

**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF MENDOCINO**



Press Release
(For immediate release: January 16, 2015)

**NEW BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COURT
STARTS IN TEN MILE COURT
IN FORT BRAGG**

The Mendocino County Superior Court is pleased to announce the creation of a new Behavioral Health Court (BHC) Program in Fort Bragg. This program will reflect the approach of the existing Behavioral Health 11 AM calendar in Ukiah. Like the 11 AM calendar, the goal of the new Fort Bragg program is to enhance public safety and reduce recidivism of criminal defendants who suffer serious mental illness by connecting them with community treatment services and ongoing court supervision. The new program is a collaborative effort of the Ukiah and Fort Bragg Courts; the Mendocino County District Attorney's and Public Defender's Offices; the County Social Services Department; local law enforcement agencies; and other community organizations involved in behavioral health treatment and advocacy.

Participation in the BHC is voluntary. The Judge and lawyers work closely with the mental health providers with a focus on the person's diagnosis and psycho-social risks and needs. As a general rule, if the defendant's mental illness is a primary cause of their involvement with the criminal justice system, the case will be considered for the BHC.

Upon acceptance into the program, the BHC treatment team clinical providers develop an individualized treatment plan that includes intensive case management, medication management, psychiatric rehabilitation, supportive living arrangements, and substance abuse treatment. Throughout their participation in BHC, clients attend regular judicial status hearings, where their progress in treatment is monitored and encouraged through positive reinforcement. The Judge can also impose sanctions, including incarceration, if corrective action is necessary. In the interest of public safety, defendants who commit certain violent crimes are not allowed into the program.

The analogous 11 AM program has been operating in Judge Ann Moorman's courtroom in Ukiah since March of 2013. The program began with just 2 participants, and quickly grew to the current active caseload of 20. Over its short history, over 100 participants have been involved.

"We've been very pleased with the results so far," says Judge Moorman. "Many of the people in the program are far more stable than they were prior to entry, and many of the barriers to maintaining their ongoing health and stability have been removed. It's a very effective long term solution to reducing the numbers of mentally ill defendants cycling through the jails and courts."

The program began operating at the Ten Mile Branch court in Fort Bragg on January 7, 2015. Fort Bragg Judge Clayton Brennan says, "We're really excited to bring this expansion of court services to the Mendocino Coast. I see it as part of a larger community effort to improve our response to behavioral health issues."

For more information contact:

Christopher Ruhl
Court Executive Officer
100 N. State Street, Room 303
Ukiah, CA 95482

(707) 463-4662