

**FIRST DISTRICT MENTAL HEALTH COURT**  
Eligibility Taxonomy - 10 Factors Relevant to Program Acceptance

Referral Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Eligibility Review: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Mental Illness</b>	To be eligible for the program the defendant must have a diagnosis of Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, and/or Bipolar Disorder (usually Bipolar I or Bipolar II, as Bipolar NOS does not reflect the same level of severity in functional impairment).	COMMENT
<b>Criminal History</b>	Criminal history includes not only criminal offenses alleged currently or committed historically, but also the longitudinal pattern of criminal conduct over time. The habitual offender may represent a poor candidate for success.	COMMENT
<b>Nature of Criminal Charges</b>	Both historically, and in the current circumstance, the nature of criminal offenses with respect to the issues of public safety, represent a critical factor of eligibility. Violent offenses pose a risk to public safety and program viability.	COMMENT
<b>Mental Health Treatment History</b>	Of importance is information about the defendant's motivation for treatment and existing or past level of participation. Often treatment has been avoided, resisted, or of little interest until there are circumstances of incarceration	COMMENT
<b>Substance Abuse History</b>	Substance abuse is a complicating factor in mental illness diagnosis as it can produce symptoms that mimic other mental illness conditions. Substance abuse can also exacerbate existing co-occurring mental disorders previously in remission.	COMMENT
<b>Personality Characteristics</b>	Personality Disorder (PD) produces ongoing conflicts that are enduring, problematic, and difficult to manage. Defendants who have a qualifying diagnosis, but where PD is the primary focus of treatment, must be scrutinized carefully for acceptance.	COMMENT
<b>Family Dynamics</b>	Relationships with immediate and extended family can either represent a network of strength and support or a source of persistent turmoil. Family pathology, criminal histories, and dysfunctional behavior may pose a serious detriment to program success.	COMMENT
<b>Patterns of Association</b>	Success in the program may necessitate a change in the defendant's friendship patterns and unhealthy associations. A network of manipulative "friends" with criminal and substance abuse histories will unduly place the defendant at greater risk of failure.	COMMENT
<b>Motivational Demeanor</b>	Motivation for change is a critical factor for success. Defendants not motivated internally are more likely to repeat errors of the past. Those who are not highly invested will usually plateau in progress and eventually terminate the program prematurely.	COMMENT
<b>Readiness for Change</b>	Self-change follows a predictable course along a series of specific stages. Defendants who set goals they are not ready for will typically be more inclined toward failure. Program success will usually follow those who seriously contemplate behavior change.	COMMENT

The above taxonomy represents a general guideline for mental health court program eligibility. Each dimension must be assessed on a case-by-case basis relative to a totality of circumstances including both mitigating as well as aggravating factors.