

# Adult Drug Court

## History

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Criminal cases involving drugs and alcohol cycle in and out of Henrico County Courts, taking up substantial court and system resources. Drug Court offers a new approach to the problems of stretched resources and repetitious crime.

The states 14th Judicial Circuit, serving Henrico County, for several years has operated with one of the highest caseloads in Virginia. In 2004 each Judge concluded 2,515 cases, compared to the statewide average of 1,693 per Judge. The total number of defendants on the 2004 criminal docket of the Circuit Court was 3,709. A large number of these cases are probation violation proceedings. Most probation violations involve continued use of drugs while under probation supervision. Existing methods of supervision, and the threat of future incarceration, simply have not worked with many of the substance- abusing probationers. Accordingly, in 2001 and 2002, concerned representatives from throughout Henrico looked for a new solution to the toxic mix of drugs and crime.

The Drug Court planning team included representatives of the Police Department, the Sheriff, the Community Corrections program, the Commonwealth's Attorney, the County Manager's Office, the Virginia Department of Corrections (Probation), the Criminal Defense Bar, the Community Services Board (Henrico Mental Health) and Judges of the Circuit and District Courts. Planning included visiting established drug courts, discussing goals and setting eligibility criteria.

The Drug Court Planning Team adopted this Mission Statement in 2002:

*To reduce crime and recidivism through timely intervention and comprehensive treatment of substance abusing offenders, who will be held accountable through coordinated efforts of the criminal justice system, treatment providers and community partners.*

In June 2002, Henrico County received a federal grant to establish an adult Drug Court program for individuals who are chronic, non-violent substance abusers. In January 2003, the first participants began their journey through Drug Court. In May 2004, Henrico Drug Court celebrated its first graduation. The program is available to individuals under state probation supervision who are charged with violation of probation due to continued drug use, and who meet other eligibility criteria. All participants have lengthy suspended sentences that can be imposed by the Drug Court Judge if the participant is terminated from Drug Court.

Drug Court consists of four phases of intensive judicial supervision intended to coerce compliance. Participants must undergo frequent drug testing, participate in substance abuse treatment groups, obtain employment, pay monthly fees, complete educational objectives, obtain stable housing, and attend weekly court hearings. As the participant

achieves certain benchmarks and has shown them self to be responsible, they are advanced to the next phase of the program and are given additional privileges, including a later curfew, less court appearances and more randomized drug testing. For remaining clean and sober, the participant will receive a reward as an incentive to continue to do well; however for non-compliant behavior, there will be a sanction imposed by the Drug Court Judge at the court hearing.

Since 2003, there have been one hundred and fifty eight (158) participants that have completed all the program requirements and that have graduated from the program.

"Turning Point: Inside Henrico's Drug Court," earned an Emmy award from the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. The awards were presented at the 50th Emmy Awards ceremony Saturday, June 14, 2008 in Washington, D.C. "Turning Point: Inside Henrico's Drug Court," produced by Ryan Eubank, captured the prize for the Public/Community Affairs-Program/Special category.

*Take a journey inside Henrico's Drug Court, which is reducing crime by assisting non-violent felons who have a history of substance abuse recover from their addictions. This is unscripted reality as told through past and present Drug Court participants, staff, judges, and actual courtroom drama. Turning Point tells the revealing story of addiction, recovery, and hope.*

On April 28, 2008, Judge Catherine C. Hammond and Judge Gary A. Hicks were awarded the Bronze Key Award from the National Council of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (NCADD). They were chosen for the award as recognition for their dedication, sincerity and determination that has been exhibited in facilitating the Henrico Drug Court.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) presented the Henrico Drug Court's "Healthy Lifestyles Initiative" with an Achievement Award at the annual conference held July 11-15, 2008 in Kansas City, Mo. "Healthy Lifestyles Initiative" began in November 2006 to improve the health of individual participants in Henrico County Drug Court (HCDC), and thereby improve community health. The project goal is to build access to health-care into existing HCDC program requirements. HCDC participants' overall health and family relationships have suffered from long-term drug addiction. This deterioration can sabotage otherwise successful strides in substance abuse treatment. "Healthy Lifestyles" provides access to a primary care physician, on-site health screening and education sessions once a month, assistance with dental care, transportation to appointments, and assistance with co-payments for medical care and prescriptions. The project also includes family involvement, through mandatory events focused on rebuilding healthy relationships between participants and family members.

According to the ***Virginia Adult Drug Treatment Courts Cost Benefit Analysis*** conducted by the National Center for State Courts submitted to the Virginia General

Assembly in 2012, the recidivism rate for Henrico Drug Court graduates to be 15% compared to the match comparison group recidivism rate of 63%. Henrico County Drug Court average annualized cost per drug court participant was one of the lower cost per participant, in the state at under \$10,000 (\$9,868.63). This is one third the cost of incarceration at approximately \$32,000/year. (This cost avoidance is in addition to the \$19,234 saved per participant in traditional court processing) This cost (\$9,868.63) includes cost of assessment, treatment, supervision, court oversight and drug testing for each participant from assessment to graduation or termination.

On March 31, 2015 Judge Catherine Hammond retired from the Henrico County Circuit Court bench. Judge John Marshall was appointed to replace her and he also assumed the duties as the one of the two Drug court Judges, partnering with Judge Gary A. Hicks.