



news

Colorado Judicial Branch
Mary J. Mullarkey, Chief Justice
Gerald Marroney, State Court Administrator

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Contact: Robert McCallum or Jon Sarché
303-837-3633
303-837-3644
robert.mccallum@judicial.state.co.us
jon.sarche@judicial.state.co.us

Fifth Judicial District launches Colorado's newest drug court *New problem-solving court established in Summit County*

BRECKENRIDGE, Colo. – Colorado's latest drug court, a problem-solving court focused on treating substance abuse among qualifying criminal offenders, was launched this month in the 5th Judicial District (Clear Creek, Eagle, Lake and Summit counties).

“Statistics show that a high percentage of criminal cases in this district are related to drug and alcohol addiction, and simply sending those people to prison doesn't help treat addiction or reduce recidivism, two areas where drug courts have proved to be very effective,” said District Judge Karen Romeo, presiding judge of the new Drug Court. “I am excited and hopeful that our Drug Court will be successful and will be a valuable means to implement real, positive change for offenders and our community as a whole.”

The new Drug Court joins the more than 50 problem-solving courts operating in Colorado. Participants, who must be approved through a multidisciplinary screening process, are accepted into a program that emphasizes treatment and rehabilitation through monitoring, customized treatment programs, intensive supervision and regular, in-person court review hearings.

Participants must undergo treatment and counseling, submit to random and frequent drug and alcohol testing, and appear frequently before the judge. Sanctions, including jail time, may be imposed for noncompliance. Positive incentives may be awarded to successful participants as

encouragement to continue advancing in the program, which typically takes 18 to 24 months for each offender.

A team comprising the judge, representatives from the district attorney's and public defender's offices, a private defense attorney, a representative from the sheriff's office, Colorado West Regional Mental Health and probation will screen participants. The court's initial client list is capped at 15 participants.

"I can think of no better way to preserve public safety than to attack the root of a person's drug issues rather than just deal with the symptoms," said District Attorney Mark Hurlbert. "By doing that, hopefully we can ensure there are no future victims."

Drug courts and other problem-solving courts such as DUI court, truancy court or veterans court have been in existence for about 20 years and have proved their success. Seventy-five percent of drug court graduates remain arrest-free at least two years after leaving the program, and every dollar invested in drug courts results in a net savings of \$3.36 that otherwise would have been spent on criminal justice costs, according to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

For more information on drug courts, visit

<http://www.courts.state.co.us/Administration/Unit.cfm/Unit/prbsolcrt>.