



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Family Treatment Courts Receive Two Grants Totaling \$936,791, Start Training

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia has received two grants totaling \$936,791 to support the opening of four Family Treatment Courts in the state.

House Bill 3057, passed in March, authorized the Supreme Court to begin operating at least four Family Treatment Courts. The two grants are providing the financing to do that.

One grant funded a two-day training for the first three Family Treatment Court teams. The training that began Tuesday in Charleston focused on the national perspective of Family Treatment Courts, working together as a team, building a foundation for change, recovery, supporting families and therapeutic responses.

Treatment Court teams from Boone County, Ohio County, and Randolph County attended the training led by Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit (Boone and Lincoln Counties) Judge William Thompson, First Judicial Circuit (Brooke, Hancock and Ohio Counties) Judge David Sims, and Twentieth Judicial Circuit (Randolph County) Judge David Wilmoth.

“You are truly on the front line working each and every day to help families heal and reunite. The future of our state is our children, and each of us here is committed to doing what we can to ensure every child is raised in a safe, secure and supportive home,” Justice Jenkins told the teams as the training began Tuesday. The Supreme Court fully supports Family Treatment Courts, he said.

Family Treatment Courts are designed to protect children and assist parents who have been adjudicated in abuse and neglect proceedings due to their substance use disorders before the parents permanently lose custody of their children. These non-adversarial courts will provide accountability, structure and support for the parents to aid in their recovery and enhance their overall parenting and life skills.

A \$339,599 grant from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources’ Office of Drug Control Policy is funding, for one year, the cost of setting up Family Treatment Courts in Ohio County, Randolph County, and a third county to be determined. The grant funds will be used to hire full-time Family Treatment Court case coordinators and for other expenses associated with the programs including laptop computers, cell phones, incentives for treatment court participants, drug testing and a case management system to track performance and outcomes. In addition, the grant will allow six individuals from three Family Treatment Courts to attend the National

Association of Drug Court Professionals Conference next May in Anaheim, Calif. The DHHR grant is also paying for the two-day training in Charleston by the Center for Children and Family Futures, a national firm that assists with family treatment courts throughout the United States.

A federal grant for \$597,192 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention will support the Boone County Family Treatment Court for three years. That grant will pay for a full-time Family Treatment Court Case Coordinator, a laptop and cell phone for that employee and incentives for treatment court participants. The grant also will partially fund the salary and benefits for a Court Statistical Analyst who will work in the Supreme Court Administrative Office in Charleston and track Family Treatment Court data. The grant will pay for two individuals from the Boone County Family Treatment Court to attend the National Association of Drug Court Professionals Conference. The second and third years of the grant will pay the salary and benefits for a full-time Treatment Court Specialist in the Supreme Court's Division of Probation Services.

House Bill 3057 established a Family Treatment Court State Advisory Committee led by the Chief Justice. Both Chief Justice Beth Walker and Justice Jenkins attended the advisory committee's regular meeting Monday afternoon in Charleston. During the meeting, Chief Justice Walker noted that "we are grateful for the hard work by the circuit judges, staff and others who have made the Family Treatment Courts possible in a relatively short period of time. This cooperative effort will enable us to make a real difference in the lives of the families who participate."

Each of the Family Treatment Courts also will have its own local advisory committee made up of the supervising Family Treatment Court Judge, the Case Coordinator, the county prosecutor, a defense attorney who regularly represents people in child abuse and neglect cases, the Child Protective Service Worker and Community Service Manager of the Bureau of Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Resources, and a court-appointed special advocate, among others involved in the welfare of the family.

Over 400 Family Treatment Courts currently operate in the United States. West Virginia's will be based on proven strategies developed in other states and will feature collaboration between the courts, treatment providers and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

Participation in Family Treatment Courts will be voluntary.

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