



Mental Health Docket is Recertified by the Supreme Court of Ohio for Another Three Years

The Mental Health Court of the General Division of the Court of Common Pleas of Delaware County has retained its certification for another three-year period. In March 2022, the Supreme Court’s Commission on Specialized Dockets gave its final approval to the renewed certification in Delaware County for the three-year period that will end on December 31, 2024.

In order to receive the renewal and extension of its certification, the local court had to submit an application, undergo a site visit, and provide specific program materials in response to certification standards that went into effect in January 2014.

Judge David Gormley – who oversees the court’s mental-health docket – expressed gratitude to the Supreme Court and to the members of the local treatment team who work with those persons whose mental-health challenges have brought them before the court’s two felony-level judges. “Research indicates that many people who have committed serious crimes and who suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress, bipolar disorder, social anxiety, and other illnesses can be rehabilitated and can lead law-abiding lives if their illnesses are properly treated by mental-health professionals.”

Gormley added, “Our goal with the mental-health docket is to connect those criminal defendants with the right services and community support so that they stop committing crimes and become successful and productive citizens. Rather than simply doling out punishment for crimes, we strive with the mental-health docket to combine that punishment with the mental-health treatment that some criminal defendants need and perhaps have never had an opportunity to pursue. The program works, and all of us who attend my frequent meetings with the program participants can see the difference that appropriate mental-health treatment is making in the lives of the participants.”

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor congratulated the Delaware County Common Pleas General Division Mental Health Court and Judge Gormley for receiving final recertification.

“Specialized dockets divert offenders toward criminal justice initiatives that employ tools and tailored services to treat and rehabilitate these offenders,” said Chief Justice O’Connor. “Studies have shown this approach works by reducing recidivism while saving tax dollars.”

Specialized dockets are courts that are dedicated to specific types of offenses or offenders and use a combination of different techniques for holding offenders accountable while also addressing the underlying causes of their behavior. There are more than 261 specialized dockets in Ohio courts that deal with issues such as:

- Drugs and Alcohol
- Mental Health
- Domestic Violence
- Human Trafficking
- Veterans Treatment

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

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, court personnel, and is headed by the specialized-docket judge.

The Commission on Specialized Dockets has 22 members who advise the Supreme Court and its staff regarding the development and enforcement 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.