

MMC MOMENTS



Fulton County Misdemeanor Mental Health Court

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THE YEAR OF NEW BEGINNINGS

There is no denying that 2020 was a year of firsts for the Fulton County Misdemeanor Mental Health Court (MMC). Having operated as a pilot program with its first Coordinator and Case Manager in 2019, the MMC team welcomed 2020 as a separate unit under the Magistrate Court and earned its certification from the Council of Accountability Courts & Judges as a Certified Georgia Accountability Court. The team introduced a Participant's Handbook, an expanded Policy & Procedures Manual, and increased its programming to 12 months to better serve the participants and the community and to meet State standards. The 2020 that unfolded was surely not the "2020-Vision" the MMC team imagined.

In February, MMC launched its partnership with SPROKIT, "Successful Prisoner Re-Entry -- Opportunity & Knowledge Interactive Tool". The app allowed mobile interface with our participants providing helpful notifications for the group, along with access to 24/7 support from health providers, case workers, and other stakeholders. It was still early in 2020 and the goal for the app at the time was to provide participants with constant support and to allow for some flexibility in requirements and check-ins to be electronic to reduce time and costs for the participants and team members. With the pandemic threatening lives and halting court operations, by March SPROKIT fast became the foundation for the future of MMC.



In April, as the world became reliant on remote working, Virtual Zoom Court became a reality for our team and participants. We revised procedures daily to facilitate our programming. Court continued and the MMC behavioral health team adapted and provided virtual mental health programming. SPROKIT allowed constant connection to our participants and in July, MMC conducted a virtual graduation for 10 participants who completed the program. Our commitment and teamwork throughout the many changes far exceeded our expectations for the year.

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& CACJ Certification**

SPROKIT Launch

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Upcoming:

**Graduation on February
5, 2021**

**Justice Partners Meeting
on April 16, 2021**



Participants Persevere During Uncertain Times

Despite the challenges, MMC closed 2020 with 19 active participants who have remained dedicated to the program and their wellness. Nearly half are slated to graduate in the first quarter of 2021, having accomplished the majority of the program during extraordinary times. Two MMC participants began the program living in shelters and hotels but were able to successfully secure apartments with the assistance of the team. Others have been successful in securing employment, identification, benefits and even parenting classes. MMC looked different for the participants but they continued to meet and exceed their goals.

In 2020, Certification of the Misdemeanor Mental Health Court not only assisted our participants, but was an enhancement to the program and our team members. Each of our Justice Partners on the team from Magistrate and State Court Judges, Solicitor General and Public Defender Offices, DBHDD and River Edge Behavioral Health was able to receive state-sponsored training and access to a specialized accountability court case management system. The future collection of outcome data will assist in securing grants in the future and assessing our mental health court's impact over time. MMC ended 2020 producing a long-awaited Orientation Video to inform participants and the public more thoroughly.

2020 arrived with unknowns we could not have planned: a COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, political division and economic hardship. We were able to push through with the unwavering commitment of every Justice Partner represented on the MMC team. 2021 may present new challenges and adventures. Without a doubt, Fulton's Misdemeanor Mental Health Court team remains 100% committed to improving the quality of life for people charged with misdemeanors who have mental illness. We will continue to make effective use of the community's limited criminal justice and mental health resources and we look forward to serving Our Community in 2021.

MMC Justice Partners

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Cassandra Kirk
Patsy Y. Porter
Chuck M. Douglas

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Georgee Corley

Litigation Manager

Brooke E. Lane

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