Administrative Office of the Courts

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Contact: Robert Mitchell, Senior Statewide Program Manager for Problem Solving Courts
aocrvm@nmcourts.gov
505-827-4940
505-695-5453

NEW MEXICO DRUG COURTS CERTIFIED UNDER NEW EVALUATION SYSTEM

SANTA FE – Five New Mexico problem-solving courts have earned certification under a new evaluation process that ensures the treatment-based programs use high quality methods in helping offenders who struggle with addictions that contribute to repeat criminal behavior.

Three additional drug court programs are currently in the certification process through the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), and four are to begin in November.

"Knowing court programs are operating according to recognized best practices is vital," said Supreme Court Chief Justice Judith K. Nakamura. "In addition to cost savings generated by problem solving courts, graduates are less likely to re-offend and they contribute productively to the community."

Studies have found that drug courts are three times more effective than prison in preventing an offender's re-arrest and five times less expensive than prison. Nationwide, for every $1 invested, drug courts save as much as $3.36 in avoided costs in the criminal justice system, and up to $12 when including victimization and healthcare costs.

There are more than fifty problem-solving courts in New Mexico, including adult and juvenile drug courts, DWI drug courts, mental health courts and family dependency courts. A judge and a team of professionals, including treatment providers, prosecutors and public defenders, oversee offenders with alcohol and drug addiction or mental illness. The yearlong programs treat offenders' addictions while holding them accountable through frequent drug tests, probation visits and judicial hearings.

"Certification allows programs to demonstrate alignment with our New Mexico drug court standards and to be formally recognized for the great work they are doing," said Artie Pepin, director of the AOC.

Robert Mitchell, AOC's senior statewide coordinator for problem-solving courts, said, "The certification process benefits everyone involved with a local drug court program. The judge and team gain a deeper understanding of their program and the standards. Taxpayers receive an assurance that programs are following evidence-based practices known to produce better results at a lower cost than incarcerating offenders. Participants in a certified program and their loved ones receive the best opportunity for a healthier life."

Certification measures alignment with the drug court standards adopted in October 2016 by the state Supreme Court. The standards were developed in collaboration with NPC Research supported by a grant from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The pilot certification project was implemented in September of 2017 and all five pilot sites were certified by June of 2018. The certification begins with a letter of intent, application, and online assessment then moves through a review of procedures, forms, and other documents. Each program's operational system is measured against the state standards. The evaluation covers elements such as treatment and confidentiality practices, drug testing protocols, professional development activities and documentation, programmatic structure, team roles and responsibilities, and the application of sanctions, incentives, and therapeutic adjustments. Any areas noted for improvement are typically addressed through training and technical assistance resulting in program enhancements.

Certified:

- Eddy County Magistrate DWI Drug Court – Honorable D'Ann Read & Program Coordinator Jennifer Hedrick
- Doña Ana County Magistrate DWI Drug Court – Honorable Joel Cano & Program Coordinator Carmen Florez-Lucero
- San Miguel County Magistrate DWI Sobriety Court – Honorable Christian Montano & Program Coordinator Zabrina Sandoval [Provisional Certification]
- Seventh Judicial District Court / Sierra County Adult Drug Court – Honorable Matthew Reynolds & Court Executive Officer Jason Jones
- Valencia County Magistrate DWI Drug Court – Honorable Tina Garcia & Program Coordinator Ragon Espinoza

In-process of certification:

- San Juan Magistrate DWI Drug Court – Honorable Mark Hawkinson & Program Coordinator Stacey Madson
- Santa Fe Magistrate DWI Drug Court – Honorable George Anaya Jr. & Program Coordinator Renee Sandoval
- Sixth Judicial District Court / Grant County Adult Drug Court – Honorable J.C. Robinson & Program Director Margaret Begay

Scheduled to begin the certification process in November:

- Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court/DWI Recovery Court – Honorable Edward Benavidez & Division Director Lissa Lowe
- Twelfth Judicial District Court/ Lincoln County Adult Drug Court – Honorable Daniel Bryant & Program Coordinator Georgetta Corbett
- Twelfth Judicial District Court/ Otero County Adult Drug Court – Honorable James Counts & Program Coordinator Katina Watson
- Twelfth Judicial District Court / Lincoln County Adult Drug Court – Honorable Angie Schneider & Program Coordinator Georgetta Corbett

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