Supreme Court of Appeals
State of West Virginia

News

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# Drug Court Day March 10 to honor graduates

For immediate release

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Supreme Court Justice Brent D. Benjamin; Senate President William P. Cole, III; and House Speaker Tim Armstead will join together to honor graduates of West Virginia adult and juvenile drug courts in a ceremony at 10 a.m. Thursday, March 10, in the lower rotunda of the Capitol.

They each are scheduled to speak, as will several drug court graduates from around the state.

Adult drug courts and juvenile drug courts will have information displays about their programs in the lower rotunda that morning.

"We look forward to celebrating these treatment programs, the success of which is so crucial to ending the repeating cycle of drug abuse, victimization and crime in our State," said Justice Benjamin.

The Justice Reinvestment Act passed in 2014 required adult drug courts to serve all of West Virginia's counties by July 1, 2016.

There now are 27 adult drug court programs serving 45 counties. Three additional drug courts are planned to cover the Third (Doddridge, Pleasants, Ritchie Counties), Fourteenth (Braxton, Clay, Gilmer, and Webster Counties), and Thirtieth (Mingo County) Judicial Circuits.

There are 15 operational juvenile drug courts serving 20 counties: Berkeley, Boone, Brooke, Hancock, Harrison, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mercer, Monongalia, Ohio, Pleasants, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Wayne, Wirt, and Wood.

As of Feb. 22:

- 857 participants had graduated from adult drug courts, a graduation rate of 52 percent.
- There were 487 active participants in West Virginia adult drug courts.
- 506 participants had graduated from West Virginia's juvenile drug courts, a graduation rate of 50.5 percent.
- There were 194 active juvenile drug court cases.

The recidivism rate for adult drug court graduates over two years is 9.4 percent. The one-year, post-graduate recidivism rate is 1.88 percent. That compares to a nearly 80 percent recidivism rate for incarcerated drug offenders.

The average annual cost to serve an adult drug court participant is $7,100, compared to an annual incarceration cost of $17,611 in jail or $28,369 in prison.

The recidivism rate for juvenile drug court graduates is 14.6 percent, compared to a 55.1 percent rate for youths in traditional juvenile probation programs.

For FY 2012-13, the average cost to serve each graduating youth was $6,900, compared to $96,000 per person in a Division of Juvenile Services facility, $44,000 per person in a residential group facility, or $99,000 per person in a hospital treatment facility.

When adult drug courts are implemented consistent with models and procedures developed based on objective studies, they significantly reduce recidivism and substance abuse among high-risk substance abusing offenders, according to rigorous evaluation and research. Properly implemented adult drug courts increase the likelihood of successful rehabilitation while simultaneously reducing the cost to the public below the historic costs of addressing these problems in the criminal justice system.

The goal of juvenile drug courts is to intervene early in the life of a young person and to use the drug court model to prevent future involvement in the court system.

Adult and juvenile drug courts are open only to non-violent offenders whose underlying crimes are linked to substance abuse. Referrals are made by judicial officers, law enforcement, probation officers, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. Juveniles also can be referred by school personnel, parents, and child protective services/youth workers.

Both adult and juvenile drug court programs have multiple phases and minimum lengths. Both require intensive supervision; frequent, random, and observed drug testing; counseling sessions; regular meetings with probation officers; appropriate sanctions and incentives; and other rehabilitative services. Juvenile drug courts also involve family participation and promote self-sufficiency.

West Virginia's first adult drug court was established in the Northern Panhandle in 2005. The Supreme Court's first juvenile adult court was established in Cabell County in 2007. (The Cabell County juvenile drug court had been established in 1999 with a federal grant. After it ran out, the Supreme Court re-established the program.)

In 2009 and 2011 respectively, the West Virginia Legislature enacted legislation which codified adult and juvenile drug courts in West Virginia under the administration, control and responsibility of the Supreme Court.

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