of the benefits of MAT and reduce the stigma associated with this form of treatment. MAT is evidence-based and supported by extensive research, though it remains somewhat controversial among treatment professionals. I believe there are many pathways to recovery and that all individuals should have the opportunity to explore the treatment options available to them to determine the 'best fit'. In this role, my hope is to see an expansion of MAT services within our accountability court programs, which will contribute to increased positive outcomes, including lower recidivism rates, longer engagement in treatment, less illicit drug use, and increased prosocial behavior, such as gainful employment, stable housing, and reunification of families."

In addition to hard work, training, and education, Ms. Perry understands the importance of balance. In sharing an interesting personal fact, she said, "I am a night-owl turned early-bird. I start my weekdays at 4:00 a.m., with a routine that includes exercise, journaling, and reading. I have come to enjoy the quiet moments when most of the world is still asleep. I use this time to engage in self-care practices that set a positive tone for each day."

Please join CACJ in welcoming Ms. Perry to the role of Statewide MAT Coordinator!



Ms. Alison Lerner, Esq. joined CACJ in a full-time capacity on November 16, 2021 in the inaugural General Counsel role. Ms. Lerner graduated from UGA School of Law in 2010 and spent most of her career as a public defender, first as a juvenile public defender handling both delinquency cases and dependency cases as a parent attorney, and then eventually with a full felony trial caseload. She also worked for a civil litigation boutique law firm on a variety of legal issues including employment matters, professional liability, general liability, and personal injury. After a few years in the private sector, she joined the Judicial Council/Administrative Office of the Courts' in-house legal department where she assisted a variety of judicial branch agencies on legal matters, as well as advising the JC/AOC on HR issues. It was then she began providing legal services to the CACJ while she was a staff attorney.

When asked what made her interested in joining CACJ full-time, Ms. Lerner said, "When I was a public defender, I served on an adult felony drug court and a mental health court team. I had some of the most professionally rewarding experiences of my entire career doing this work. It was just incredible to be able to see my clients take control of their lives, get sober, and just get their lives back. I remember one client who had three separate serious felony cases, and I fought hard to get them into the program. At graduation, they thanked me personally by name, and they went on to become a founding member of the program's alumni group and stayed active in peer support. I felt like I made a difference in someone's life, and I will never forget that moment. Working with CACJ, I hope to help empower team members to create more moments like that. It's not often as lawyers that we get to say that we helped save peoples' lives."

While working with the AOC, Ms. Lerner advised on employment/personnel issues, liability issues, and state government compliance matters, like contract review and handling open records requests. She will advise CACJ on similar matters and will handle grievances and legal questions from team members. The goal is to also provide legislative support for the CACJ and expand attorney training offerings. She will staff the Legislation Committee, which will involve assisting the CACJ in interpreting any proposed legislation that might impact the functioning of the state's accountability courts and their ability to function as they

currently do. The Committee looks to ensure that any proposed legislation won't interfere with the courts in an unwanted way, and if there is proposed legislation that would have an unwanted impact, she will work with the legislature to make any fixes needed before a bill becomes law. She is also looking forward to working with the Training Committee on designing and coordinating some expanded offerings for training for attorneys. In addition, she will be handling grievances and Article 8 decertification procedures as needed, working to become the point person on the housing grant, and continuing to provide legal support and answering questions from CACJ staff and team members.

In sharing a personal interesting fact, Ms. Lerner said, "I have three cats and am active in animal rescue work. If anyone wants to foster any kittens or puppies, or adopt a new four-legged friend, just shoot me an email!"

Please join CACJ in welcoming Ms. Lerner to the role of General Counsel!

CACJ 2021 ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE

Recorded Sessions Now Available

CACJ is pleased to provide the 2021 Annual Training Conference attendees with access to select conference session recordings. This is an excellent opportunity to view missed sessions or watch sessions again to further understanding of content presented during the conference. The content is available online until March 31, 2022. Please refer to your email received during the conference from Map Dynamics with your login credentials to view the recorded content. If you cannot locate the email, access the platform's webpage [here](#) and then select "reset password".

For your convenience, an agenda of on-demand content and instructions are available below.

- [Instructions to view recorded content](#)
- [2021 Annual Training Conference Video On-Demand Agenda](#)

CACJ posted conference session PowerPoint presentations and handouts on the website [here](#).

The Council of Accountability Court Judges is not responsible for continuing education units or issuing certificates of attendance for attendees viewing recorded content. If you have questions or need assistance, please email cacj@georgiacourts.gov.

CACJ 2022 ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE

Call for Presenters



CACJ is excited to launch a call for presenters for the 2022 Annual Training Conference scheduled for October 9-12, 2022. As a member of the accountability court community, we need your help with ideas for workshops and presenters! If you know someone who would be perfect for our annual conference, please share this request and encourage them to submit a proposal. Proposals are due by December 31, 2021.

Annual Training Conference Survey

This survey will collect information from the accountability court community. Please complete this brief survey and provide your interest in topics and speakers or make suggestions you believe may be helpful for CACJ staff as we begin preparations for the 2022 conference. The survey will end December 31, 2021. Complete the survey [here](#).

If you have any issues with the survey, please email CACJ@georgiacourts.gov.





CACJ Mentorship Programs

The Council of Accountability Court Judges is pleased to announce a new technical assistance resource for accountability courts. The Case Manager Mentorship Program began accepting applications on Monday, November 8, 2021. Details about the program and applications are now available on the CACJ website for case managers who are interested in serving as mentors and those interested in having a mentor.

The Council of Accountability Court Judges is also pleased to announce the return of the Coordinator Mentorship Program. Applications are now available online to both coordinators interested in serving as mentors and those interested in having a mentor.

Applications for both opportunities are due December 10, 2021. Decisions and pairings will be announced via email no later than January 2022.

Details about the program and the applications (Formstack link for mentee and mentors) can be located on the CACJ website at <https://cacj.georgia.gov/resources/cacj-mentor-program>. If you have any questions about the program, please feel free to contact Sacha Greene or Kimberly Howard.

CERTIFICATION SEASON STARTED DECEMBER 1, 2021!

Reminders to get you ready for Certification Season:

- If your program is up for recertification, you must download the newest version of the certification application from the CACJ website. Please do not use old forms.
- Please review your most recent certification letter from the Standards and Certification Committee to see if you are required to certify. If you are unsure of your court's status, please contact CACJ staff.
- Complete the application and submit it along with your attachments no later than January 19, 2022.
- Remember to save often and submit early!



JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS



Please send submissions for the January 2022 newsletter to Debbie Mott (Debbie.Mott@GeorgiaCourts.gov) by Wednesday, December 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.

GEORGIA ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS JOB POSTINGS

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

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| *Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit Family Treatment Court Coordinator | *Forsyth County Contract Counselors |
| *Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Mental Health Court Coordinator | *Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Group Facilitator |
| *Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Case Manager | *Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Drug Testing Technician |
| *Douglas County DUI/Drug Court Coordinator | *Fayette County DUI/Drug & Veterans Court Coordinator |
| *Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit Drug Court Case Manager | *DeKalb County Misdemeanor MHC Social Worker |
| *Fulton County Behavioral Health Clinician I | *Fulton County Behavioral Health Clinician II |
| *Rockdale County Behavioral Health Clinician Team Lead | *Rockdale County Juvenile Drug Court Case Manager |

