



# Monterey County District Attorney's Office

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## Mental Health Court

This program is for those diagnosed with mental illnesses that cause significant impairment, like schizophrenia and anxiety disorders, among others. The crimes must be low-level and they must not be considered public safety risks. The vast majority have had significant psychiatric hospitalizations in the past and have numerous arrests for minor crimes. The cost to the community for hospitalizations and jails stays is significant – it was these costs which led to the creation of the Mental Health Court (MHC). Rather than keep running the mentally ill through the system, it was decided it was better for the clients and the community to stop the vicious circle and help the clients avoid jail and the hospitals.

These clients often just need to take their medications and avoid illegal drugs/alcohol. This court places them on probation with conditions including a treatment plan that requires them to take their medications, attend therapy groups and avoid using illegal drugs/alcohol. They must appear in court every week and follow their treatment plans or they are likely be remanded into jail custody. After successful completion of MHC, clients graduate and their cases are dismissed. This is a collaboration between the DA’s office, probation, the court, the Public Defender’s Office and the county Department of Mental Health.