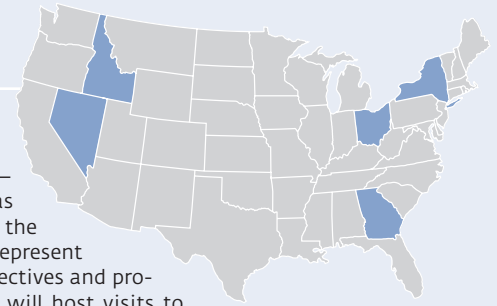


MENTAL HEALTH COURT LEARNING SITES

About the Mental Health Court Learning Sites. The number of mental health courts (MHCs) in the U.S. has grown exponentially over the past decade. State and local officials who have recently launched—or are considering whether to launch—such programs in their jurisdictions often seek out more experienced MHCs for guidance and advice.

To facilitate peer-to-peer assistance among jurisdictions that have established, or are planning to establish, MHCs, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)—through its technical assistance provider, the Council

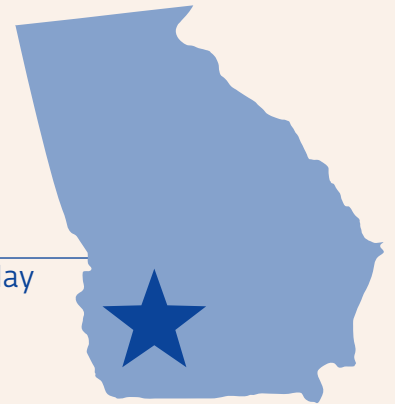
of State Governments (CSG)—has designated five MHCs as “learning sites.” Located across the country, these learning sites represent a diverse cross-section of perspectives and program examples. Learning sites will host visits to their courts and respond to telephone/email inquiries from the field.



Dougherty Superior Court, Georgia

Established in 2002

Approximately 40 participants are under MHC supervision on any given day



NOTABLE FEATURES

- Operates a dual mental health and drug court (court refers to itself as the Dougherty Superior Court Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division)
- Targets people who cycle in and out of jail and who routinely appear on the court calendar as defendants charged with “quality of life” offenses; the majority of participants enter the program after their second or third probation violation
- Operates in a rural jurisdiction that has been designated as a “Health Professional Shortage Area” by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Sits in the county with the highest incarceration rate in Georgia (and at times has had the highest incarceration rate of any county in the country)
- Conducted an evaluation of participant performance which indicated that program participation reduces arrests, jail stays, and hospitalizations

ADMINISTRATION

- **Planning:** Designed by a planning committee convened to discuss a broad range of criminal justice/mental health issues
- **Ongoing oversight:** Advised by a committee, which is collecting data to determine whether the program is achieving its goals
- **MHC team:** Comprises a judge, a court coordinator (who is a registered nurse and also the mental health screener) three probation officers, two caseworkers (specializing in mental health and substance abuse, respectively), two public defenders, and two district attorneys
 - Provides training on co-occurring disorders to probation officers who join the court team.

ELIGIBILITY

- Accepts individuals charged with non-violent felonies who have mental illness, co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders, or a primary substance abuse disorder

TREATMENT AND OTHER SERVICES

- Draws on the following community-based services: crisis stabilization unit for individuals with mental illness and substance abuse

- disorders; a 28-day residential program for individuals with dual diagnoses; a detoxification center; a Transitional Aftercare for Probationers and Parolees program which provides transportation assistance, case management, and assistance applying for benefits and entitlements; psychoeducation; dual diagnosis groups; and a peer support program run by a consumer of mental health services
- Supplements community resources with group therapy for participants who abuse substances

FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Funded by the Community Service Board (the state agency in charge of providing mental health services), for the court coordinator and two caseworker positions
- Supported by the local criminal justice system, which donates the staff time of probation officers, public defenders, and prosecutors
- Uses operations data to justify continued funding

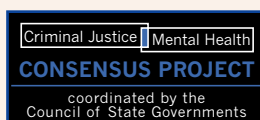
To learn more about the Dougherty Superior Court Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division, see the program's long overview at: <http://consensusproject.org/mhcp/> or contact:

Hon. Stephen Goss
Presiding Judge
Dougherty Superior Court Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division
(229) 434-2683
gossS@gajudges.org

The Mental Health Court Learning Sites are a part of the technical assistance offered by BJA's Mental Health Courts Program (MHCP). Information about the MHCP and mental health courts generally can be found at <http://consensusproject.org/mhcp/>.

To learn more about the Mental Health Court Learning Sites, visit <http://consensusproject.org/mhcp> or contact:

Lauren Almquist
Research Assistant
Council of State Governments
(646) 383-5743
lalmquist@csg.org



To download other mental health court resources, please visit <http://consensusproject.org/mhcp/info/mhresources/pubs/>:

- *The Essential Elements of a Mental Health Court*
- *A Guide to Mental Health Court Design and Implementation*
- *A Guide to Collecting Mental Health Court Outcome Data*
- *Navigating the Mental Health Maze*

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