



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Southwestern Regional Drug Court has first graduation **For immediate release Friday, April 16, 2010**

MADISON, W.Va. – Supreme Court Justice Brent Benjamin will be the main speaker at the first graduation ceremony of the Southwestern Regional Drug Court at 2 p.m. April 23, 2010, at the Boone County Courthouse.

The graduation ceremony will be held in the second-floor courtroom in the courthouse, 200 State Street, Madison.

Judges Eric H. O'Briant and Roger L. Perry of the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Logan County and Judges Jay M. Hoke and William S. Thompson of the Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit of Boone and Lincoln Counties also are expected to attend.

Four adults will graduate from the program, which opened in November 2008 to serve Boone, Lincoln, and Logan Counties.

Probation Officer Mary Napier is the Drug Court Coordinator for the three counties. She coordinates services with the Department of Health and Human Resources, the Public Defender's Office, prosecutors, other probation officers, deputy sheriffs, local police and State Police, treatment facilities, and local professionals like psychiatrists and psychologists, to tailor the program to individual participants' needs.

Adult drug courts serve only those who have either pled guilty or been found guilty of non-violent misdemeanors and felonies, and who were motivated to commit those crimes due to a substance abuse addiction. People can volunteer for the programs to avoid jail and prison sentences, if a judge so orders. Prosecutors have final approval of all participants, and all participants must be evaluated as a low to moderate risk to be released back into the community. People who have been charged with sex crimes or crimes in which a child was the victim are not eligible.

Participants undergo substance abuse treatment and are heavily supervised by probation officers, law enforcement, and the sentencing court. If needed, they may also undergo treatment for mental illnesses. Participants may be forced to repeat certain phases if they have positive drug screens or if they refuse to cooperate. The judge may impose jail time if he feels it is necessary to make a participant follow the protocol.

Adult drug treatment courts are recognized as an important strategy to improve substance-abuse treatment outcomes and reduce crime. Treatment courts produce greater cost benefits than other strategies. (GAO February 2005 report).

West Virginia has ten regional adult treatment court programs serving twenty-four counties and four juvenile treatment courts serving four counties.

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