

MISDEMEANOR
MENTAL
HEALTH
CCOURT

**PARTICIPANT
HANDBOOK**

DeKalb Magistrate Court
DeKalb County, Georgia

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WELCOME TO THE MISDEMEANOR MENTAL HEALTH COURT (MMHC)

Use this handbook to:

- ✓ Answer questions
- ✓ Address concerns
- ✓ Provide information about MMHC



Ask your case manager or defense attorney to explain to you anything in this handbook that you do not understand.

WHAT IS MMHC?

MMHC is a special part of the DeKalb Magistrate Court. It is a court-supervised program for those arrested and charged with misdemeanors in DeKalb County who also have a mental health diagnosis. MMHC's program includes regular court appearances before the judge. Following your arrest, you were offered the choice of participating in MMHC or having your case proceed as part of the regular court process. If you are eligible for participation and enter the program, a MMHC social worker will develop a treatment plan for you. While you are a participant, the judge, your case manager, and treatment provider will monitor your progress.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

MMHC participants are required to enter a plea of guilty or nolo contendere; however, your sentence will be suspended while you participate in MMHC. Immediately after giving your plea you will sign your participation agreement. The participation agreement is an agreement between you, the Office of the Solicitor-General and the judge. It explains what is expected of you while you are in MMHC. Before you sign your participation agreement, you will have an opportunity to review it with your attorney and have your questions answered. MMHC participants are required to attend treatment, as directed by your MMHC case manager and the judge. Participants are also required to remain drug and alcohol-free and live a law-abiding life.

HOW LONG WILL I BE INVOLVED IN MMHC?

The amount of time you spend in MMHC is determined by your compliance to your treatment plan and by your individual progress. Misdemeanor charges require a minimum of twelve (12) months participation with MMHC. Some persons will be active in MMHC beyond the minimum participation time. It all depends on the effort you put into treatment and your progress.

Dismissal or Voluntary Withdrawal from the MMHC will result in the return of your case back to State Court to impose the original sentence.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

INCENTIVES & REWARDS

MMHC acknowledges compliance in the following ways:

- Recognition from the judge
- Reduced reporting to court sessions
- Phone-in calls to case manager instead of in-person reporting
- Promotion to the next phase

NO JAIL SENTENCE

Successful completion of MMHC will result in a dismissal of your charges and record restriction.

MMHC GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

- Engage in treatment to insure ongoing stabilization and wellness
- Return to your family, employment and community productively
- Evaluate and discuss other critical life concerns and issues within a confidential group therapy environment to help you move forward in your life

A SECOND CHANCE!

On the following pages, you will find information on the resources you will need to succeed. Remember that there are many people who make up the MMHC Interdisciplinary Team and they all want to see you succeed. If you take advantage of the assistance offered, you will discover many ways to make a better life for yourself.

MMHC RULES:

WHAT ARE THE RULES OF MMHC?

To remain active in MMHC you are required to follow these rules:

1. Appear in court as scheduled – you must attend all scheduled court appearances
2. Follow your treatment plan – you must attend all treatment, support and case manager appointments
3. Remain drug and alcohol free – random screens are given to participants that must remain negative
4. Complete MMHC – you must successfully complete all requirements of MMHC for the State Court to dismiss your criminal case
5. Live a law-abiding life

While we recognize that your arrest stemmed from your mental illness, it is important for you to remember that you are in MMHC because of criminal behavior that requires total accountability through treatment compliance to avoid future criminal activity.

1. APPEAR IN COURT AS SCHEDULED

You will be required to appear in front of the judge on a regular basis. The judge will be given progress reports regarding your drug and alcohol tests, reports to your case manager, attendance and participation in your treatment programs, and compliance with any doctor appointments. The judge will ask you about your progress and discuss any problems or concerns of yours.

Frequency of court appearances will depend on which phase you are participating in. As you make progress, your court appearance schedule will be reduced. Participants in phase 1 are required to come to court every week, participants in phase 2 attend court biweekly, and participants in phase 3 and phase 4 attend court once a month.

On the day of your court appearance, you must arrive to MMHC at 9:30 am and stay until the judge has excused you from court.

2. FOLLOW YOUR TREATMENT PLAN

The treatment plan is developed after you complete all MMHC intake assessments; it will be developed by our social workers and your case manager. Your treatment plan will be revised as you progress through the phases. The minimum requirements of your treatment plan are:

- Attendance at a mental health treatment program as directed by your case manager and treatment provider
- Regular drug and alcohol testing
- Attendance at an educational, vocational or employment program

Your case manager will also help you with other areas of your life according to your individual needs.

Your treatment schedule will vary according to your progress. It is your responsibility to keep all scheduled appointments and to arrive on time. You must review your treatment plan with your case manager and follow it carefully.

MISDEMEANOR MENTAL

HEALTH COURT EXPECTATIONS

WHAT ELSE IS EXPECTED OF ME?

The expectations of MMHC are:

- Treat others with respect
- Cease all drug- and alcohol-related activity
- Comply with drug screening
- Be law abiding
- Be mindful of your surroundings & associates

These expectations are explained in detail in the next pages.

The goals you set up with your case manager may also cover areas of:

- Education
- Employment
- Health care
- Housing
- Other approved structured day activities
- Social Security and other disability benefits

TREAT OTHERS WITH RESPECT

You should respect the opinions and feelings of other people in MMHC. Verbal or physical threats to anyone will not be tolerated. Any inappropriate behavior will immediately be reported to the Court and may result in a severe sanction or your termination from the program. You will be required to dress appropriately for your court sessions and treatment appointments. Sunglasses are not to be worn in court unless approved by a doctor. Gentlemen should remove their hats when coming into the courtroom and **everyone** should turn their cell phones **off**.

CEASE ALL DRUG-RELATED ACTIVITY

You will not possess, sell, or use alcohol or illegal drugs. Any relapse by you involving drugs and/or alcohol must be reported to your case manager immediately. Any drugs that a doctor prescribes for you must be reported to your case manager immediately. You must consult your case manager **before** taking any over-the-counter medication.

COMPLY WITH DRUG & ALCOHOL SCREENING

In addition to your mental health treatment, one of the goals of MMHC is to help you remain abstinent from alcohol and all non-prescribed drugs. A positive test or admission of substance use may result in a sanction or change in treatment. Repeated substance use may result in termination from MMHC. You will be randomly tested throughout your participation in MMHC. A diluted result or refusal to screen will be treated as a positive test.

BE LAW-ABIDING

You are required to refrain from further violation of the law. Additional offenses may result in termination from MMHC. You must inform your case manager immediately of any arrest or citations.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS & ASSOCIATES

You should avoid people or places of disreputable or harmful character. This includes people currently on probation or parole, people with felony conviction, drug users, drug dealers, or prostitutes.

SUPPORT SERVICES

MMHC Support Services are available to you and your family. These services will help you to overcome stress, problems and conflicts that may block your recovery process. The MMHC team recognizes that recovery is not an easy process, but we support your effort and encourage positive change. Together, we can make it work.

HEALTH

Developing positive health habits and knowing how to handle physical and emotional setbacks are essential for your success in recovery. MMHC supports and recommends that you safeguard your physical health by scheduling and monitoring the following health services and others if necessary and applicable:

- Psychiatrist or psychologists referrals
- Other medical screenings (as appropriate)
- Referrals for testing for additional mental health issues or medication issues
- Doctor, dentist and optometrist appointments
- Health and nutritional counseling
- Diabetes screening, monitoring and care
- Prenatal care, if appropriate

You will be expected to follow through on any treatment recommendations. You may also be asked to provide documentation to the court of medical conditions or appointments. Any prescribed drugs must be reported to your case manager as random drug screens are scheduled throughout your MMHC participation.

EDUCATION

MMHC is concerned and interested in your educational, vocational and employment goals. MMHC will support and encourage your efforts towards:

- **GED:** working toward your high school equivalency diploma.
- **Vocational:** job training in many fields, from food service and haircutting to computer technology and auto mechanics.
- **College:** post-secondary education in liberal arts, language arts, science, healthcare services, medicine, etc.

EMPLOYMENT

Finding and keeping a job that you like is an important part of building lasting success in recovery.

Employment referral services include:

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Department of Labor
- DeKalb or Fulton County Workforce
- Goodwill

Please note that a participant's legitimate and confirmed efforts and involvement in education and employment pursuits may substitute for MMHC daytime structure requirements.



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SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

GRADUATION: A TIME TO CELEBRATE AND RECOGNIZE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

You will be able to invite your family and friends to join you at your MMHC Successful Completion "Graduation" Ceremony. The Graduation Ceremony marks your successful completion and full compliance with all of the terms and conditions of MMHC and the beginning of your new way of life.

Requirements for successful completion "graduation":

- Complete all MMHC requirements and conditions
- Your case manager's approval and recommendation for graduation
- Progress toward any vocational, educational and employment goals
- Secure an ongoing relationship with your mental healthcare provider and all other treatment providers that you will establish while participating in MMHC



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IMPORTANT NAMES AND NUMBERS:

NOTES

Mental Health Treatment Court
556 North McDonough Street
Decatur, Georgia 30030

IMPORTANT NAMES AND NUMBERS TO KNOW:

Attorney:

Case Manager:

Treatment Provider:

Therapist/Psychiatrist/Psychologist:

Emergency Contact:

NOTES

The Misdemeanor Mental Health Court (MMHC) operates under the direction of the DeKalb County Magistrate Court and is a collaborative effort of the Magistrate Court, Adult Probation, DeKalb Community Service Board (DCSB), DeKalb Volunteer Lawyer's Foundation (DVLf), Jail Mental Health Services, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Office of the Sheriff, Office of the Solicitor, Pre-trial Services, State Court, Hope Atlanta, Inc. and the Georgia Public Defender Standards Council (GPDSC).

The impetus behind this effort is the decriminalization of persons suffering with serious mental illness.



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