



Chairman's Corner

*Tom Worthan, Chairman
Douglas County Board of Commissioners*



New Misdemeanor Drug Accountability Court

As we celebrate the one year anniversary of the County's DUI/Accountability Court, the State Court of Douglas County is implementing a new Misdemeanor Drug Court. This is only the third one in the State, and offenders with multiple misdemeanor drug charges or other misdemeanor charges that are drug related will get an opportunity to get assistance in becoming drug free and productive citizens if they qualify to enter the program. The State Court handles misdemeanor offenses as well as traffic offenses in Douglas County.

State Court Chief Judge Neal Dettmering heads up the new Misdemeanor Drug Accountability Court and is currently in the process of getting it running with the help of a State Grant from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

The advantages to this program are very similar to those in the DUI Court in that participants will get the treatment they need rather than to just be put in jail for their crimes. This gives them the opportunity to become drug free, productive citizens. The implementation of the Court is totally funded by the grant but will eventually be self-sustaining at no additional cost to County tax payers.

Participants will come into the program voluntarily. People who enter the program in this manner have a much better success rate because they have realized that they have an addiction. That is the starting point. Once they make the decision to get into the program, they will undergo an extensive needs assessment which is done by our Treatment Provider. Afterwards, they have an orientation meeting with the Director of the Court and when everything is in order, the Director and the Treatment Provider bring the candidate to the full staff for consideration/approval and entry into the program.

The program will last a minimum of 12 months during which time the participants will receive extensive drug treatment group and individual sessions. There are four phases of treatment – the first phase being the most intense with treatment and group sessions occurring daily for the first 90 days. The participants will be randomly drug tested at least 8-10 times per month to be sure they are staying clean and meeting all the program requirements. Community partners such as AA/NA, Celebrate Recovery, Reformers Unanimous, and Overcomers, etc., will be used to help supplement the treatment that is provided through the Court. Home visits by Sheriff's Department deputies/City Police officers will ensure participants are home at curfew, allow another avenue for random testing, and allow them to have positive interaction with law enforcement.

The staff consists of Prosecutors, Defense Attorneys, the Treatment Provider, the Judge, the Drug Court Director, and local Law Enforcement. Staff meetings take place bi-weekly on the day the participants come to Court for the Judicial oversight part of the program. If a participant does not complete conditions, is late to treatment or to Court, tests positive for drugs or alcohol or breaks the law, sanctions will be imposed. These sanctions can include but are not limited to community service hours, extra treatment sessions, or possibly jail time. Successful completion of the program can result in the offender having their charges dismissed.

I am very proud that the State Court has implemented these two programs that address the core problems of - and provide help to - people with addictions. Through these programs, many citizens can return to their families and become productive members of our community instead of hardened criminals.

Working to make our community better,

Tom

P. S. See you at County Government Day at Arbor Place Mall on Saturday, May 3rd!