

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

MISSION STATEMENT

Community Connections Program seeks to provide an effective and meaningful alternative to the traditional criminal justice system for individuals with a mental illness. Our goal is to promote prompt intervention, education, treatment and recovery in order to improve the quality of the individual's life, reduce recidivism and improve community safety.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Community Connections is an intensive and comprehensive mental health court program designed as an alternative to incarceration. The Program strives to hold its participants accountable for their behavior while also encouraging the individual to engage in mental health treatment.

The Community Connections Program is guided by the following principles:

- 1) Maximize the communication and cooperation between the mental health system and the criminal justice system;
- 2) Improve access to community mental health services;
- 3) Expedite case processing time with a team approach;
- 4) Reduce recidivism;
- 5) Better protect the safety and well-being of the community;
- 6) Improve appropriate treatment for identified defendants;
- 7) Ensure that punishment for non-compliance with the treatment plan be swift and graduated to fit the circumstances;
- 8) Incorporate community-based educational, vocational, counseling and self-help courses and programs into a comprehensive treatment plan of self-improvement; and
- 9) Allow family members and others responsible for the care of the participant to become involved in the treatment and recovery process, in appropriate circumstances.

An individual may apply for admission into the program as part of the disposition of any criminal matter. The applicant will be assessed by the Court Liaison to determine eligibility for the program. Additional evaluations may be required. A treatment plan will be developed by treating team with input from the applicant and the evaluators. If the individual does not agree to the plan, he or she would not qualify for Community

Connections and the matter will be referred back to the normal court process.

In situations where there is co-occurring substance abuse, the Treatment Plan will include a substance abuse component that may require the participant to undergo a substance abuse evaluation and comply with recommendations.

Treatment will be monitored by the Court Liaison in order to make sure the participant is complying with the treatment plan. Participants must authorize any treatment providers, including doctors and counselors, to disclose to the Court Liaison any noncompliance with the treatments plan, such as missed appointments, substance abuse or failure to take medications as prescribed. The purpose of these disclosures is to quickly detect any noncompliance and address the situation promptly and effectively.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

PROGRAM INFORMATION

What is Community Connections Program?

Community Connections Program was created by the court, mental health providers, prosecutors and defense counsel in order to provide sentencing alternatives to individuals with a mental illness who are involved in criminal matters. The program integrates treatment into the resolution of the case. The fundamental principal of the program is that people who engage in criminal behavior *due to their mental illness* should undergo appropriate treatment in order to modify their behavior and achieve recovery. Punishment, such as jail, alone has proven to be ineffective and inappropriate.

The program is run through the 9th Circuit Court and is administered by Greater Nashua Mental Health (GNMH). Most cases are from the District Division however referrals on felony matters are considered upon approval of the County Attorney's Office and the Superior Court Judge.

Someone charged with a crime can enter the program on one of three tracks.

TRACK I – Placed on File Agreement

The prosecutor and person charged with a criminal offense agree to continue the adjudication of the case for a designated period of time, usually one (1) year. During this period the person must remain of good behavior and comply with their treatment plan. The case would not be prosecuted if the person remains in compliance.

TRACK II – Suspended or Deferred Sentence

After conviction the defendant is sentenced to jail and/or a fine. The sentence is suspended or deferred for a designated period, usually one (1) year, during which the person must remain of good behavior and comply

with their treatment plan. The incarceration in jail or fine would not be imposed and the case closed if in compliance.

TRACK III – Bail Supervision

Certain conditions, including mental health and/or substance abuse treatment, are added as conditions of bail pending trial. The person charged with an offense would have to comply with their treatment plan as well as all other conditions of bail.

What is a Treatment Plan?

The treatment plan outlines the specific treatment a participant must comply with as part of the program. A treatment plan is created for each individual and typically includes counseling, taking medication as prescribed, education/vocation rehabilitation and substance abuse treatment, if deemed appropriate.

Who creates the Treatment Plan?

The treatment plan is developed by the participant and his or her treatment providers, with input from the Court Liaison.

Who is the Court Liaison?

The Court Liaison is an employee of GNMHC who serves as a liaison between the court, treatment providers, prosecutor, participant and attorney. The Court Liaison determines eligibility for the program, arranges evaluations, assists in preparing the treatment plan and monitors compliance.

Must I receive treatment at GNMH?

No. Treatment can be provided by any appropriate provider.

Who is eligible for the program?

Any person who has been charged with a criminal offense and has a diagnosed or diagnosable mental illness that contributed to the behavior resulting in the charged offense. Prior criminal record will have an impact on the tract but not on eligibility for the program

How do I get into the program?

Referrals to the Community Connections Program can come from a number of different sources including the police, prosecutor, defense counsel, treatment provider, family members or the court.

The referral will be made to the Court Liaison who will explain the program to the individual. If agreed, an initial assessment to determine eligibility will be arranged. Additional evaluations may be recommended. If the person is deemed eligible and agrees to enter the program, a treatment plan will be created. A contract, incorporating the treatment plan, is signed by all parties and presented to the court for approval.

Am I required to enter the program?

No. This is a voluntary program. A participant must sign an agreement (“Contract”) before entering the program.

Do I have to go back to court?

There are weekly court reviews to check on compliance with your treatment plan. Initially, you may have to attend on a regular basis; however, if you are in compliance, as you progress through the program you will have to appear less often.

What happens if I do not comply with the treatment plan?

Compliance with the treatment plan is essential to the participant’s success. Sanctions for non-compliance will be graduated based on the seriousness of the offense and any prior infractions. For instance, a missed appointment may result in an increase in reporting to court for reviews or community service. New arrests, failure to attend court reviews or repeated failures to attend appointments shall result in a violation notice being sent to the prosecutor and defense counsel.

Initially there will be a meeting between the Court Liaison, prosecutor, participant and defense attorney to discuss the infraction and any modification(s) to the treatment plan that may be appropriate. If the participant disputes the infraction or a modification cannot be resolved, the prosecutor may file a pleading with the court and a hearing scheduled. If the participant is found not to be in compliance then a modification can be ordered by the court or participation in the program terminated.

If terminated from the program then:

Track I – the case is returned to the trial docket.

Track II – a hearing on the imposition of the suspended or deferred sentence is scheduled.

Track III – bail is revoked and the conditions of bail are readdressed.

The court reserves the right to suspend a participant's involvement in the program for non-compliance, pending resolution of the alleged non-compliance.

What happens when the term of program ends and I have remained in compliance?

If the participant has remained of good behavior and complied with the treatment plan then:

Track I – Case closed without prosecution.

Track II – Sentence is satisfied and case closed.

Track III – The matter will be resolved either by trial, or agreement of the parties, which may include further participation in the program under either Track I or Track II.

Why do I have to sign a release of information?

The information you share with your therapist and doctor is privileged and confidential under both state and federal law. In order to monitor compliance with the program participants will be requested to sign a limited waiver of confidentiality so the therapist and doctor can disclose what the participants complying with the treatment plan.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

CONTRACT

Participant: _____ Case #(s) _____

Charge(s): _____ Track: ___(I, II or III)

Suspended/deferred sentence if Track II: _____

I, _____, understand that I have qualified to enter the Community Connections Program. The Court Liaison and/or my attorney have explained the following conditions to me and I am voluntarily entering the Program under these conditions:

- (1) I agree to follow my treatment plan developed by my provider, to include:
 - (a) Fully participating in treatment as recommended by my treatment team, including any recommended modifications;
 - (b) Taking all medications as prescribed by my treatment provider;
 - (c) Attending all individual and group counseling appointments. I will call my counselor in advance if I am unable to make an appointment and I am responsible to promptly reschedule the appointment;
 - (d) Attending and participating in all inpatient or outpatient substance abuse programs, as recommended; and,
 - (e) Cooperating with any additional evaluations recommended by the treatment team and complying with all recommendations.
- (2) I will attend all scheduled court appearances.
- (3) I will remain of good behavior, defined as not committing a felony, misdemeanor or major motor vehicle violation.
- (4) I will refrain from any use of alcohol and any use of non-prescribed narcotic or controlled substance.
- (5) I understand that if I do not follow these conditions there may be consequences. For minor infractions, such as missing a treatment appointment, I can be sanctioned by the judge and required to perform up to 5 hours of community service for each infraction or attend court reviews more often. If I do not accept the court's sanction or I commit a more serious infractions, such as missing court reviews, repeatedly missing treatment appointments or new arrests the Court Liaison may report my non-compliance to the Prosecutor and my attorney, if I have one. If the Court liaison,

prosecutor and my attorney believe the infraction can be resolved with a modification to my treatment plan, then a meeting shall be scheduled.

- (6) If the alleged infraction cannot be resolved, the prosecutor may file a motion with the court and I will be required to appear before the Judge at a hearing. My attorney, if I am represented, will appear with me at this hearing. I understand that I will be entitled to due process at this hearing. If I am found to be in violation then a modification can be ordered by the court or my participation terminated.
- (7) I understand that the Judge may temporarily suspend my participation in the program pending a hearing; this does not suspend treatment. I understand that I may continue to receive treatment from my provider(s) while awaiting a hearing.
- (8) If I choose voluntarily to leave the Program, I will notify Court Liaison and my attorney immediately and my participation in the program terminated.
- (9) I understand that if terminated from the program for any of the above reasons or if I voluntarily leave the program, the prosecutor and defense counsel will be notified and my case will be returned to the usual court process. The prosecutor may request the case be scheduled for trial if Track I, the suspended/deferred sentence be imposed if Track II or bail be revoked and a bail hearing scheduled if Track III.
- (10) I agree to sign a limited waiver of confidentiality to allow the Court Liaison to monitor my compliance with the treatment plan.

Participant

Attorney for Participant

Court Liaison

State Prosecutor

Approved,

Judge

Date

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK CONSENT

I, _____, _____, authorize
Print Clients Name Date of Birth

The Community Connections Program to obtain a copy of my state and national criminal record from the _____ Police Department, in addition to a motor vehicle record at anytime during my participation within the program. The information obtained is to be used to determine acceptance and compliance with the Community Connections Program contract, which requires me to remain arrest free and to report any contact with law enforcement.

I further authorize the Hillsborough County House of Corrections to obtain a copy of my state and national criminal record, in addition to a motor vehicle record at anytime after my completion of the program. This authorization shall expire 3 years from the date of successful completion of the program and shall be used to evaluate program effectiveness and recidivism only.

Client Signature

Date

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information on the Community Connections Program contact:

Mark Durso, Court Liaison
Greater Nashua Mental Health
7 Prospect Street
Nashua, NH 03060
Tel: (603) 402-1585

N.H. Public Defenders Nashua Office
44 Franklin Street
Nashua, NH 03064
Tel: (603) 598-4986

Other contact information:

9th Circuit Court/Nashua
30 Spring Street
Nashua NH 03060
1-855-212-1234

Nashua Police Department
Legal Bureau
28 Officer James Roche Drive
Nashua, NH 03062
Tel: (603) 594-3500

9th Circuit Court/Merrimack
4 Baboosic Lake Road
Merrimack, NH 03054
1-855-212-1234

Merrimack Police Department
Legal Bureau
31 Baboosic Lake Rd.
Merrimack, NH 03054
Tel: (603) 424- 3774

9th Circuit Court/Milford
4 Meadowbrook Drive
Milford, NH 03055
1-855-212-1234

Milford Police Department
Legal Bureau
19 Garden Street
Milford, NH 03055
Tel: 673-7742

Hollis Police Department
Legal Bureau
9 Silver Lake Road
Hollis, NH 03049
Tel: (603) 465-7637

Hudson Police Department
Legal Bureau
1 Constitution Drive
Hudson, NH 03051
Tel: (603) 886-6011

Litchfield Police Department
Legal Bureau
2 Liberty Way
Litchfield, NH 03052
Tel: (603) 424-4047

Amherst Police Department
Legal Bureau
175 Amherst Street
Amherst NH 03031
(603) 673- 4900