



## **Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County**

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### **Drug Court Celebrates Recovery During National Drug Court Month**

*Drug Court participants achieving sobriety, positive life changes*

PHOENIX (June 13, 2022) – During National Drug Court Month, recognized annually in May, three Drug Court participants celebrated achieving sobriety by graduating from the Adult Drug Court program. Drug Court is offered through the Adult Probation Department, part of the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County, and provides substance-abuse monitoring and intensive outpatient counseling to help participants break the cycle of addiction.

“Drug Court is an opportunity for people who are at high risk for continued drug or alcohol use and addiction to get the treatment and help they so desperately need,” said Commissioner Melissa Zabor. “Often, we hear in the media of the current drug crisis – whether that is alcohol, meth, or opioid. We rarely hear about the solutions to these problems, and Drug Court is an opportunity to tackle those problems head-on. In tackling their addictions, people often find themselves tackling their mental, physical, and emotional health.”

The Drug Court program in Maricopa County started in 1992 and monitors an average of 425 participants at a time. Commissioner Nicolas Hoskins says the program can last from a minimum of 14 months and can continue for the entirety of a person’s probation period. Participants are supported

throughout their time in the program by probation officers, counselors, attorneys, judicial officers, law enforcement, community partners and each other.

“Drug court offers a mixture of both compassion and accountability to participants,” said Commissioner Hoskins. “The focus always remains on treatment, and participants are both encouraged and required to actively engage in substance abuse counseling.”

In 2021, 52 participants successfully graduated from Drug Court, giving them the tools they need on their path to recovery.

“When I first began probation, the challenges I faced were making sure that all my actions were in line with actually completing probation,” said Ahmed, a recent Drug Court graduate. “That meant eliminating distractions, old habits and old friends. Creating new habits and routines was difficult but achievable since that’s what my focus became. Drug court helped me in my recovery because it kept me in line with my goals of changing old habits and creating new healthy ones. Drug court aided in my goal to leave my old life and start a new one.”

During the pandemic, treatment groups and individual counseling sessions have been primarily held through a virtual counseling platform.

“Drug Court’s ultimate aim is to assist participants in achieving and sustaining long-term sobriety. In doing so, Drug Court pursues a treatment-centric approach, rather than one based on long periods of incarceration,” said Commissioner Hoskins. “In focusing on treatment, the program is not limited to providing substance abuse counseling. Instead, we try to focus on the whole person, including providing mental health resources, trauma-informed care, and job and housing assistance.”

According to the Adult Probation Department, most of the Drug Court participants appreciated being able to participate in counseling sessions from home.

“My counselor, Will, made the virtual counseling sessions enjoyable and would find ways to get me to discuss how I felt and then always had something nice and positive to say,” said Ahmed. “He also was great at listening and giving good advice to motivate me and everyone in the group.”

The Housing Outreach and Peer Engagement (HOPE) program provides peer navigation and sober living services for eligible participants. Through HOPE, participants can receive the support they need to continue to be engaged in treatment while providing them with a safe place to live.

“In my time in Drug Court, I’ve seen people who were living in their cars or in the streets get safe and affordable housing. I’ve seen people get reunited with their kids once they are sober,” said Commissioner Zabor. “I’ve seen people get jobs and become leaders in their recovery groups. I’ve seen people get sober. This program changes and saves the lives of the individuals who come through it.”

The Drug Court Alumni Association provides additional assistance to Drug Court participants through a peer-support network. Drug Court graduates are also able to receive continued mentorship and peer support to help during their recovery journey.

According to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, there are nearly 4,000 treatment courts in the United States, annually serving 150,000 people. Since 1989, treatment courts have served more than 1.5 million people and saved billions of tax dollars.

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The Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County is comprised of Superior Court, Adult Probation and Juvenile Probation, which includes juvenile detention. The Judicial Branch in Maricopa County is the fourth largest trial court system in the nation and, along with its 3,100 employees, is dedicated to providing a safe, fair and impartial forum for resolving disputes, enhancing access to services, and providing innovative, evidence-based practices that improve the safety of the community and ensure the public's trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch. For more information, visit [www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov](http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov).