

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

IN RE: Establishing Mental Health Court) No. 2026-J-_____
(Wellness Court) pursuant to 42 Pa.C.S.A.)
§ 916) **AD-14-2026**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

AND NOW, this 9th day of April, 2026, upon consideration of 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 916(a), which authorizes the Court to establish, from available funds, one or more treatment courts which have specialized jurisdiction, including, but not limited to, veterans courts, drug courts, mental health courts and driving under the influence courts, whereby defendants are admitted to a court-supervised individualized treatment program,

IT APPEARING the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas has operated a Mental Health Court (also known as “Wellness Court”) since the beginning of 2026 and that this Administrative Order shall serve as a means of formally memorializing the establishment of said Mental Health Court,

IT IS ORDERED pursuant to 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 916 et seq., the Lehigh County Mental Health Court is established to ensure public safety and reduce recidivism through the facilitation of judicially-supervised intensive mental health treatment programs that encompass individualized intensive treatment, intensive probation supervision, case management, and related services to criminal offenders with serious mental illness issues.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas shall make information concerning Mental Health Court available to the public by way of hosting one or more webpages on its website dedicated to the Mental Health Court,¹

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Administrative Order shall be effective

¹ As of the date of this Order, the County hosts an application which can be used to apply to the Mental Health Court at <https://www.lccpa.org/departments/adultprob/recovery.nex>.

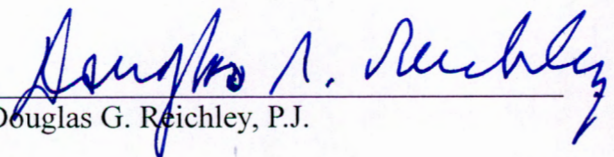
thirty (30) days after publication thereof in the Pennsylvania Bulletin,

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that in accordance with Pa.R.J.A. 103(d), the

District Court Administrator shall:

- (a) File one (1) certified copy hereof with the Criminal Procedural Rules Committee, which has certified to this Court that this Administrative Order is not inconsistent with any general rule of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.
- (b) Distribute two (2) certified copies hereof to and one (1) CD-ROM copy that complies with the requirement of 1 Pa.Code § 13.11(b), with the Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin;
- (c) File one (1) certified copy hereof with the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts;
- (d) Publish one (1) copy of this Order on the website of the Lehigh County Judiciary at: <https://www.lccpa.org/rules.nex>;
- (e) Supervise the distribution hereof to all Judges of this Court and the Magisterial District Judges of the County of Lehigh.

BY THE COURT:



Douglas G. Reichley, P.J.



LEHIGH COUNTY WELLNESS COURT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Lehigh County Wellness Court, having united in purpose with the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, the Adult Probation and Parole Office, Lehigh County Menal Health Office, the Lehigh County Sheriff's Office, the Lehigh County Jail System, Lehigh Valley Pretrial Services, Lehigh County Single County Authority, Magellan Health and local law enforcement and community treatment providers, agree to collaborate to address criminal activity stemming from untreated mental illness in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. In order to support a comprehensive program of services to meet the needs of qualified participants, the team members and departments commit to the following:

Wellness Court Judge

- Preside over all wellness court proceedings, including pre-court staffing meetings.
- Participate as an active member of the staffing team and the steering/planning team.
- Ensure a cooperative atmosphere for wellness court team members.
- Inquire of each prospective participant as to his or her desire to enter the program.
- Accept the guilty pleas of participants.
- Communicate with each participant at wellness court proceedings.
- Gather information from the wellness court team and make final decisions on incentives, sanctions (up to and including termination from the program) and service adjustments relative to participant performance.
- Reinforce the necessity of active participation in treatment.
- Meet annually with treatment providers to reinforce the importance of their role.
- Act as mediator in developing resources and improving interagency partnerships.
- Contribute to the education of peers, colleagues and the judiciary in the efficacy of wellness court.
- Provide guidance in the development of program policies and procedures.
- Ensure that all team members receive timely and ongoing wellness court-related training.
- Maintain an understanding of the program's policies and procedures.

- Collaborate and communicate with local, state and national officials, the community and the media regarding the operation and needs of the program.

Wellness Court Coordinator

- Responsible for administrative functions related to wellness court sessions, including pre-court staffings.
- Participate as an active member of the staffing team and the steering/planning team.
- Attend all team meetings and court sessions.
- Provide general oversight to the wellness court team to include meeting attendance, grant reporting, program support, funding solicitation and community outreach.
- Facilitate communication between team members and partner agencies.
- Receive, review and track new program applications. Research and archive all pertinent documents for team to review. Coordinate application process with team members.
- Liaise with other problem-solving courts for applicants and participants with charges in other counties.
- Assist with organizing court, events and meetings and compiling supporting materials to disseminate to stakeholders and providers of services to maintain partnerships.
- Give detailed explanation to accepted applicants on the structure of the program, including the different phases and the requirements corresponding to each phase.
- Review policies and procedures; prepare and recommend changes as needed. Ensure policies and procedures are followed during program operations.
- Ensure all team members follow confidentiality regulations and all appropriate forms are signed and circulated to the appropriate agencies.
- Contribute to the education of peers, colleagues, and the judiciary in the efficacy of wellness court.
- Gather and analyze statistical data for program evaluation and recommend changes as needed.
- Oversee PAJCIS/DCCM and ensure all appropriate data and information is entered and current. Utilize PAJCIS/DCCM to prepare reports in support of program goals.
- Assist in providing or seeking ongoing wellness court-related training for team members. Ensure all new team members receive a wellness court orientation before participating in their first staffing.
- Participate during pre-court staffings and advocate for effective incentives and sanctions for program compliance or lack thereof.

Wellness Court District Attorney

- Participate as an active member of the staffing team and the steering/planning team.
- Establish Commonwealth's screening criteria with community safety being the priority.
- Approve all defendants for participation in wellness court based on legal eligibility.
- Assist in identifying defendants arrested for specific offenses that meet program eligibility requirements.
- Contact defense attorneys to address sentencing issues/agreements.
- May help resolve other pending legal cases that affect participants' legal status or eligibility.
- Participate in all wellness court guilty pleas.
- Provide input to the court on sentencing.
- Continually balance community safety concerns while providing defendants with the greatest opportunity for success.
- Participate during pre-court staffings and advocate for effective incentives and sanctions for program compliance or lack thereof.
- Attend weekly team meetings and operate in a non-adversarial manner during court, to promote a sense of a unified team presence.
- Contribute to the education of peers, colleagues, and the judiciary in the efficacy of wellness court.
- Make decisions regarding the participant's continued enrollment in the program based on performance in treatment rather than on legal aspects of the case, barring additional criminal behavior.

Wellness Court Public Defender

- Participate as an active member of the staffing team and the steering/planning team.
- Encourage clients meeting appropriate criteria to apply for entry into wellness court and explain opportunities of the program, including the pursuit of recovery and lessened criminal sanctions.
- Advise the defendant as to the nature and purpose of the wellness court, the rules governing participation and the consequences of failing to abide by the rules.
- Advise clients of their legal rights, legal options, program conditions, and potential sentencing outcomes.
- Prepare clients for entry into wellness court by explaining standard rights regarding guilty pleas and the unique nature of a guilty plea into wellness court, whereby participants may not later withdraw their plea.
- Attend weekly team meetings and operates in a non-adversarial manner during court, to promote a sense of a unified team presence.

- Review the participant's progress in the program and advocates appropriately for effective incentives and sanctions for program compliance or lack thereof.
- Ensure the constitutional rights of the participant are protected.
- Protect the rights of persons being considered for removal from wellness court and ensure that they are afforded fair evaluation of their circumstances.
- Contribute to the education of peers, colleagues, and the judiciary in the efficacy of wellness court.
- Advise other defense attorneys regarding criteria for entry into wellness court, procedure by which application for entry to wellness court is made, and suitability of specific potential participants.

Wellness Court Probation Officer

- Participate as an active member of the staffing team and the steering/planning team.
- Provide comprehensive field supervision of wellness court participants.
- Use a validated criminogenic risk/needs assessment tool to be conducted during the referral process to ensure the wellness court is serving the appropriate target population.
- Provide coordinated and comprehensive supervision to include telephone contact, office/home/employment visits, as well as random field visits to participants' homes.
- Develop effective measures for alcohol and drug testing and supervision compliance reporting that provide the wellness court staffing team with sufficient and timely information to implement sanctions, incentives, and therapeutic interventions.
- Monitor/assist the participant's compliance and progress through the adherence of the judgement and sentence order and program requirements.
- Participate in pre-court staffings and provide updates on all active participants and advocate for effective incentives, sanctions, and therapeutic interventions during staffing.
- Enforce sanctions and all requirements of the program.
- Utilize and deliver cognitive-behavioral interventions to address criminal thinking and increase a readiness for change.
- Contribute to the education of peers, colleagues, and the judiciary in the efficacy of wellness court.
- Develop a written case plan and update based on ongoing risk and need assessment.
- Verify employment, sponsorship, and meeting attendance (collecting and reviewing meeting slips) for participants.
- Give detailed explanation to applicants regarding program requirements, e.g.,

signing conditions and phase structure.

- Responsible for PAJCIS data collection and entry on drug testing, monitoring and contacts.
- If participants are on probation/parole in another county, supervise the cases from those counties and communicate with the probation officer as needed.

Wellness Court Case Management

- Participate as an active member of the staffing team and the steering/planning team.
- Work as a partner to ensure the success of wellness court participants.
- Operate in conjunction with the wellness court team for the assessment and placement of participants in the appropriate level of care to meet their treatment needs.
- Utilize a validated clinical screening and assessment tool to ensure appropriate placement of participants.
- Provide progress reports to the team prior to staffing, so the team will have sufficient and timely information.
- Advocate for effective incentives, sanctions, and therapeutic adjustments during staffing.
- Serve as a liaison between treatment providers and the team.
- Coordinate the utilization of community-based services such as health and mental health services, victims' services, housing, entitlements, transportation, education, vocational training, and job skills training and placement to provide a strong foundation for participants.
- Engage in on-going contact with participants to assist with resource coordination and resource recommendations.
- Ensure all confidentiality forms are signed with the client and the team.
- Contribute to the education of peers, colleagues, and the judiciary in the efficacy of wellness court.
- Responsible for PAJCIS data collection and entry of contacts and treatment status.

Wellness Court Law Enforcement Representative

- Serve as a liaison, along with the District Attorney, between the law enforcement community and the team.
- Participate as an active member of the staffing team and the steering/planning team.
- Attend all wellness court meetings and court sessions as well as any additional team required meetings.
- Assist probation officers with home visits or environmental checks.

- Follow-up on warrants issued through the court.

TRAINING

All members of the team will be required to earn at least twelve hours of continuing education credits each year in the problem-solving court field. These trainings may be on site, off site, or via internet.

New members to the team will complete the “New Team Member Training Program” which includes online trainings, shadowing team members, and selected readings/research on adult treatment courts. If funding is available, additional trainings to include role specific training through National Drug Court Institute will be attended.

All members of the team should attend the Pennsylvania Association of Treatment Court Professionals (PATCP) annual conference. If funds are available team members may also attend the annual meeting of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

NOTE: Each team member will be responsible for dissemination of information to their respective agency about confidentiality laws that apply specifically to wellness court participants. Likewise, the sharing of information between team members is a vital part of working as a team. Team members will also be charged with the education of peer professionals on the program and develop community linkages which enhance the effectiveness of the program.

AGREEMENT

In creating this partnership and uniting around a single goal of addressing an underlying problem affecting our community, we pledge to enhance communication between courts, law enforcement, advocacy groups, and treatment programs. Through this linkage of services, we expect greater participation and effectiveness in addressing wellness court participants involved in the criminal justice system.

STEERING COMMITTEE

All parties agree to be represented in this steering committee. This group will be responsible for modifying and amending this agreement. They will address problems and issues as identified and develop policy and program modification.

AGREEMENT MODIFICATIONS

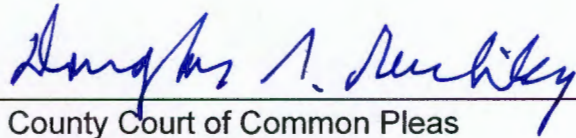
Any individual agency wishing to amend and/or modify this agreement will notify the steering committee of the issue(s). The committee will address the issue(s) for purposes of

modifying/amending the issue(s). The issue(s) will be decided by consensus (if possible) or by simple majority.

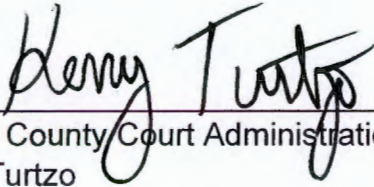
TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT

Individual agencies contemplating termination of their participation in this Agreement shall first notify the steering committee of their concerns. The steering committee shall attempt to resolve the problem to ensure continuation of the treatment court. If unable to resolve the problem, the individual agency or department can exercise its right to terminate this agreement by notifying all other agencies in writing a minimum of ninety (90) days prior to such termination.

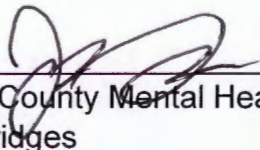
All of the above is agreed upon, this the ___th day of March, 2026.



Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas
The Honorable Douglas G. Reichley



Lehigh County Court Administration
Kerry Turtzo



Lehigh County Mental Health
Josh Bridges



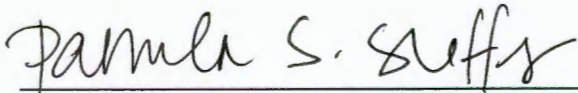
Wellness Court Coordinators
Andi Sandt and Drew Taylor



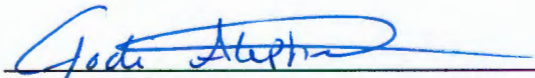
Office of the Lehigh County District Attorney
Gavin P. Holihan



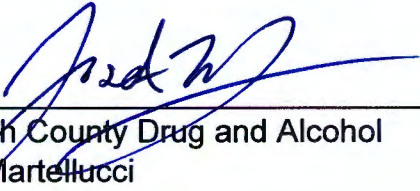
Office of the Lehigh County Public Defender
Kimberly Makoul



Lehigh County Adult Probation & Parole
Pamela Sheffer



Pretrial Services
Jodi Stephen



Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol
Joe Martellucci



Law Enforcement Representative; APD
Charles Roca



Magellan Health Representative
Dr. Sarah Kinsch