



NEWS

MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
COURT HOUSE, NORRISTOWN, PA., BOX 311, 19404-0311

Lorie Slass, Director of Communications

Jessica Willingham, Press Secretary

PHONE (610) 278-3061 FAX (610) 278-5943

COMMISSIONERS: VALERIE A. ARKOOSH, MD, MPH, *Chair*

JOSH SHAPIRO, *Vice Chair*

JOSEPH C. GALE, *Commissioner*



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 4, 2017

Montgomery County Drug Treatment Court Holds Accreditation Ceremony and 90th Graduation

Norristown, PA (January 4, 2017) – The Montgomery County Drug Treatment Court was awarded accreditation by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania at a ceremony held today at the Montgomery County Courthouse. Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Kevin M. Dougherty presented the Certificate of Accreditation to the Honorable Steven T. O'Neill who has been the presiding Drug Treatment Court Judge since the Court's founding in April 2006.

Drug Treatment Court is a special part of the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas offering a court-supervised treatment program for non-violent offenders with drug and/or alcohol related charges who have a drug and/or alcohol addiction. The program allows for addicted individuals to remain in treatment for long periods of time while under close supervision. To ensure accountability, participants are regularly and randomly tested for substance use, required to appear frequently in court for the judge to review their progress, rewarded for meeting goals, and sanctioned for not meeting clearly stated obligations.

Research has shown that drug treatment courts save up to \$27 for every \$1 invested and up to \$13,000 for every individual they serve. The Montgomery County Drug Treatment Court has more than 415 graduates with 70% of graduates remaining arrest free.

The PA Supreme Court Accreditation Program for Adult Drug and DUI Treatment Courts was developed in 2011 by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts and requires close adherence to evidence-based practices. These practices have been shown to reduce recidivism in the criminal justice system.

“We are honored to be acknowledged with this accreditation,” said the Honorable Steven T. O’Neill, presiding Drug Treatment Court Judge. “Drug Court utilizes evidence-based practices to treat those with substance use disorders in the criminal justice system. The successful outcomes we have experienced over the last decade demonstrate, beyond a doubt, that Drug Courts work – changing and saving lives while saving taxpayer dollars. When I started the Drug Court, I knew it was the right thing to do. Accreditation means we are doing the right thing the ‘right way’.”

The PA Supreme Court accreditation process requires the Drug Court’s adherence to the “Ten Key Components of Drug Courts:”

1. Integration of alcohol and other drug treatment services with justice system case processing.
2. A non-adversarial approach, where prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants’ due process rights.
3. Identification of eligible participants early so they are promptly placed in the drug court program.
4. Access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.
5. Monitoring of abstinence by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.
6. A coordinated strategy governing drug court responses to participants’ compliance.
7. Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant.
8. Monitoring and evaluation of program goals and effectiveness.
9. Interdisciplinary education promoting effective drug court planning, implementation, and operations.
10. Partnerships among drug courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations to generate local support and enhance drug court program effectiveness.

Dr. Valerie Arkoosh, Chair of the Montgomery County Commissioners, presented a proclamation to Judge O’Neill. “I would like to thank Judge O’Neill and the members of the Drug Treatment Court for being an integral part of the County’s holistic approach to combatting the epidemic of addiction,” Dr. Arkoosh said. “Drug treatment courts improve substance-abuse treatment outcomes, reduce substance abuse and crime, and do so at less expense than any other criminal justice strategies.”

The 90th Montgomery County Drug Treatment Court graduation was held immediately following the Accreditation Ceremony. Last year, the Montgomery County Drug Treatment Court celebrated its 10 year anniversary.