



# COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

JULY 2020

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## COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES NEWS

### Congratulations to Chief Judge Asha M. Jackson and Judge Karen Beyers, CACJ's Executive Committee's newest members!

The Council of Accountability Court Judges held elections at the June Annual meeting to vote for FY21 Executive Committee members. The Council of Accountability Court Judges would like to welcome Chief Judge Asha M. Jackson and Judge Karen Beyers to the Executive Committee. Judge Jackson presides over the Felony Mental Health Court in the Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit, and Judge Beyers presides over the Gwinnett County Veterans Court.

The Council would also like to bid a fond farewell to our outgoing Executive Committee member, Chief Judge Reuben Green. Judge Green provided four dedicated years of service to the Executive Committee as the Nominations Committee Chair and Veterans Treatment Court representative.

#### **The FY21 Executive Committee members are as follows:**

Chief Judge Kathlene F. Gosselin (Chair), Northeastern Judicial Circuit  
Judge D. Scott Smith (Vice Chair), Cherokee Judicial Circuit  
Chief Judge Brenda S. Weaver (Immediate Past Chair), Appalachian Judicial Circuit  
Judge Charles E. Auslander, III, Athens-Clarke County  
Judge James F. Bass, Jr., Eastern Judicial Circuit  
Judge Karen Beyers, Gwinnett County  
Judge Mary Staley Clark, Cobb Judicial Circuit  
Chief Judge Asha M. Jackson, Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit  
Judge W. James Sizemore, Jr., Southwestern Judicial Circuit  
Chief Judge Russell W. Smith, Mountain Judicial Circuit  
Judge Alison W. Toller, Northeastern Judicial Circuit



### Georgia's Accountability Courts are Expanding!

The Council of Accountability Court Judges welcomes new implementation programs in FY21:

- Cherokee County Juvenile Drug Court
- Clayton County Adult Mental Health Court
- Conasauga Veterans Treatment Court
- DeKalb County Juvenile Court Family Dependency Treatment Court
- Douglas Circuit Accountability Courts – Veterans Court
- Fulton County Misdemeanor Mental Health Court
- Gwinnett County Family Treatment Court

The total number of CACJ certified accountability court programs in Georgia is 170 as of July 1, 2020.



### 2020 Annual Training Conference

On behalf of Judge Scott Smith, CACJ Training Committee Chair, and the CACJ Executive Committee, the 2020 CACJ Annual Training Conference, scheduled for September 13-16, has been cancelled as a "in person" conference. There will be a virtual training option offered during the original dates so that those who desire to participate in the training will have ample opportunity to do so. We have many excellent speakers who will be providing virtual presentations on a variety of interesting and helpful topics. We encourage everyone who is available on those dates to participate in the virtual training options. Registration for the virtual conference will begin later this month. Please look for more information and details to be provided in the coming days.

**Important**

### FULTON COUNTY ACCOUNTABILITY COURT

*Submitted by John Collins, Fulton County Accountability Courts Director*

#### Fulton County Behavioral Health Treatment Court Welcomes Judge Emily Richardson



Fulton County Accountability Court is delighted to welcome Judge Emily Richardson as our new Behavioral Health Treatment Court Judge. Judge Richardson has served with the Superior Court since January 2019. Prior to being appointed to the bench, Judge Richardson was the Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney at the DeKalb County District Attorney's Office, overseeing complex and appellate litigation. Judge Richardson also previously was a prosecutor at the Douglas County District Attorney's Office and an Assistant Attorney General at the Georgia Attorney General's Office. Judge Richardson knows first-hand how invaluable accountability courts are to our criminal justice system, and she is honored to be joining Fulton County's Behavioral Health Treatment Court.

The program would also like to bid a fond farewell to our outgoing Behavioral Health Treatment Court Judge, the Honorable Rebecca Crumrine Rieder. Judge Rieder has worked tirelessly in advocating for the Program and our participants. During Judge Rieder's tenure, the program has established its charitable organization, partnered with the Atlanta Bar Association to start a holiday "Adopt a Family" program, and coordinated the provision of weekly care packages during the pandemic.

Thank you Judge Rieder, and welcome Judge Richardson!

### ALCOVY JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

#### Judge Samuel D. Ozburn Retires from Alcovy Circuit Superior Court; Continues as Senior Judge to Preside Over Newton County Resource Court

The Honorable Samuel D. Ozburn was appointed as a Superior Court Judge for the Alcovy Judicial Circuit (Newton and Walton Counties) by Governor Zell Miller on December 20, 1995. He was re-elected to six terms, and, during that time, he implemented the Resource (mental health) Court in Newton County in July 2013. He also helped create the Walton County Resource Court, over which Judge Eugene M. Benton presides. Judge Ozburn retired on April 30, 2020, after serving 24 years on the bench. However, he chose to remain as a Senior Judge so he can continue with the Newton County Resource Court.

#### Words from Judge Ozburn:

**What was your initial interest in being an accountability court judge?** "Early in my career as a Superior Court judge, I noticed the prevalence of mental illness and addiction in people appearing before me with so few options to truly address their problems. The accountability courts provided greater opportunities to effectively address these issues and restore people to stability to enable them to be better parents, employees and citizens."

**Why were you interested in mental health court?** "Mental health courts provide the means to identify and deal with deep problems that so many people have and may be unaware of. They do not have the resources to treat lifelong mental illnesses that are usually complicated by addictions. Their families have often given up on them, and a mental health court is frequently their only hope for a stable and productive life."

**Was there a specific moment/event that happened that let you know you were doing something right for your program?** "I often encounter people in the community who thank me for helping their child or their spouse, but it first hit me when I called a local hardware store on a Saturday morning. It was answered by an employee, and I asked them a question about an item I needed.



There was a short pause and the gentleman asked, "Is this Judge Ozburn?" When I said yes, he identified himself and I remembered him from our Resource (Mental Health) Court. He was working at the hardware store and said that his family was now proud of him, and that he was so grateful for the Court. This was an unexpected blessing and encouraged me to work even harder to restore people despite the problems that can arise in dealing with them each week."

**To date, what do you think is your court's biggest program accomplishment?** "As required by our court standards, we have focused on high-risk, high-need individuals who have a lengthy history of incarceration tied to several mental issues which are usually complicated by addiction. We have not always succeeded but we have a pretty high rate of success in treating and supervising them. The goal is to break the incarceration cycle to enable them to become stable, law abiding citizens. It can be frustrating, but it is truly rewarding to see the successes and restoration of hope."

**How does your court involve the community? Special events?** "We have a remarkable advisory board consisting of government officials, law enforcement, healthcare and community leaders who are interested in helping our court supervise and treat our court participants more effectively. We have an annual banquet to thank those who have contributed to the court in some way. Some of our participants tell their story of recovery and a list of our needs is given to attendees. We also have a Christmas meal each year for our participants and gifts are donated by the Celebrate Recovery program at a local church and given to the participants and their children by Santa Claus."

**Once you retired, why did you choose to stay on with the Resource Court?** "Participants in our Resource (Mental Health) Court are best served with consistent, regularly-held court proceedings. Although I retired as of April 30, 2020, I will continue to preside over the weekly court proceedings until Judge Zon is trained to handle the court. Until then I want to make sure court continues to be held each week without interruption for the benefit of participants. I just enjoy it, as well."

**What advice would you give a judge starting a new court program?** "The judge must be sure he or she is truly dedicated to the treatment and stability of every court participant. This requires patience because you're trying to overcome behavior patterns that have often persisted for decades. But the most important thing is to convince the participants that you truly care for them. They have to know that you care. Their experiences with courts have largely been negative – being sentenced to confinement. Once they realize that you sincerely want them to succeed, they will trust you and be more receptive to treatment and recovery."

Thanks to Judge Ozburn's leadership, concern, and direction, to date the Alcovy Resource Court has served 167 participants in both Newton and Walton Counties.

Newton County:

Total participants served since court began: 90

Current census 26

Graduates: 36

Walton County:

Total participants served since court began: 77

Current census: 20

Graduates: 34

## CONASAUGA DRUG COURT

*Written by Mitch Talley, Whitfield County Director of Communications*

### Despite Retiring, Drug Court's Lynch Aims to Continue Relationships with Program Participants

Just because he's retiring doesn't mean Marshall Lynch won't continue to be a positive influence on the people whose lives he has touched during his seven years with the Conasauga Drug Court program. His goal, Lynch points out, has always been to stay connected with participants in the program, even after graduation, and retirement won't put a stop to that.

"I sorta have a standing rule that (the participants) have to graduate and then I wanted to remain connected with them," Lynch said during a surprise retirement luncheon given June 24 by his co-workers at The Chop Shop in Dalton.

Lynch has served Drug Court as a treatment provider for five and a half years full-time before switching to part-time teaching specialty groups two days a week beginning in November 2017. He has specialized in helping participants deal with the trauma they've suffered, particularly earlier in life.

"Many times when people have had traumatic episodes in their lives, they tend to repress it and it becomes part of their issues," Drug Court Coordinator Terry Sosebee explained. "Marshall has been very good at working with these individuals to help with the trauma, to help them get over it and get on with their lives."

In fact, at a recent graduation ceremony, several Drug Court participants praised Lynch for helping them in their recovery. Said one female graduate: "Marshall, you have a special place in my heart. Thank you for all the knowledge and advice you gave me. You helped me understand so many things from my past. You helped me to accept myself for who I am and who I am today is good enough. You believed in me when I couldn't believe in myself. Thank you for that!"

Another male graduate said: "Marshall helped me overcome being a victim and showed me I could do anything I set my mind to. He showed me that just because my father didn't want to be part of my life, it didn't mean I couldn't have a connection with someone that could fill the void I had in my life. He showed me love from the beginning and was always there when I needed to let my feelings out. For that, I will be forever grateful. Thank you, Marshall. I feel you were put into my life for a reason."

Ironically, Lynch could just as easily *not* have been put into the lives of these participants. "I live in Ellijay, and I was looking for a new position seven years ago," he explained. "I had left a rehab center where I was working in Canton, and I never ever thought about working in Dalton. When the job here was posted, it was posted oddly enough on Craig's List. I never hardly ever look on there, but just one day I happened to go on there, saw it, came over here and interviewed, and started working in Dalton. I never ever thought about this corridor when I was looking – it was always like Blue Ridge or Ellijay or Canton or something like that. "Now, he jokes that he's made the trip back and forth between Ellijay and Dalton so many times, "they've got a statue of me on (Highway) 282 as I go up the mountain!"

Before his stint in Dalton, Lynch had been a teacher for 12½ years in Marietta City Schools before going back to graduate school and becoming a therapist starting in 1993. Looking back, he says his decision to work for Conasauga Drug Court was "really the best thing to happen to me," noting that the position "was kinda like a culmination for me of everything I had learned" over the years. "I really felt like I grew as a person these last years here ... it's been everything to me," Lynch said.

Drug Court Judge Jim Wilbanks, for one, is glad Lynch saw that Craig's List ad. "Marshall has been, gosh, the backbone of the program," Wilbanks said. "He was the men's treatment provider, and he's just been so much more than that. He's been an advisor, counselor, leader of everything that we do. His fingerprints are all over this program in a very positive way, and I'm sure Judge (Jack) Partain (Drug Court founder) would agree with that. I know when I ask Marshall in a few minutes if we can still call him for his advice and counsel, that he'll gracefully say 'yes, I'll be happy to'. He's just such a great man, standing by himself, but you take his Christian life that he lives and breathes and you move it into the treatment context, and it's just powerful, nothing short of powerful."

One way Lynch reached the men in the program has been through a motorcycle program that will keep rolling down the highway despite his retirement, he promises. "We started a motorcycle riding group of guys in recovery that goes back to guys that graduated three, four, five years ago," he said. "I hope to keep building that. We all enjoy the sport of riding. The only requirements are that you're sober, that you're trying to do good things in your life, and you use that as a connection with other men to do good things. We had a ride about a month ago with seven guys – had several others that couldn't be there – so I'm hoping to build that gradually as a support system in a different way."

Another way he and fellow treatment provider Rosafay Lawson have helped men and women in the program build their confidence has been through talent shows, the most recent being in 2017. "That was one of my happiest moments, I think," Lynch said. "I took that back from when I was young; they used to have all kinds of talent shows when we were in high school and I always thought what a great way to teach people in recovery to use their gifts. A powerful part of recovery is rediscovering the things that you may have laid aside when you were using and were an addict." At the show, participants are encouraged to display whatever their talent might be – singing, painting, drawing, whatever. "When they rediscover that talent," Lynch said, "typically they're better than ever before, and so the talent show was just a chance to showcase that for everybody in recovery and to give them a chance to see, you know what, maybe these are things I laid aside when I was using because that's all I ever thought about doing back then, but now I know I can still use my gifts." Lynch, coincidentally, has talents of his own that he shared at that 2017 show, when he played guitar and sang with participants. He still is a member of a band and also performs with his wife at their church, Ellijay Seventh-Day Adventist Church. "We do YouTube concerts for our church online," Lynch said. "We have done two during the pandemic, and we're going to continue to do that. We enjoy singing together. She's actually a better singer than me, but I play and sing harmony with her. That's a blessing for me." In fact, you can watch the next concert on July 11 by visiting the church website at <https://ellijayga.adventistchurch.org/>. Previous concerts may also be watched online, too.

While Lynch has retired from the Drug Court program, he's still working two days a week as clinical coordinator at the Green House, a child advocacy/sexual assault center in Dalton, offering services to help victims and their non-offending family members recover from trauma caused by child abuse and sexual assault. He also will continue doing assessments for the Whitfield County Sheriff's Office. Lynch says he'll miss his work with the Drug Court. "I got a call this morning from a guy (along with) several messages of encouragement," he said. "The thing that matters to me is that if I had any kind of impact on them with their families and themselves, it means everything to me. I want to remain close to these people. I want them to be able to reach out to me if they



need encouragement or just a word. I tell them I learned more from them than I ever gave back. When you sit in a circle with a group of men all those years," Lynch said, "it changes your life somehow, and I'll never forget that. In fact, my biggest adjustment when I went down from full-time to part-time was just not getting to sit in that circle every day and hear the feedback of people's lives and how they grow and how they change. So I learned a lot about that from that group."

## BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

*Written by Judge David L. Cannon, Jr.; Appeared in the Cherokee Tribune & Ledger-News*

### From the Bench & Bar: Accountability Courts More Than Pay for Themselves

Georgia spends \$1.2 billion a year housing 52,000 prison inmates. Of the 20,000 released each year, almost one-third will return within three years. Georgia Supreme Court Justice Michael Boggs characterized that as a terrible investment of tax dollars. As bad as these numbers sound, they could have been worse. Georgia's prison population has only slightly increased over the past 10 years, in part due to a series of criminal justice reforms. One of the key components of these reforms was the expansion of accountability courts throughout the state focusing on rehabilitation and treatment as an alternative to incarceration.

I became the presiding judge of the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit Drug Accountability Court 18 months ago. This is not my first experience with accountability courts. As solicitor general, I assisted in the formation of the DUI/Drug court in 2005 and a misdemeanor drug court in 2011. I remember the conversation with Judge C.J. Gober when he suggested starting a program in Cherokee County. He explained how the participants would receive counseling and treatment and we would have a team that would discuss how the participants were progressing twice a month. We would help them find jobs and suitable housing if needed, and they would be subjected to a significant amount of drug and alcohol testing. If they relapsed, they would receive a short jail sanction, but we would continue to work with them and give them some additional treatment. This struck me as a little warm and fuzzy coming from Judge Gober. When I asked him what was so appealing about this program, he said, "I've been doing this a long time and I'm tired of seeing the same folks over and over again. Putting them in jail isn't stopping them from drinking again once they get out. What we are doing isn't working."



After that conversation and lots of classes and training we created the 5th DUI court in the state (there are currently 23). Judge Ellen McElyea began our circuit's felony drug court in 2013. At that time there were 3,100 participants in accountability courts statewide. Currently there are approximately 10,000 participants in a wider array of programs including veteran's courts, mental health courts, as well as juvenile and family treatment courts.

A key component to Georgia's drug court programs and a requirement to receive funds is data collection. Georgia's combined accountability courts administered 631,349 drug tests in 2019, and over 94% of them were negative, and the percentage of positive tests declines further as they progress through the program. There were 1,500 graduates in 2019 and 72% of them were employed. Only 7% of accountability court graduates are rearrested within two years, and even participants who were ultimately terminated from a program still have a 10% lower recidivism rate than those who do not enter an accountability court program.

A study by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government determined the total economic benefit for the 1,500 graduates, including fees paid by participants, income taxes paid to the state, cost savings from foster care and health care totaled \$38 million vs. \$32 million to fund accountability court programs. We have had three drug free babies born to participants in our program in the last 18 months, that saved \$63,000 (hospital, medical, foster care, etc.) each. Not to mention the incalculable benefit to the child beginning its life free from drug dependency.

These numbers don't give the full picture, to get that you have to hear from our participants and graduates and let them tell you their stories. How they have reunited with their families, the pride of being clean and sober for a year or longer, holding a steady job and getting a promotion. I had one participant this week say, "I didn't think I could be a good person because I've been in trouble all my life, but now I know I can."

A side note on dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. We are maintaining our drug court operations through video conferencing. The counseling sessions, and court hearings and meetings by our drug court staff are being zoomed with relative success. Many participants are struggling because of loss of work and others need additional care that a session through a screen just cannot

provide. That being said, this group is doing better than I would have expected given the extreme circumstances in which they find themselves. I also am keenly aware of the budget discussions going on at the Capitol currently based on a significant decline in tax revenue. I hope those decision makers realize the impact our accountability courts are making on people's lives and the long-term economic benefit to the state.

## ACCOUNTABILITY COURT GRADUATIONS

### ROCKDALE COUNTY RESOURCE COURT

*Submitted by Mary-Lou Snow, Rockdale County Resource Court Coordinator*

On June 4, 2020 the Honorable Judge Robert Mumford and the Rockdale County Resource Court Team celebrated its first ever virtual graduation. With five graduates being recognized, a phenomenal speaker on mental health, and family and friends within view, it was a virtual success. Each graduate was given the opportunity to stop by the office the following day to see the judge and coordinator face-to-face and to receive their graduation goodies – plaque, framed certificate, \$25 gift card, and the judge's golden coin. "When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be." -Lao Tzu

## COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES UPDATES

### Inaugural Data Driven Award Announced

CACJ is excited to announce the first data driven award opportunity! CACJ will recognize a court's data collection and analysis efforts toward improving program outcomes with a supplemental grant award to be used for a program evaluation, as well as recognition at the 2020 CACJ Training Conference. This is a competitive opportunity. Details regarding this award opportunity, to include submission requirements, will be released in late July.

### CACJ Rules & Regulations Are Effective

The Council of Accountability Court Judges' Rules and Regulations are effective July 1, 2020. A complete publication of the CACJ Rules are located on the Council's homepage. A webinar covering need-to-know information from the Rules and offering practical tips for implementing the new requirements is being offered July 23rd at 12pm. All team members are encouraged to attend or view the webinar afterwards. Registration details are found [HERE](#). Space is limited, only the first 200 registrations are accepted for the live event.

### FY21 Training Opportunities Released

The Council of Accountability Court Judges FY21 Training Calendar has been released and is available on the CACJ website. Please visit the training webpage to view training opportunities offered from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

**Registration is currently open for the following accountability court training opportunities:**

- **New Coordinator Training Webinar** - Registration is open for the New Coordinator Training scheduled for Tuesday, August 25, 2020. This training is specific to new coordinators and will include information on CACJ, as well as important programmatic details for your role as coordinator. Registration opened Monday, June 29, 2020.
- **FY21 Data Collection Training Webinar** - CACJ and AOC Research will deliver a live webinar to discuss the FY21 data collection changes, updates to the quality assurance protocol, and helpful tips to ensure your program remains in compliance with the grant special condition related to data collection. You will also get a sneak peek into an exciting project planned for release late summer/early fall. Mark your calendars for **August 3 at 10:00 a.m.** A registration link for the data webinar will be sent soon.



### CELEBRATING FAMILIES!™ VIRTUAL FACILITATION WEBINAR

1 - 2: 30 PM ET / 10 - 11:30 AM PT

THROUGH THIS **FREE** WEBINAR,  
LEARN HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY  
PROVIDE **CELEBRATING FAMILIES!**  
(CF!) USING A VIRTUAL PLATFORM.



### REGISTRATION COMING SOON!

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SHORT 3 MINUTE SURVEY TO LET US KNOW  
MORE ABOUT YOUR CURRENT STATUS WITH VIRTUAL PROGRAMING,  
AND CONCERNS/SUCCESSES IN DOING SO EFFECTIVELY!  
[HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/GPH7QTB](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GPH7QTB)

EMAIL DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS MARY BETH COLLINS,  
[mbcollins@nacoa.org](mailto:mbcollins@nacoa.org), TO RECEIVE THE REGISTRATION  
ANNOUNCEMENT WHEN RELEASED.

THIS **FREE** LIVE WEBINAR WILL BE FACILITATED BY CF! PROGRAM DEVELOPERS AT PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP INTERNATIONAL WITH FUNDING FROM THE CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND ONGOING PARTNERSHIP WITH NACOA.



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CHILDREN





### Update Accountability Court Key Personnel Contact Information

CACJ has a new procedure to update the contact information or report changes in key accountability court leadership roles - judge, coordinator, or director. Please complete the Change in Personnel Form located on the website. You can find the form on the Court Resources page under the Georgia Accountability Court Directory tab.

### FY21 Operating Grant Awards Coming Soon

From April 27, 2020 – May 5, 2020, the CACJ Funding Committee, with the assistance of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's (CJCC) grant specialists, District Court Administrators, and CACJ Staff, met virtually to review FY21 Accountability Court grant applications. Accountability court programs can anticipate receiving their official grant award package notification **via email** from CJCC in July.

### Intranet Is Still Not Available but CACJ Staff Continues to Provide Housing Resources

As a friendly reminder, the AOC-supported intranet for Court Coordinators is not available. As a result, resources for accountability court participant housing are no longer accessible using the platform. To continue operations and provide housing resources for program participants, please contact CACJ Staff for the following:

- Reentry Partnership Housing Application
- HUD 8.11 Housing Application
- CACJ Residential Resource Guide

### FY21 Data Collection Changes Just Released

CACJ released the FY21 data collection changes update memorandum, manual, and toolkit on June 29, 2020. The changes went into effect on July 1, 2020.

### August Newsletter Submissions

Please send submissions for the August 2020 newsletter to Debbie Mott ([debbie.mott@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:debbie.mott@georgiacourts.gov)) by Monday, July 27. If you plan to include a photo where participants can be identified, please be sure to include a signed photo consent with your submission.

## TREATMENT CORNER: EVIDENCE-BASED CURRICULUM TIPS TO AID VIRTUAL GROUPS

*Submitted by Lasheika Kassa, Treatment Fidelity Program Manager*

### Recommendations for Thinking for a Change Groups During COVID-19 Pandemic

*Written by Archie Weatherspoon, IV, National Institute of Corrections' Thinking for a Change Program Manager*



As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, T4C facilitators are facing unprecedented challenges. Since this is an extraordinary time and situation, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) is providing our recommendations to help the continuation of programming and services to your group participants. If your agency/organization has made the difficult decision to postpone in-person groups to help reduce the further outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, NIC has a few guidelines for T4C facilitators and group members.

If possible, you can facilitate the groups through telehealth/telemedicine platforms and/or web conferencing platforms. The recommended platform would need to include video conferencing to allow for group members' role-plays and other activities, and for facilitators to provide real-time modeling, coaching, and feedback. Also, your agency/organization will need to consider methods to disseminate T4C assignments via email, file upload, or other digital sharing method. All T4C facilitators with approved T4C 4.0 online curriculum access must abide by Federal copyright when sharing T4C materials.

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Now, transitioning from the classroom or group rooms to virtual/online facilitation groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, you may be feeling a bit nervous about how to facilitate programming online. Here are 4 useful tips for facilitators and T4C group members to make this transition smooth and successful.

#### 4 Tips for Creating a Successfully Online Learning Experience (For T4C Facilitators)

1. Creating your space is essential for success and your comfortability as you are beginning virtual facilitation. Whether you are conducting your session from your office, classroom, or home, configuring your space is important. • Choose your location carefully. Look for a plain, distraction-free backdrop. Avoid standing or sitting in front of a light source. Clear the space around you of everything that is not a part of your current lesson. • Check the framing and volume of your video before you begin. Be sure the camera is steady and is recording what you want seen. • Consider making your virtual sessions password-protected and only to be utilized by participants from your T4C group. • Clarify ground rules/group norms for online interaction in the given space, including how to treat each other respectfully. • Monitor the space frequently, including all chat forums/discussion boards. • Establish set times when you will be online and available for real-time interaction after each T4C session for the group members' virtual T4C assignment questions and help. Stick to those times if possible, and if you must change the times, provide as much notice as you can.
2. Many of us want to feel that we are a valued member of a group. As a virtual facilitator, break down the feeling of anonymity and strive to include everyone in the session. • Arrive early to your online session. Create a warm, friendly online learning environment that welcomes people. Consider virtual classroom icebreakers like Tic-Tac-Toe on a virtual whiteboard, Two Lies/One truth or Two Truths/One Lie in chat/discussion board, etc. • Use people's names when you read or debrief chat comments. If the group size is small enough, invite people to elaborate on their chat comments by having them unmute their phone lines and talk with each other.
3. It's tempting for any participant to lurk in the background. To make it safe to participate actively in your virtual classroom, spend time prior to the session orienting people new to your web conference platform in the use of the online interaction tools. • Make sure everyone is comfortable using chat, emoticons, annotation tools, web cameras, and polls.
4. You may have some participants with a need to feel appreciated or recognized often, as they engage in helping activities during the online session. • Of course, this is OK as long as they don't monopolize your attention. The path of least resistance is to acknowledge them with a genuine "thank you." If someone is volunteering to share an example for the third time, you might say, "Gabe, thank you so much for sharing your experiences. I really appreciate it because we all benefit from your examples. I'd like to open this discussion to people who haven't shared their examples yet."

#### Online Learning Pre-Cautions & Other Considerations

Virtual facilitation sessions can be a valuable tool. However, you should keep in mind the fact that there may be participants without in-home online access. Consider alternative learning options to ensure that these group members are not entirely left out of the learning process. Additionally, in many homes (due to work and school closures from COVID-19) participants may have to share their online access with spouses, children, siblings, parents, or other house guests. Learning assignments and tasks should have both online and offline components to accommodate those who need to share their computer (such as providing lesson materials; i.e., skill cards, homework assignments, and handouts beforehand).

However you choose to conduct your virtual group sessions, your group members' attention spans will be considerably shorter than usual without your physical presence to engage them in the lesson. Also, try to stay on top of the assessment and evaluation process. Prepare a screening tool so that when your agency/organization decides to resume live classroom/group activities, you can easily assess the T4C group members' understanding of lessons covered during the distance-learning period.

If you are interested in general information and resources responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic, please be advised that the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has launched a Coronavirus Information page on its website ([www.nicic.gov/coronavirus](http://www.nicic.gov/coronavirus)). It contains COVID-19 information from multiple sources, including guidance from the White House, a number of links to pages from federal government agencies (including the Centers for Disease Control), as well as information compiled by professional associations serving the field of corrections.

#### University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute Helpful Tips on Delivering Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Substance Abuse (CBI-SA) Virtual Sessions

##### Necessary Modifications

Trained treatment providers should utilize their best judgement to make any necessary modifications while doing their absolute best to adhere to the fidelity of the evidence-based groups.



### **One-on-One Session**

Treatment providers should take into consideration that there may be unavoidable circumstances (no internet access, no computer, etc.) that may prevent participants from attending virtual groups. In this case, treatment providers should be able to work with the participants on a one-on-one basis to implement the evidence-based group lesson for the day/week.

### **Smaller Group Size**

Smaller groups work better on a virtual platform. If groups are normally 10-12 participants, groups should be cut in half. Conduct one group of 5-6 participants at one time and set a group schedule for the other 5-6 later that day.

### **Check-Ins**

Check-ins should be shorter (usually check-ins last 10 minutes). If certain participants are struggling and having severe personal issues causing your check-in time to go over, the treatment provider should make a professional judgement to determine if individual group sessions would work better.

### **Role-Plays/Co-Actor**

Participant Role-Plays have proven to be a challenge for treatment providers. Treatment providers should shorten the feedback piece after each role play. The participants can use a significant other, spouse, children, or roommate as a co-actor. Please note that this person can only aid with the role play and must exit the room for the remainder of the group due to privacy issues. If treatment providers are not comfortable allowing this, they can aid with being the co-actor for all the participants instead of allowing others to volunteer to do it or assigning individuals to do it.

### **Individual Sessions**

Some of the CBI-SA sessions are better in an individual format to include Succession Planning and Problem Solving. (Treatment providers should use their professional discretion based on what has been a struggle for participants. This should be decided on an as-needed basis and based on the tougher modules.)

### **Office Hours**

Treatment providers should have set office hours daily (M-F) which allow for participants to reach out to ask any pertinent questions related to their evidence-based curriculum to include help with practice work, etc.

## **Correctional Counseling, Inc. Helpful Tips on Delivering Moral Reconation Therapy Virtual Sessions**

### **Preparation**

MRT can be done in one-on-one telephone or video sessions. • Make sure ALL clients have a workbook and smartphone or computer.

### **Rules**

Use all of the same rules and procedures outlined in the facilitator's guide.

### **Checklist**

Maintain a set of steps or session checklist for each client.

### **Homework**

Assign each participant to complete their relevant step or session homework. • Clients should show and describe responses to homework to the camera on their phone or computer and then answer appropriate questions.

### **Feedback/Approval**

The facilitator approves the homework based on the criteria for that session just as it is normally done. • Show clients that you are signing their completion sheet after they successfully present a step. • Create the same group process for exercises that require group feedback by having several group participants present in your virtual group.

### **Individual Sessions**

If necessary, sessions can be done individually with clients; however, it is strongly encouraged to deliver the program in a group format. • Set meeting times and appointments with clients, as needed.

**If you have any questions regarding the virtual delivery of the programs, please contact Ms. Lasheika Kassa ([Lasheika.Kassa@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:Lasheika.Kassa@georgiacourts.gov)) or Ms. Tara Zellous ([Tara.Zellous@georgiacourts.gov](mailto:Tara.Zellous@georgiacourts.gov)).**

