



NEWSLETTER

November | 2022



From the CACJ Staff

Approximately 1,289 accountability court professionals came together October 9-12, 2022 in Athens for the 2022 CACJ Annual Training Conference.

The conference featured 40 local and national experts as speakers and provided three keynote presentations and 45 unique breakout sessions. Topics included suicide prevention, mental health and substance use, supervision strategies, self-care and resiliency, equity and inclusion, and unique issues faced by accountability court professionals. CACJ's Training Committee placed emphasis on providing sessions that focused on current and evolving trends. For those interested in the conference presentations, they are accessible on the CACJ website.

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp and Chief Justice Michael P. Boggs attended the conference as keynote speakers.

The conference highlights included the recognition of the 2022 award recipients, recognition of the Coordinator Certification Program graduates, and a debut of the video: *Georgia's Accountability Courts: Changing Lives*.

The Council of Accountability Court Judges Training Committee and staff thank everyone for their attendance and dedicated service to Georgia's accountability courts. The 2023 Annual Training Conference dates are September 10-13, 2023. Please visit the CACJ website for the most up-to-date information about the next event.

Submitted by Kimberly Howard, Training & Operations Manager

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Forsyth County DUI Court Graduation

The Forsyth County DUI Accountability Court held their 66th graduation ceremony on October 19, 2022. Judge T. Russell McClelland has presided over DUI Court since it began in 2006. Other team members in the photo include William A. Finch (Elected Solicitor General), Melissa Banker (Accountability Court Defense Attorney), Carol Simpson (Assistant Director), Morgan Samples (Case Manager), Walter Hughes (Counselor), Darrin Goodwin (counselor), and Debbie Krietner (Counselor).

Eleven graduates participated in the ceremony and had the opportunity to share comments in front of peers, family, friends, and staff. Their speeches included how much they have overcome, how the program changed the trajectory of their life, and the giving back to the community project they completed.

After each speech, individuals spoke on behalf of the graduates. They shared how much their relationship had suffered when addiction was prevalent and how it is now mended. A particularly moving moment occurred during the ceremony when a graduate's 7-year-old child stood up to speak. He shared how much his father had changed for the better, now that he is sober. The child began to state how proud he was, how much he loved having his dad back, and all the memories they would continue to make. The child's speech moved the entire assembly room and there were not many dry eyes in the room after he was finished speaking. The graduation ceremony reminded everyone of the incredible impact accountability courts are making in people's lives, our communities, and for future generations.

Submitted by Morgan Samples, Forsyth County DUI Court Case Manager



Savannah-Chatham County Drug Court Graduation

Congratulations to Mrs. Tanya Hicks, who graduated from the Savannah-Chatham County Drug Court on October 19, 2022! She is pictured in the photo with Judge James F. Bass, Jr.

Submitted by Tiffany Shuff, Savannah-Chatham County Drug Court Coordinator

Clayton County Veterans Treatment Court Graduation

The Clayton County Veterans Treatment Court, with Presiding Judge Robert L. Mack, held its 7th graduation ceremony on October 5, 2022. Graduate Ricky Ray Harber completed the program successfully despite many hardships, such as the loss of his brother during this time. However, he persevered. Mr. Harber served in the United States Air Force from March 1978 and retired as Master Sergeant in 1995. Prior to each participant's graduation, a community service project must be completed. As his community service project, Mr. Harber created the "Second Chance" All Recovery Meeting at the Paula Crane Life Enrichment Center in Clayton County. Mr. Harber continues to conduct recovery meetings for his community every Tuesday at the center.

The keynote speaker for this occasion was the Honorable Jason Deal, Superior Court Judge of the Northeastern Judicial Circuit. Judge Deal delivered an inspirational speech to the graduate and the Veterans Treatment Court participants about the differences and similarities between the military and recovery. He advised all to stay vigilant, and "it'll take all you have to win the war and even more to keep the peace".

Mr. Harber was overwhelmed with gratitude when he was presented with a proclamation from Assistant District Attorney Smalls of the Clayton County District Attorney's Office and a Challenge Coin from the National Association of Black Military Women. He thanked the many individuals that helped and guided him along the way. His advice for his fellow participants was "do not let yesterday cloud up today and keep looking forward to tomorrow". Mr. Harber will spend time with his family and continue to help others along in their recovery.

Submitted by Lakisha Dixson, Clayton County Veterans Treatment Court Coordinator





Brunswick Judicial Circuit Drug Court Contest Entry

The Brunswick Judicial Circuit Drug Court along with Pineland Behavioral Health Developmental Disabilities entered the 2022 Scarecrows Among Us contest hosted by the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce and the Jesup Kiwanis Club. Our Drug Court participants created the theme to design and decorate our scarecrow. Judge Stephen Kelley served as the inspiration. Everyone involved had fun and learned socialization skills, teamwork, and how to enjoy recovery events. Voting was done through the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce Facebook page by scrolling the pictures of scarecrows and clicking “like”. Voting ended at 4:00 p.m. on October 27, 2022 .

Submitted by Shelley Cyphers, Brunswick Judicial Circuit Drug Court Coordinator

Appalachian Judicial Circuit Accountability Courts Participate in Extreme Adventure Race



Several participants from the Appalachian Judicial Circuit’s Veteran and Drug Courts participated in the Bear Blairsville Extreme Adventure race on September 1, 2022 . This 10-hour adventure race included between 25-35 miles of mountain biking, 8-9 miles of trekking, and 6-10 miles of canoeing. It also required land navigation skills, an area the Veterans’ Court participants excelled in. This team was led by Veterans Court Case Manager John Di Renzo. He also organizes group workouts at local gyms to encourage participants to maintain their physical health during their sobriety journey. These gym memberships are paid for by the Accountability Courts if a participant agrees to attend the gym for at least one hour three times weekly. The Appalachian Judicial Circuit appreciates Case Manger DiRenzo’s dedication to helping our participants with their physical health. Chief Superior Court Judge Brenda. S Weaver presides over both the Veterans Court and the Drug Court.

Submitted by Chris Holt, Appalachian Judicial Circuit Veterans Court Coordinator

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.

Savannah-Chatham County Drug Court Model Drug Court (2020-2023)



Savannah-Chatham County Drug Court Team Members

Judge – Honorable James F. Bass, Jr.
Coordinators – Tiffany Shuff & Stephen Brown
Public Defender – Todd Martin
Assistant District Attorney – Kristjan Whiteway
DCS Supervision Officer – Katherine Langston
Chatham County Sheriff's Office Mental Health/Social Services Director – Cassandra Barnwell
Community Policing Officer – Captain Nicole Scott-Bond
Recovery Place, Inc. Treatment Director – Raven Demery
Recovery Place, Inc. Counselor – Christy Lopez
Veteran Justice Outreach Officer – Shanta Barron-Millan
PRIDE Probation – Nikeya Blake
Chatham County Sheriff's Office Court Liaison – Toni Geoghagan

Not pictured: Christy Lopez, Toni Geoghagan, Nikeya Blake, and Shanta Barron-Millian

Court Type: Drug Court with Veterans Court Division

Presiding Judge: The Honorable James F. Bass, Jr. has presided over the program since inception in 2001.

Coordinator: Tiffany Shuff has been with the court since 2016 and became the Drug Court Coordinator in July 2022, and Stephen Brown has served as the Veterans Court Coordinator since February 2015.

Program Inception Date: October 2, 2001

Number of Graduates to Date: About 360

Current Program Census: 42

Recidivism Rate: 6%

Innovative Practices/Unique Programming:

Ms. Shuff: “We have several team members who are in recovery themselves. These individuals give the team a firsthand perspective of substance use and recovery that benefits both the team and the participants. Secondly, we offer a wide range of incentives to participants who are doing well, including monthly gift card drawings, a prize basket, a fishbowl, and most recently, we added achievement certificates. Fishbowl has folded tickets in it, which includes everything from gift cards to words of encouragement. Participants can choose to draw from the fishbowl when the judge gives them a choice of incentive. The certificates we hand out recognize everything from sober time to a good deed a participant has performed or an accomplishment they have made. These certificates show our participants that we are noticing and recognizing both big and small achievements and appreciate their progress. Additionally, we also do a weekly honor roll, which is voluntary. If participants choose to participate in the weekly honor roll they are asked to perform a certain amount of community service hours per week, attend at least three community support meetings, and write an essay on a recovery topic (as chosen by treatment). If they complete honor roll requirements for that week, they receive a \$10 gift card and are first to talk to Judge Bass during court. Once they have had their time in front of the judge, they are free to leave court early. And for our veterans, when they complete the court, they receive a challenge coin which has the court logo and the various branches of service.

Why does the judge choose to preside over the accountability court?

Judge Bass: “Because it works. And it works because incarceration does not really change behavior regarding use of alcohol and drugs. Treatment does. Treatment Court is much more effective in terms of addressing addiction.”

What does the coordinator hope to accomplish as a model court?

Ms. Shuff: “To provide assistance to other drug courts throughout the state of Georgia in improving their operations.”

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

Judge Bass: “When we first got started, we felt that when somebody relapsed our response should be a short period of incarceration but the science shows that this does not address the issues. Sanctioning by incarceration is not the answer. We should rather be looking at things to address the use. Also, being more creative with incentives.”

**Cobb County Mental Health Court
Model Mental Health Court
(2021-2024)**



Cobb County Mental Health Court Team Members

- Judge – Honorable Ann B. Harris**
- Coordinator – Melanie Valentine**
- Case Manager – Jennifer Puett**
- Prosecutor – Maurice Brown**
- Defense Attorney – Grady Moore**
- Treatment Liaison – Jennifer Logan**
- Probation Officer – Lasonya Vance**
- Law Enforcement Officer – Jonathan Granger**
- Work Source Cobb Representative – Sherrod Jones**

Court Type: Mental Health Court

Presiding Judge: The Honorable Ann B. Harris has presided over the court since May 2021.

Coordinator: Melanie Valentine has been with the court since June 2016 and has served as the Coordinator since April 2019.

Program Inception Date: April 2013

Number of Graduates to Date: 73

Current Program Census: 23

Recidivism Rate: 14%

Innovative Practices/Unique Programming:

Ms. Valentine: “Fishbowl - We incentivize the participants by putting the names of those who meet basic criteria into a ‘Fish Bowl’ (their names are written on starfish). This occurs the first two weeks of the month. The name drawn receives a gift card of their choice. Participant of the Month - Every month, a participant is recognized for outstanding behavior. They are recognized in court and receive a certificate. Hope the Comfort Dog - Lutheran Church Charities brings a special friend to our court sessions. Hope is a trained Comfort Dog to help calm and bring comfort. Sober Outings - Our treatment liaison, Jennifer Logan, takes our participants out of the group room and into the community. Whether it’s going to a luau themed Chick-Fil-A or a night of karaoke, she plans outings that help our participants learn to have fun without mind-altering substances. Regions Bank Financial Literacy Webinars - We have partnered with Regions Bank to provide a money management course to our participants every couple of months. CIT- Our participants provide feedback to officers in CIT training. Evidence Based Therapies used: CBI-SA, MRT, DBT, and TREM.

Why does the judge choose to preside over the accountability court?

Judge Harris: “Prior to taking the bench eight years ago, I was involved for almost two decades in the criminal justice system and handled any number of cases where defendants’ crimes were related to, and sometimes a direct result of, an untreated mental illness. So, I developed not only a professional interest in, but also professional concern for, those individuals – and how they could be better served within the criminal justice system, in hopes that they would not return to it in the future. And on a personal note, my mother was severely afflicted for over a decade with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease which ultimately ravaged her mind and altered her behavior in devastating ways. It is only by the grace of God – and the devotion of my family - that she did not become enmeshed in the criminal justice system on a couple of occasions. On a broader scale, I hope that the emphasis being placed on mental illness in recent years will translate into needed funding and services in the community so that individuals without resources will be able to access the treatment they need before they become enmeshed in the criminal justice system.”

What is the coordinator most proud of in terms of the program’s success? What does she hope to accomplish as a model court?

Ms. Valentine: “It makes me proud to hear from graduates (and sometimes even people who did NOT successfully complete the program) and find out that they are thriving. I genuinely think it’s when the participants are out of the program and the supervision is gone is when the real work begins. We ask a lot of our participants, so seeing someone come out on the other side a stronger, happier individual is what makes the job worth it. As a model court, I hope we never stop improving, continue learning and implementing best practices, and, ultimately, I hope that we are being recognized as a model court because we are helping people.”

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

Ms. Valentine: “I was not working with Cobb MHC at its inception in 2013; however, being Court Case Manager was my first full-time job out of college, and it was A LOT of trial and error. (Honestly, there still is a lot of trial and error and there probably will be until I retire.) I think the biggest lesson I’ve learned is that it’s okay to show your humanity to staff and participants. I spent a lot of time trying to act like what I thought a case manager/coordinator should act like - it wasn’t authentic and, ultimately, it wasn’t effective. I think there’s this idea you need to have this ‘tough guy’ persona (and sometimes you do)

but that's not a persona I'm naturally good at. There's a way to hold people accountable and stand up for what you believe is right without losing yourself in the process. When I stopped trying to be something I wasn't, I was WAY more successful with my job."

Judge Harris: "On a good note: Don't take for granted the importance of recognition when participants are doing well at even the 'small things' – realizing that for many of them, 'small things' are a major accomplishment. Even if it doesn't involve a tangible reward of some kind, just acknowledgement matters a lot. And on a less positive, but necessary note: Sadly, some folks are so severely mentally ill that they are beyond the scope of what mental health court can address. These folks need to be identified on the front end, to avoid bringing them into the program when they are unable to meet the requirements. Doing so is not only harmful to the program but ultimately is harmful to the individual."

Council of Accountability Court Judges News

CACJ Welcomes Two New Members to the Team!



Ms. Christina Frazier joined the Council of Accountability Court Judges' staff in October 2022 as the Operations and Communications Coordinator.

Ms. Frazier received from Albany State University in 2016 a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Sociology. She began her career with the State of Georgia in 2018 at the Department of Human Services (DHS) in the Division of Child Support Services as an Enforcement Agent 2. In 2020, she became the first Liaison of the Fatherhood program at the Albany Technical College Campus for individuals on child support that were struggling, due to personal barriers, to pay their court ordered amount on time. Prior to CACJ, Ms. Frazier joined the Georgia Department of Labor in 2021 as a Rapid Response Coordinator where she researched, monitored, and contacted businesses that recently closed, were closing their doors, and/or had a temporary or permanent layoff. Her team coordinated with local partners throughout the state to host Employee Information Sessions (EIS) to assist those transitioning into unemployment due to no-fault of their own. These partners primarily included, but not limited to, GDOL Unemployment Specialist, Business Services Unit, WIOA grant partners, and the local technical colleges for educational support.

When asked what interested her in the Operations and Communications Coordinator position with CACJ, Ms. Frazier said, "In seeking new employment, I wanted something specific. I knew my strengths and I knew my interests, but I did not know what 'job title' combined these things. When I saw the Operations and Communications Coordinator position, it entailed several non-negotiables on my list of interests: training, customer service, administrative duties/coordination, travel, court services, and a healthy/dynamic work environment."

Regarding the experience she brings to the role, Ms. Frazier said, "Customer service is at the heart of everything that I do. I began employment with the State of Georgia in 2018, and, prior to the state, I was a Records Clerk Technician with Dekalb County Police Department, preceded by a range of customer service/retail roles including Dillard's, Bath and Body Works, Victoria's Secret, Hibbett Sports, and Sprint. I am a registered mediator in Georgia and a Life Coach, so in most things, I attempt to seek and understand both sides of a situation before deciding an outcome. In high school and college, I was an intern in a variety of settings ranging from a law firm, the Gwinnett County Solicitor's Office, Albany Transitional Center, and Albany Office of Community Supervision."

Ms. Frazier said she is “sincerely and genuinely excited to sit in this role and to have joined CACJ” where she looks forward to coordinating and planning training sessions and events and hopes to one day host her own training sessions where she can engage with an audience about a subject she is passionate about. She said she is most excited about the annual training conference and assisting with coordinating such a large-scale event.

In relaying an interesting fact about herself, Ms. Frazier said she is an “extroverted introvert” who prefers intimate, small group settings but also someone who likes to plan large events like the conference and see them come to fruition where people enjoy the project she assisted with.

Please join the CACJ in welcoming Christina Frazier to the CACJ team!



Ms. Madison Nash joined the Council of Accountability Court Judges’ staff in October 2022 as a Certification Officer.

In 2013, Ms. Nash completed an internship with the Piedmont Circuit Accountability Courts and was hired to begin in September 2013 as the Case Manager Tech and Lab Tech. In 2014, she transitioned into the Case Manager and Lab Tech role with Jackson County as the County’s positions were split into two separate roles. In 2017, Ms. Nash went to the Hall County HELP Court as the Case Manager, and in 2018, she started as a Community Supervision Officer with the Department of Community Supervision. While in that role, she started in the Piedmont Circuit supervising a stratified caseload. Due to an officer vacancy, she helped supervise sex offenders and eventually moved into supervising the Day Reporting Center caseload and running the lab. In July 2021, she was promoted to Community Supervision Officer III with the Athens Day Reporting Center in the Western Judicial Circuit before joining CACJ.

When asked about her interest in the Certification Officer position, Ms. Nash said, “I was interested in taking on a more administrative role once again and saw this position open. I have always been interested in and invested in accountability courts since I started working with them in 2013 and wanted to get back into the field. I am thankful to be joining the CACJ team!”

Ms. Nash said her previous work as a case manager with various accountability courts and her work as a community supervision officer will greatly help her in the role of Certification Officer, and she hopes to grow as a professional while also contributing to the positive impact accountability courts have across the state.

When asked about an interesting fact about herself, Ms. Nash said she likes to play the clarinet, sew, and go to concerts. She added, “I am excited to be back working with accountability courts and doing something that I believe in!”

Please join the CACJ in welcoming Madison Nash to the CACJ team!

Certification Season Opened November 1

Certification season opened on November 1 primarily for DUI Courts and Family Treatment Courts; however, some other courts may need to recertify. Please refer to your most recent certification letter or contact the CACJ Certification Team for assistance. Be sure to submit your certification materials early to ensure time for staff review and constructive feedback. The Certification Team will answer your certification questions during a Q&A session during virtual office hours on Wednesday, November 18 from 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Be sure to register for virtual office hours in advance.

Certification closes on December 30, 2022.

December 2022 Newsletter Submissions

Please send submissions for the December 2022 newsletter to Debbie Mott (Debbie.Mott@GeorgiaCourts.gov) by Monday, November 28. 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 Career Opportunities

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

- *Rockdale County CBI-SA Group Facilitator
- *DeKalb County Wellness Court Counselor
- *Hall County Drug Court Coordinator
- *Fulton County DUI Court Associate Licensed Clinician
- *Forsyth County Accountability Court Case Manager
- *Fulton County Behavioral Health Clinician II
- *Henry County Behavioral Health Clinician
- *Forsyth County Contract Counselors
- *DeKalb County Misdemeanor Mental Health Court Social Worker
- *DeKalb County DUI Court Treatment Coordinator
- *DeKalb County Lab Technician
- *DeKalb County Clinical Coordinator
- *Hall County Drug Court Counselor
- *Fulton County Compliance Coordinator
- *Griffin Judicial Circuit Contract Counselors
- *Henry County Case Manager
- *Cherokee Judicial Circuit Mental Health Counselor
- *Glynn County Lead Clinical Director



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: One Wednesday of the month from 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm (times changed as of August 1, 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

Nov. 18, 2022 (*Register in advance: [Here](#)) 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

- Staff will answer questions about Certifications

Dec. 7, 2022 (*Register in advance: [Here](#)) 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

- Staff will answer Treatment Session questions

February 8, 2023 (*Register in advance: [Here](#)) 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

- Staff will answer questions about the FY23 grant application



Webinar from Averhealth: "Veterans Treatment Courts: Never Stop Moving – 10 Years, 10 Tips"

Wednesday, November 9 | 2:00 p.m. ET

In July 2022, Shelby County, Tennessee celebrated the 10th anniversary of its veterans treatment court (VTC). In this [free webinar sponsored by Averhealth](#), panelists will discuss the trauma, mental health disorders, and substance use disorders veterans can return home with, leading to issues of unemployment, homelessness, and high rates of suicide. Panelists will describe how the Shelby County VTC got started and the challenges and successes of a decade in operation. Attendees will also hear one graduate's story of his journey to recovery.

Through this webinar, attendees will:

- Identify the benefits of a VTC for those who have served our nation
- Learn from the perseverance and commitment of the Shelby County VTC
- Learn how to implement action items to start or refine a VTC in their communities

This webinar and message are sponsored content by Averhealth. Views and opinions expressed in this content are those of the sponsor and do not necessarily represent the positions of NADCP or its Justice For Vets division.