



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Justice Benjamin, others to attend reopening of Cabell County Adult Drug Court

For immediate release

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. – Supreme Court Justice Brent D. Benjamin, Sixth Family Court Circuit (Cabell County) and Drug Court Judge Patricia Keller, and Huntington Mayor Steve Williams will attend a ceremony at noon on Friday, Nov. 6, to rededicate and expand the adult drug court in Cabell County.

The ceremony in Courtroom No. 1 in the Cabell County Courthouse also will rename the drug court. The new name, Cabell-Huntington Adult Drug Court, signifies the close partnership between the county and city on drug treatment and drug-related crime prevention.

The drug court recently received two federal grants which will allow it to add a specialized track for adult prostitutes who also are addicts, a combination which make them high-risk, high-need, non-violent felony offenders. The Women's Empowerment and Addiction Recover Program (WEAR) will treat their addiction, mental illness, and physical health needs, thus applying a social service approach to prevent recidivism instead of focusing on punishment through the criminal justice system.

Up to 20 participants a year will be served by the WEAR program. That will increase the overall capacity of the drug court from 40 participants per year to 60. A full-time adult drug court probation officer and part-time case manager will be hired to provide services specifically for the WEAR participants.

The co-occurrence of drug abuse and prostitution is becoming a community health hazard in Cabell County. Prostitution arrests in Huntington have more than doubled since 2010. More than 670 overdoses have occurred in Cabell County in 2015; of those, 53 have resulted in death. Public health concerns include the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, the increase in disease spread by needle sharing, and drug paraphernalia and condoms littering city streets.

Expanding the drug court in Cabell County is part of the Mayor's Strategic Plan to address the drug crisis in Huntington. The Mayor's Office of Drug Control Policy, in conjunction with the Supreme Court, was instrumental in pursuing the \$643,716 in grant funding from the federal Joint Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Center for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

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