



# COUNTY of ROCKINGHAM

## Rockingham-Harrisonburg Court Services Unit

### **PARTICIPANT UPDATE ON ROCKINGHAM COUNTY ADULT DRUG COURT PROCESSES**

FROM: Ann Marie Freeman - Director, Rockingham County Court Services; RHDTCP SAMHSA Grant Administrator

RE: COVID-19 Drug Court Changes

DATE: April 1, 2020

In light of the recent national crisis, there have been some formal and informal changes to our Drug Court operations. This letter is intended to inform you of these changes and remind you of your responsibilities as court participants.

On March 16th, the Chief Justice of the Virginia State Supreme Court issued an order of judicial emergency, prompting several changes to our local court system. These changes were made to protect the health and safety of court employees, litigants, attorneys, judges and the general public. Judge Albertson acted swiftly following the order to institute immediate changes in Drug Court proceedings, most of which you are likely already aware of.

Please be aware of the following:

- The Drug Court docket has been suspended. All defendants are released from court appearance until May 7th, unless further guidance is issued.
- Judge Albertson has given Court Services, through the office of the Drug Court Coordinator, complete discretion to proceed with drug testing and treatment requirements as noted in the Drug Court Manual of Operations.
- Even though you won't appear in court, you are still fully responsible to abide by the standards outlined in the manual, which you signed and fully consented to upon program entry.
- As of now, all of your treatment providers continue to offer some level of care. Care recommendations made by Case Managers and approved by the Court Coordinator are considered mandated activities. This includes recommendations for inpatient and residential care. You are required to remain in compliance with treatment recommendations made by your Case Manager including MRT, IOP, and Individual Therapy.
- You are encouraged to stay in regular contact with your Peer Support Specialist. In the coming days, Jordan will be in touch with each of you to assess your support systems and provide you with a set of community resources that are currently accessible.
- While some of your regular testing times/hours may change, positive drug screens will continue to be enforced with program violations, which may lead to incarceration. Your Drug Court Coordinator will inform you weekly of your specific testing requirements.
- Failure to comply with your phase specific court requirements, including curfews and housing arrangements, will continue to be punishable by program sanction.

We understand that employment opportunities and access to your normal pro-social supports may be radically changing during this time. We also understand that these changes may affect your ability to pay court fees, maintain current housing arrangements, maintain community service commitments, and/or find transportation support. Our

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decision to continue drug testing and court treatment services was made with your best interest in mind, not as a punitive measure. We want to support your hard work in maintaining sobriety and think you can do this while staying in your home and with your family during this time. In order for us all to be successful in this goal, you must be HONEST about any issues you may be having with relapse and constraints or changes you are experiencing in your household. Your HONESTY is key to your ability to remain in the program and in the community.

To that end, we are requiring all participants report IMMEDIATELY any serious sickness or respiratory illness you or direct family members are experiencing. Make sure you contact my office PRIOR to arrival at Court Services for testing or contact your Case Manager PRIOR to arriving at CSB for treatment. We urge you to take this outbreak seriously and act appropriately. Do not, however, use the seriousness of this national crisis as an excuse to miss appointments and/or testing. Dishonesty regarding your health, may result in immediate program removal.

Please stay safe and well. Feel free to reach out to our office if you have any further questions. For more information, see the following resources from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

How to Prevent Getting Sick  
Recognizing Symptoms and Testing  
General public guidelines if you get sick