
RAMSEY COUNTY, MINNESOTA MENTAL HEALTH COURT

Approximately 40 participants per year
Established in 2005



NOTABLE FEATURES

- An urban, pre- and post-adjudication program that aims to offer treatment in the community rather than in a court or hospital setting
- Evaluation and outcome data show that Ramsey County MHC graduates were less likely to be charged with a new offense, less likely to be convicted of a new offense, and less likely to spend time in jail than those in a comparison group of similarly situated people who did not participate in Ramsey County's MHC
- Attorneys from Briggs & Morgan P.A. have partnered with the Ramsey County MHC since 2011 to provide pro bono legal services to defendants who have been accepted into the program

MENTAL HEALTH COURT TEAM

The Ramsey County MHC is a collaborative effort between criminal justice and human services stakeholders that includes the following partners: three judges from the Second Judicial District of Ramsey County (Presiding Judge William H. Leary, Judge John H. Guthmann, and Judge Teresa R. Warner); a program coordinator from the Second Judicial District of Ramsey County; two case managers from Community Human Services; a probation officer from Ramsey County Community Corrections; one prosecutor each from the St. Paul City Attorney's Office and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office; a public defender; three pro bono defense attorneys; two graduate clinical interns; and a law student who is certified to practice as an attorney (i.e., "student certified attorney"). Outcome evaluations are shared on a quarterly and annual basis with all court and community partners.

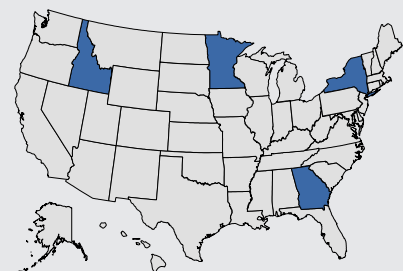
MENTAL HEALTH COURT LEARNING SITES

A mental health court (MHC) is a court-based program that brings together members of criminal justice and behavioral health systems, among others, to work with people with mental illnesses who face criminal charges. MHCs modify traditional court processes to start participants on a therapeutically oriented path of court supervision and behavioral health treatment.

MHC teams generally hold meetings prior to each court convening, with participant referrals coming from district attorneys, defense attorneys, judges, community supervision, other court partners and jail staff, as well as family or community members.

The number of MHCs in the U.S. has grown exponentially in the past two decades. State and local officials who have recently launched, or are considering whether to launch, such programs in their jurisdictions often seek out more experienced MHCs for guidance and advice.

To facilitate peer-to-peer assistance among jurisdictions that have established or are planning to establish MHCs, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), through its technical assistance provider, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, has designated four jurisdictions as MHC "learning sites." Located across the country, these MHC Learning Sites represent a diverse cross-section of perspectives and program examples. MHC Learning Sites host in-person visits to their courts and respond to telephone and email inquiries from the field.



WHOM DOES THIS MENTAL HEALTH COURT SERVE?

The target population is adult residents of Ramsey County who are charged with a nonviolent misdemeanor or felony and have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness. Participants must also be legally competent, have no history of violent offenses, and be willing to participate in and commit to the rigors of the mental and clinical health treatment plan. People who are charged with offenses deemed violent by federal definition and those whose primary diagnosis is a developmental disability or traumatic brain injury are not eligible for participation.

HOW DOES THIS MENTAL HEALTH COURT WORK?

The minimum length of participation is one to three years, depending on a person's charge and plea. At intake, Ramsey County MHC staff establish the referred person's interest in the MHC; orient him or her to the MHC process; assess his or her mental health and substance use needs; and introduce him or her to the MHC case manager and to "psycho-education"—a type of intervention that is intended to help people with mental illnesses move toward recovery. The MHC program has four treatment phases:

- **Phase I, Engagement:** The participant and case manager develop a crisis plan, establish an individual mental health treatment plan, and assess the participant's need for mental health and substance use disorder treatment, resources, and education.
- **Phase II, Active Treatment:** The MHC team assists the participant in connecting with mental health services in the community; the case manager sets goals and recommends prosocial activities for the participant to increase stability and improve quality of life; and court-ordered conditions are implemented.
- **Phase III, Stabilization:** The MHC team monitors and assists the participant in making responsible decisions and maintaining a healthy and stable lifestyle through community resources, stable housing, and continued mental health care.
- **Phase IV, Program Completion/Graduation:** The participant fulfills all MHC requirements, is deemed mentally stable, and has established medical and community supports and service providers. All court-ordered conditions have been met or the judge deems that the participant has completed the program.

FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Volunteer graduate-level clinical case management interns increase the MHC's capacity, and volunteer student certified attorneys and program interns assist the MHC team. Ramsey County's MHC received funding in May 2005 from the Second Judicial District Court and Ramsey County's Adult Mental Health and Chemical Health Services department. In 2006, the MHC received a Problem-Solving Partnership Grant from the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs. Program funding has been provided by the Adult Mental Health division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services since 2008, and all expansion efforts have been funded through federally awarded grants.

HOW TO LEARN FROM THIS SITE

The Ramsey County MHC hosts site visits and answers questions about its operation and best practices via phone and email.

To learn more, contact:

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Mental Health Court Learning Sites are a part of the technical assistance offered by BJA's Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program. Information about Mental Health Court Learning Sites can be found at csgjusticecenter.org/mental-health/learning-sites. To download the following other mental health court resources, please visit csgjusticecenter.org/mental-health-court-project:

A Guide to Collecting Mental Health Court Outcome Data
Mental Health Courts: A Guide to Research-Informed Policy and Practice
State Standards: Building Better Mental Health Courts
Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses: The Essential Elements of a Mental Health Court

Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses at the Pretrial Stage: Essential Elements
Developing a Mental Health Court: An Interdisciplinary Curriculum
Developing a Mental Health Court: An Interdisciplinary Curriculum; Handbook for Facilitators