



# news

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## **Sixth Judicial District Behavioral Health Court celebrates first anniversary**

DURANGO – The Behavioral Health Court in the Sixth Judicial District (Archuleta, La Plata and San Juan counties) celebrated its first anniversary in April and marked the occasion by celebrating with dessert enjoyed during the docket and prepared by presiding Judge Martha Tinsley Minot.

Judge Minot is an advocate for problem solving courts and the integrated, community-based approach under which they operate.

“The high level of communication and cooperation among the Behavioral Health Court team members ensures the defendants receive support to attend treatment, take their medication properly and stay out of legal trouble,” Judge Minot said. “It is a pleasure to work with such committed members of the community to assist other community members in reclaiming the value and meaning in their lives.”

The problem-solving Behavioral Health Court started in April of 2011 in an effort to reduce recidivism of offenders with mental illness in the criminal justice system and provide community protection with a cost effective, integrated continuum of care through the development and utilization of community resources. The program holds defendants accountable while assisting offenders to achieve long-term stability to become law-abiding citizens, and successful family and community members.

With the intention of providing diverse perspectives and a strong professional knowledge-base, the Behavioral Health Court team members include Judge Minot, representatives from the District Attorney’s and Public Defender’s offices, private counsel,

treatment providers, mental health professionals, the La Plata County Sheriff's Department, Probation, Useful Public Service Coordinator, and Problem Solving Courts Coordinator.

The Behavioral Health Court utilizes best-practice methods of treatment, motivational interviewing techniques, sanctions and incentives, and a team orientated interventional approach to address the individual circumstances and needs of each participant.

The team meets every two weeks, prior to Behavioral Health Court, to review the status of each participant. Special attention is given to appropriate mental health and substance abuse treatment and access to vital resources, and practical training, education, housing and sustainable employment.

In order to be eligible for this problem-solving court, defendants must have a mental illness related to their current charge and for whom this court program can be expected to foster recovery and reduce recidivism. Behavioral Health Court participants must meet phase requirement including regularly scheduled court appearances and probation meetings, specialized treatment plans including group and individual sessions with licensed mental health and substance abuse counselors, drug testing and individualized components such as education, employment and UPS.

As clients fulfill requirements, they are eligible to progress to gradually less supervision, and more responsibility and independence in a phased fashion. Behavioral Health Court currently has 10 clients; 7 in Phase 1 and 3 in Phase 2. At the successful completion of Phase 4, clients will be set for a graduation celebration.

Colorado is home to more than 70 problem-solving courts operating in 19 of Colorado's 22 judicial districts. Colorado's problem-solving courts include adult and juvenile drug courts, family/dependency and neglect drug courts, DUI courts, adult and juvenile mental health courts, and a veteran trauma court.

For more information, please contact 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Problem Solving Court Coordinator Lisa Roberts at 970-385-6025 or [lisa.roberts@judicial.state.co.us](mailto:lisa.roberts@judicial.state.co.us)