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For Immediate Release

Local Drug Court program awarded \$975,000
to help participants who are hardest to treat, have fewest resources

Federal grant to help participants succeed in Drug Court, get education and employment

FRANKFORT, Ky., March 17, 2017 – The Adult Drug Court program that serves Harrison, Nicholas, Pendleton and Robertson counties at the District Court level has been awarded a \$975,000 federal grant. The grant is to help participants who are the most difficult to treat and have the fewest resources to successfully complete the program and obtain education and work. The program began using the funds in January.

The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) awarded the program the grant to expand treatment services, including counseling and job coaching, and assist participants with education expenses, transportation, child care and other needs. The funds are to help participants who struggle with employment issues, suffer with mental health problems and/or lack basic education.

“The local Drug Court program was started because of the obvious and too-often tragic results of substance abuse and addiction in this community and the overwhelming influence it has on criminal behavior,” said District Court Judge Charles W. Kuster Jr., who volunteers his time to conduct Drug Court proceedings for Harrison, Nicholas, Pendleton and Robertson counties. “Solving the problem takes hard work and usually a complete change in environment for participants. It most certainly is not an easy way out for criminal defendants. This grant offers the opportunity to enhance treatment, supervision and wrap-around services to help them succeed.”

Under the grant, the District Drug Court program will use the Assertive Community Treatment Model, which is designed to enhance the chances of success for participants who need assistance beyond traditional treatment. The model calls for increased case management and a multidisciplinary team approach.

A portion of the grant will be used for Bluegrass.org to employ a substance abuse counselor, peer recovery specialist and case manager to work exclusively with Drug Court participants. The counselor's duties include providing counseling and enhanced treatment for individuals and groups of participants. The peer recovery specialist and case manager conduct home and jail visits, lead mentoring groups, connect participants with community services, and offer job coaching and transportation. The peer recovery specialist also offers recovery support for participants and the case manager works with Drug Court staff to oversee participant progress.

"We're really happy for what this grant will be able to provide," program supervisor Andrea Bussell said. "We will be able to serve participants who might not have done well in the program without the added level of services."

Kentucky Drug Court programs are funded with state money approved by the Kentucky General Assembly. State funds are for treatment, drug testing, home visits and other services but do not cover wrap-around services like transportation and clothing.

"I appreciate the effort the District Drug Court team for Harrison, Pendleton, Nicholas and Robertson has put into the development of the program, including obtaining this grant," said Connie Payne, who oversees Drug Court and other specialty courts for the state court system. "The enhanced treatment funds will help overcome barriers that can hinder participants from doing well in the program."

In addition to Judge Kuster, Bussell and other Drug Court staff, the local District Drug Court team includes the assistant county attorney, a public defender, law enforcement officers, treatment providers, faith-based community volunteers and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

There are 30 participants in the local Drug Court program. One participant is scheduled to graduate from the program at a public ceremony Tuesday, April 18, at the Harrison County Courthouse. Commonwealth's Attorney Doug Miller will be the guest speaker. The courthouse is located at 115 Court St. in Cynthiana.

About Kentucky Drug Court

Kentucky Drug Court is administered through the Administrative Office of the Courts in Frankfort, which oversees 54 adult programs that serve 113 counties. Drug Court provides court-supervised treatment as an alternative to incarceration. The program's success can be measured in the number of lives changed and the cost savings to Kentucky taxpayers. For every \$1 spent on Drug Court graduates, the state saves \$2.72 on what it would have spent on incarcerating these individuals.

The program has helped reduce illicit drug use and related criminal activity and lowered rearrest, reconviction and reincarceration rates. It has increased payments of delinquent child support and improved employment rates. As of December 2016, 8,257 individuals had graduated from Drug

Court programs statewide and participants had paid \$6.1 million in child support and \$6.5 million in court obligations, including restitution and fines.

Drug Court coordinates the efforts of the judiciary, prosecution, defense bar, probation, law enforcement, mental health, social services and treatment communities to actively intervene and break the cycle of substance abuse, addiction and crime. The program consists of three phases that last at least one year and are followed by aftercare. Drug Court staff and participants work together to develop individual program plans with specific responsibilities and goals with timetables. Plans include group, family and individual counseling; frequent and random urine testing; education and vocational training; scheduled payments of restitution, child support and court fees; and health and community activities. Participants report directly to their Drug Court judge, who rewards progress and sanctions noncompliance.

When participants successfully complete the program, charges may be dismissed through diversion, or conditional discharge may be granted through probation. Judges who participate in Drug Court volunteer their time to the program.

Administrative Office of the Courts

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