

The State of New Hampshire

New Hampshire Superior Court

Honorable Mark E. Howard
Chief Justice

Superior Court Center
One Granite Place, Suite N400
Concord, NH 03301

December 30, 2025

Michael W. Kane
Office of Legislative Budget Assistant
107 North Main Street
State House, Room 102
Concord NH 03301-4906

Re: 2025 Annual Report of the Drug Offender Program

Dear Mr. Kane,

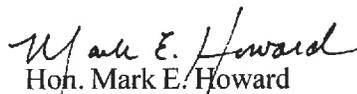
On behalf of the New Hampshire Judicial Branch and in accordance with RSA 490-G:6, I respectfully submit the 2025 Annual Report of the Drug Offender Program.

As you are aware from recent annual reports, New Hampshire has 10 adult drug courts fully operational in our superior courts. All of the programs follow national best practices and standards in pursuit of the overall goal to “reduce the incidence of substance abuse and crimes resulting from it.” RSA 490-G:1. We now have a statewide program that works continually to create uniformity in program operations and training. Our statewide drug offender program coordinator works collaboratively with every drug court in establishing budgets, building drug court teams, ensuring appropriate training, and operating their respective programs.

As drug court programs continue to expand and accept additional participants, we, as a state, must ensure the programs continue to adhere to the principles that have made them successful and receive the proper funding and support from the state to further their efforts.

If you or any member of the legislature would like more information about the Drug Offender Program or would like to visit a drug court program in any part of the state, please feel free to contact me and I will assist you.

Respectfully,



Hon. Mark E. Howard
Chief Justice

New Hampshire Superior Court

**2025 ANNUAL REPORT OF
STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE'S
DRUG OFFENDER PROGRAM**

I. Introduction

Pursuant to RSA 490-G:6, the Office of Drug Court Offender Program Coordinator (also known as the Drug Court Coordinator) is required to provide an annual report to the Legislature regarding the operation of the drug court programs. The 2025 annual report is the ninth report and the history of the establishment of the office and drug court programs, and the specific county operations can be found in the prior reports.

Ten of the eleven county locations now fully operate a felony drug court program. The only county not operating an adult drug court is Sullivan County. The NHJB approached Sullivan County about funding and operating an adult drug court by contracting with a treatment provider. The county turned down the offer initially, however the Judicial Branch and Sullivan County in 2025 began discussing the possibility of a Sullivan County Drug Court. Such discussions are on-going at this time.

II. What is Drug Court?

Superior Court felony drug courts work to reduce crime, save money and return justice involved individuals to the community as contributing members. Studies show that 60% or more of individuals serving time in jail or prison suffer from a substance use disorder and, upon release from incarceration, those defendants reoffend at a rate of approximately 65%. Studies also show that when high risk/high need individuals who would otherwise serve a high-end house of corrections sentence or a low-end state prison sentence complete drug court, those defendants reoffend at a rate of 25%. Even those participants who are not successful in drug court, and are sent to jail or prison, reoffend at a rate of 40%.

Drug court is not appropriate for dangerous individuals, or drug profiteers who deal in high quantities of drugs and are engaged in drug trafficking as a business enterprise, regardless of whether they suffer from substance use disorder.

Target Group

The appropriate candidate for drug court is an individual who presents as high risk/high need.

Risk refers to the likelihood individuals will reoffend or violate the terms of probation because of their criminal thinking and poor social insight. Individuals who are high risk (not to be confused with dangerous) have a significant criminal record, usually related to drug use. The record can include convictions, for example, for theft, forgery, burglary, and robbery, in addition to possession and some low-level sales to support their addiction. They also have served time in jail or prison. In contrast, low risk individuals may have a minimal or no criminal record, have a decent education, have some family support, and have a history of employment. Such low risk individuals have spent very little time, if any, in jail. They are less likely to reoffend and are not appropriate for drug court.

Need refers to an individual's level of substance use disorder, as well as any psychosocial issues that contribute to their substance use, including mental health concerns. High need refers to an individual who suffers from a moderate to severe substance use disorder and who has been using substances for a significant period of time. They may have tried treatment and failed on one or more occasions. Low need individuals suffer from more mild substance use disorder and have been suffering for a shorter period of time. They may be able to stop using on their own, or with low level interventions. They are not appropriate for drug court, and in fact the intensive programming of drug court has proven to make low need individuals worse.

Process for Acceptance into Drug Court

The drug court team consists of the judge, prosecutor, public defender, treatment provider, probation officer, case manager, and law enforcement liaison. Several teams also include a recovery support provider. Each member has been specifically trained in National Best Practice Standards and must receive annual training to ensure compliance with best practice standards.

Once an individual is identified as a potential drug court participant (usually at or shortly after arrest), the individual must submit an application, through his or her lawyer, to be assessed for drug court. The prosecutor team member then conducts a legal screen to determine, based on objective criteria largely focused on criminal history or the nature of the criminal conduct, whether the individual is appropriate for drug court. If approved by the prosecutor team member, then the treatment provider conducts an objective, evidence-based risk/need assessment of the individual to determine if he or she fits the appropriate drug court target population. If the individual is qualified, the team discusses the application at the weekly meeting and determines as a group whether to accept the individual into the program.

The individual then enters a plea of guilty to the pending charges and receives a suspended State Prison sentence, or a suspended high-end House of Corrections sentence, with three to four years of probation. A condition of the suspended sentence is the successful completion of drug court. Generally, drug court takes 18-24 months to complete, depending on the particular circumstances of the case. After completion of drug court, the defendant remains on probation with a specific aftercare plan.

Participant Obligations

There are generally five phases of drug court and varying levels of treatment in each phase. In the beginning phases, the participant is required to attend group treatment three hours per day, three days per week, or attend residential treatment if the assessment indicates that level of care. In addition, the participant attends at least one individual session per week. The curriculum used by the treatment provider is targeted specifically for the criminal justice involved person with substance use disorder and includes treatment designed to address criminal thinking and anti-social behavior, in addition to substance misuse, relapse prevention and recovery support. At least 80% of individuals who enter drug court also suffer from some type of mental illness like anxiety, depression or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Treatment is designed to address both substance use and mental health issues simultaneously.

The participant is also required to submit to at least two random drug tests per week, and may be required to submit to daily testing, depending on the nature and extent of the substance use disorder. The participant also attends recovery support activities several times per week and is required to appear in

court weekly to account for their behavior and progress. In later phases, the participant is required to obtain a GED or a job.

Court Sessions

Drug Court sessions are conducted weekly and in a few rural areas bi-weekly. First, the team meets to discuss the progress of each of the reporting participants. The participants are not present for these team meetings. At the meetings, the team discusses whether a participant should receive an incentive for complying with program requirements or engaging in other activities or conduct that should be encouraged, or a sanction for failing to comply. If a participant suffers a relapse and is honest about the use, then the team will generally adjust treatment to address the relapse. If a participant is dishonest about use and lies about a drug test, or tries to avoid the drug test, then the team recommends sanctions to address the behavior.

After the team meeting, the participants appear in the courtroom where the judge calls each one individually to the podium and talks to them about the successes and challenges of the prior week.

During the court session, the judge awards incentives for participants who have stayed sober, reported to treatment on time, attended self-help meetings, made a payment toward drug court fees, or engaged in other positive or pro-social activities that should be encouraged. Incentives can include applause, certificates, praise, gift cards, or a reduction in fees. Our drug courts continue to implement creative incentive ideas consistent with evidence-based best practices.

For participants who have been non-compliant by, among other things, lying about drug tests, failing to report to probation or treatment, or failing to show up for court, the judge issues sanctions. Sanctions can include writing an essay and reading it in court, sitting through regular court sessions, completing community service, or serving a jail sentence of up to seven nights depending on the severity or frequency of the conduct. Studies show that jail is the least effective response to changing behavior, so it is used sparingly. In addition, jail is not used for participants who have relapsed and need a treatment adjustment.

Termination

Because drug court is designed to address the high risk/high need individual, some do not make it through the program and are terminated. Generally, if they are terminated, they will serve some, or all, of their suspended sentence. Terminations occur if a participant is caught selling drugs while in the program, commits a serious crime while in drug court, threatens the safety of staff or other members, or persistently demonstrates an unwillingness to engage in the program. Other times participants may self-terminate if they feel they cannot complete the program requirements. Most participants say that completing drug court is more difficult than spending a year or two in jail or prison.

Overall Goal of the Program

Drug court is a difficult program but the strict structure of the program and focus on substance use disorder has proven successful throughout the country and in New Hampshire. At the successful completion of drug court, a participant comes before the drug court team and the judge, who has

overseen the participant’s case including the setbacks and successes, congratulates him or her on their completion of the program. It is not unusual for members of the drug court team to commence their training as skeptics and, through working with the individual and the team, become true advocates of the vital role it can play in our judicial system.

III. Participant Success

Attached is a testimonial from drug court graduates describing their progress through the program and their successful transition back to the community. Also attached below is a link to an article about the journey of a Cheshire County drug court graduate and a commencement ceremony conducted in Hillsborough County, Southern District.

Cheshire County Drug Court https://www.keenesentinel.com/news/local/keene-nh-treatment-court/article_6a0f3d96-819f-499a-86b9-1a3306d20cb2.html

[..\Drug Court\Hills North\A Story of Success - Letter from a Graduate.pdf](#)

[..\Drug Court\Hills South\Hillsborough South Recovery Court Newsletter.pdf](#)

IV. Drug Court Programs FY 24 Budgets

Jurisdiction	Approx. # of participants as of 12/2025	FY24 Budget	Start Date	State Funding Start Date
Belknap County Superior	28	\$342,705.28	January 2013	September 2017
Carroll County Superior	13	\$221,714.95	February 2018	November 2017
Cheshire County Superior	17	\$342,705.00	June 2013	July 2017
Coos County Superior	5	\$215,635.28	February 2018	November 2017
Grafton County Superior	7	\$375,000.00	May 2007	January 2017
Hillsborough North Superior	49	\$567,918.55	November 2016	November 2016
Hillsborough South Superior	30	\$567,396.26	August 2014	October 2017
Merrimack Superior	41	\$595,473.00	October 2017	September 2017
Rockingham Superior	23	\$540,263	March 2011	July 2016
Strafford Superior	62	\$549,167.49	November 2004	July 2016

V. Statewide Office of Drug Offender Program

A detailed description of the Statewide Office of Drug Offender Program is contained in the prior reports. In 2025, the following statewide trainings were provided:

February 2025: New Hampshire Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselors Association (NHADACA) provided a training for Drug Treatment Court Staff members on Re-entry & Reintegration. This training aimed to explain stages of re-entry planning and evidence-based practices when working with offenders in the criminal justice system; List community-based programs and services that have resulted in offenders' successful re-entry back into the community; and identify evidence-based strategies to engage and motivate offenders in reintegration.

February 2025: Chief Justice McDonald of the Supreme Court and Chief Justice Howard of the Superior Court hosted a meeting with our Federal Judges and NCSC to discuss a Federal / State collaborative.

March 2025: NHADACA provide a Suicide Prevention for Non-Clinicians Training. This workshop aimed to describe how to integrate evidence-based and evidence-informed suicide prevention interventions into their practice. Useful tools were demonstrated and are inclusive to widely diverse populations and shine a light on stressors known to negatively affect the mental health of community members, including those entrusted to serve vulnerable populations.

March 2025: The NHJB provided a half day training on Confidentiality: Updates to CFR 42 Part 2. This training provided information and updates on proper use of releases of information and what the professional standards and expectations are for CFR 42 Part 2.

March 2025: The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) hosted a two day in person training for State Coordinators. Alex Casale, Tanya Pitman and Chris Gowell attended this conference and taught a breakout session on Grant Management.

March & April 2025: NHJB was awarded a free grant through the Gains Center for Trauma Informed Treatment Courts Learning Collaborative and Train the Trainer (TITC LC TTT). Four Ask the Expert (ATE) sessions were provided from April to May 2025. Those sessions included: Treatment Court Roles & Boundaries, Engagement & Collaboration across Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health Systems, Community Trauma, Screening, Assessment & Treatment for Trauma, Ethical Concerns: Judges Role and Legal Perspectives, Vicarious & Secondary Trauma & the Role of Peer Supports in Drug Treatment Courts. April 2025: The DOC hosted a risk assessment training (ORAS) for probation parole officers and drug court staff.

May 2025: The NHJB with assistance from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) hosted a full day Strategic Planning Initiative Training. This initiative was a collaborative approach among all disciplines of the treatment court teams to identify specific goals for each treatment court.

May 2025: All Rise held their annual four-day in-person conference with breakout and plenary sessions held each day. Over 7,000 treatment court professionals from around the country attended. Many New Hampshire team members also attended the training. Below is a link to the Recap of the Conference.

https://allriseconference.org/rise25_recap/#:~:text=RISE25%20Recap%20%2D%20RISE%20Conference.%20From%20May,substance%20use%2C%20mental%20health%2C%20and%20justice%20innovation.

July 2025: NHJB through NHADACA provided Drug Court staff a Seeking Safety Training: An Evidence-Based Model for Trauma and/or Addiction– with Emphasis on Criminal Justice Settings

July 2025: NHADACA hosted a training on Adapting DBT for Neurodivergent Minds: Clinical Strategies That Work.

August 2025: The TITC LC provided NHJB and Drug Court Staff an onsite training from Dr. Brian Meyer on three topics: Fidelity to Treatment, Peer Support Specialists in Trauma Informed Courts and Preventing Courtroom Behavior from Triggering Participants.

August 2025: The TITC LC TTT concluded with a two day TTT session on How Being Trauma Informed improves Criminal Justice System Responses. Four NH Drug Court Staff members were fully trained and certified to train others on this curriculum.

September 2025: The Gains Center through SAMHSA provided a TITC LC Virtual Closing Event.

October 2025: The NHJB began the contract with Connexis Cloud (IMS) database to implement a new statewide database for Drug Treatment Courts and Mental Health Courts. The Request for Proposal process in the months prior ended in final contract negotiations and a start date of October 1st, 2025.

October 2025: JSI and NHADACA put on a statewide treatment court conference for all of the NH treatment courts. 191 treatment team members attended in person. This two-day conference covered Incentives and Sanctions, Phases and Court Requirements, Criminogenic Thinking, The Core Evidenced Based Treatments that every Treatment Court needs, Emerging Drug Trends and other relatable topics. Below is a link to the Conference Agenda.

<https://web.cvent.com/event/549850a2-587b-4c2a-ba82-d6c782ba1800/websitePage:e0813240-b07e-4e7b-9dce-608766583621>

November 2025: The New England Association of Recovery Court Professionals (NEARCP) hosted a three day in person conference. The goal of the conference is to promote an exchange of information, experiences, collaboration, and networking among criminal justice, treatment court, and healthcare professionals, as well as community/state leadership in the New England states regarding promising programs and strategies that have proven their effectiveness. Below is a link to the Conference Website.

<https://nearcp.org/2025-conference/>

December 2025: Merrimack County hosted a train the trainer even for the Ohio Risk Assessment (ORAS). The Drug Court sent one staff member from Rockingham County Drug Court to become an ORAS trainer. The Drug Courts will now be able to host their own internal ORAS trainings.

VI. Peer Review

The Judicial Branch has developed a peer review process to ensure that drug court programs are aligned with the National Drug Court Best Practice Standards. These standards are research-based, organized on the foundation of the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts, and include guidelines for policies and practices that help ensure programs provide access to treatment and other needed services, reduce recidivism, and remain cost effective. The Treatment Court Coordinator and Drug Court Coordinator are currently working with the National Center for State Courts to update the peer review process and align it with updated best practice standards.

The peer review process creates a learning community in New Hampshire among treatment court teams. The idea is for peers to help each other identify areas for program improvement and to share successes and challenges. The peer review process allows New Hampshire's treatment court community to access information and to gain support at a low administrative cost while building relationships between programs. It also provides important information to the Judicial Branch about areas of needed technical assistance and training and helps to target those resources most effectively.

Individual treatment court team members assess other treatment court programs and provide feedback about that program's alignment with the National Drug Court Best Practice Standards (NADCP 2013, 2015) and the 10 Key Components of Drug Courts. The peers have been trained in how to conduct the assessment, how to conduct an in-person visit to the other program, and how to compile the information into a simple report that includes suggestions for improvement and resource ideas. In turn, the peer will have the opportunity to learn about innovative and successful practices that have been implemented in other programs.

The main activities involved in the peer review process include:

- Online assessment on program characteristics, policies, and procedures completed by the program being reviewed.
- 2-day (or possibly 3-day) site visit where peers observe staffing and court hearings, interview team members and partner agency staff, talk with program participants, and review program documents.
- On-site debrief of assessment findings.
- Summary report of feedback, including a table of best practices and which practices the program is meeting, recommendations for program improvement, documentation of innovative/successful practices to share with other programs, and requests for future training or resources.
- Follow-up phone call with the program under review to discuss the report including additional findings, commendations, and recommendations that were not covered during the on-site debrief.

VII. Statewide Drug Court Grant

In 2019 the New Hampshire Department of Justice (DOJ) was awarded a Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Statewide Drug Court Grant. The grant award provided funding for database migration, training, self-assessment surveys, a recidivism study, and an equity and inclusion study. Beginning in July 2020 the state coordinator began meeting with the sub grantees on a weekly basis to oversee the projects. DOJ received a no cost extension through September 2023 to finish and transition the active projects.

In 2021 DOJ was awarded another BJA Statewide Drug Court Grant. In addition to finalizing the 2019 grant studies, this grant allows the NHJB to hire a grant manager/writer, contract for transportation services, partially fund the statewide treatment court conference, validate the ORAS risk assessment, and fund the statewide database.

In 2024 the NHJB was awarded a BJA Statewide Drug Court Grant. This grant will assist the drug courts to be trained in and utilize the Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) Assessment. Enhance and fund the Drug Court Database, expand training on evidence-based practices and team cohesion, and increase funds for transportation assistance.

VIII. Next Steps

Community Housing

In support of this initiative to increase access to safe housing statewide, the NHJB Community Housing Program (CHP) was established to work in collaboration with the Department of Corrections (DOC), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services (BDAS) to provide temporary rent support to qualified participants as they work to sustain housing independently. The types of safe housing options include emergency housing (hotels and shelters), sober/transitional living, and apartments. The program is funded through the Governor's Commission on Addiction, Treatment, and Recovery and the Opioid Abatement Commission. The CHP launched in October 2020 with funding from the Governor's Commission on Addiction, Treatment, and Recovery and was then expanded in December 2024 with funding from the Opioid Abatement Commission. The expansion allowed the CHP to serve more court-involved populations and more individuals overall. Since the CHP launch in October 2020, the program has connected 1,023 participants with safe housing. Of these, 606 have successfully transitioned into stable housing of their own and an additional 267 are actively working with their prospective case manager's and PPO's towards achieving that shared mission of self-sustainable and independent living.

Initiatives during fiscal year 2026 will include the continued expansion of resources for safe recovery housing that accommodates medically assisted treatment (MAT). In addition, the CHP will continue to expand the long-term sustainable housing options with statewide housing vendors. In fiscal year 2025, the program extended support to the Mental Health Treatment Courts and individuals on NH Probation; these efforts will continue to expand in the upcoming fiscal year. The NHJB CHP continues to work in collaboration with the Department of Corrections (DOC), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services (BDAS) to provide temporary rent support to qualified participants as they work to sustain housing independently.

Housing Drug Court success story

In June 2025, the Hillsborough South Drug Court program graduated 8 participants who had successfully completed the program. Of these 8 graduates, 7 of them had received support from the Community Housing Program during their early stages of the program. This housing support allowed the participants to stabilize in the community more quickly and begin establishing other critical supports without being at constant risk of experiencing homelessness.

One of these participant's support team shared the following message: *I wanted to take a moment to highlight the positive impact this support has had on this individual. Having known him for quite some time, I can confidently say this is the best I have seen him doing. I recently had the opportunity to catch up with him, and I was truly impressed by the dedication he has shown toward housing initiatives and the programs he is involved in. His commitment and progress are remarkable, and it is clear that the support provided through the Community Housing Program has played a significant role in his success.*

With support from the Community Housing Program, these Drug Treatment Court participants were able to obtain safe recovery housing and the ability to focus on their recovery, while also achieving goals like receiving critical medical care, finding meaningful employment, and reunifying with children.

Family Treatment Court

Nationally recognized to create better outcomes for families, Family Treatment Court (FTC) is a court process parents with abuse and neglect cases participate in when they have a substance use disorder. FTC uses a supportive, team approach to increase families' access to supports and services, accountability and recovery, and the likelihood of reunifying families that can maintain long-term health. When parents have the support and tools they need to enter treatment sooner, stay engaged in treatment longer, and resolve barriers quickly, their children spend fewer days out of home and separated from their families. Implementation of FTC and best practice processes are a partnership of the court, the Division for Children, Youth and Families, Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Hampshire, parent attorneys, substance use treatment providers, mental health providers, and other community partners.

Desired Outcomes:

- Decrease time between when a family is identified as needing services and when they receive services.
- Increase access to family-centered treatment and case management for families.
- Increase family engagement in substance use and mental health treatment, and other community-based services.
- Increase coordination of support services for families.
- Increase parent's ability to parent and comply with case plan requirements.
- Decrease time to children returning home, if appropriate.
- Decrease time to address barriers to appropriate permanency options, especially reunification.
- Increase long-term access to multidisciplinary and multisystemic Collaborative Approaches in Abuse/Neglect court cases impacted by parental SUD in NH.

Current Implementation:

Family Treatment Court in Sullivan County (FTCSC) is the first full implementation of FTC in NH. It serves all families with abuse and neglect cases in the Newport and Claremont Circuit Courts when at least one parent has a substance use disorder. FTCSC has been in operation since 2021.

Manchester Supported Family Approach (SFA) serves families with abuse/neglect cases with children ages 0-3, whose parents are at risk of or separated from their children, at least in part, due to substance use. Families have access to early hearings in which the team and family work together to identify and meet needs as early as possible in a holistic and ongoing manner. SFA has been operating since July 2024.

Immediate improvements to the abuse and neglect case process are identified through FTCSC and SFA which are then shared with partners working across the system for immediate implementation. Examples include language changes in judge’s orders, increased collaboration, and training opportunities.

Funding:

Source	Purpose	Dates
Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Family Treatment Court Program	Statewide expansion of best practices, to include new integration of FTC alumni into all processes of FTC planning, implementation, and development; limited support of two additional FTCs	October 2024-September 2028
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Grants to Expand Substance Use Disorder Treatment Capacity in Adult and Family Treatment Drug Courts	Family Treatment Court in Sullivan County (FTCSC) Coordination, Case Management, Peer Support, and Database	October 2024-September 2029

Mental Health Court

Mental Health Courts (MHCs) offer a unique approach to addressing the complex needs of individuals with mental health conditions who are involved in the criminal justice system. By combining supervision with community-based treatment programs, MHCs aim to reduce recidivism and improve public safety.

The NHJB worked with MHCs in NH and a working group made up of lawyers, coordinators, and the Council of State Governments to create statewide guidelines. These guidelines released in 2023 give direction for the MHCs of NH. The mental health court guidelines were updated in 2025 to more closely align with the All-Rise best practices for Treatment Courts.

In 2023 the Judicial Branch was awarded a Bureau of Justice Assistance Justice and Mental Health Collaboration grant. This grant funds a Statewide Mental Health Court Coordinator to conduct a statewide

assessment of Mental Health Courts and provide more opportunities for mental health training to judges and MHC court teams.

The Statewide Treatment Court Coordinator and the Statewide Mental Health Court Coordinator are currently engaged with Rutgers University to develop a robust qualitative and quantitative evaluation process for mental health courts in the state.

Seven counties in New Hampshire currently operate MHCs. Through Sequential Intercept Mapping workshops Carroll county has identified potential opportunities to establish an MHC. New mental health court initiatives were launched in 2025 by both the Belknap County Behavioral Health Court and the Salem Mental Health Court. The Southern Carroll County Mental Health Court team recently created a target start date for the program of February 2026 to be located in Ossipee District Court.

In 2025 the Mental Health Court Coordinator participated in the planning committee for the 2025 Treatment Court Conference that was held in Bartlett NH October 23-24. We also offered Statewide Training to Mental Health Court Teams and Judges in the following topics:

- Suicide prevention
- De-escalation techniques
- Mental Health 101
- Life Interrupted providing a prospective of family members with lived experience.

Young Adult Court

The Hillsborough County Superior Court—Northern District Young Adult Court (YAC) officially launched as a pilot project on July 13, 2023, after approximately 2 years of planning. YAC is a voluntary program for offenders who are younger than 25 years old who have been determined to be at moderate to high risk to reoffend and in moderate to high need of case management, supervision, and support.

The mission of the Hillsborough County Superior Court—North Young Adult Court (“YAC”) is to reduce recidivism and enhance community safety by providing young adult participants with supervision, accountability, education or job training, mental health or substance misuse treatment and/or counseling, and life-building skills. YAC is intended to address the risks and needs of young adults where immature decision-making, unstable life conditions such as poor family support or inconsistent housing, lack of education or job skills, or other similar circumstances have contributed to the criminal behavior. This judicially supervised program will provide participants with the opportunity to develop mature decision-making and life skills with the goals of reducing crime, restoring families, and successfully integrating participants into the community.

YAC may help reduce or avoid the long-term impacts on the person’s life that flow from a felony conviction in the ordinary adult court process. Key components of the program include job training, education assistance/support, mental health treatment and case management; frequent, random drug testing (if clinically appropriate) through observed urine screens; frequent status hearings in front of the YAC Judge and team. The goal of these requirements and hearings is to report on compliance and progress and provide accountability. The YAC judge will use incentives to promote positive behavioral change and sanctions to discourage negative behavior.

YAC currently has 9 participants with a capacity of up to ten individuals in the pilot phase of the program. Formation and staffing of YAC has been a collaborative effort by the Superior Court, Hillsborough County Attorney's Office, the New Hampshire Public Defender Program, New Hampshire Probation/Parole Division, and MyTurn. YAC in Hillsborough North Superior Court is the first such program in New Hampshire but it is modeled on similar evidence-based programs in other states.

Veteran Court expansion

New Hampshire Expands Veteran Court Program with New Legislation to Support Former Service Members in Crisis

In an effort to better serve the state's military veterans, New Hampshire has expanded its Veteran Court program, complemented by new legislation aimed at providing critical support to former service members struggling with legal issues related to mental health, substance abuse, and trauma. Initially launched as a specialized court to address the unique needs of veterans involved in the criminal justice system, the program has seen significant growth in recent years, reflecting a growing recognition of the challenges veterans face when reintegrating into civilian life.

Under the new legislation, the scope of Veteran Courts across the state has been broadened to ensure more veterans have access to the resources and treatment they need to overcome underlying issues that may contribute to their legal troubles. These include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and substance use disorders—all of which are prevalent among many veterans. The expansion of the program also brings increased collaboration between the court system, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), community-based organizations, and local mental health providers to offer comprehensive treatment plans, including counseling, rehabilitation, job training, and housing support. The legislation passed however due to budget restraints for FY26 and FY27 RSA 490-I:1 was not funded this biennium. The NHJB continues to monitor federal grants that could fund parts of veteran's courts.

Veteran Courts are designed as a diversionary option, allowing veterans charged with certain offenses to undergo treatment and rehabilitation instead of facing traditional incarceration. The approach prioritizes healing and reintegration into society over punitive measures, with a focus on providing veterans with the tools they need to succeed. Judges, mentors, and legal professionals involved help foster trust and understanding between participants and the court system.

The new legislation not only broadens access to Veteran Court programs but also improves coordination between federal, state, and local agencies. By providing veterans with the treatment, resources, and support they need in a compassionate and specialized court setting, New Hampshire hopes to reduce recidivism, improve public safety, and ultimately help veterans lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.

IX. Strategic plan:

The NHJB collaborated with the Center for Court Innovation, Northwest Professional Consortium, Inc. (NCP Research) and the Drug Offender Program Advisory Group in 2017 to create a strategic plan for the New Hampshire Drug Courts. The Strategic plan was finalized in Feb of 2018 and gradually implemented. In November of 2021, the NHJB finalized its new strategic plan after collaborating with Center for Court

Innovation. The plan includes continued program development of the Adult Drug Courts, Mental Health Courts, Family Drug Courts, and Community Housing program.

The NHJB is working with NCSC to create a 3-year strategic plan for the Adult Drug Courts and will include Council for State Government (CSG) the TA provider for Mental Health Courts, Children and Family Futures (CFF) to assist with the Family Treatment Court and Supportive Family Approach. The Treatment Court office will have an overall plan with specific plans for multiple treatment court types.

In 2025 the NHJB hosted a treatment court strategic planning session for Adult Drug Courts, Mental Health Courts, Family Treatment Courts, and Veterans Courts. This plan laid a strong foundation for the future of our treatment courts. Over the past several months, we engaged in an inclusive planning process that brought together staff, leadership, community partners, and other stakeholders to develop a focused, actionable roadmap for the next three to five years. With over sixty individuals registered, there was representation from the courts, public defenders, prosecution, treatment, DOC, CASA, DCYF, student interns, and others. Across all treatment courts the plan has nineteen Goals and over fifty objectives.

X. Conclusion

The New Hampshire Judicial Branch is proud of the drug court programs that, since July 2016, have been established, expanded, and/or reformed with the aid of state funds and statewide standards. The Office of Drug Court Offender Program now serves as an invaluable resource to these programs through training, technical assistance, and overall support.