

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Akron Municipal Court

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### **AKRON MUNICIPAL MENTAL HEALTH COURT EARNS RENEWED STATE CERTIFICATION**

**Akron, Ohio, December 10, 2020** – On November 18, 2020, Akron Municipal Court’s Mental Health Court, led by Judge Annalisa Stubbs Williams, earned a renewed certification from the Ohio Supreme Court’s Commission on Specialized Dockets.

The Akron Municipal Mental Health Court was the first of its kind to be established in Ohio and fifth in the United States. It was established in 2001 and Judge Annalisa Stubbs Williams began presiding over the specialized docket in 2005. The Mental Health Court was formed, in part, as a response to the overwhelming numbers of mentally ill offenders being seen by the Akron Municipal Court.

Defendants who enter the program must complete an intensive two year probationary period which includes regular meetings with the judge and compliance with all mental health treatment related to counseling requirements.

Admission criteria includes Primary Axis I Diagnosis of Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder or Bipolar Disorder, a misdemeanor charge, a willingness to participate, a willingness to take his/her medication and the ability to understand and comply with the requirements of Mental Health Court.

Mental Health Court is now certified through December 31, 2023. The certification Mental Health Court received in 2017 was set to expire on December 31, 2020.

“I feel so much joy watching men and women become more productive, healthier and happier after following treatment plan guidelines. 2020 marks my fifteenth year of presiding over Mental Health Court and the pride I feel during each graduation ceremony never gets old,” said Judge Williams. “My team and I work incredibly hard to diminish the stigma associated with mental illness.”

The Akron Municipal Court is home to six specialized dockets. In addition to Mental Health Court, the remaining five specialized dockets are: Active Recovery Creates Hope (ARCH) Court led by Administrative/Presiding Judge Nicole Walker, Valor Court led by Judge Jerry Larson, Recovery Court led by Judge Jon Oldham, Family Intervention Court led by Judge Ron Cable and Restore Individual Self-Empowerment (RISE) led by Judge Ron Cable.

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Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor congratulated the Akron Municipal Mental Health Court for receiving final certification.

“Specialized dockets divert offenders toward criminal justice initiatives that employ tools and tailored services to treat and rehabilitate the offender so they can become productive members of society,” said Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor. “Studies have shown this approach works by reducing recidivism while saving tax dollars.”

The certification requirements include establishing eligibility requirements, evaluating effectiveness of the specialized docket, and assembling a treatment team for implementing daily operations of the specialized docket. The team can include licensed treatment providers, law enforcement and court personnel and is headed by the specialized docket judge.

The standards provide a minimum level of uniform practices for specialized dockets throughout Ohio, and allow local courts to innovate and tailor to meet their community's needs and resources.

The Commission on Specialized Dockets has 22 members who advise the Supreme Court and its staff regarding the promotion of statewide rules and uniform standards concerning specialized dockets in Ohio courts; the development and delivery of specialized docket services to Ohio courts; and the creation of training programs for judges and court personnel. The commission makes all decisions regarding final certification.

Mental Health Court takes place bi-weekly on Tuesday afternoons.

*The Akron Municipal Court serves the cities of Akron and Fairlawn; the townships of Bath, Richfield and Springfield; the Villages of Lakemore and Richfield; and that part of Mogadore in Summit County, Ohio. For more information about Akron Municipal Court services and programs, please visit: <https://www.akronmunicipalcourt.org>.*

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