



Skagit County
Mental Health Court

Participant Handbook

Introduction

Welcome to the Skagit County Mental Health Court program. The Skagit County Mental Health Court is a collaborative, problem-solving court that strives to promote stability, sobriety and safety for criminal justice involved individuals with mental illness through an intensive program of evaluation, treatment and frequent monitoring of compliance, while ensuring the security and well-being of the community.

This handbook will detail what is expected of you as a Mental Health Court participant and review general program information. As a participant, you will be expected to follow the instructions given to you by the judge and the Mental Health Court Team, as well as to comply with the treatment plan developed for you by the Treatment Team. Some guidelines may vary at the discretion of the Mental Health Court Team. All participants are encouraged to share this handbook with family and friends.

The Skagit County Mental Health Court is a voluntary program. The four phase program consists of intensive judicial supervision that includes frequent appearances before the Mental Health Court judge, mandatory mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment if indicated. As you complete requirements for each particular phase, you will become eligible to advance to the next phase.

Program Length

The program length is a minimum of twelve (12) months for misdemeanors and twenty-four (24) months for felonies.

Program Rules

As a Mental Health Court participant, you will be required to abide by the following rules:

1. Attend all scheduled Mental Health Court sessions. An unexcused absence may result in issuance of a bench warrant.
2. Behave appropriately during the court sessions. Mental Health Court participants are expected to support one another and pay attention to the court proceedings. Listen to the judge and to one another.
3. Dress appropriately for court. No torn clothing, shorts, or flip-flops.
4. Attend all treatment sessions. This includes individual and group counseling, educational sessions, and other treatment as directed. Unexcused, missed treatment sessions will likely result in a sanction. If you are unable to make a scheduled appointment, you must notify your provider immediately. You must make all reasonable efforts to give your provider as much notice as possible of cancellation and to provide a reason for the cancellation.
5. Do not make threats towards other participants or staff or behave in a violent manner. Violent or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and will be reported

to the Court. This behavior will likely result in a sanction and may result in termination from the Mental Health Court program.

6. Submit to random urinalysis and/or breath tests as requested.
7. You must abstain from alcohol and all non-prescribed medications or drugs.
8. Maintain confidentiality of other Mental Health Court participants.

Termination from the Program

This is a voluntary program. You can decide to ***voluntarily terminate*** from the program at any time. The judge can also ***involuntarily terminate*** you from the program for non-compliance with treatment plan, repeated failure to appear in court, new criminal charges, or use of non-prescribe drugs and/or alcohol. The Mental Health Court Team will jointly make all decisions regarding involuntary termination.

If you are terminated from the program for any reason, voluntary or involuntary, the judge will review the police reports and decide whether or not you are guilty.

If the judge agrees that the reports support a finding of guilt, you will be convicted of the crime you have been charged with and the recommended sentence will be imposed.

Schedule and Location

Court will be held on alternate Mondays at 2:30 pm unless otherwise scheduled. Court will be held in either Hearing Room B or C of the Skagit County Administration Building at 700 So. 2nd Street, Mount Vernon, WA, or in one of the courtrooms in Superior Court at 205 W. Kincaid Street, Mount Vernon, WA. You will be advised of the court's location prior to the hearing.

Mental Health Court Requirements

Progressing Through Treatment

MHC consists of phases that include judicial oversight, individual treatment requirements, possible drug testing, and rewards and sanctions. Phases are designed to build upon the skills acquired in the previous phase, allowing you to learn to effectively manage your mental illness (and substance abuse, where applicable). As you move through the phases of the program, you will be evaluated and promoted based on successful completion of each phase.

Because all treatment plans are individualized, the requirements may vary. This is a general guideline and is subject to modification by the MHC Treatment Team and MHC Judge.

1. Intake/Assessment

- Complete initial mental health assessment

- Complete CD assessment if indicated; enter detoxification or inpatient treatment if indicated; submit to random UAs
- Observe minimum of two consecutive MHC dockets and appear in court as scheduled
- Sign Agreement to Participate in Mental Health Court and Stipulation to Facts

2. Phase I (minimum of 3 months)

- Follow treatment plan--mental health, substance abuse
- Comply with medications regimen
- Group counseling
- Engage in relapse prevention techniques
- Random UAs if recommended
- Address payment of court fees and fines if necessary
- Assessment for education/vocation training
- Seek stable housing, transportation
- Engage in family counseling, parenting class, life management skills as recommended
- Abstain from alcohol and non-prescribed medications or drugs

3. Phase II (minimum of 3 months)

- Comply with medications regimen
- Follow treatment plan--mental health, substance abuse
- Individual and Group counseling
- Engage in relapse prevention techniques
- Random UAs if recommended
- Appear in court as scheduled
- Address payment of court fees and fines or complete community service
- Assessment for and active pursuit of education/vocation training or volunteer opportunities
- Develop means to meet basic needs: housing, transportation, income
- Engage in family counseling, parenting class, life management skills as recommended
- Keep scheduled appointments
- Abstain from alcohol and non-prescribed medications or drugs

4. Phase III (minimum of 3 months)

- May attend alternate court dockets
- Demonstrate skills learned in earlier stages of Mental Health Court Program
- Comply with medication and treatment plan
- Complete a Relapse Prevention Plan, which recognizes triggers for old patterns of thinking and behavior and what to do during periods of high stress or personal vulnerability to mental decline or criminal behavior
- No new arrests; no non-emergency contact with law enforcement

- Obtain employment or educational activity, or other activity as approved by court
- Maintain stable housing and meet all basic needs
- Abstain from alcohol and non-prescribed medications or drugs

5. Transitional Phase

- May attend alternate court dockets
- Demonstrate skills learned in earlier stages of Mental Health Court Program
- Comply with medication and treatment plan
- Complete Wellness Plan
- Follow Relapse Prevention Plan
- No new arrests; no non-emergency contact with law enforcement
- Maintain employment or educational activity, or other activity as approved by court; engage in community service if necessary to complete court obligations
- Maintain stable housing and meet all basic needs
- May serve as a Mental Health Court “mentor” for participants in earlier stages
- Abstain from alcohol and non-prescribed medications or drugs

Graduation Requirements

Court Appearances - Attend all required court sessions.

Program Participation and Cooperation

Pro-social behavior

Engaged in an ongoing therapeutic support system

Effective use of medications

Compliance with terms of probation

Has addressed outstanding matters in the criminal justice system

Drugs and Medications - Comply with the treatment plan including appropriate use of medications and drugs.

Triggers –Ability to identify and understand those circumstances and/or events which are likely to trigger relapse behaviors. Develop new responses to those signs, including a list of significant others who will be helpful when the triggers are present.

Basic Life Needs – Have the means to address food, clothing and shelter. Make every effort to insure that the residential environment is one that will promote ongoing recovery, and is safe and stable.

Reliability - No excessive or unexcused absences from appointments, employment, training classes or other obligations.

Financial or Community Service Responsibility – Make all payments or complete all community service hours required for MHC participation.

Dismissal of Charges - When you have successfully completed the terms of the court order, the court will dismiss the charges.

Exit Interview - Complete Exit Interview with Mental Health Court Coordinator.

Aftercare and Wellness Plan

One month prior to graduation, you must develop a written plan that describes what you need to do every day to keep well, triggers that could make you feel worse, and an action plan to stabilize the situation. You should also review and update your personal crisis plan to be used when you need others to take over responsibility for your care. The Plan should also describe your goals for your future and your plan to achieve those goals. In addition, you must have a treatment plan in place and the ability to follow it.

Mental Health Court Phone Numbers

Mental Health Court Coordinator – Rebecca Clark	360-336-9395
Public Defender's Office – Keith Tyne	360-336-9405
Compass Health Skagit – Jennifer Schweinhard, Diana Sullivan, or Natosha Scheenstra	360-419-3500
24-Hour Care Crisis Line	1-800-584-357

Conclusion

The Mental Health Court program has been developed to help you achieve stability in your life. The program is designed to promote self-sufficiency and to return you to the community as a productive and responsible citizen. The Mental Health Court Team, Treatment Team, and community resources are here to guide and assist you, but the final responsibility is yours. If you have any additional questions or concerns about the Mental Health Court program, please contact Compass Health, your attorney, or the Mental Health Court Coordinator.