

## Mental Health Court Program

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The Second Judicial District's Mental Health Court has been operational since May 2005 and developed based on the national problem-solving court model. The Ramsey County Mental Health Court (RCMHC) was created when it became increasingly clear that persons with mental illness and co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders were in need of more specialized and individualized jurisprudential approaches.

The RCMHC directs eligible defendants with mental health disorders from the criminal justice system to community-based mental health, substance abuse and support services. Between its inception in May of 2005 and December of 2014, the RCMHC has provided services to 472 individuals with serious mental illness who have been charged with criminal offenses in Ramsey County.

RCMHC is currently funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Adult Mental Health, and two federal Bureau of Justice and Mental Health Expansion grants. By partnering with Human Services, the RCMHC team includes two human services case managers who link participants to available community mental and chemical health services. This approach has demonstrated results by changing lives, lowering incarceration rates and reducing recidivism. To maintain adequate resources, the Court relies heavily on pro bono services.

At present, the state of Minnesota has three operational mental health courts and 39 operational drug courts. There are more than 400 mental health courts across the country with many additional courts in the planning phase.

### Mission

The mission of the RCMHC is to increase public safety by reducing recidivism among those whose criminal behaviors are attributable to mental illness. Through court supervision and the coordination of mental health and other social services, the Court supports a psychiatrically stable and crime-free lifestyle among its participants.

### Goals

The goals of RCMHC are to:

- Reduce recidivism.
- Improve public safety.
- Reduce the costs of prosecution, incarceration, and hospitalization to taxpayers.
- Improve defendants' access to public mental health and substance abuse treatment services and other community resources.
- Enhance collaboration between criminal justice agencies and the mental health system to better serve those with mental illness.
- Improve the quality of life of mentally ill defendants.

RCMHC meets its goals by directing eligible defendants with mental health disorders from the criminal justice system to community-based mental health, substance abuse and support services. **Rather than the traditional pattern of focusing on the criminal activity of the defendant, the RCMHC focuses on addressing and treating the defendant's mental health and chemical health needs.**

## Target Population

The target population of the RCMHC is adult Ramsey County residents who have been charged with a crime that is related to a serious mental illness.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for the Mental Health Court program an individual must be:

- 18 years of age or older
- Ramsey County resident (out-of-county considered on a case by case basis)
- Charged with a Crime
- Diagnosed with a significant mental illness
- Legally competent
- A person with no history of violent offenses
- Willing to voluntarily participate and commit to the rigors of the court conditions and treatment plan

## Program Requirements

The RCMHC program is a four-phase treatment process, lasting a minimum of one year and a maximum of three years. Each phase consists of specific requirements for advancement into the next phase and outlines the recovery support services delivery plan. Phase movement results upon accomplishing treatment goals as agreed in the treatment plan; court conditions as agreed at acceptance into the RCMHC program and specific phase requirements.

Participants who agree to be accepted into the RCMHC program are required to:

- remain law abiding;
- abstain from illegal or non-prescribed drugs;
- submit to random drug and alcohol testing;
- complete community service hours;
- identify and maintain appropriate housing;
- remain compliant with all medication and psychiatric appointments;
- fully comply with mental health and chemical health treatment recommendations;
- develop and sustain a long-term treatment plan;
- participate in pro-social activities;
- become involved with mental health and community support groups;
- complete a wellness plan before graduation to identify triggers and prevent recidivism.

## Accomplishments and Impact

The accomplishments of the RCMHC include connecting defendants to mental and chemical health services; reducing the incidences of criminal behavior; reducing the costs to the criminal justice system, corrections, public safety, and hospitals; enhancing the collaboration between the courts and the mental health community; improving the quality of life of defendants upon discharge (i.e., housing and treatment services in place); and assisting defendants with establishing more productive lives including self-sufficiency and self-confidence. Through the coercive authority and monitoring of the RCMHC as well as collaboration with the community, defendant's mental illness and environmental factors drastically improve. The proven outcome is that people learn to engage in services, and when they have their next mental health crisis, instead of defaulting to the police on the street they default to the treatment system.

The impact of RCMHC has been significant. RCMHC has a proven record of success in changing lives, lowering incarceration rates, reducing recidivism, and improving medication compliance thereby increasing public safety and decreasing criminal justice and court expenses across the board. Evaluation and outcome data reveals that RCMHC graduates are less likely to be charged with a new offense, less likely to be

convicted of a new offense, and less likely to spend time in jail than those in a comparison group of similarly situated offenders who did not participate in RCMHC.

## Team

The Honorable [John H. Guthmann](#), [William H. Leary](#), and [Teresa R. Warner](#) lead RCMHC. The judges volunteer their time while handling their normal caseloads. The judges supervise participant progress through the RCMHC continuum based on regular hearings, team input, and participant behavior. They also lead the RCMHC team in decision-making and hold participants accountable for their progress by use of sanctions and incentives.

Brandi Stavlo, is the Program Coordinator for the Ramsey County Mental Health Court (RCMHC) in St. Paul, Minnesota. Ms. Stavlo has worked for the Second Judicial District Court since 2005, and prior to that worked in the nonprofit sector as a mental health counselor, crisis and outreach counselor, and child advocate. Ms. Stavlo has represented RCMHC on several state and county committees focused on mental health issues, including the Police Round Table; Community/Homeless/Mental Health Committee; Ramsey County Community Human Services Citizens Advisory Council, Adult Mental Health Committee; and the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Minnesota (NAMI-MN) Criminal Justice Advisory Committee. Ms. Stavlo was trained nationally by the Council of State Governments Justice Center in *Developing a Mental Health Court: An Interdisciplinary Curriculum* to provide training to jurisdictions within Minnesota who are interested in starting a mental health court or improving their existing program. Ms. Stavlo received her Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from the College of St. Benedict and earned her Masters of Social Work (MSW) degree from the University of St. Thomas and College of St. Catherine.

## Volunteer and Internship Opportunities

Thank you for your interest in volunteering or interning with RCMHC.

### Graduate Clinical Placements:

In addition to the information in our graduate school posting, all students need to apply and be screened by Volunteer Services before RCMHC can move forward with interviews. Students who are interested in the RCMHC internship need to complete an [online application](#) for the internship, found on the Ramsey County Home Page.

Please note:

- Academic year placement (September - May). Minimum of 400 hours.
- Summer block placement (June - August). Minimum of 400 hours.

### Program Interns and Project Volunteers:

All non-clinical applicants should complete the [Application For Internship](#) and return it with a current resume to [brandi.stavlo@courts.state.mn.us](mailto:brandi.stavlo@courts.state.mn.us).

- Program Interns: There is a minimum of 150 hours required for Program Interns.
- Project Volunteers: Should also submit hours required with the application.

If selected for an interview, be prepared with the following information:

- Skills, training or experience that you bring to RCMHC
- What interests or goals you hope to pursue through an internship
- Program requirements (i.e. required hours if seeking educational credits)
- Type of supervision needed
- A proposed final project (i.e., publishing an editorial article, organizing mental health education at your school, speaking for a community organization, etc.)

- A brief description of how you think your work would fit into our program in the areas of education, individual advocacy, and mental health advocacy.

## How do I refer to RCMHC?

1. Call Program Coordinator at 651-266-9256.
2. [RCMHC Referral Process](#) (2015)

## Program Materials

[RCMHC Program Brochure](#) (2015)

[RCMHC Participant Handbook](#) (2015)

[RCMHC One Page Fact Sheet](#) (2015)

[Volunteer Opportunities](#) (2015)

[Program Information](#) (2015)

## Video

[2014 Minnesota CLE Criminal Law Webcast Ramsey County Mental Health Court: Working with the Mentally Ill Defendant.](#)

[2010 Ramsey County Mental Health Court on the public access television show \*One and the Same\* on the Suburban Community Channels SCC.](#)

## Press and Publications

William Mitchell Law Review: [Ramsey County Mental Health Court: Working with Community Partners to Improve the Lives of Mentally Ill Defendants, Reduce Recidivism, and Enhance Public Safety \(May 2015\)](#)

Minnesota Lawyer: [Judge: Mental health court needs new money \(March 16, 2015\)](#)

Minnesota Lawyer: [Briggs attorneys receive MJF recognition \(October 28, 2013\)](#)

Minnesota Lawyer: [Mental Health Court decreases recidivism \(August 19, 2013\)](#)

News Release: [RCMHC Reduces Recidivism \(July 2013\)](#)

2010-2012 Report: [2010-2012 RCMHC Report](#)

Ramsey County Bar Association: [Barrister Article \(April 2011\)](#)

2009 Report: [2009 RCMHC Report](#)

## Awards

[2014 Minnesota Lawyer Unsung Legal Hero Award: Brandi Stalvo](#)

[2013 Minnesota Justice Foundation Private Practice Award: Alan Maclin, W. Knapp Fitzsimmons, Michael Wilhelm, and Ankoor Bagchi, Briggs and Morgan, PA](#)

[2013 Minnesota Justice Foundation Law Student Award: Suzula Bidon, RCMHC Student Certified Attorney](#)

2009 Ramsey County Bar Association Outstanding Pro Bono Attorney: Warren Maas, RCMHC Pro Bono Attorney

## **Trainings**

CLE - MAY 23, 2012: [Working with the Mentally Ill Defendant](#)

Minnesota CLE - May 27, 2014: [Criminal Law Series Live Webcast](#)

## **Contact**

Please contact the Program Coordinator for referrals or additional information regarding the Mental Health Court.

Brandi Stavlo, MSW

Program Coordinator

[brandi.stavlo@courts.state.mn.us](mailto:brandi.stavlo@courts.state.mn.us)