

First District Mental Health Court

GOAL SETTING AND MENTAL HEALTH COURT ADVANCEMENT

Each phase of mental health court advancement should be initiated with the articulation of basic goals and objectives in each of four areas that are fundamental to program success. These areas include (1) what the individual plans to accomplish in the area of mental health treatment, (2) what specific efforts will be made in the area of productivity, (3) what will be done to address the area of socialization, and (4) what plan will be initiated to further learning and education.

Frequently, stagnation and decline leading to program termination results when participants fail to attend to the proper management of their mental illness, the effective management of their time, the appropriate management of their relationships, and the neglect of education. Goals in these critical areas should be fashioned in the affirmative, such as, “I will _____,” rather than articulated in the negative, “I will not _____.” Personal management in each of these four areas is further described below:

Illness Management:

The management of mental illness begins with the development of a coordinated and person-centered plan of care that is directed by the client. Investment in mental health and adjunct treatment (i.e., substance abuse services) means that the consumer actively participates as part of the treatment team, builds rapport with his or her providers, maintains open lines of communication regarding thoughts, feelings, symptoms, experiences, medication results, and progress toward recovery. Consumers invested in their treatment are conscientious about keeping scheduled appointments and working interdependently in both developing and adhering to an individualized plan of care.

Time Management:

The management of time, particularly productive time in which the individual participates in activities that are of economic or social value, is an important factor in the acquisition of a personal sense of adequacy, competence, accomplishment, and contribution. These are motivational ingredients that provide the stimulus for sustained effort toward the development of a productive lifestyle. Concomitantly, the more the program participant withdraws from community engagement into isolation or idle pursuits, the greater the tendency to become

discouraged and counter-productive. Without forethought and proactive planning for a productive daily future, the predicaments of the past will typically override thought and action to the detriment of the future. Simple goals with respect to productive living may include efforts to secure full or part time employment, supported employment, volunteer work, continuing technical, formal or informal education, and other positive activities that require focused attention and goal-directed effort.

Relationship Management:

The participant's personal associations represent a critical relationship factor that impacts judgments of individual worth and perceived capability to succeed. Social esteem, or the sense of worth relative to other people, is derived exclusively from interpersonal relationships. Who the participant spends time with consistently is important not only from the standpoint of self-image, but also in terms of what any particular relationship offers with respect to the opportunity for personal growth or the opportunity for personal defeat. MHC program participants are highly encouraged to surround themselves socially with those who offer respect, support, encouragement, and responsibility in daily living. A network of value-added relationships will be critical to both immediate program success, as well as the participant's future long-term recovery.

Educational Management:

Continuing education, whether formal or informal, is critical to both functional and social survival in community living. For some participants, this may mean completing basic literacy education, for others it may involve completing a GED, and still others it may include advanced education in technical, trade, or a college liberal arts and sciences program. Regardless of the level of one's education upon entry into the MHC program, the pursuit of additional learning is both valued and expected by the court as a means to sustain progress and advantage participants in their personal, family, and community life.