

Tarrant County
Mental Health Diversion Court
Participant Handbook



Honorable David Cook
Honorable Deborah Nekhom
Magistrate Anna Hernandez

Introduction

This handbook has been designed for your personal use. It is meant to answer any questions you might have and provide information about what is expected of you as a participant in the program. The foundation of the Mental Health Diversion Court is based on three essential values: Dignity and respect for self and others; Personal Responsibility; and Honesty. The mission of the Tarrant County Mental Health Diversion Court is to identify mentally impaired offenders, to expedite them through the criminal justice system, and to help them achieve mental stability and non-criminal behavior.

Program Structure

As a participant, you will be expected to comply with directives from your Case Manager, comply with the tasks identified on your individualized treatment plan, and follow the instructions given in the Mental Health Diversion Court. The individualized treatment plan will be created by a qualified Mental Health Professional during your initial evaluation and will include different goals and objectives that you will be required to complete during treatment. Your treatment plan may change during the program in order to address your needs and provide resources as needed. Some examples of objectives identified on the treatment plan may include: 1) The client will take all mental health medications as prescribed by their psychiatrist. 2) The client will attend at least 8 individual counseling at MHMR or a MHDC contracted vendor. 3) The client will maintain sobriety from all mind-altering substances and submit negative drug tests throughout the duration of the program.

Your Case Manager will monitor your progress while you are in the program and you will be required to attend monthly based office visits. You will also be required to call in every week in order to check in and let the team know how you are doing. You will also be required to attend court two times per month while you are in Phase One and one time per month while you are in Phases Two and Three. During court sessions, you will meet with the presiding Judge of the program in order to discuss your progress toward your treatment goals and the program requirements.

Program Duration

The Mental Health Diversion Court is completed on average between nine months and two years. The period in the program will be determined by your needs and your progress throughout treatment. You will be required to enter a guilty plea to be admitted into the program. Once you complete the program successfully, your case(s) will be dismissed and they will be eligible for an immediate expunction. If you do not complete the program successfully, your case(s) will be remanded to the court of origin.

Program Agreement

- Enter an Open Plea of “Guilty” for the stated offense and agree that this admission may be used against you in court as provided by law.
- Waive your rights to a speedy indictment, if charged with a felony offense, and to a speedy trial as provided for under the Code of Criminal Procedure of Texas, and the Texas and United States Constitutions.
- Do not commit a criminal offense while in the program or after completing the program.
- Do not consume alcohol or any illegal drugs.
- Submit to random and frequent drug testing.
- No contact with persons of disreputable or harmful character.
- Cooperate with mental health treatment and/or counseling as recommended.
- Take all mental health medications as prescribed by your prescribing physician.
- Complete treatment requirements as outlined by the treatment plan.
- Keep all appointments and attend all compliance hearings as scheduled.
- Keep program staff informed of your current address and telephone number.
- Consent to the release of health and mental health information as permitted under Texas law.
- Acknowledge that failure to comply with any term of this agreement will cause the State to withdraw from this agreement and proceed with prosecution of this offense.
- Acknowledge that the successful completion of the diversion agreement shall cause the State of Texas to dismiss the charges in this matter.

Phase System

The Tarrant County Mental Health Diversion Court has a phase system that consists of four different phases, each of which will take you approximately three to four months to complete.

Phase One - Stabilize

Complete a Psychiatric Evaluation with a Mental Health Professional.
Demonstrate medication compliance for 1 to 3 months to promote mood stability.
Demonstrate compliance with the program agreement.
Complete an individualized treatment plan.
Participate in treatment as outlined on the treatment plan.
No inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations within the last 3 months.
Maintain sobriety from all illegal drugs and alcohol for at least 2 months.
Regular attendance at court sessions.

Phase Two - Maintenance

Demonstrate medication compliance for 3 to 6 months to promote mood stability.
Continued compliance with the program agreement.
Participate in treatment as outlined on the treatment plan.
No inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations within the last 3 months.
Maintain sobriety from all illegal drugs and alcohol for at least 3 months.
Regular attendance at court sessions.

Phase Three – Continued Care Planning

Demonstrate medication compliance for at least 6 months to promote mood stability.
Continued compliance with the program agreement.
Complete treatment goals on the treatment plan.
No inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations within the last 4 months.
Maintain sobriety from all illegal drugs and alcohol for at least 4 months.
Regular attendance at court sessions.
Completed Transition to Discharge Plan.

Phase Four – Step-Down Phase

Demonstrate medication compliance for at least 6 months to promote mood stability.
Completed all treatment goals on the treatment plan.
No inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations within the last 4 months.
Completed Transition to Discharge Plan.
Maintain sobriety from all illegal drugs and alcohol for at least 4 months.

Graduation Requirements

- Clear demonstration that you have been fully engaged in your treatment and completed all program requirements.
- Continued demonstration of ability to maintain long-term sobriety.
- Employed or unemployed and adequately supported by other means, such as retirement, disability, and family/spousal support.
- Actively engaged with community resources, such as MHMR, JPS, NAMI, AA, etc.
- Completed Transition to Discharge Plan.
- Pay Program Fee in Full

Contact Information

Mental Health Diversion Court

mentalhealth-diversion@tarrantcountytx.gov

Court Location

Tim Curry Criminal Justice Center
401 W. Belknap Street, 8th Floor
Trial Room B
Fort Worth, Texas 76196

Tarrant County
Mental Health Diversion Court

Participant Acknowledgement of Handbook

I, _____, acknowledge I have received a copy of the Tarrant County Mental Health Diversion Court (MHDC) Participant Handbook.

I, _____, acknowledge that if admitted into the Mental Health Diversion Court, I will be responsible for paying the program fee of **\$300**. I acknowledge that the program fee is to be paid at the initial court appearance before being accepted into the Mental Health Diversion Court unless otherwise indicated. I understand that the program fee must be paid by Money Order, Cashier's Check, or Credit Card.

I understand and agree to remain under the supervision of the Mental Health Diversion Court **UNTIL FURTHER ORDERS OF THIS COURT**. I acknowledge that I have read and understand my responsibilities and duties discussed in this Participant Handbook. I agree to abide by every rule.

Participant Signature

Date

MHDC Staff Signature

Date