

# **Seminole County Mental Health Court**



## **Participant's Handbook**

**Seminole County Florida  
Eighteenth Judicial Circuit**

# Table of Contents

Welcome and Overview .....	2
Mental Health Court Team.....	2
Progress Reports .....	3
Phases of MHC.....	4
Expectations .....	5
Medication Policy.....	6
Co-Occurring Disorders Treatment.....	7
Questions and Answers .....	8
Sanctions and Rewards.....	9
Examples of Report to Judge .....	10-12

# Welcome

Welcome to Seminole County's Mental Health Court. This booklet will give you information and answer your questions about the Mental Health Court Program. If you choose to participate in the program, you will be expected to comply with medication and treatment recommendations. We believe that if you do these things, it will help you make successful choices that will improve the quality of your life.

## Overview



*"Mental Health Court is a partnership between different agencies."*

Mental Health Court is a three-phase program for adults who have been charged with one or more criminal offense(s) and who are having difficulty with mental health issues. It is a joint effort between the Court, Seminole County Probation, the State Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and Aspire Health Partners. By working together, we will provide an individualized treatment plan to help you develop and maintain healthy coping skills. It is considered a diversion program, and can help you avoid facing the charges in traditional court, or going to jail. Mental Health Court is considered to be a "conditional release" from jail, meaning that the Judge is expecting you follow certain conditions after your release from jail. If you fail to follow these conditions, the Judge will deal with those issues.

## Mental Health Court Team

The Mental Health Court Team has the goal of helping the client make a positive change in their life. It is made up of the following:

**Judge** – the MHC Judge is the lead team member. He/She will review case status reports that explain how you are doing in the program, and if you are following your treatment plan. During review hearings, the Judge can either give you further sanctions or rewards depending on how you are progressing.

**State Attorney** – The State Attorney is also a team member. The State Attorney has to approve new participants in the program and also make recommendations regarding sanctions.

**Public Defender** – The Public Defender/Defense Counsel represents and protects the rights of the client in all court related matters. They also protect your rights as a

mental health consumer. They are also a member of the team which will help make decisions regarding sanctions and rewards while in the program.

**Aspire Health Partners** – Aspire Health Partners (AHP), will provide a **Forensic Care Coordinator** who along with a Probation Officer will supervise and report on your case. AHP has a treatment team made up of psychiatrists, mental health providers and case managers who will oversee your mental health treatment and make treatment recommendations to the Mental Health Court Team. AHP will also provide your medication monitoring, and can offer outpatient counseling, intensive outpatient counseling, inpatient substance abuse counseling, crisis stabilization, a clubhouse program and day treatment services, whichever are appropriate and outlined on your treatment plan. It is important that you keep all your appointments with the center. The Center has members on the mental health court team and can make recommendations for sanctions or rewards.

**Seminole County Probation** – The mental health Probation Officer has received specialized training in mental health issues and will be supervising you while in the program. You must meet with your Probation Officer and Forensic Care Coordinator as designated and allow them to visit you at home. The Probation Officer is also a team member and can make recommendations to the court regarding sanctions and rewards.

**Sheriff's Office Designated Staff** – There is mental health staff in the jail that will focus on inmates receiving the correct mental health treatment, as well as helping to refer participants to the program. There are also specially trained deputies who have received CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) training, and who are familiar with mental health issues that will be involved with helping to track your progress.

## **Progress Reports**

Before each Mental Health Court appearance, your Forensic Care Coordinator and your Probation Officer will provide the Mental Health Court Team members with a progress report. The report will contain information as to how you are following your treatment plan, your attendance, employment/community service, participation, cooperation in treatment and your overall progress. The members will discuss your progress. The Judge may ask questions about your progress and discuss any problems you may be having. If you are doing well, the program requirements may be reduced. If your report shows that you are not doing well, the Judge will discuss this, and will determine future action, which could result in

sanctions in order to help you remember your goals in the program. Sanctions range from increased program requirements, essays, to community service.

## **Mental Health Court Appearances**

You will be required to appear in MHC on a regular basis. The number of times you must appear depends upon the phase of MHC you are currently in. Failure to appear, without contacting your Probation Officer or Forensic Care Coordinator could result in a warrant. These are very important appearances.

## **Phases of Mental Health Court**

Phase 1 – Initial Phase up to 60 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initial Screening – Eligibility: current and past charges, Mental Health Diagnosis, Needs stabilization</li><li>• Treatment Plan Developed</li><li>• Diversion, Placed Under MH Court jurisdiction</li><li>• Compliance – with medications, with treatment.</li><li>• No use of alcohol, illegal drugs, non-approved medications, or mood-altering substances. Random drug testing.</li><li>• Restitution as deemed appropriate by MH court.</li></ul>
Phase II – Treatment up to 8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attendance at MH Court hearings and Forensic monitoring appointments.</li><li>• Random drug testing.</li><li>• Treatment plan modified as necessary</li><li>• Discharge requirements identified</li></ul>
Phase III – Completion up to 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintenance Phase – decreased contact with team</li><li>• Continued Assessment of compliance</li><li>• Develop Aftercare Plan</li></ul>

# Expectations

The following are the general expectations while participating in mental health court. You may have additional expectations which will be developed for you in your individualized treatment plan. Noncompliance with these expectations can result in sanctions through the Court. The general expectations follow:

- You will take ALL prescribed medications as directed and attend ALL appointments with your assigned provider(s). All medications must be disclosed to the mental-health court team. You will not take medications prescribed by outside providers without approval from the mental health court team. Please refer to the agency policy regarding prescription medications on page 6.
- You will keep ALL scheduled appointments with your probation officer and your Forensic Care Manager. No call/No show for scheduled appointments will result in violation of your court order.
- You will not consume ANY alcohol, take illegal drugs, misuse prescription or OTC (over the counter) drugs or any other mood-altering substances while you are in MHC Diversion Program. Medical marijuana is NOT permitted in Mental Health Court, nor are any potentially addictive medications.
- You must submit to random urinalysis. Refusal to submit to random urinalysis will result in a violation of your MH Court order. Failure to submit UDS sample or diluted/tampered sample will result in violation. A positive UDS sample can result in referral for more intensive level of treatment.
- You will participate in some type of productive activity at least five days per week (minimum of 25 hours).
  - Productive Activity is defined as employment, going to school, volunteering at a local agency or attending programming through Turning Point or Charlotte's Place.
  - Your Forensic Care Manager can refer you to programming.

- You will appear in court as ordered by the Judge. Failure To Appear at court hearings places you at risk of expulsion from MHC.
- You will contact your probation officer, Crisell Ayala, at (407) 665-4604 and attend ALL scheduled appointments. You must maintain contact with your assigned Forensic Care Manager, 407-323-2036 x1869 [TBD], or x2124 [Jasmine] and attend ALL scheduled forensic meetings. Failure to present for scheduled forensic appointments places you in violation of your court order.

# Seminole Behavioral Healthcare Medication Policy

August 27, 2012

## Treatment of Anxiety and Attention Deficit Disorders in Adults at Seminole Behavioral Healthcare

Anxiety and panic are very common symptoms that will often resolve without the use of any medications. When these symptoms reach the point that they prevent you from being able to function such as interfering with your ability to work, attend school or leave your home it is appropriate to consider the use of medications. At Seminole Behavioral Healthcare, we consider all appropriate NON-ADDICTING medication options including vistaril, buspar and antidepressants that are approved for these conditions.

We DO NOT use benzodiazepines which includes xanax, ativan, klonopin, valium, librium and most sleeping medications such as ambien, restoril, lunesta and sonata. These medications are known to be addicting. They are only approved by the FDA for SHORT TERM treatment of anxiety and panic not long term management of these conditions. We will not prescribe these medications. If you are interested in taking them, you will have to pursue medication management for ALL your psychiatric needs through another provider.

Treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder in adults involves similar issues. Treatment of children for this condition requires the use of stimulant medications such as Ritalin, adderall, vyvance and concerta. In adults, these medications can be highly addictive and WILL NOT be prescribed by our providers. We are able to use Wellbutrin and Straterra. These are the only two medications we will prescribe for adults with attention problems.

If you are currently taking benzodiazepines, you will be tapered over the next thirty days. There is no need to taper stimulant medications that are used for attention deficit problems so these can simply be discontinued.

Our goal is to provide treatment that is safe and effective. Please understand that we will work with you to resolve your symptoms but we will no longer prescribe stimulant medications or benzodiazepines.

Sincerely,

Valerie Westhead, MD  
Medical Director – Outpatient and Substance Abuse Services



## Co-Occurring Disorders Treatment

Studies show that many people who have mental health issues may also have a problem with substance use and addiction. If you test positive for drugs or alcohol, this will be addressed in your treatment plan. You must comply with the recommendations made by the Forensic Treatment Team. The following are the different levels of Co-Occurring Disorders treatment offered at Aspire Health Partners:

- Crisis Support Individual or Family
- Outpatient Group Counseling
- Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) - Participants may be required to participate in intensive outpatient treatment at the discretion of the Treatment Team should they test positive for drugs or alcohol.
- Residential Challenge- Participants may be placed on the waiting list for residential treatment at Seminole Center for Co-Occurring Disorders (SCCD) should they continue to test positive for drugs or alcohol after less restrictive measures have been utilized (i.e.: outpatient or intensive outpatient counseling).
- Residential Treatment- Participants may attend SCCD, which is a 45 to 60 day intensive residential treatment.
- Vivitrol- Medication Assisted Therapy is available to participant with opiate or alcohol dependence issues at no charge to the participant.
- After Care- After completing a 45 to 60 day program at SCCD, participants may be transitioned into a less restrictive treatment as is appropriate to their individual needs. The IRP (Intensive Relapse Prevention) group is offered to all clients who have successfully completed SCCD or the IOP program.

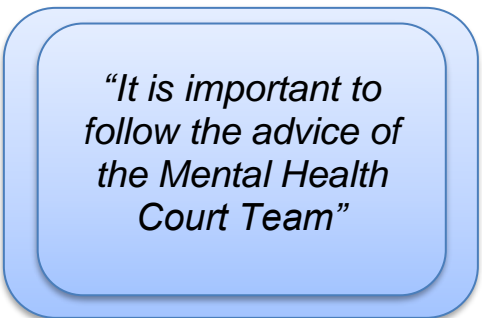
## Questions and Answers

**What is the Seminole County Mental Health Court Session?** Mental health court is a special session of Seminole County 18<sup>th</sup> District Court. It is part of a diversion program in Seminole County for people who have mental health issues, or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues.

**What do I have to do to get into the program?** Once a referral is made to the court, you will be expected to sign a waiver of speedy trial. Your attorney can explain this to you in detail. You will also be assessed by a mental health specialist. As long as you meet both legal and mental health criteria, you will be accepted into the program.

**How long will my case be in mental health court?** Cases will run anywhere from 6 – 12 months, with extreme exceptions possibly going over the year. How quickly you progress through mental health court depends on many things, including how hard you are willing to work. It is important that you follow the advice of your doctors, Probation Officer and Forensic Care Manager. It is also very important to listen to your Judge.

**What are graduation requirements?** In order to graduate, you will have had to remain alcohol and drug free for a specific amount of time, comply with your productivity requirements, remain compliant with medications, stay compliant with treatment, and have no unexcused absences for all scheduled appointments and court appearances.



*"It is important to  
follow the advice of  
the Mental Health  
Court Team"*

**What is the benefit to me to participate?** The biggest benefit to you is to avoid criminal conviction and the possibility of jail time. Upon successful completion, your case will be *nolle prossed* which means the state will no file the case, it will not be held against you. Another invaluable benefit to you is that you will get the help you need to deal with your mental health issues and/or substance abuse issues. You will have people encouraging you to do the right thing, and helping to lead you in the right direction.

**Do I really have to take my prescribed medication?** Yes, medication management is extremely important. If you have questions about your medications, it is important that you call your psychiatrist or Nurse Practitioner to discuss your concerns, do not just discontinue your medications on your own. Once in the program, discontinuing your medication can be cause for a violation in the program.

## **Rewards, Infractions, or Sanctions**

Understand that with all the rules and conditions of mental health court, if you break the rules there are consequences. On the other hand, if you follow all the rules, and live crime free, you will be acknowledged and rewarded. If you continue to do the right thing, you will graduate, if you continue to do the wrong thing, you can be expelled from the program, and may eventually face your original charges. Examples of breaking the rules are:

- missed appointments
- missed court appearances
- failure or refusal to take your medications
- positive urinalysis for substances
- refusal to give urine sample
- violation of rules of treatment program
- threatening behavior, including verbal threat of violence
- not following treatment plan
- failure to abide by a restraining order
- a new law violation

Below are some of the potential rewards and sanctions:

## **Rewards:**

- (1) Dismissal of case
- (2) Recognition of progress in Court
- (3) Come to court less often
- (4) Certificate of completion
- (5) Having your case heard first in court
- (6) Graduate to the next phase
- (7) Avoidance of jail

## **Sanctions:**

- (1) Expelled from program
- (2) Return to Criminal Court
- (3) Violation of your “conditional release” status from the jail
- (4) Extending your time in mental health court
- (5) Have to come to court or probation more often
- (6) Increased treatment intensity
- (7) Increased urinalysis
- (8) Having your case heard last
- (9) Community service hour
- (10) Assigned essay

## **Reports to Judge**

Prior to Court the Judge will be given a report on your progress. This report is filled out by your Forensic Care Manager and your Probation Officer. An example of this report is on the next page. With this report the Judge is made aware of exactly what you are doing in mental health court.

# Report for Mental Health Court

October 12, 2012

John Smith

## Progress:

- Client has done everything asked of him,
- Made every appointment on time,
- Continuously tested negative for all substances,
- Followed his treatment plan,
- Attending meetings, attending family and individual counseling,
- Remaining productive at least four days per week.

## Challenges:

- None identified

## Recommendation:

- We recommend he be taken first on the docket and also
- Phased up to Phase II at this time.

# Report for Mental Health Court

October 12, 2012

Jane Smith

## Progress:

- Client has had clean UA's for past three weeks.

## Challenges:

- Has not maintained herself on the SCCD waitlist as ordered.
- Admitted she had run out of meds and was not taking them.
- Client was late to two appointments this month.

## Recommendation:

- We recommend client be required to do community service hours for not following the judge's instructions regarding the waitlist.
- We recommend her to remain in Phase I at this time.