



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

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**Hon. Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge**

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Midtown Community Court Launches Misdemeanor Mental Health Court, Expands Age Eligibility for Specialized Part Aimed at Young Adult, Low-Level Offenders

NEW YORK CITY—Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks today announced the launch of the Midtown Community Court’s Misdemeanor Mental Health Court (MMHC), a specialized court targeting low-level offenders living with a serious mental illness related to their criminal justice involvement. The new mental health court is a collaborative effort of the New York City Criminal Court, the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, the Center for Court Innovation, the local defense bar and local service providers, among other partners. The MMHC has been working with the Court System’s Office of Justice Initiatives’ Division of Policy and Planning throughout the planning and implementation process. Hon. John Zhuo Wang will preside over the new MMHC.

Mental health courts seek to craft a meaningful response to the problems posed by justice-involved individuals with serious mental illness, addressing both their treatment needs and the public safety concerns of the community. These specialized courts link participants to court-supervised, community-based treatment and services as an alternative to conventional prosecution and incarceration.

Participation in the mental health court is voluntary. Following their arraignment in New York City Criminal Court in Manhattan, people with serious mental health symptoms or a history of mental illness may be referred to the new mental health court upon the consent of the parties. Treatment plans will be tailored to each participant's needs, with the court offering a range of services, such as counseling, substance abuse treatment, housing assistance and job training. Participants who fulfill the mental health court's treatment and other requirements may have their charges reduced or dismissed. Misdemeanor Mental Health Courts have also been implemented or are underway in New York City's other boroughs and in counties around the State.

Additionally, Judge Marks announced that the Midtown Community Court's specialized Youth Part, which offers meaningful alternatives to conventional prosecution for young adults charged with low-level crimes, has expanded its eligibility to include young adult offenders ages 18 through 25—up from 18 through 23. The Youth Part aims to reduce recidivism by addressing core reasons for criminal justice involvement and linking young adult offenders to age-appropriate interventions and services, including individual and group counseling, case management services, harm reduction services and coping skills. Among other services, the Youth Part also has a program for non-custodial fathers who are living in New York City with a child under the age of 18, offering parenting classes, cognitive behavioral therapy and workforce development sessions.

The Midtown Community Court, located at 314 West 54 Street in Manhattan, was the first community court established in the U.S. and has been addressing quality-of-life issues since 1993. Community courts respond creatively to low-level offending, addressing problems that often underlie individuals' criminal behavior to help break the cycle of crime. Focusing on local concerns, community courts rely on the collaboration of criminal justice agencies, area residents, civic organizations, government entities, social service providers and other stakeholders. Judge Marks today also announced that the Midtown Community Court, which had been conducting proceedings remotely during the pandemic, will resume in-person operations on Friday, March 18.

“The Midtown Community Court is a long-established neighborhood fixture, providing essential services that aim to enhance access to justice, strengthen the Court’s relationship with local stakeholders and boost the quality of life for the entire community. The Court’s new mental health court, along with the expanded eligibility and programming of its youth part, will help ensure better case outcomes and improve public safety,” said Chief Administrative Judge Marks. “I am grateful to the Court’s many partners and stakeholders, among them, Senator Brad Hoylman for his leadership, including his championship of the Court’s mission, and the Community Board 4 members, for their ongoing support.”

“I’m proud to announce the return of in-person proceedings to Midtown Community Court, a vital resource in reducing our reliance on incarceration and addressing quality of life in my district. I thank Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, Chief Administrative Judge Marks, Administrative Judge Tamiko Amaker, and the Center for Court Innovation for working together to bring court proceedings, including an expanded youth part and a new mental health court, to MCC. With this new development, defendants will be immediately linked with the services they need, and we will attack the root causes of crime in our neighborhoods,” said Senator Brad Hoylman.

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