



Montgomery County Behavioral Health Court

Behavioral Health Court Goals

- Connect criminal defendants who suffer from serious mental illness to treatment and support services in the community.
- Reduce time spent involved with the criminal justice system.
- Decrease time spent in jail by moving defendants with serious mental illness expeditiously into appropriate community based treatment settings.
- Promote employment and other evidences of recovery among defendants served by the Behavioral Health Court.

Structure/Model

- Behavioral Health Court will accept referrals after criminal charges have been filed and the case has been forwarded to the Court of Common Pleas for further disposition.
- Referrals will also be accepted for defendants who are before the Court of Common Pleas for alleged violations of probation/parole sentences.
- Participation is voluntary. When the defendant is formally accepted into Behavioral Health Court, the defendant must enter a plea to certain agreed upon charges.
- Upon successful completion of the Behavioral Health Court program, the defendant's charges may be reduced or dropped all together.

Eligibility Criteria

- The defendant must be a resident of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.
- The defendant must be 18 years of age or older.
- The defendant must have a serious mental illness (SMI) diagnosis (schizophrenia, major mood disorder, psychosis NOS, borderline personality disorder) that contributed to the criminal behavior.
- Defendants with co-occurring disorders (mental health and substance abuse) will be evaluated for Behavioral Health Court if they meet the criteria for serious mental illness.
- The Court prefers to address non-violent offenses but other crimes will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis.

Exclusionary Criteria

While each case will be considered individually, the following offenses will typically be excluded from the court:

- Felony sex offenses
- Felony crimes of violence
- Felony crimes of violence committed with a firearm
- Felony drug offenses
- Defendants are considered ineligible if there are any unresolved out of county charges. It is the responsibility of the defendant's counsel to resolve any pending out of county charges.
- **Murder and Manslaughter will not be considered under any circumstances.**



Montgomery County Behavioral Health Court

In June 2009, the Montgomery County Behavioral Health Court was established to more effectively address the needs of defendants with serious mental illness cycling through the court and prison system.

This court represents a collaboration between the Court, Office of the Public Defender, Office of the District Attorney, Office of Behavioral Health, Probation and Parole Department, Correctional Facility, Montgomery County Emergency Service, Inc. and other community based treatment providers.

Prospective program participants should contact their Attorneys or The Behavioral Health Court Coordinator

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*Application and more information
available online at:
<https://wiki.montcopa.org/BHCourt>*



Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas Behavioral Health Court

Honorable Joseph A. Smyth, Judge



MISSION STATEMENT

To enhance public safety and reduce recidivism of criminal defendants with serious mental illness by connecting them with community treatment services and supports.

To find appropriate dispositions to their criminal charges by considering the defendant's mental illness and the seriousness of the offense.