

MENTAL HEALTH COURTS IN GEORGIA

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OVERVIEW

- What is CACJ? What are accountability courts?
- What are mental health courts?
- What do Georgia's mental health courts do?
- How can mental health courts be improved?

CACJ & ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

- The Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ) is a body of judges that promotes and improves the quality, accessibility, and administration of accountability courts.
- Accountability courts are special court programs that represent alternatives to incarceration for offenders with certain charges and criminal histories.
 - Focus on treatment and accountability
 - Participants remain in the community
 - Multi-discipline team made up of judges and judicial staff, attorneys, law enforcement, and treatment providers
 - Drug courts, DUI courts, veteran treatment courts, family treatment courts, and...

MENTAL HEALTH COURTS

- Accountability courts that serve offenders with a severe and persistent mental illness and whose charges are related to that diagnosis
- Often co-occurring substance use disorder
- Participants must drug screen – often for illicit and prescribed drugs
- Regular interaction with a judge
- Attend group and individual counseling
- Where possible, achieve goals like education, employment, or be connected with benefits

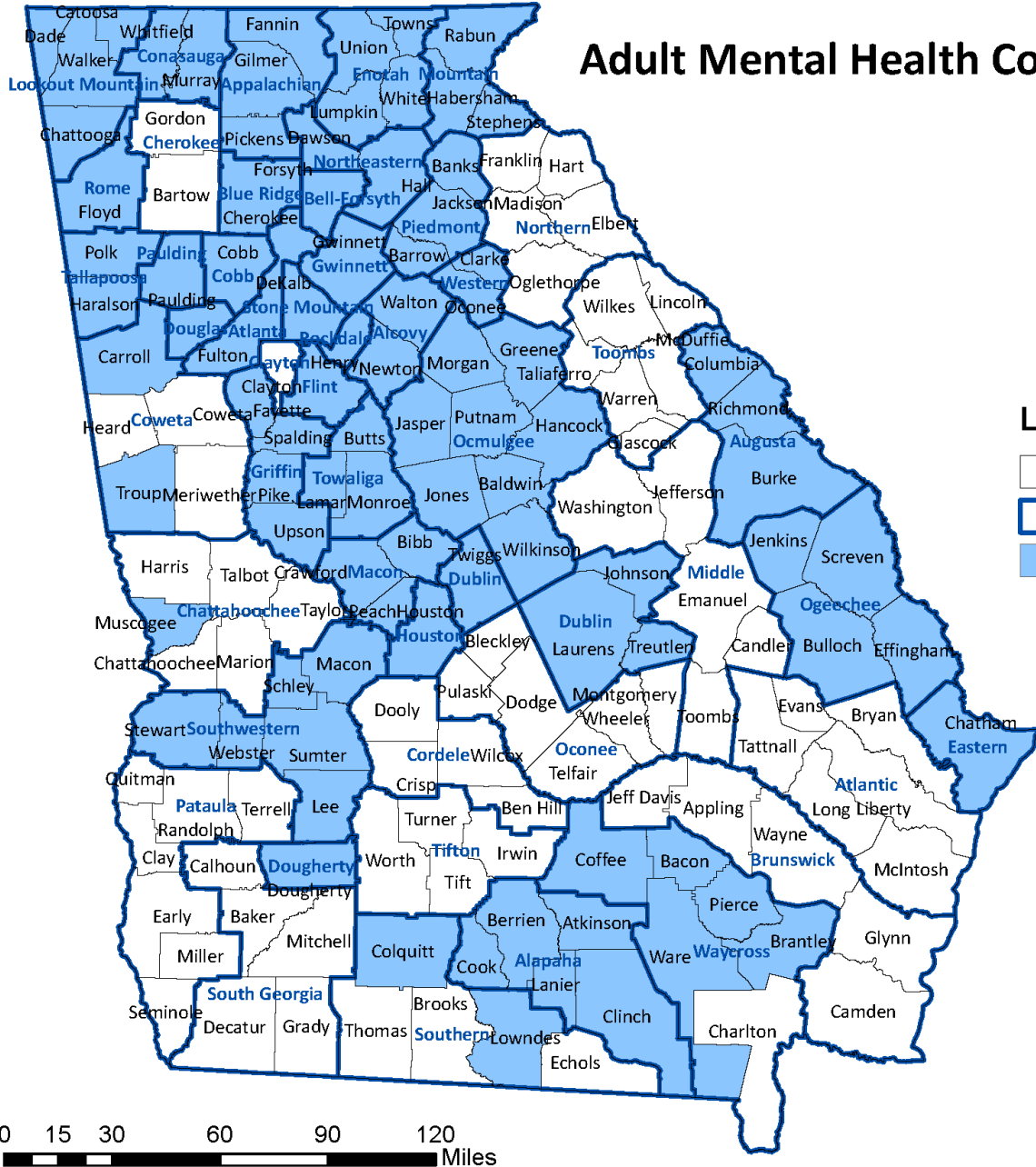
GEORGIA'S MENTAL HEALTH COURTS

- Enabling statute O.C.G.A. § 15-1-16
- 33 state grant funded MHCs in Georgia
 - Primarily Superior Court/felony cases, but some misdemeanors and lower level courts
- 18-24 month programs
- Follow Georgia's Standards for Mental Health Courts
 - Based on national research – Essential Elements
 - Certified every two years and peer reviewed every three years
 - Treatment fidelity monitoring
 - Follow HIPAA and other laws regarding confidentiality/privacy




GEORGIA'S MHC DATA SNAPSHOT

- 2,112 participants served in FY19
 - Compared to 896 participants in FY14
- Estimated savings of \$6.03 per dollar invested
- Each mental health court participant represents \$16,543 in diversion savings
- Recidivism is reduced for any amount of MHC participation, and even further for graduates
 - 12 months post graduation = 16%
 - 24 months post graduation = 24%
 - Even after 36 months, recidivism only 32%

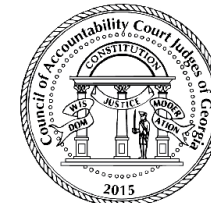
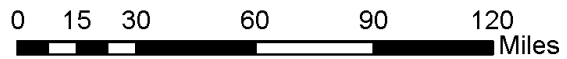
Adult Mental Health Courts Available by County



Legend

-  Georgia Counties
-  Georgia Judicial Circuits
-  Adult Mental Health Courts Available

This map was created with data from the Accountability Court Directory listed on the Council of Accountability Court Judges website. The directory is available at www.gaaccountabilitycourts.org. Map created by Kayla Kane, Research Analyst, kayla.kane@cjcc.ga.gov



GEORGIA'S MENTAL HEALTH COURTS

- Standards include requirements like:
 - Validated risk/needs assessment
 - Regular judicial interaction
 - Regularly updated treatment and case plans
 - Evidence based treatment, drug screening, home checks
 - Data reporting
- Core and ancillary services may include:
 - Individual and group counseling
 - Life skills training, family counseling
 - Connection with benefits
 - Medication management
 - Housing, transportation, medical and dental care

GEORGIA'S MENTAL HEALTH COURTS

- Case Management
 - Individual case plans and treatment plans drafted early and regularly updated
 - Assist participants with program completion and meeting personal goals
 - Assist with connections to community and government services
- Medication Management
 - Imperative to assist participants with starting correct medications
 - Continued monitoring through urine screens and pill counts

MHC PARTICIPANTS AND TRAUMA

- Accountability court participants, including mental health court participants, overwhelmingly have history of trauma
 - Domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, other PTSD
- Programs assess for trauma and provide trauma specific counseling
 - Typically gender specific
 - Evidence based (e.g. Seeking Safety)
 - Sensitive to trauma in court and group settings

MHC CHALLENGES

- Funding
 - Mental Health Court programs benefit from consistent state funding, especially in rural areas
- Availability of mental health services in the community
 - Community Service Boards and DBHDD
 - Knowledge and awareness among stakeholders (Sequential Intercept Model)
 - Availability of treatment providers, again, especially in rural areas

MHC CHALLENGES CONTINUED

- Housing
 - Participants suffer from lack of access to appropriate housing
 - Income, criminal history, availability of stable and safe housing
- Transportation
 - Often have limited transportation options: income, criminal history, other options
 - Statewide issue, but even more prominent in rural areas
- Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)
 - Evidence based practice that improves outcomes for substance use disorder
 - Limited access around the state
 - Continued (but improving) stigma

MHC CHALLENGES CONTINUED

- Data Collection
 - Additional case management system development
 - Court training to ensure data collection accuracy
- Assessment and Treatment
 - Implementation of a mandatory trauma assessment (much like the current risk assessment requirement)
 - Implementation of a mandatory mental health screen for all adult accountability courts
 - Increase in evidence-based trauma treatment in all adult accountability courts
- Court Training
 - Additional assessment and evidence-based training

QUESTIONS?

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