



# **Cobb County Mental Health Court**

## **Participant Handbook**

This handbook belongs to:

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**Cobb County Mental Health Court  
32 Waddell Street  
Marietta, GA 30090**

**Ann B. Harris, Judge**

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**(\*NOTE: Landline numbers that do not receive text messages)**

**In case of an Emergency contact**

**Melanie Valentine:**

**(770) 528-8106 - office**

## **Welcome to the Cobb County Mental Health Court**

Welcome to the Cobb County Mental Health Court (MHC). This Handbook is designed to answer your questions about what is expected of you as a Mental Health Court participant. In addition to abiding by the court requirements in the admission paperwork and this handbook, you must also follow the instructions and orders given to you by the judge and any team members.

If you still have questions after reading this handbook, please contact your Court Case Manager or Mental Health Court Office.

### **Introduction**

The Cobb MHC is based on proven national research and program models. The Court is designed to provide you with an opportunity to pursue treatment for your mental health need(s), while productively addressing your legal issues. The Court is a partnership between the Judge, District Attorney, Defense Counsel, Probation, Law Enforcement, Treatment, the community, and you. Your participation in the court will range from 18 to 30 months. The average time is 24 months. The Court has 4 phases as well as a Pre- Graduation phase when you have completed all requirements to graduate pending the next ceremony. The goal of the Court is to link you with mental health, substance abuse treatment, and/or community resources that will allow you to live a healthy, independent, and productive life. You will be expected to complete and participate in numerous Court and treatment-oriented activities. These may include, but are not limited to: community support meetings, group and/or individual therapy, case management meetings, weekly court appearances, probation appointments (if applicable), and urine/breath/chemical drug testing.

### **Important Documents**

You are bound by your sentence, any exhibits attached to the sentence, any orders that were entered as part of your sentence, the Mental Health Court Participant Contract, all paperwork you completed as part of your application for Mental Health Court, this handbook, and any memos or other documents you are given by the Mental Health Court Team. Keep copies of all your paperwork together in a folder and keep it where you can access it at any time. Most answers to your questions will be found in those papers. Please refer there before you ask a question. You are responsible for your participation. You will attend all events independently,

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unless it is a family event. You are responsible for completing all assignments.

## **Staff Contact**

If an MHC Team member calls you, there is a reason they need to speak with you, so you need to answer the phone. If you cannot, you are required to return the call within 3 hours. Failure to do so will result in a sanction. We will do our best to only call during normal business hours and make sure that after-hours contact is **only** emergency or surveillance related.

*If a staff member does not pick up, leave a voicemail. **DO NOT call repeatedly.***

Courthouse Office Hours: 8:00am- 5:00pm

Treatment Hours: 8:00am-8:00pm

## **Roles of the MHC Team members**

### **Judge's Role:**

In the courtroom, the Judge develops a personal, working relationship with each participant while monitoring the participant's progress. The Judge has many responsibilities beyond Mental Health Court; therefore, his/her time is limited. Direct contact with the Judge and his/her office is **prohibited** beyond the courtroom setting. The Judge is not your case manager, personal attorney, or your legal advisor. The Judge attends non-court settings such as staffing to discuss possible candidates for the program and to determine appropriate steps to foster program compliance.

Before each court session, the Judge will be given a progress report. The progress report will discuss your drug testing results, attendance, participation and cooperation in the treatment program, employment, or other requirements that may have been imposed. The Judge may ask questions about your progress and discuss any problems you may be having. The Judge will acknowledge your accomplishments. The Judge will also discuss areas where you are not doing well. The Judge will grant incentives or give sanctions based upon your behavior. It is your responsibility regarding how you do in the Court.

**Mental Health Court Coordinator:** The Coordinator acts as the primary contact person, attends staffing and court sessions, maintains participant records, and provides oversight for

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treatment and court services;

**Court Case Manager:** The CCM attends staffing and court sessions, provides the team with your case progress, coordinates services, and recommends appropriate sanctions and incentives.

**Prosecutor:** The Prosecutor attends staffing sessions, identifies potential candidates for the court, and participates in incentives and sanctions recommendations. The Prosecutor or their representative also attends court sessions. The Prosecutor cannot give you legal advice nor meet with you outside the courtroom. Should you need assistance with legal concerns/questions/comments, please contact the Court Coordinator for direction.

**Defense Attorney:** attends staffing sessions to evaluate your progress through the court and to recommend appropriate sanctions and incentives. Once you enter the court, the obligations of your former attorney end, and it is the Mental Health Court Defense Attorney who speaks on your behalf at court staffing sessions; however, this person does *not* represent you in the traditional sense;

**Sheriff's designated Mental Health Court Deputy:** provides accountability for your participation in the court, conducts unannounced field visits to your home and job; participates in staffing and attends court sessions;

**Mental Health Court Probation Officer:** provides reports on compliance matters to the team; and attends court sessions; all participants under community supervision are required to comply with all required special and general sentence conditions in addition to MHC requirements.

**Treatment staff:** ensures that each participant is enrolled in treatment services which may include, but is not limited to: group/individual therapy, medication management, & intensive case management services (as needed). Staff reports to team the participant's engagement in their treatment/recovery, progress, and suggests changes in treatment to improve participant outcomes. They attend staffing and court sessions. They also create, review, & update treatment plans.

## **Participant Responsibilities**

Once accepted into Mental Health Court, you need to follow **all** program guidelines. Each Phase and each individual will have specific requirements. The general guidelines are as follows:

- Attend all Court appearances, Dr.'s appointments, treatment sessions, and any other

appointments as assigned.

- Be on time for all appointments, treatment sessions, and court appearances;
- Abstain from using any illicit drugs or unapproved medications as well as refrain from using alcohol; complete all random alcohol and drug screens;
- If directed, attend community based support group meetings; and obtain a community based support group sponsor of the same gender;
- Comply with all education and employment requirements;
- Bring all assigned treatment materials to each group session;
- Do not enter any business whose primary function is the sale of alcohol;
- Do not associate with people who use or possess drugs;
- Immediately report any contact you have with any form of law enforcement (includes moving violations & traffic stops);
- Do not possess any weapons while in Mental Health Court, and do not carry any weapons on your person or in your vehicle (includes pocket knives).
- Inform all medical persons that you encounter that you are a participant in the Mental Health Court. Take the “Notice to Medical Professionals” form with you each time you have to see a doctor outside of MHC;
- Free expression of your thoughts and feelings are encouraged; however, violence, threats, or intimidation will not be tolerated. Extreme use of profanity is not acceptable;
- Keep the staff informed of your current address, phone number, and schedule;
- Dress appropriately for treatment sessions and court appearances;
- No phones in Court or treatment.

## **Courtroom Behavior and Rules**

Attend all scheduled Court appearances on time and immediately be seated in the courtroom;

- Do not talk in the courtroom or during court proceedings;
- Do not bring food or drink into the courtroom;
- Do not chew gum or eat candy in the courtroom;
- When addressing the Judge, answer with a "yes" sir/ma'am or "no" sir/ma'am and speak clearly so the Judge and other Team Members can hear you;
- Keep your hands out of your pockets;

- Remain in the courtroom until excused by the Judge. Do not leave the courtroom for **any** reason (including the bathroom), without permission.

## **Court Room Dress Code**

All participants are required to dress appropriately for Court, treatment sessions and office visits.

Appropriate dress means:

- No shorts to court (even during summer);
- No torn or ripped jeans;
- No swimwear;
- Underwear should never be visible during court, treatment, or office visits;
- No tight pants or leggings;
- No hats, caps, or bandanas;
- No sunglasses inside;
- No gang attire of any kind;
- No sagging pants that hang below the waist;
- No tank tops, muscle shirts, or crop-tops;
- No clothing advertising tobacco or alcohol products or attire with obscene words or pictures;
- Shirt tails are to be tucked into pants for Court;
- No flip flop or "thong" footwear in Court.

## **Treatment**

Each participant who is accepted into Mental Health Court will be required to attend treatment sessions. The treatment component of Mental Health Court is designed to provide a continuum of care during your recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration into the community. Each participant will receive a personalized structure (treatment plan), based upon their needs and issues. These treatment plans will be updated periodically, either based upon phase move, inability to maintain, or other circumstances where it is necessary to change the structure. To aid you in your treatment, each Phase of the Mental Health Court provides varying degrees of court supervision and alcohol and drug screening. You will be required to attend treatment groups, individual counseling sessions, doctor's appointments, , and case management meetings. As you successfully move through the Mental Health Court, the intensity of these requirements will lessen and expectations for increased personal accountability in everyday life will increase.

## Court Phases

### Phase 1 Requirements (Orientation)

Minimum of 3 months

- Stay clean and sober; **do not drink alcohol or use drugs.**
- Attend all appointments as assigned and scheduled.
- See doctor to determine if medication is necessary. If yes, take all medication as prescribed, do not change or stop taking medications without notifying your doctor and case manager. Report any and all side effects immediately.
- Attend on time and actively participate in all groups.
- Complete all assignments on time.
- Handbook test.
- If required, obtain sponsor within 10 days.
- Attend **weekly** court sessions.
- Meet with Court Case Manager once weekly for first year in program
- Obtain and maintain safe and adequate housing.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Have a **minimum of 2 weeks sobriety.**
- Have a **minimum of 2 weeks** without a jail sanction.



## Phase 2 Requirements (Engage)

Minimum of 5 months

- Stay clean and sober; **do not drink alcohol or use drugs**
- Attend on time and actively participate in all groups **as assigned**.
- Complete all assignments on time.
- Maintain medication compliance.
- Attend **weekly** court sessions.
- Find employment, continue in school, or enroll in the Vocational Rehabilitation program. If you are unable to work, your court case manager will assist you with application(s) for assistance. You will be required to complete weekly volunteer hours within your abilities.
- Begin work on personalized life goals.
- Begin work on personal budget.
- Meet with Court Case Manager as scheduled.
- Maintain/obtain safe, adequate, and approved housing. Begin independent living opportunity.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Have a **minimum of 4 weeks sobriety**.
- Have a **minimum of 4 weeks** without a jail sanction.

## Phase 3 Requirements (Maintain)

Minimum of 5 months

- Stay clean and sober; **do not drink alcohol or use drugs**
- Attend on time and actively participate in all groups as directed.
- Complete all assignments on time.
- Maintain medication compliance.
- Attend all appointments as scheduled. Failure to show or call for appointment will result in a sanction.
- Attend court sessions on **1st and 3rd Thursday of each month.**
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Maintain safe, adequate, and approved housing. Establish independent housing as possible. Housing must be approved by Team.
- Maintain employment, schooling, Vocational Rehabilitation or volunteer hours as directed. Minimum of 60 days.
- Meet with CCM as scheduled.
- Meet current goals as outlined in case plan.
- Work on GED classes and pre-tests as needed; follow up with CCM for progress goals. Must complete at least ½ of requirements to complete GED.
- Finalize personal budget. Establish financial objectives.
- Formulate personalized life goals. Review with CCM.
- Have a **minimum of 8 weeks** sobriety.
- Have a **minimum of 8 weeks** without a jail sanction.

## Phase 4 Requirements (Transition)

Minimum of 5 months

- Stay clean and sober; **do not drink alcohol or use drugs.**
- Attend on time and actively participate in all groups as directed.
- Complete all assignments on time.
- Maintain medication compliance.
- Attend all appointments as scheduled. Failure to show or call for appointment will result in a sanction.
- Attend court sessions on **2nd and 4th Thursday of each month.**
- Meet with CCM as scheduled.
- Meet current goals as outlined in case plan.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Maintain safe, adequate, and approved independent housing.
- Maintain predictable, and accountable schedule for 90 days through employment, attending school, or volunteer services.
- Complete GED requirements. All tests must be passed and submitted before receiving graduation packet
- Complete writing assignment.
- Complete goals project.
- Complete the graduation packet at least 1 week before exit interview date.
- Schedule exit interview.
- Have a **minimum of 6 months** sobriety.
- Have a minimum of **16 weeks** without a jail sanction.

Once a participant completes the active phases of MHC, they will be in P Grad. This is the period when the requirements of participation are minimal and participants are responsible to supervise their own activities. This is the opportunity for the participant to demonstrate the skills and resources acquired from MHC. Individual case plans will be developed with each participant. The requirements will consist of any, all, or additional obligations as listed below until the graduation date. P Grad participants who are on Probation (Community Supervision) must continue with all sentence conditions.

#### P Grad (pending graduation)

- Maintain medication compliance.
- Attend court sessions on **2nd Thursday of each month.**
- Meet with CCM monthly as scheduled.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens. Must call the drug screen daily.
- Maintain safe, adequate, and approved independent housing.
- Maintain predictable, and accountable schedule through employment, attending school, or volunteer services.
- Still be subject to home checks.
- Complete exit interview 1 month before graduation.
- Submit to your last drug screen on graduation day.
- **Maintain** sobriety. Positive test while in Pre-grad will move participant back to at least Phase IV.
- No jail sanctions while in P Grad.

Aftercare may continue after graduation, depending on the terms of your case. See the Court Case Manager if you have questions.

## **Directions for completing Phase Up Request**

- Initial each task when you have completed it.
- Complete all fields in the list of requirements.
- Print name and sign form.
- Date form.
- Set appointment with Jennifer Logan to review your phase up request.
- Once approved by Treatment Staff, set up appointment with Jennifer Puett. Bring checklist with you. It MUST be the signed original- no faxes, emails, carrier pigeon delivery!!!!
- Phase up request must be turned in no later than Tuesday at 2 p.m. to be considered on the Thursday (court day) of that week.
- Phase up request will be staffed by Team. Approval or Denial is based on the Team's decision.
- If approved, a certificate will be awarded and you will move to next phase.
- If denied, you should speak to Court Staff for reasons and steps necessary for approval.

## **Group Materials**

You are expected to bring your group materials to each group. You are financially responsible for the replacement of any lost materials and will be sanctioned for anything that you do not have in group. Treatment is a vital part of MHC and it is difficult to do without the proper materials. Destruction of group materials will be sanctioned and you will be responsible for the cost of replacements.

## **Facility and Group Rules**

All MHC-related activities and locations are an extension of MHC. Your behavior should always reflect this understanding. This includes the treatment facility and parking lot, all other treatment locations, community service sites, special events, and any other function associated with a MHC activity. Violations of Court rules will result in sanctions and/or new criminal

charges.

- No alcohol, drugs, weapons, or pocket knives will be brought to any facility.
- Groups will begin on time. You must be punctual, as tardiness will result in sanctions. You must attend and participate in the full session to receive credit.
- Confidentiality is a must. What is said in group stays in group! You can tell anyone what **you** say or do in group, but not what **others** say or do. There will be **significant consequences** to any violation to this rule.
- Be respectful and attentive to peers.
- Free expression of your thoughts and feelings is encouraged; however, violence, threats, or intimidation will not be tolerated. Extreme use of profanity is not acceptable.
- Leave group only in an emergency **after** notifying a treatment staff member.
- Dress code: no tank tops, shorts, or dark glasses. No clothing advertising alcohol or drugs is permitted. No flip flops or “thong” shoes allowed. All hats are to be removed once inside the building. Appropriate hygiene is to be maintained.
- If you exhibit behaviors of harm to yourself or others, confidentiality will not apply, the proper authorities and next of kin will be notified.
- Cell phones must be left in the car before entering the treatment facility. They will be confiscated if they ring or beep.
- No visitors allowed at the treatment facility unless attending a scheduled session.
- Smoking is not permitted outside the court house entrance or at treatment. Cigarettes need to be left in your car with your cell phones.
- No littering in parking lot or buildings.
- Destroying or defacing property will lead to sanctions and criminal charges.

## **Incentives, Sanctions and Graduation**

### **Incentives**

All Court participants can receive incentives for program participation. Possible incentives are:

- Recognition in court
- Reduced court appearances
- Certificates of completion
- Gift cards
- Curfew extension
- Incentives Raffle

### **Sanctions**

If participants do not comply with Court requirements, sanctions will be imposed. Possible violations include:

- miss/late to Court/treatment/doctors' appointments
- miss/fail or adulterated urine tests
- using illicit drugs or alcohol
- failure to take medication
- not following rules of treatment
- new arrests/charges
- failure to participate in groups/individual sessions. A negative/resistant attitude is included.

Sanctions may include:

- verbal or written reprimand from the Judge
- increased reporting to the MHC office
- community service
- increased drug testing
- electronic monitoring
- home confinement
- incarceration
- termination from the program.

**The severity of the sanction is individualized & will depend on the severity of your offense and your prior history of violations.**

Sanctions can include jail time. If jail time is required for your program violation, **you must make sure that your children, if you have any, will be supervised while you are in custody.** Child neglect will not be tolerated, and the Mental Health Court Team will involve the Department of Family and Children Services when necessary. If you know you will be going into custody, be sure to bring your properly labeled prescription medications with you when you appear in Court. Also, if you drove to Court before being taken into custody, plan to have your vehicle retrieved for you. Do not leave your vehicle unattended while you are in jail.

Treatment will not be used as a sanction; however, it is possible that your violation of program rules indicates that your treatment will need adjusting. Examples of treatment adjustments include, but are not limited to:

- Increased case management with your treatment clinician;
- Increased treatment attendance and/or individual sessions;
- Placement in a recovery residence or in-patient treatment facility.

### **Termination from Mental Health Court**

Generally, termination from MHC occurs only after other sanctions have been imposed, and the participant continues to disregard rules that are established by the Court. Other grounds for termination include a new arrest and/or conviction on new charges, tampering with urine samples, dealing, selling, buying or repeated instances of possession, other illicit drugs, or drug-using paraphernalia at any time. Termination may be appropriate in other circumstances even in the absence of repeated or prior program violations.

### **AWOL Policy**

AWOL definition- absence without leave, absent often without notice or permission.

The Mental Health Court AWOL policy mandates that if a participant has gone AWOL from the MHC program for 30 days or more the participant will self-terminate from the MHC program.

### **A Team**

Participants who have performed well since the last Court session will receive special acknowledgement. This acknowledgment includes a public courtroom display of the names of



participants who have performed well since the last meeting. Participants in compliance, doing well and have had no issues and/or sanctions will be selected for the A Team.

Benefits:

The A team will be addressed first in court.

A team will be dismissed from court first

Approval from the Judge and the team

Holding the participant up as a positive example, invites the approval of the fellow participants in the audience

Names will be displayed on the A Team PowerPoint

The Judge will:

Ask the person if they know why they are on the A team today.

Specifically tell the person what behavior we liked, why we liked it and discuss how continuing that behavior will help the person

Minimum qualifications include;

- 30 days in the program;
- 30 Days without a sanction; and
- 30 Days without a positive, confirmed drug screen

### **Participant of the Month Award**

Each month, the Cobb County Mental Health Court will recognize a participant for their outstanding progress while in the program. Only one participant will receive this honor per month, meaning the participant must be recognized as going above and beyond by staff.

Minimum qualifications include;

- 30 days in the program;
- 30 Days without a sanction; and
- 30 Days without a positive, confirmed drug screen

While basic requirements are the same as the Fish Bowl, staff will be looking for a participant that is going **above and beyond** and show **continuous progress**.

## **Peer Award**

Usually, people think of recognition coming from their boss, or the Judge in this case, but positive feedback from peers can be just as powerful. This incentive will allow an opportunity for participants to recognize peers for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to recovery. Participants will be allowed to submit their nominations anytime throughout the month; the form will include their name, who they're nominating and the reason for the nomination. Minimum qualifications include;

- 30 days in the program;
- 30 Days without a sanction; and
- 30 Days without a positive, confirmed drug screen

## **Graduation**

Upon successful completion of the all phases of the Mental Health Court, your achievement will be celebrated in a Graduation Ceremony. Attending and participating in Graduation is a court requirement. Your family and/or guests are invited to witness your graduation that recognizes your accomplishments. The Team looks forward to congratulating you. When you are close to completing Phase 4, you will be given a graduation packet you are required to complete. Additionally, you will be given a specific list of items you must complete to graduate. Any questions you have about graduation need to be directed toward the MHC coordinator. Graduations will be held approximately every 6 months.

To graduate from the MHC, you must meet the following requirements:

- Complete an application for graduation and schedule an exit interview one month prior to your expected graduation date.
- Successfully complete all Phases of the Mental Health Court.
- Maintain sobriety. Positive and/or dilute screens can compromise your ability to graduate.

By the time you graduate from Mental Health Court, you will have developed a strong support system for your recovery and will be an asset to the community.

## Alcohol and Drug Testing

### Courthouse Collection Hours

#### Monday – Friday

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

(closed 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

Saturday: 8:00 a.m-11:00a.m.

Sunday testing: 8:00 a.m-10:00a.m.

You will be alcohol and drug tested randomly throughout every phase of MHC. All testing is done at the courthouse. A drug test can be requested of you by **any Team member at any time**. You will receive a text message at 6:00 a.m. You will receive a text message if you DO test and if you DO NOT test. **If you do not receive a text message, something is wrong with the testing system. Please notify staff IMMEDIATELY.**

**Notice: The lab may adjust hours due to training or holiday schedules. Please read all posted notices and adjust your schedule accordingly.**

Methods of testing will include portable alcohol detection devices (such as a Breathalyzer) and urine analysis. When giving a urine sample, you will be observed by someone of the same sex to ensure you are providing the sample and to prevent tampering.

- If you have a positive test in any phase, the Judge, based on recommendations from the Mental Health Team, will apply immediate sanctions, including, but not limited to, jail time to help you refrain from alcohol or drug use.
- All diluted samples with a creatinine of 19 ng or below will be counted as a positive.
- If you miss a test, it will count as a positive test.
- Failure to submit a specimen within 20 minutes of testing will count as a positive test.
- You will be expected to stay in the lab until you produce a sample.
- You must be punctual and be prepared to submit a specimen when requested.
- **Tampering with or diluting an alcohol/drug screen will be grounds for termination from the Mental Health Court.**
- Only one participant is allowed in the testing area at a time. A staff member must always accompany you during alcohol/drug testing.

- You are responsible to make sure that both your name and date are on the specimen bottle.
- You are required to admit or deny alcohol/drug use on the testing form.
- You are not allowed to leave the testing area or to drink excessive fluids until a sample is provided.
- You are not allowed to bring anything into the testing area with you.
- You are required to lift your shirt to waist level and pants/underwear should be pulled to the knees before the sample is produced.
- The test cup/bottle must be filled at least ½ for testing. If you do not produce enough urine, there may not be enough urine to test. Failing to produce enough urine is a violation of court rules.
- Make sure that the specimen bottle is closed properly. If a sample is not sealed properly and leaks, the specimen is not testable and will be considered a missed test.

**Honesty is a crucial component for recovery and for participation in Mental Health Court. Admitting that you have used drugs and/or alcohol will be considered by the Court when sanctions are imposed.**

If you have a positive UDS, you may request a confirmation test. The sample will be sent to a reference lab. If the positive is confirmed, your sanction will be increased. If the positive lab result is not confirmed by the reference lab, no action will be taken. **A dilute test result is a program violation.**

## **Dilute Drug Screens**

Dilute drug screens occur when a person consumes too much fluid/liquid of any kind in a short period of time, usually to flush drugs and/or alcohol from their system.

Everyone is encouraged to drink appropriate amounts of water each day to maintain a healthy body system. Your body will maintain homeostasis, an equilibrium, in which you take in fluids and excrete waste fluids in the urine according to your body's needs. This occurs normally unless the donor has severe kidney disease.

Creatinine is a by-product of protein metabolism and breakdown; any unused creatinine is dissolved in the urine as waste. It is easily measured in the amount of fluid in which it is dissolved. For drug screening purposes, there is no other reason to measure creatinine other than to be able to tell if a person is trying to dilute their urine. The more fluid in urine, the less creatinine can be measured. The less fluid in urine, the more creatinine can be measured. The normal level of creatinine in urine ranges from 60 mg/dl to 300 mg/dl. A dilute urine sample means that the creatinine level is equal to or below 19mg/dl. The creatinine levels can change daily, but most people have a "normal" value range.

**Eating extra protein, exercising, and running have no significant effect on the creatinine level measured in urine due to the body's built-in equalizer, homeostasis. The only thing that affects a dilute sample is the amount of fluid taken in within a short period of time prior to providing the urine sample.**

Maintaining normal liquid consumption will not produce a dilute urine sample. Tea, coffee and carbonated drinks are diuretics so monitor your intake of all to ensure normal urine samples. Diuretics cause your body to make extra urine and may throw off your normal body balance if taken in excessive amounts. This can lead to a dilute urine sample. Avoid products that claim to "beat a drug test". These usually are nothing but a diuretic in disguise.

If you have a medically diagnosed kidney disease, you will need to bring proper documentation from your physician that states specifically why you might test with dilute urine specimens. This should be done prior to admission into the program.

If you have any questions or concerns, please discuss them with the court coordinator or your counselor and your physician.

## **Alcohol Testing**

Advances in the science of alcohol detection in urine have increased the ability to detect even minor amounts of alcohol consumption. In addition, these tests are capable of detecting alcohol ingestion for longer periods of time after drinking. Because these tests are sensitive, in

rare circumstances, exposure to non-beverage alcohol sources can result in detectable levels of alcohol. To preserve the integrity of the testing program, it has become necessary for us to restrict and/or advise participants regarding the use of certain alcohol-containing products.

It is **YOUR** responsibility to limit your exposure to products and substances that contain ethyl alcohol. It is **YOUR** responsibility to read product labels, to know what is contained in the products you use and/or consume. It is your responsibility to inspect all products **BEFORE** you use them. ***Use of the products detailed below in violation of this contract will NOT be allowed as an excuse for a positive test result. When in doubt do not consume cough syrups and other liquid medications.*** Participants are prohibited from using cough/cold syrups, such as Nyquil® that contain alcohol. Other cough syrup brands and numerous other liquid medications, contain ethyl alcohol and may test positive on a drug test. Mental Health Court participants are required to read product labels carefully to determine if they contain ethyl alcohol (ethanol).

All prescription and over-the-counter medications are to be reviewed with your case manager before use. Information on the composition of prescription medications should be available from your pharmacist. Non-alcohol containing cough and cold remedies are readily available at most pharmacies and major retail stores.

**Non-Alcoholic Beer and Wine:** Although legally considered non-alcoholic, NA beers (e.g. O'Douls®, Sharps®) do contain a residual amount of alcohol that may result in a positive test result for alcohol, if consumed. Mental Health Court participants are **not** permitted to ingest NA beer or NA wine.

**Food and Other Ingestible Products:** There are numerous other consumable products that contain ethyl alcohol that could result in a positive test for alcohol. Flavoring extracts, such as vanilla or almond extract, and liquid herbal extracts (such as Gingko Biloba), could result in a positive screen for alcohol or its breakdown products. Communion wine, food cooked with wine, and flambé dishes (alcohol poured over a food and ignited such as cherries jubilee, baked Alaska) must be avoided. Read carefully the labels on any liquid herbal or homeopathic remedy and do not ingest without approval from your case manager.

**Mouthwash and Breath Strips:** Most mouthwashes (Listermint®, Cepacol®, etc.) and other breath cleansing products contain ethyl alcohol. The use of mouthwashes containing ethyl alcohol can produce a positive test result. Mental Health Court participants are required to

read product labels and educate themselves as to whether a mouthwash product contains ethyl alcohol. Use of ethyl alcohol-containing mouthwashes and breath strips by Mental Health Court participants is not permitted. Non-alcohol mouthwashes are available. If you have questions about a product, bring it in to discuss with your case manager.

**Hand Sanitizers:** Hand sanitizers (e.g. Purell®, Germex®, etc.) and other antiseptic gels and foams used to disinfect hands contain up to 70% ethyl alcohol. Excessive, unnecessary or repeated use of these products could result in a positive urine test. Hand washing with soap and water are just as effective for killing germs.

**Hygiene Products:** Aftershaves and colognes, hair sprays and mousse, astringents, insecticides (bug sprays such as Off®) and some body washes contain ethyl alcohol. It is unlikely that limited use of these products would result in a positive test for alcohol. Excessive, unnecessary or repeated use of these products could affect test results. Just as the court requires Mental Health Court participants to regulate their fluid intake to avoid dilute urine samples, it is the participants' responsibility to limit their use of topically applied (on the skin) products containing ethyl alcohol.

**Solvents and Lacquers.** Many solvents, lacquers and surface preparation products used in industry, construction, and the home, contain ethyl alcohol. As with the products noted above, Mental Health Court participants must educate themselves as to the ingredients in the products they are using. There are alternatives to nearly any item containing ethyl alcohol. A positive test result will not be excused because of using these types of products.

If you are in employment where contact with such products cannot be avoided, **you need to discuss this with your Case Manager.** Do not wait for a positive test result to do so.

***Remember! When in doubt, don't use, consume, or apply.***

## **MEDICATION GUIDELINES**

Most everyone in the Mental Health Court will be required to take medications as prescribed. MHC participants are not allowed to take narcotics, amphetamines, benzodiazepines, opiates, or consume alcohol. If you have concerns about medications and over-the-counter products that are not listed in the guide, please consult the CCM.

**If your prescribing physician believes that no alternative medications will**

**adequately address your medical needs, you must have him/her document this opinion in writing and you must provide that documentation to the Program Coordinator immediately**

Please follow these guidelines:

- Obtain a copy of the "Notice to Medical Professionals" form. Take a copy of this form each and every time you see a doctor. Have them sign the form and return a copy to the Court CM and treatment. **This is important each time you see a new doctor and emergency situations.**

**NO DRUG, MEDICATION, OR HERBAL OF ANY KIND IS TO BE TAKEN WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL FROM THE COURT STAFF**

- In case of an emergency, when court staff cannot be reached (for example overnight or weekends), medications given by an emergency professional may be taken. Proof of the medical treatment (discharge summary) any medications, and other prescriptions are to be presented to Court Case Manager by 9:00 a.m. on the next weekday.
- Do not eat poppy seeds. Do not take herbal supplements and teas, diet aids, muscle building substances, power drinks, etc. while enrolled in MHC. **These sometimes contain chemicals that will cause a positive test on a drug screen for certain individuals. Anyone taking these substances who tests positive will be sanctioned accordingly.**
- Because of the high risk for cross-reaction as THC, **use of Cannabidiol oil/CBD oil/Hemp products** where not medically necessary should also be avoided while in this program.
- Many foods, sauces, desserts, and soups contain alcohol or sugar alcohol. Some over-the-counter products, cold/allergy and cough medications, also contain alcohol and/or pseudo-ephedrine products and dextromethorphan (DM). **These products are prohibited and may result in a positive drug test. Anyone taking these products who tests positive will be sanctioned accordingly.**
- Most antibiotic medications may be taken without resulting in a positive drug screen. **LEVAQUIN**, a strong antibiotic medication, may cause a positive test result for some individuals and is, therefore, **NOT APPROVED** to take. Ask your



doctor to prescribed alternative medication.

- Most antidepressant medications may be taken without resulting in a positive drug screen. **WELLBUTRIN**, a common antidepressant medication, may cause a positive test result for some individuals and therefore, **MUST BE APPROVED PRIOR TO TAKING**. Ask your doctor to prescribe an alternative medication.
- **MOST PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICATIONS ARE NOT APPROVED FOR ROUTINE USE**. Ask your doctor about using Motrin 800 mg (NSAIDs, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs). Motrin is suggested for moderate to severe pain. All NSAIDs may cause gastro-intestinal problems and should be taken only with approval from your doctor.
  - Use of SUBOXONE, for pain management, **IS NOT APPROVED**.
  - Use of **Soma IS NOT APPROVED**.
  - Routine use of **ULTRAM**, for pain management, **IS NOT APPROVED**.
  - Short-term use of **CAMPRAL**, for cravings, is approved.
  - **ZANTAC**, commonly used for stomach problems, may cause a positive drug test for some individuals and is, therefore, **NOT APPROVED**. Ask your doctor to prescribe an alternative medication.
  - Most beauty products, sprays, lotions, hand sanitizers, mouth washes, sore throat sprays, and tinctures contain alcohol or sugar alcohol. Use only alcohol-free products during MHC.

**Anyone using these products who tests positive on a drug screen will be sanctioned accordingly.**

- Numbing injections given at a dental office are approved.

There may be an occasion where your doctor says that you need to take one of the unapproved medications listed above. If this is the case, speak with the Court Case Manager before filling the prescription and taking the medication. Failure to have special clearance for unapproved medications will result in a sanction.

Please remember that these are guidelines to follow during MHC. There is an addendum to this handbook with a list of approved medications. **NO DRUG OF ANY KIND IS TO BE TAKEN WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL FROM THE COURT STAFF.**

## **Schedule**

The Mental Health Court Team meets for staffing every Thursday at 8:00 a.m. to prepare for Court that morning. Court convenes sometime after 10:00 a.m. and lasts between 45 minutes and an hour. Plan to arrive no later than 9:45 a.m. Please keep in mind that Court sessions are open to the public, but staffing is not. Group treatment schedules vary depending on what phase you are in and your treatment plan. Your treatment schedule will be anywhere from 1 to 4 days per week (Monday-Friday).

## **Attendance**

As a participant in Mental Health Court, you are required to attend all assigned Court sessions and all assigned treatment sessions (group, individual, and/or family). Additionally, you are required to attend any appointment for doctor, employment, benefits, etc. scheduled or necessary for your MHC participation. Failure to attend as required will result in progressive sanctions including, but not limited to, a warrant being issued for your arrest.

***Special requests to be excused from Court sessions and/or treatment sessions must be approved in advance by the Mental Health Court Judge and Team.***

### **How to submit a special request:**

- All requests are to be submitted in writing (in person, fax, or email) by Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. to the Court Case Manager. It is the participant's responsibility to submit the request in a timely manner to have it considered.
- The Team will consider requests and notify the participant of the decision. The Team may include specific instructions (attend treatment before/return to treatment after appointments). It is the participant's responsibility to know and follow any instructions related to the request.
- Doctors' appointments are not a valid reason to miss any of your sessions. All effort should be made to schedule doctor's appointments outside of treatment/court sessions. If a participant is unable to schedule outside of treatment/court sessions, a special request should be submitted explaining the reason why the appointment cannot be outside of MHC time.

**Only legitimate excuses** will be considered. Birthdays, anniversaries, vacations, and concerts are not considered legitimate reasons for missing Court or treatment. In the event of a sudden life-threatening illness and/or death in the immediate family, submit an emergency request and MHC will notify you as soon as a decision is made. ("Immediate family" includes

your spouse, children, siblings, parents, and grandparents **only**.) You are responsible for providing proof of the emergency to the Court Case Manager or Coordinator the next business day following your return.

**No special requests for vacation, weekend passes, or curfew extensions will be considered until you are in Phase 3.**

### **Smoking**

Smoking is not allowed on Cobb County Court House Property.

### **Residency**

You are required to live in Cobb County during the duration of your time in Mental Health Court. Before moving to a different address within the county, you must complete a change of residence request form **and** get approval for such change from the Mental Health Court Team.

### **Family**

Support is an integral part of the recovery process. There will be activities/events in which family will be asked to attend. Other than those events, family (including spouse, parent, children, and partners) are not included in MHC activities. You are the individual who agreed to abide by and enter MHC. Your relationships will change as you change. Speak to your clinician if you need assistance in this area.

### **Curfew**

While you are in Mental Health Court, you will be placed under a curfew. Unless you are specifically told otherwise by the Judge, your curfew is 9 pm to 5 am in Phase 1 and 10pm to 5 am in other phases. During the hours of your curfew, you will be expected to be at your primary residence. Violating curfew will result in sanctions. Requests to be out after curfew, whether for work or other purposes, must be submitted as a special request and approved by the Mental Health Court Team. Be sure you comply with any probation terms as well as MHC requirements.

## Curfew Hours

Phase 1- 9:00pm-5:00am
Phase 2- 10pm- 5:00am
Phase 3- 10pm- 5:00am
Phase 4- 10pm- 5:00am

## Home Checks

The deputy assigned to MHC (and/or others) is responsible for conducting home/work/school checks. Please prepare your family/roommates/employers that a deputy will come to visit you. You are required to meet with the deputy on each visit. If you do not answer the door, the deputy will call you. You must response to the deputy. Failure to do so will result in a sanction.

## Employment/School

You are required to maintain approved employment, be enrolled in school (at least part-time), enrolled in vocational rehabilitation or consistent maintain a volunteer commitment throughout MHC.

- Only jobs with reportable income will be approved. That means that your employer must take taxes out on you and "cash only" jobs will **NOT** be approved.
- If you are in business for yourself, you must turn in copies of quarterly paid taxes for proof.

Failure to have and maintain this commitment will result in sanctions. If you enter the program without a job, the Team will determine when you are ready to seek employment, based upon your treatment requirements & cognitive abilities. When you have permission to work, you will be required to seek suitable employment that meets your abilities and schedule. When looking for employment you will need to submit proof of at least 10 job contacts per week. Job contacts are due to the Case Manager each Thursday by noon. Failure to seek and obtain suitable employment will result in a sanction. Once you find a job, submit an employment form for the Teams' approval. Hours, shifts, locations, and job duties must be approved before you begin

working. **If the team does not approve your employment, you cannot work there.**

**Participants are NOT allowed to quit a job without first discussing it with your Case Manager or Coordinator. A special request will more than likely be required.**

Work, school vocational rehab, or volunteer verification must be turned in to the case manager the first Thursday of every month. If you do not turn it in on this day, you may be sanctioned. Employment verification is a current paystub. School verification is a current school schedule. For Vocational Rehabilitation, you will to submit the need next appointment scheduled in writing. Volunteer verification is a letter from the agency, on letterhead with days/times volunteering and contact name/number.

Being honest with your employer/professors, etc. is important. MHC may, at any given time, visit/call to verify work/school schedules.

**Worksource Cobb** provides access to a system of employment and education services for the Cobb County community such as interviewing skills, assistance with writing a resumes and assistance with finding a job. Every MHC participant is eligible for this service and maybe recommended to them by the team. Worksource Cobb works with each participant that needs employment and/or education by assisting with the above-mentioned services they offer. Worksource Cobb is a part of our treatment team staffing and have an office in the courthouse. Each participant in need of employment and/or education has direct access to the Worksource Cobb services. Appointments can be scheduled through case management.

### **GED/High School Diploma**

Some participants in MHC are required to complete all GED requirements if they are not a high school graduate. GED participation is to begin no later than the beginning of Phase 3. The Court will need a copy of your completion and/or passing scores before graduating from MHC. No online programs will be accepted unless the test is taken in person at a court approved testing site. Please see the Court Case Manager for a list of approved sites/resources. **It is very unlikely you will be exempt from this requirement.**

### **Sponsoring/Peer Specialist/Support of Others**

Your participation in Mental Health Court is an opportunity to focus on your needs. You will  
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receive the support and benefit associated with your participation. Sponsoring others, training to become a Peer Specialist, or acting in an advocacy role for others is **not** permitted. You will have the opportunity to pursue those interests once you have graduated from MHC. Please see the Court Coordinator if you have questions about this.

## **Social Media**

Social media is a great communication tool. It can also be detrimental to your recovery. As a participant, you are required to provide access to all social media accounts. This includes Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and/or any others you participate on. This information will be collected during your court intake.

## **Vacation**

Vacation days from MHC are very similar to job polices and must be earned. No vacation request will be approved until phase 3. All job-related requests will be treated as vacation requests. Much like the job world, you only get so much vacation and need to budget them accordingly. You may be ordered to obtain an out of town drug test at your expense and or to attend local drug court programs and/or CBSG meetings. Vacation requests must be submitted in writing and must be approved in advance by the entire team.

After Phase 3, you will be awarded 5 vacation days for the length of time you are in MHC. Missed group sessions must be made up. You must appear for Court on the day your request is being considered. The Court Case Manager will inform you at that time whether your request has been granted. If you are under Community Supervision, you must follow those rules and get approval to travel. If MHC approves, but Community Supervision denied, you cannot go. You will be sanctioned. You must have approval from both to travel.

## **Sick Policy**

If you are unable to attend court or group due to sickness, you must have a doctor's note. The doctor's excuse must be obtained **before** your group/court time is scheduled to begin. You must always present the "Notice to Medical Professionals" to any medical personnel prior to medical treatment. Along with this paperwork, you must provide the discharge paperwork provided to you (NOTE: sometimes you are not given a hard copy of this paperwork and must log on to their portal i.e. MyChart). If you fail to do so, you will be sanctioned.

## **Transportation to Court**

Parking near the court house complex is always a challenge. Please make sure that you pay attention to where you are parking because most lots are reserved with a hefty violation fine. Please also note that it is common to have train delays on or near the court complex. Please also allow time for challenges as this will **NOT** be a valid excuse to be late. If you are using public transportation, be sure you have sufficient time for transfers/delays. Being late because of these issues will not be a valid excuse.

## **Community Supervision**

If you are placed in MHC as a condition of probation (Community Supervision), you will have additional requirements, such as keeping your probation officer informed of your location and seeking permission to travel- in addition to your MHC requirements. It is your responsibility to know **EXACTLY** what your conditions are. Violation of probation terms will be a violation of your MHC participation and may result in sanctions.

## **Emergencies**

Participants may experience emergencies from time to time. When such happens, the participant will be required to call the CCM as soon as possible and bring in official documentation of such emergency if the participant misses scheduled sessions. Such emergencies might include: medical hospitalization, automobile accident, or a sudden death in the family.

## **Inclement Weather**

During the winter months, ice/snow conditions may interfere with the ability to get to court/group/meetings. Participants should listen to radio/TV to determine whether the courts will be closed that day. If the courts are closed, then participants are excused from attending scheduled court or group sessions that day.

## **Mental Health Court Fees**

### **\$10 weekly**

Payments will be made to the Cobb County Clerk of Superior Court located at 70 Haynes Street (1<sup>st</sup> floor). The clerk's office is open **Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**Accepted forms of payment are cash, money orders, cashier's check, and credit cards (2.5% transaction charge).** If you would like to pre-pay your program fees, you are free to do so.

Prior to making your first payment, you will be given a fee card that shows your name and case number. To ensure that your payment is properly credited towards your Mental Health Court program fee (as opposed to your fines), you must present this fee card to the clerk when making your weekly payment. There will be a \$5 charge for a lost fee cards.

Failure to pay program fees will result in sanctions. Participants are expected to review budget at month 3 or when fees hit \$60.

All new participants will receive a 4-week grace period at the beginning of the program.

**THE YELLOW COPY OF THE RECEIPT MUST BE GIVEN TO THE CASE MANAGER FOR YOU TO GET CREDIT FOR YOUR PAYMENT.**

*Mental Health Court program fees must be current to be eligible to phase up, to be approved for vacation, and to graduate from the program.*