

## Mental Health Court Programs

### Cochise

**Court/Agency:** Sierra Vista Justice Court

**Established:** 2011

**Program Type:** Combined Deferred Prosecution and Post-Conviction

**Program Description:** In 2005, Judge Timothy Dickerson was approached by representatives of Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services (SEABHS) with a proposal to create a mental health court program in Sierra Vista, the population center of Cochise County. SEABHS, a behavioral health treatment provider agency, had a contractual agreement at the time to operate under the auspices of RBHA. The Sierra Vista Justice Court conducted the Provisional Rehabilitation Accountability (PRA) Program from 2005 until 2009, when the Arizona Department of Health Services awarded a new RBHA contract to of Arizona. This transition disrupted the operation of the PRA Program for approximately 18 months. Operations resumed in 2011 after representatives from Arizona Counseling & Treatment Services, a behavioral health treatment provider agency subcontracting with Cenpatico, approached the former PRA Program judge and prosecutor with interest in operating the treatment component of the program to support reinstatement.

**Program Contacts:**

Honorable Timothy Dickerson, Justice of the Peace

Ms. Dany Hernandez, Treatment Coordinator - Adult Probation

## Coconino

**Court/Agency:** Flagstaff Justice Court

**Established:** 2012

**Program Type:** Combined Deferred Prosecution and Post-Conviction

**Program Description:** In 2012, Judge Howard Grodman approached the county attorney's office, public defender's office, and The Guidance Center, a local treatment provider agency, to ascertain the degree of interest in a new mental health court program. With the support of these agencies, as well as Coconino County Superior Court, adult probation department, police department, Northern Arizona Regional Behavioral Health Authority (NARBHA), and the Coconino County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, the Coconino County Mental Health Court Program was established in May 2012. Flagstaff Justice Court adopted Flagstaff Municipal Court's Mental Health Court program model with a few amendments: The Justice Court program adopted an expanded admissions policy to include not only misdemeanors but also felony-level cases and to accept defendants not only pre-plea on a deferred prosecution basis but also post-conviction. The Coconino County Mental Health Court Program accepts defendants transferred to Flagstaff Justice Court from Coconino County Superior Court to be judicially supervised in the mental health court program as a mandatory term of their adjudicated felony probation sentence.

### Program Contacts:

Ms. Patricia Garcia, Justice Court Specialist

Honorable Howard Grodman, Justice of the Peace

## Coconino

**Court/Agency:** Flagstaff Municipal Court

**Established:** 2006

**Program Type:** Deferred Prosecution

**Program Description:** Flagstaff Municipal Court's Mental Health Court program began in November of 2006. Following the Tucson Municipal and Tempe Mental Health Court models, the initiative to establish the Flagstaff Municipal Mental Health Court resulted from a desire to improve the process for managing the high volume of and to produce better criminal justice outcomes for mentally ill defendants. The official mental health court program description indicates that "the initial procedures, protocols and terms of participation were developed over a 12-month period of time through the cooperation of the Flagstaff City Court, Prosecutor, Public Defender, The Guidance Center, NARBHA, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Flagstaff Police Department, and the Coconino County's (CJCC) – Mental Health Substance Abuse Subcommittee."

**Program Contacts:**

Ms. Cathy Harrison, Deputy Court Administrator  
Honorable Thomas L. Chotena, Magistrate

## Maricopa

**Court/Agency:** Chandler Municipal Court

**Established:** 2015

**Program Type:** Deferred Prosecution

**Program Description:**

**Program Contacts:**

Honorable R. Michael Traynor, Presiding Judge  
Ms. Anntoinette Bogart, Court Clerk III

## Maricopa

**Court/Agency:** Glendale Municipal Court

**Established:** 2013

**Program Type:** Deferred Prosecution

**Program Description:** The Glendale City Mental Health Court was implemented by Judge Elizabeth Finn on January 2, 2013. Until that point, the court was unable to adequately address the needs of defendants with mental illnesses, causing a significant financial strain on the system. The court was founded to cut costs by streamlining the process for defendants with mental health issues and connecting them to services. Reductions in failure to appear costs (\$150/defendant) and reductions in jail costs (reducing time in jail and by integrating third-party release from jail directly to services) have significantly reduced the court's budget. A planning committee conducted a need assessment for the program prior to implementation. The court matched four years of RBHA clients with the court's list of defendants and found significant crossover, justifying the need for this program.

**Program Contacts:**

Ms. Kathleen Williams, Management Assistant  
Honorable Elizabeth R. Finn, Presiding Judge

## Maricopa

**Court/Agency:** Phoenix Municipal Court

**Established:** 2015

**Program Type:** Deferred Prosecution

**Program Description:**

**Program Contacts:**

Mr. Andrew Urias, Court Supervisor  
Honorable Michael Hintze, Judge

## Maricopa

**Court/Agency:** Superior Court in Maricopa County

**Established:** 2004

**Program Type:** Post-Conviction

**Program Description:** Maricopa Superior Court's operations with the SMI Specialized Probation Caseload began in 2004. This caseload operates within a larger context of the Maricopa Consolidated Mental Health Court. A clear benefit of this "Consolidated" mental health court is that the dockets operating within this court are interrelated, covering a range of mental health issues (e.g., guardianship, competency). The mental health court operates a docket to provide judicial support and oversight for probationers on specialized caseloads who have serious mental illnesses.]

**Program Contacts:**

Honorable Nicole Brickner, Commissioner

Honorable Keelan Bodow, Commissioner

Ms. Catherine Soileau, Comprehensive Mental Health Court  
Supervisor

## Maricopa

**Court/Agency:** Tempe Municipal Court

**Established:** 2003

**Program Type:** Deferred Prosecution

**Program Description:** The first participant entered the Tempe Mental Health Court program in June of 2003. A development committee identified the objectives of the program, which were to provide early identification of mentally ill offenders and provide them with a diversion option that identifies appropriate treatment and support services. Defendants' lack of knowledge about benefits and a lack of access to treatment was part of the impetus for the project.

**Program Contacts:**

Honorable MaryAnne Majestic, Magistrate  
Ms. Deborah Schaefer, Court Administrator

## Pima

**Court/Agency:** Pima County Consolidated Justice Court

**Established:** 2009

**Program Type:** Combined Deferred Prosecution and Post-Conviction

**Program Description:** The Pima County Consolidated Justice Court (PCCJC) began operating an informal mental health court in 2000 under Judge Carmen Dolny as an effort to respond in a new way to the volume of mentally ill offenders circulating through the criminal justice system. Several tragedies in the Tucson area – crimes borne of mental illness – heightened awareness of the link between mental health and criminal justice in the community consciousness. The PCCJC community viewed early identification and efforts to connect mentally ill offenders with treatment services as a partial solution to reduce recidivism driven by mental illness and provide these individuals with a chance for a better life. In 2009 when Judge Susan Bacal became the current presiding judge of this docket, she transformed the initiative into a formal PCCJC Mental Health Court program, modeled after the longstanding mental health court program at the local Tucson City Court.

**Program Contacts:**

Honorable Susan Bacal, Justice of the Peace  
Ms. Micci Tilton, Case Management Manager

## Pima

**Court/Agency:** Superior Court in Pima County

**Established:** 2004

**Program Type:** Post-Conviction

**Program Description:** In July 2004, Judge Nanette Warner of the Arizona Superior Court in Pima County assembled a committee of local criminal justice stakeholders to direct the development and implementation of a specialized court program for mentally ill offenders. Judge Warner noted the high rate at which petitions to revoke probation were being filed against community-supervised offenders with serious mental illnesses (SMI) and called for a program that could better meet the needs of these individuals to help them successfully complete probation.

**Program Contacts:**

Ms. Terri Rahner, Criminal Justice Mental Health Clinical Coordinator

Honorable Danelle Liwski, Judge

## Pima

**Court/Agency:** Tucson City Court

**Established:** 2000

**Program Type:** Combined Deferred Prosecution and Post-Conviction

**Program Description:** The Tucson City Court Mental Health Division manages the oldest continuously operational mental health court in Arizona. Representatives from the prosecutor's office, the public defender's office, and the RBHA engaged in preliminary discussions about the possibility of creating a mental health court program after local pretrial services and jail representatives identified inefficient and costly practices in the system's response to individuals with mental illness. Specifically, they recognized that multiple Rule 11 motions for an evaluation of competency were being filed for the same person at the same time in different courts. The mental health court emerged from these discussions in January of 2000 as a two-pronged response for reducing criminal justice costs associated with mentally ill offenders. First, it streamlined existing processes by establishing a centralized court docket with a specialized team to manage cases with mentally ill defendants. Second, the mental health court took additional steps to connect mentally ill offenders with the treatment and resources needed to help them become better functioning members of the community, to improve their quality of life, and, ultimately, to increase their periods of mental stability between crisis episodes. Judge Michael Lex conducted the mental health court for approximately 10 years and was succeeded by Judge Susan Shetter, who currently presides.

**Program Contacts:**

Honorable Susan Q. Shetter, Magistrate

Mr. Christopher Hale, Court Administrator

## Yavapai

**Court/Agency:** Superior Court in Yavapai County

**Established:** 2013

**Program Type:** Post-Conviction

**Program Description:** The Yavapai County Superior Court's SMI Unit of the Specialized Probation Caseload program accepted its first probationer in October of 2013, so the program is in its infancy. Approximately four years ago, stakeholders including law enforcement and members of probation discussed the need for a program for probationers with serious mental illnesses. The program is based on Maricopa's SMI Specialized Probation Caseload (SPC).

**Program Contacts:**

Honorable Celé Hancock, Judge

## Yuma

**Court/Agency:** Superior Court in Yuma County

**Established:** 2013

**Program Type:** Combined Deferred Prosecution and Post-Conviction

**Program Description:** Yuma County Mental Health Court was created by a collaboration of attorneys, probation officers, mental health advisors, treatment providers, and leaders in the detention facility and the court. The court was created, upon the suggestion of Mary White, Assistant County Attorney and with the support of Presiding Judge John Nelson, to address a need to provide treatment options for felony offenders who are diagnosed as seriously mentally ill, rather than sentencing them to regular probation. The stakeholders met in August of 2012 and made the commitment to establish a mental health court; the first court calendar was held on April 15, 2013. Judge Lisa Bleich currently presides over the mental health court. After a visit to the Pima County Superior Court's Mental Health Court, Yuma determined that a coordinator position was necessary for the success of the program. A senior probation officer was loaned to the program to serve this role. The mental health court offers eligible participants the chance to enter both an alternative treatment and sentencing program for defendants with serious and persistent mental illness that are facing criminal charges and/or are having challenges managing their mental illnesses with traditional probation and treatment.

**Program Contacts:**

Ms. Cathy Dryer, Mental Health Court Coordinator  
Honorable Lisa Bleich, Judge Pro Tem