



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

Administrative Office
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Bldg. 1, Room E-316
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
(304) 340-2305 Jennifer Bundy
(304) 340-2306 April Harless
(304) 558-4219 / TTY
(304) 558-1212 / FAX
Web Site: www.courtswv.gov
Twitter: [WVCourts](https://twitter.com/WVCourts)
Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/courtswv/
Email: Jennifer.Bundy@courtswv.gov
Email: April.Harless@courtswv.gov

Chief Justice to attend Kanawha Drug Court graduation

For immediate release Wednesday, September 18, 2013

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Supreme Court Chief Justice Brent D. Benjamin will attend the tenth graduation ceremony for adults who have completed the Kanawha County Adult Drug Court Program.

The ceremony will be at 3 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 19, in the ceremonial courtroom of the old Kanawha County Courthouse.

Seven adults will graduate on Thursday, bringing to more than fifty the number of graduates since the program began operating in May 2009.

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Chief Judge Jennifer Bailey presides over the drug court, which is one of twenty operational adult drug courts in West Virginia. There also are sixteen operational juvenile drug courts.

Adult and juvenile drug courts are intensive supervision probation programs. Juvenile drug court participants are usually in the program for six to eight months. Initially, a participant meets with the drug court judge weekly and a probation officer several times per week. Juvenile drug court is intended for youth who are at risk of becoming addicted, not those who are already addicted.

Adult drug courts are for those who already are addicted. Participants complete a treatment program of no less than twelve months. They are required to attend group and individual counseling, to take drug tests multiple times per week, and to do community service work. They meet with a probation officer frequently and see the drug court judge at least weekly in the beginning of the program.

The average annual cost incurred by the state for one adult drug court participant is approximately \$7,100 compared to \$18,000 in jail or \$25,000 in prison. About 10 percent of drug court graduates return to jail, compared to 30 percent of traditionally incarcerated defendants and 80 percent of drug offenders who have not gone through drug court programs.

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