

Mental Health Court- Pennington County

Background: The Task Force on Community Justice and Mental Illness Early Intervention recommended the establishment of a Mental Health Court in Pennington County.

- The court in Pennington County will establish a specialized docket for certain offenders with mental illness that substitutes a problem-solving model for the traditional criminal court procedures.
- Participants will be identified through mental health screening and assessments and voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment court program. The leadership of the program will reside with the Judge. A team of mental health professionals will develop a treatment plan. Other members on the team, including a court services officer, a state’s attorney, a defense attorney, a coordinator and a law enforcement representative will work together to ensure adherence to the developed treatment and supervision plan.

Structure: A defendant can enter the court for various convictions and the court is not targeted to a specific offense. Rather, the offense committed would relate to the defendant’s mental health condition. The goal is to identify individuals suffering from severe and persistent mental illness and direct them into a judicially supervised community based program. The Mental Health Court will provide intensive judicial supervision for up to 20 clients.

Results: Mental Health Courts have been found to reduce the probability of any new charge by 39% as compared to those that receive treatment as usual. Additionally, the probability of receiving a new violent offense is reduced by 54% as compared to those that receive treatment as usual. ¹

Funding Request Breakdown:

Mental Health Court Services Office- \$63,683

Mental Health Court Operating Expenses- \$46,264

Operating Expenses

Travel	2,520
Transportation Costs	4,000
Defense Counsel	16,744
Mental Health and Addiction Providers	10,400
Miscellaneous Supplies	1,800
Medical Supplies	10,800
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	46,264

Mental Health Court Treatment- \$138,500 (6 months) (DSS Budget)

¹ Effectiveness of a Mental Health Court in Reducing Recidivism and Violence; Am J Psychiatry 2007; 164:1395-1403. See also “Improving Responses to People with Mental Illnesses, The Essential Elements of a Mental Health Court.” Bureau of Justice Assistance (2007).