

Conasauga Circuit Mental Health Court
Participant Handbook



Mental illness is not a choice, but recovery is.
Help for today, hope for tomorrow

October 7th 2019

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

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Welcome

Welcome to the Conasauga Mental Health Court Program. This handbook is designed to answer your questions and provide you with overall information about the program. As a participant, you will be expected to follow the rules and instructions given in Court by the Judge and comply with the treatment plans developed for you by the treatment team and service providers. The information in this book will detail what is expected of you as a program participant, and it will review general program information.

If you have been given this handbook, then you are aware that you have been accepted into the program. The decision to accept you was based on your history of mental health issues, and possibly drug/alcohol use, as related to your negative encounters with law enforcement.

As a participant, you are expected to follow the instructions found in this handbook, in your contract, as well as the instructions of the Mental Health Court Judge, Court Team, and your Treatment Providers.

What is a Mental Health Court?

In 2018, various agencies in the Conasauga Circuit involved with the judicial system began looking for ways to address an increasing number of defendants who became involved with the criminal courts based, in large part, on actions which were related to mental disorders.

As a result of discussions, the Conasauga Circuit Mental Health Court was developed to allow defendants with a diagnosed mental illness to voluntarily address their issues concerns with the goals of becoming accountable for their own health, reducing their negative interactions with law enforcement and the court system and achieving life stability.

The program you are undertaking lasts 18 to 24 months and consists of five phases. As you advance in the program, you should become increasingly engaged in your own wellness needs through community-based services, including counseling, addiction treatment, and medication management.

Mental Health Court involves frequent court appearances, active participation by you in your treatment plan, and random drug testing. Through it all, you will be held accountable for your actions. The Court will give incentives for progress and sanctions for negative behavior.

If you will become engaged in the goals that you help to set for yourself as part of this program, upon completion you should have the tools to live a productive life in which you are responsible for you own mental wellness.

These goals will only be accomplished if you, the participant, are honest with yourself and others, and make an effort to succeed. Without honesty and effort, you will not complete the program and will have failed to take advantage of the opportunity that only a few will get.

The Mental Health Court Team consists of the Judge, the Coordinator, the Prosecutors, Probation, Law Enforcement, Defense Counsel, Treatment Provider and Case Manager. Their role is to help

you develop your goals and monitor your progress. When you stumble or lose your way, they will be there to help you learn from those mistakes. When you do well, they will be there to praise and reward you. The Mental Health Court team members will work with you to make sure you understand what is expected of you and help you to succeed. In the end, though, the final responsibility will be yours.

Mission Statement

The Conasauga Mental Health Court's Mission is to offer a recovery focused program for defendants in the criminal justice system who have been diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness and/or co-occurring substance abuse disorder. Our goal is to improve mental health, promote self-sufficiency, and reduce recidivism by providing an alternative to incarceration and hospitalization through treatment of mentally ill Participants. The CMHC holds defendants accountable and assists offenders to achieve long-term stability, become law-abiding citizens, and become successful family/community members.

Core Principles of Mental Health Court: HEART

Honesty- Having the courage to disclose and be honest, without honesty, this program will not work. Honesty is an expectation and is nonnegotiable.

Effort- Make the effort. Do the work, even when you don't want to. You must do it and put energy into it.

Accountability is a part of recovery. The program will hold you accountable. You must also hold each other accountable. You should no longer have the snitch mentality. No holding secrets. Keeping secrets keeps you sick.

Respect- Have respect for this opportunity. This is the only time in your life where you will have a team of people around you who want nothing more than for you to succeed. Respect the program. You will hear things you don't want to hear and have to do things you don't want to do, but you must respect the process. Respect yourself. Jealously guard your recovery and your integrity.

Trust is not optional in recovery. Without it you will not succeed. You must trust the program and trust the process. You also have to become trustworthy yourself.

You must maintain these core principles in order to be successful. In the absence of one of these core principles, you are not truly in recovery.

Rules of the Conasauga Circuit Mental Health Court

In order to realize the greatest benefit of the Mental Health Court, you agree to follow certain rules. While in the program, failure to abide by these rules can result in sanctions, including community service, incarceration and up to termination from the program.

These rules, in general, include:

1. You must **actively participate** in the treatment plan and the case management plan which will be developed with input from both you and the Team.
2. You must attend **on a timely basis** all required Court sessions, drug screenings, doctor appointments, treatment appointments, drug and/or alcohol recovery meetings, community service duties, as well as any other appointments to which you are directed to attend as a part of the program.
3. You must **abstain** from using any illegal drugs or unapproved medications as well as refrain from using alcohol. In order to ensure compliance with this rule, you will be required to participate in random alcohol and drug screens when directed by the court. When you do use a prohibited substance, you will be honest about it before being confronted with a screening.
4. You must comply with **all** local, state, and federal laws. In the event you are arrested or otherwise detained by ANY law enforcement agency, you will **immediately** notify the staff.
5. You must behave in a **respectful** manner towards fellow court participants, the Team and staff, as well as all treatment providers.
6. You must keep the Court Coordinator informed of your **current** address, phone number, and schedule. You must keep staff advised as to what vehicle you are driving, the color of vehicle, tag number, etc... You must have a **working** telephone number with voice mail at all times. All changes in address require approval by the Coordinator.
7. You must abide by any curfews which are put in place by the Team.
8. You must **dress appropriately** for treatment sessions and court appearances.
9. Changes may be made to the Conasauga Circuit Mental Health Court program in order to address concerns that arise in the program's operation. You will be notified of any changes ahead of time and be required to sign and acknowledge any change.

These will be addressed more fully in the pages that follow

Phases of the Conasauga Circuit

Mental Health Court

The Program Phases of the CMHC

The Conasauga Mental Health Court is an 18 to 24 month program which is divided into 5 different phases. Your time in each phase will vary depending on your progress with the goals set out in each phase.

In addition to the set goals for each phase, your progress will also be determined by your individualized case management and treatment plans established during each phase.

The following is an outline of the requirements for each phase, completion of which will allow you to move to the next phase and, ultimately, graduate from the program.

Phase I – Stabilization

Time in Phase – A minimum of three months

The initial phase of the program will be used to stabilize the Participant, as is necessary. Through treatment and case management planning, the court will establish measurable goals and objectives for the Participant based on assessment results. During the first phase, it is expected that participants will be transitioned into group-based programming as their functioning-level permits (estimated 7 to 9 hours of treatment per week).

During Phase I, participants will be required to:

- Attend all scheduled appointments with a medical professional for purposes of receiving prescription medication and monitoring the effectiveness of the medication
- Attend on a timely basis and be engaged during all recommended appointments with the Treatment Provider
- Obtain and take all prescribed medications
- Report for drug and alcohol screens as directed (minimum twice a week)
- Attend weekly court sessions
- Adhere to a 7:00 p.m. curfew, unless otherwise directed by the Court
- Maintain acceptable living arrangements and avoid the company of persons likely to adversely impact their progress
- Meet with the case manager within the first week in the program to establish goals for the phase and continue to meet with the case manager at least once a week
- Make progress on goals established in the case management and treatment plans.
- Maintain updated contact information with the Treatment Provider and court Coordinator
- Must not test positive for any prohibited substance or have any sanctions for at least 30 consecutive days before moving to the next phase
- Must maintain 15 hours of paid or volunteer work and be actively searching for employment weekly until employment is obtained. Both employment and volunteer hours are subject to approval and verification/modification by the Mental Health Court Team.

Phase II – Clinical Stabilization and Active Treatment

Time in Phase – A minimum of four months

The second phase of the program seeks to transition the participant from stabilization to participation in structured, skill-based group programming to address substance use disorder (SUD), impulse control and socialization deficits, criminal thinking, etc.. During the second phase, it is expected that participants will maintain a minimum of 7 to 9 hours of treatment per week.

During Phase II, participants will be required to:

- Attend all scheduled appointments with a medical professional for purposes of receiving prescription medication and monitoring the effectiveness of the medication
- Attend all required treatment sessions
- Make satisfactory progress with all treatment goals and objectives
- Continue to take all prescribed medications
- Continue to report for drug and alcohol screens as directed
- Continue to attend weekly court sessions
- Adhere to an 8:00 p.m. curfew, unless otherwise directed by the Court.
- If not done already, find and maintain suitable permanent housing
- If not already employed, find employment or work toward obtaining the skills necessary for employment
- If employment is not possible due to any disabilities, the Participant will make an application for any available public assistance and establish other productive means of utilizing their time
- Attend all required case manager (at least once a week) sessions
- Make satisfactory progress with all case management goals and objectives
- Attend all community-based or peer-led support groups
- Continue to pay program fees as required
- Must not test positive for any prohibited substance or have any sanctions for at least 45 consecutive days before moving to the next phase
- Must maintain 15 hours of paid or volunteer work and be actively searching for employment weekly until employment is obtained. Both employment and volunteer hours are subject to approval and verification/modification by the Mental Health Court Team.

Phase III – Active Treatment

Time in Phase – A minimum of four months

The third phase of the program continues Participants' work toward developing core skills to manage mental health and other presenting treatment and functioning needs. During the third phase, it is expected that participants will maintain a minimum of 5 to 6 hours of treatment per week.

During Phase III, participants will be required to:

- Attend all scheduled appointments with a medical professional for purposes of receiving prescription medication and monitoring the effectiveness of the medication.
- Attend all required treatment sessions
- Make satisfactory progress with all treatment goals and objectives
- Continue to take all prescribed medications.
- Report for drug and alcohol screens as directed.
- You are exempt from attending court the second Thursday of every month.
- Adhere to a 9:00 p.m. curfew, unless otherwise directed by the Court.
- Maintain suitable housing.
- Attain employment, if clinically warranted (subject to assessment of functioning)
- Continue to pay program fees as required.
- Attend all required case manager (at least once a week) sessions
- Attend all required community-based or peer-led support groups
- Make satisfactory progress with all case management goals and objectives
- Must not test positive for any prohibited substance or have a sanction for at least 60 consecutive days before moving to the next phase
- Must maintain 20-29 hours of paid or volunteer work and be actively searching for employment weekly until employment is obtained. Both employment and volunteer hours are subject to approval and verification/modification by the Mental Health Court Team.

Phase IV – Active Recovery

Time in Phase – A minimum of four months

The fourth phase of the program continues Participants' work toward developing core skills to manage mental health and other presenting treatment and functioning needs. During the third phase, it is expected that participants will maintain a minimum of 3 hours of treatment per week.

During Phase IV, participants will be required to:

- Attend all scheduled appointments with a medical professional for purposes of receiving prescription medication and monitoring the effectiveness of the medication.
- Attend all required treatment sessions
- Make satisfactory progress with all treatment goals and objectives
- Continue to take all prescribed medications.
- Continue to report for drug and alcohol screens as directed.
- Attend court sessions on the First and Third Thursday or as ordered by the Court.
- Adhere to a 10:00 pm curfew, unless otherwise directed by the Court.
- Maintain suitable housing
- Continue to pay program fees as required.
- Attend all required case manager (at least once a week) sessions
- Attend all required community-based or peer-led support groups
- Complete required community outreach activities
- Must not test positive for any prohibited substance or have any sanction for at least 90 consecutive days before transitioning to the next phase
- Must maintain 20-29 hours of paid or volunteer work and be actively searching for employment weekly until employment is obtained. Both employment and volunteer hours are subject to approval and verification/modification by the Mental Health Court Team.

Phase V – Recovery Maintenance

Time in Phase – A minimum of three months

The final phase is intended to provide participants with support as they transition to graduation and independence. Participants in this phase should be applying core skills and competencies to maintain mental health stability, SUD recovery, and prosocial lifestyles. During the fifth phase, it is expected that participants will maintain a minimum of 3 to 5 hours of treatment per month focused on sharpening competencies prior to graduation.

During Phase V, participants will be required to:

- Attend all scheduled appointments with a medical professional for purposes of receiving prescription medication and monitoring the effectiveness of the medication
- Attend all required treatment sessions
- Make satisfactory progress with all treatment goals and objectives
- Continue to take all prescribed medications
- Continue to report for drug and alcohol screens as directed
- Attend court sessions at least once a month as ordered by the Court
- Adhere to an 11:00 pm curfew, unless otherwise directed by the Court
- Maintain suitable housing
- Maintain full-time employment or program-approved alternative
- Continue to pay program fees as required
- Attend all required case manager (at least once a week) sessions
- Attend all required community-based or peer-led support groups
- Complete required community outreach activities
- Complete aftercare plan
- Must not test positive for any prohibited substance or have any sanction for at least 120 consecutive days before graduation from the program

Graduation

The Graduation ceremony is the culmination of the program and cause for celebration. All participants that complete the program will attend a graduation ceremony where they will be recognized for this significant accomplishment.

In order to graduate, you will be required to meet the following program requirements:

- Not have any sanctions for at least 120 days prior to graduation
- Not have any positive drug screens for at least 120 days prior to graduation
- Be current on all court fees and probation fees

In addition to these requirements, in order to learn how to sustain the progress you have already made, prior to graduation you will meet with members of the Team to develop goals for a future outside the boundaries of strict supervision. These goals should include ongoing stable housing, employment (if appropriate) and responsibility for your own well-being.

After graduation from the program, you will maintain contact with the program for one year so that your progress can be monitored.

The Mental Health Court Team

The Mental Health Court Judge will make all decisions regarding your participation in the Program with input from the Team. This includes acceptance into the program, imposition of any sanctions, awarding of incentives, termination from the program, and graduation.

In addition to the Judge, the Team consists of the following members:

Court Administrator- The Court Administrator oversees all functions of the Treatment courts such as grants, personnel and operations. The Administrator serves as a liaison with the community, Board of commissioners and Judges. The Administrator is the direct supervisor of the Coordinator and their staff.

Court Coordinator - Maintains all information and files regarding the Participants in the program and uses this information to keep the Team informed as to each Participant's progress toward completion of the program.

Defense Counsel – Represents and advocates for the participant in court proceedings.

District Attorney – Represents the interest of the State.

Case Manager – Works with all members of the Court and the participants to monitor the progress of the participants and establish case management goals with the participants. Also works with other agencies to provide services to participants as needed and communicate with other members about your specific needs.

Treatment Provider – Devises and oversees the recommended treatment plan, counseling, group sessions and any other recommended practices.

Probation/Surveillance – Monitors the participant’s compliance with the requirements of the Court, including terms of probation.

Law Enforcement Representative – Insures that the program meets the goals of local law enforcement in regards to protecting the safety of the public.

While these are the team members at the outset, as the program grows, the assigned duties may be modified to address issues that arise.

A Day in Mental Health Court

A day in the Conasauga Circuit Mental Health Court consists of two separate parts: Staffing and Court.

Staffing

Staffing is done prior to each court session and involves all the members of the Court Team. During staffing, the Team will review each participant’s progress in a non-public setting. These discussions will cover topics such as drug test results, participation in counseling, attendance, treatment, medication compliance, employment, housing, and any other topic that may be useful in determining the participant’s progress in the program. Based on these discussions, the Team may consider appropriate responses to the participant’s progress, including incentives or sanctions. Staffing is also the time when the Team will consider the admission of new participants into the program.

Court Appearances

As a Mental Health Court participant, you are required to appear before the Presiding Judge for court reviews on a regular basis. The number of times you must appear in court per month depends on what phase you are in at the time. Failure to appear may result in a warrant being issued for your arrest and detention in jail. If you have questions about your court appearances and appointments, you may contact the Coordinator of the program.

IMPORTANT: Court is held every Thursday beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Confidentiality Requirements in the Mental Health Court

The Mental Health Court has developed policies and procedures to guard your privacy. To participate in this treatment program, you will be required to sign Release of Information forms, which will include Consent for Disclosure of Confidential Substance Abuse Information for your treatment providers and the judiciary. The disclosure of information is for the sole purpose of hearings and reports concerning your Mental Health Court case and for collaboration with other providers regarding your treatment.

Confidentiality in Staffing: As described earlier in this Handbook, The Mental Health Court team will meet prior to court to discuss your progress at a meeting called a staffing. This does not mean that court personnel will learn about your private discussions during treatment sessions. Rather, the staffing team will learn more general information, such as whether you are participating and/or progressing.

Confidentiality in Court: Please remember that the courtroom is a public place. Therefore, you will never be asked in open court to disclose any mental health diagnosis, mental health medications, or personal information discussed in treatment. During the court session, some general information may be disclosed as part of the proceedings, especially regarding arrests and failed or missed drug screens.

Confidentiality in Treatment: Confidentiality also means that what is said in group, stays in group. Obviously, people are not going to talk easily about themselves unless they feel safe and secure. One way to feel safe and secure is to make sure that everything shared in group is not mentioned outside the group. Therefore, to avoid hurting fellow group members, do not talk about what happened in group. Also, by “gossiping” outside of group, a group member is deprived of comments and perspectives which could help him or her grow. So, don’t gossip.

Drugs and Alcohol

One of the goals of the Mental Health Court is to assist you in becoming compliant with the medication that necessary for your own mental stability. In conjunction with this goal, the Court is also seeking to assist you in avoiding substances which you should NOT be taking, including illegal drugs, non-prescribed legal medications and alcohol.

Prescribed Medications

As noted, compliance with prescribed medications is a very important part of becoming accountable for one's own mental stability. Therefore, it is extremely important that you take the medications that your psychiatrist prescribes to you. The Judge and team recognize that many medications have very unpleasant side effects, that many medications do not work equally well for all patients, and that it can be very difficult for a doctor and a patient to find the best combination of medications for that patient. For most participants in the program, medications will nonetheless be essential for managing symptoms of illness and living successfully in the community.

Participants shall notify case manager at least 10 days prior to running out of prescription medications.

If you have complaints about your medications, you must tell your psychiatrist and the Court Coordinator or Case Manager. Your psychiatrist may be able to prescribe a different medication or additional medications to treat side effects. If you continue to have complaints or feel that your concerns are not being addressed, you must inform the Team and the Judge. If you refuse or repeatedly fail to take your medications as prescribed, you will be sanctioned.

At your first meeting with the Coordinator or Case Manager, you will be provided a list of medications which you may take while in the program. At that time, you must provide a list of all medications you are currently taking. Any changes in your medications while participating in the program must be approved by the Court.

Note that many common products including hairspray, perfume, mouthwash and medications contain ALCOHOL. If at any time an alcohol test is performed on your sample and is returned with a positive result, this will be considered a sanctionable offense.

PLEASE CALL THE COORDINATOR IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT ANY PRODUCT PRIOR TO USE!

Drug Screens

You will be randomly tested for drug and alcohol use throughout your entire participation in the program. It is a requirement that each person submit a valid, non-dilute test when directed to do so either as a routine process or upon the request of any Court team member. The best way to insure that a test will not come back dilute is to drink a minimal amount of liquid in the two hours prior to a screening. Water-loading, or drinking excessive amounts of water/liquid before a drug screen, will result in a dilute sample and is a sanctionable offense.

Prohibited substances include all mood-altering substances, including alcohol and illegal drugs, as well as prescription medication that was not prescribed for you and approved by the Coordinator. Also, ALL energy drinks, energy supplements or Kratom are prohibited. **Just remember: When in doubt, don't use, consume, or apply to your skin, body, or hair anything that you have not received advanced approval from the Coordinator and/or Judge.**

If you test positive for a prohibited substance, you may request a confirmation test which will be performed at an independent laboratory. If this independent test confirms the original test, then you will be responsible for paying the cost of this confirmation test and will be sanctioned at a higher level than you would for simply failing a test. If the independent test reveals the results were a "false positive", there will be no charge to the Participant for the cost of the test.

If you have used prohibited substances, you have an obligation to be honest with the Team about it. While you will still be sanctioned for any use, the sanction will be less severe than if you test positive for a prohibited substance without notifying the Team beforehand that the test result may be positive.

Additionally, some important point to keep in mind:

- Your urinalysis will be observed to ensure freedom from errors.
- If you miss a test, without valid reason, it will count as a **positive** test.
- If you provide a sample that is adulterated (something has been added to the sample), it will count as a **positive** test.
- If you provide a sample that is substituted (other liquid is provided, other than your urine), it will count as a **positive** test.
- If you are unable to provide a urine sample, it will count as a **positive** test.
- If your urine is not within the temperature range, you will be asked to provide another sample. If you are unable to provide an adequate sample, it will count as a **positive** test.
- If you miss a drug screen because you are sick, you will need a doctor's note or an excuse from your Coordinator.

Hospital and Physician Visits

While the Court recognizes that emergency situations will arise that require medical attention, participants in the Mental Health Court program are still required to avoid any form of narcotic pain medications for the period of time they remain in the program. Each participant will be provided a form that is to be given to any physician that provides treatment. This form will explain these restrictions so that an alternative medication may be given instead of one that is not approved for use while in the program.

Rules for Living

Your participation in the Mental Health Court program will require some adjustments to your current living habits. The rules that follow exist to promote the best environment for you to succeed in the program.

Housing

You are expected to establish and maintain stable housing at a location that is safe and clean. The home should not be occupied by other residents that would act as an undesirable influence on you and should be clear of any illegal substances, alcohol or weapons. The Team will work with you to achieve the goal of suitable housing once admitted to the program. In the event that your housing situation changes, you must immediately notify the Court Coordinator with any change in address.

People

It is a sad fact that many people end up in trouble based in large part on the company they keep. To ensure success, you are expected to avoid people who, based on their history or habits, would likely adversely impact your success in the program. This includes friends and family members, as well as locations where unsavory people meet or congregate. Participants are not to associate themselves with anyone outside of the program whom they know to be on probation or parole.

Employment

Each Participant who is not disabled or a full-time student is expected to maintain appropriate work. If you are not employed when entering the program, you are expected to seek work beginning in Phase II. The Team will work with you on achieving this goal.

If you are unable to work, then the Team will work with you to apply for any available assistance and to find other means of spending you time that benefits your community.

In the event you are employed, you are not permitted to change your employment without first speaking with the Court Coordinator. In addition, you may not work for a family member or other participant absent permission from the Court Coordinator who may discuss this with the Team.

Home Visits/Job Verification

As a participant in the Mental Health Court, you specifically agree to submit to a search of your person, residence, papers and/or effects at any time of the day or night and without a search warrant or probable cause. This may be done at the request of your Probation Officer, law enforcement, or Court Staff or Team member in situations where there is a credible suspicion to believe that you are in violation of your probation (if applicable) or one or more of the conditions of Court; or the law.

Information which is obtained from these searches or illicit items found may be used against you for purposes of imposing sanctions on you by the court or possibly terminating you from the program.

In order to ensure compliance, the Court will utilize a compliance officer to perform visits to your home at random.

Each participant may also have their employment verified by either unannounced job site visits or by a Team member contacting their employer.

Travel, Leave and Other requests

Travel Leave Requests

As a participant in this program, you may not leave Murray/Whitfield County for any reason without first filing a written leave request and obtaining permission from the Team and the Probation Office (if applicable).

Written travel leave request forms may be obtained from the Court Coordinator. Written leave requests must be submitted to the Court Coordinator at least two (2) weeks prior to the anticipated date of departure.

Emergency travel leave requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

If you are able to obtain work but it is in another county, the Court may grant an ongoing travel leave request. The Court will require confirmation of the out-of-county employment prior to granting the travel leave.

Any written requested travel leave will be voted on and approved by Court Team. The participant will be notified of approval/denial by the Court Coordinator or Case Manager. If you are in Phase I or Phase 2 of the program, your ability to receive travel leave will be significantly restricted in order to focus on treatment needs and to meet the requirements of probation (if applicable).

Medical Leave

If you need to be away from the program for an extended time due to a medical treatment issue, you will need to provide that information to the Coordinator at least two weeks in advance of medical leave so that the information can be verified with the treating physician. You must keep in mind that you would still be required to avoid any narcotic medications unless otherwise authorized by the Court Team. During the time that you are out on medical leave, you may still be required to be tested for drugs and alcohol and you will be required to maintain contact with the Coordinator at least once a week and will still be subject to random home visits.

Maternity Leave

If you are a female, you may be allowed maternity leave for two weeks following the birth of the child. During that time of the leave, you will not be required to undergo any counseling or be subject to random drug and alcohol screens. However, you are required to contact the Court Coordinator or Case Manager at least once a week. During the third and fourth week of the leave, you will be subject to random screens but will still be excused from any other participation. After the fourth week, you will return to the normal court schedule. During maternity leave, you will still be subject to random home visits.

Relationships with other participants

You will not engage in any romantic relationship with any other accountability court participant. If this does occur, you and the other participant may be terminated from the program. A romantic relationship will be presumed if two participants are consistently seen in each other's company. Additionally, Participants should not associate themselves with each other outside of designated Mental Health Court functions, without first having prior approval from the Team.

Personal Relationships

The focus of this program is Participant's recovery. Participant's should have that at the forefront of all decisions they make. Current and new romantic relationships can sometimes be a barrier to a Participant's success in this program. All relationships current and new MUST receive approval by the team before entering the program or entering into a new relationship while in the program.

Participants who enter into Mental Health Court in a current relationship, shall notify the Team of such relationship. If the Team decides it is necessary to meet your significant other, Participants shall allow the Team to meet with your significant other.

The team reserves the right/prerogative to contact your significant other or any other relationship, and may issue a no-contact order if a given relationship is deemed to be inappropriate or non-supportive of a participant's recovery.

No new relationship will be allowed without first having the Team's approval.

Life Changing Decisions

Decisions you make in this program will likely effect your life long after your successful completion of this program. Those decisions include, but are not limited to: family planning; marrying your significant other; accepting a job; renting or buying a house; buying a car, boat, motorcycle, or any purchase that exceeds \$100.

Participants SHALL notify the Team prior making such decisions.

Contact with other agencies

All contact with other agencies, including but not limited to law enforcement, child support recovery, and Department of Family and Children Services, must be reported to the Coordinator and Probation (if applicable) within 24 hours of the contact. This includes being issued any traffic citation.

Other legal obligations

If you have other legal obligations which you are required to be meet, such as completion of a parenting plan with DFCS or child support obligations, it will be your responsibility to keep the Court Coordinator informed of these obligations so that they may monitored by the Team.

Program fees

Program fees of \$500 will be required to take part in the program. A fee of \$25.00 is required during Phase I. A fee of \$100 is required for phases II, III, and IV of the program. A fee of \$175.00 is required during Phase V. A Participant must pay the minimum requirement on their fees to promote to the next phase. A Participant may elect to pay all of the fees at any time. Unless waived by the Court, the failure of a Participant to pay all fees due during a phase will prevent them from moving to the next phase or from graduating from the program.

Additionally, unless otherwise waived, each Participant will be required to pay any probations fees, fines and reparations to any victim.

Cell Phones/Laptops and Social Media

Participants are allowed ONE cell phone while in the program. This shall remain in effect throughout the entirety of this program. Participants shall be mindful of their use of cell phones. Participants shall not delete ANYTHING from their phone without a Team member present or without approval from the team.

Participants are only allowed ONE laptop while in the program. Laptops are not permitted at any mental health court function, to include treatment, unless prior approval is given by the Team.

Participants shall be respectful and polite while engaging others on social media. Participants must not use social media in any way that is harmful to their success in this program. Participants shall not use social media to engage others in a hostile manner or in a manner that can be deemed inappropriate for treatment.

ALL cellphone and electronic devices are subject to search and monitoring. Costs associated with monitoring applications may be imposed upon participants.

The team reserves the right to restrict access to and use of social media and/or the internet.

Participants may NOT record or photograph any treatment-related discussions or sessions.

Gang Participation/Activity

Participants shall NOT associate with anyone who is active-in or affiliated a gang. Participants shall not engage in criminal gang activity. Violations shall result in termination from the program.

Participants shall not display any gang-related colors, clothing or tattoos.

Rules for Court

Attendance in court is an important component of the accountability court model. In order to make this part of the program meaningful to all participants as well as to respect the dignity of the proceedings, you are required to abide by the rules that follow.

Punctuality

You are expected to be in court at or (preferably) before 10:00 a.m. on the days when you are required to attend court. If you are not in the courtroom at that time, you will be considered absent and subject to sanctions as if you missed court.

If you do not appear for court at all, a bench warrant may be issued to take you into custody until the next court date

Appearance

You are expected to dress for Court in an appropriate manner. For all participants, this will mean that you must not wear any clothing that is torn, see through, skimpy (including any shorts), or that has any image which depicts or promotes drug or alcohol use, violence, weapons or gang membership. Ladies are prohibited from wearing tight fitting clothes. Leggings are permitted only when worn under a dress. Sleeveless tops are prohibited for all participants. Men should wear a shirt with a collar. No torn or ripped clothing will be permitted in court. All clothing must fit appropriately; no sagging pants are to be worn to court. All clothing should be clean.

You are prohibited from wearing hats, sunglasses, or bandanas. Head coverings will only be permitted for religious reasons.

If you are coming to Court straight from work where you may become grimy, you are expected to bring a change of clothes with you so that you may change in the bathroom ahead of the time for Court.

You are expected to maintain adequate hygiene, including regular bathing, application of deodorant and attention to dental needs.

If you appear in Court in a condition that is deemed inappropriate, you will be asked to change.

Participation

While in court, you are expected to be an active participant. This will mean responding to questions and being truthful about your experiences.

Cell phones and other electronic devices.

Cell phones and electronic devices are to be turned off while in the Courtroom.

Behavior during court

While court is in session, you are required to be attentive to what is going on. This means that you should not be engaged in any activity other than listening and responding if spoken to. Once court begins, conversations with anyone other than court staff are not permitted.

When a participant is given praise or an incentive by the Court, you may (and should) encourage that participant with applause.

Inclement weather policy

The Mental Health Court follows the inclement weather plan of the Whitfield County Superior Court. If the Courthouse is closed due to inclement weather, you are excused **for that day** from attending court, treatment, probation meetings, and drug screenings. Any missed appointments will be made up as soon as possible and any missed drug screens must take place the next day the Courthouse is open.

Rules for Treatment and Case Management

Like court appearances, your participation in treatment and case management are important factors in ensuring your success.

Respect to Staff

Setting boundaries is crucial for one's mental health and well-being. You are expected to be respectful of all staff and MHC Team members at all times. This includes in person interactions, interactions through text messaging, emails, social media, and the "Remind App." You are expected to maintain a professional relationship with all staff and MHC team members. You are not allowed to friend any staff or team member on social media.

Furthermore, please understand that the Remind App after hours is for emergency use only. An example of an emergency would be going to the hospital, a car wreck, a death in the family, a relapse, etc... Please remember that in the event of a true emergency, 911 needs to be your first point of contact. In the event of a mental health crisis you can contact the Georgia Crisis and Access line at 1-800-715-4225. If you are having a mental health related issue and would like to reach out to someone via text message please text GA to 741-741. This will connect you to a crisis counselor.

We strongly encourage you to obtain a sponsor through AA and/or NA if you have a history of substance abuse. In the event that you felt like a relapse is imminent this would be a great support for you. You can also contact Peer-To-Peer Warm Line at 888-945-1414.

The Remind App is not to be used after hours unless there is a true emergency. Use of the Remind App after hours in situations where there is not a true crisis/emergency will result in a consequence as this is disrespect to staff and their personal time, which is a sanctionable offense.

Punctuality

Much like court appearance, you are expected to be on time for all appointments with physicians, the treatment providers and the Court Coordinator/Case Manager. You must contact the Court Coordinator in advance if you will be late or cannot attend any appointment and/or court appearance. If the coordinator is not available, you must leave a voicemail message. You must contact the treatment provider if you will be late or cannot attend any treatment session. You must also provide appropriate documentation in order for any absence to be excused. Each time you fail to show up or show up late for an appointment you will be sanctioned. Continued tardiness or absence from treatment may result in termination from the program.

Participation

All treatment and case management provided to you in this program is done with your input and is designed for your benefit. If you wish to succeed, it is imperative that you are an active participant both in the development of your treatment and case management plans, in discussions on your progress, and during both group and individual counseling. During these meetings, all electronic devices will be turned into staff.

You are expected to complete all course material/homework that is assigned to you by Treatment timely. You will come prepared to all group sessions. This includes making sure that you bring required course material to your group sessions.

Engagement

Your improvement in this program is going to require that you be forthcoming with the Treatment Provider, Court Coordinator/Case Manager, the Judge and the Team members. This means that you are required to be open and honest in all your interactions, even if such behavior may have adverse consequences. Consistent dishonesty during the program will lead to sanctions and may result in your termination from the program.

While you are a participant in this program, you will be expected to hold your fellow participants accountable. If you are aware that a fellow participant is not following the terms and conditions of this program, you are expected to make staff aware. Failure to do so will be considered dishonesty. A lie by omission is still considered a lie.

Dress Code

You are expected to dress for treatment in an appropriate manner. For all participants, this will mean that you must not wear any clothing that is torn, see through, skimpy (including any shorts), or that has any image which depicts or promotes drug or alcohol use, violence, weapons or gang membership. Ladies are prohibited from wearing tight fitting clothes. Leggings are permitted only when worn under a dress. Sleeveless tops are prohibited for all participants. All clothing should be clean. All clothing must fit appropriately, no sagging pants.

You are prohibited from wearing hats, sunglasses, or bandanas. Head coverings will only be permitted for religious reasons.

You are expected to maintain adequate hygiene, including regular bathing, application of deodorant and attention to dental needs.

Mental Health Hospitalizations

The Mental Health Court Team understands that hospitalization is necessary at times in order to aide in achieving stabilization. A hospitalization for mental health reasons will result in freeze in phase for the participant, which will remain in effect until the freeze is lifted by the MHC team. A hospitalization to promote mental health stabilization may lead to increased treatment, increased case management, and increased court appearances for the participant, at the discretion of the team.

Sanctions, Incentives and Termination from the Program

Incentives

Incentives are used to recognize and reward participation and progress. The program's desire is to focus on the positive strides you are making. Upon the recommendation of the Team, you may be given incentives for compliant behavior. Some incentives may include but are not limited to gift certificates, food items, and verbal praise. Your input into additional ways that we can motivate you is very welcome and should be shared with the Court.

Sanctions

The Judge may impose sanctions if you violate the rules and regulations of the program. Sanctions may include but are not limited to community service, increased court appearances, homework assignments, incarceration, and termination from the program. The Team/Judge reserves the right to impose sanctions on a case-by-case basis, appropriate to the participant and the violation.

CONASAUGA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, MENTAL HEALTH COURT POLICY: Behavior Contract

Participants may be placed on a two-week (14 day) Behavior Contract for repeated failure to maintain programmatic expectations or for violation(s) of the drug court contract. A behavior contract is a two-week period in which the participant is held to a higher standard and increased supervision in completing both treatment and case management goals/objectives. Any violation or failure to maintain all conditions listed on the behavior contract will result in elevated sanctions and an extension of the behavior contract for an additional two weeks (14 days).

CONASAUGA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, MENTAL HEALTH COURT POLICY (CJCMHC): 30-Day Step-Up

Participants may be placed on a 30-Day Step-Up after having failed to successfully complete two behavior contracts within a phase or an extended behavior contract. Additionally, participants may be placed on 30-Day Step-Up for “egregious” violations of the mental health court contract at the team’s discretion. A 30-Day Step-Up is a period in which the participant is held to a higher standard and additional supervision in completing both treatment and case management goals/objectives. Participants will be provided with a plan that details specific goals/objectives and areas for improvement. Any violation or failure to maintain all conditions listed on the plan within the 30-Day Step-Up timeframe will result in “automatic” termination from the mental health court program.

Termination

Continued participation in this program is contingent on compliance with program guidelines and regulations. Non-compliance issues include but are not limited to: an inability to remain clean and sober; failure to attend and participate in group; threats or violence against peers or staff; altering or tampering with drug screens; committing a new offense; failure to take medications as prescribed; or an accumulation of program violations.

The Team wants you to succeed in this program, and we consider termination the last resort. Because of this, the Team will address serious concern by increased monitoring. However, because the program has limited resources to be spent on participants who are not committed to or capable of meeting the goals of the program, if increased monitoring is not effective in bringing you into compliance, you will be considered for termination from the program.

Conasauga Mental Health Court



Mental illness is not a choice, but recovery is.
Help for today, hope for tomorrow

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Participant Handbook

By signing the below, you are acknowledging receipt and understanding of the Participant Handbook. Failure to sign this acknowledgement will prevent your entering the program.

Printed Name

Date

Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Date