

# SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY



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## Middlesex County Drug Court to Hold Ninth Graduation Ceremony

The Middlesex County Drug Court will hold its ninth graduation ceremony on Friday, May 29, at 10 a.m. in the jury room of the Middlesex County Courthouse, 56 Paterson St., New Brunswick. Forty-two participants will be awarded certificates marking their completion of the final phase of a rigorous, 3- to 5-year program of comprehensive drug treatment and intensive supervision.

Assignment Judge Travis L. Francis and Criminal Presiding Judge Alberto Rivas will deliver the welcome. Judge Lorraine Pullen, who presided over the Middlesex County Drug Court for more than seven years before her retirement, is returning to officiate at the ceremony. Judge Dennis Nieves will present remarks about the success of the program.

The mission of drug courts is to stop the abuse of alcohol and other drugs and related criminal activity. Participants enter the program instead of serving prison time.

The drug court program is a highly specialized team process that functions within the criminal division of the Superior Court to address non-violent drug-related cases. Drug courts are unique in the criminal justice environment because they build a working relationship between criminal justice and drug treatment agencies.

Eligible defendants receive a sentence of three to five years of probation, with the requirement that they complete drug treatment and all aftercare requirements, attend self-help meetings and weekly drug court sessions, comply with random drug tests, pay legal obligations and obtain employment. Participants are closely monitored by designated drug court probation officers as they transition through four phases of recovery over the course of their sentence and eventual graduation from the drug court program.

New Jersey's drug courts have proven effective at breaking the cycle of drug abuse and crime, providing people who have drug addictions the opportunity to become productive citizens. They offer an effective alternative to incarceration for non-violent offenders, and they help reduce minority overrepresentation in prison.

Since the program's inception, offenders have found employment and begun meeting their financial obligations, parents have regained custody of their children, and dozens of drug-free babies have been born to participants around the state.

Since Middlesex County's drug court program began in September 2004, 169 participants have graduated. Of these graduates, eight regained custody of children; 94 regained their New Jersey driver's license and 114 were

eligible for medical benefits through their jobs. Cumulatively \$463,100 was collected from these same graduates from penalties, fines, and fees. Nineteen graduates improved their level of education or obtained vocational training.

Drug courts operate in every vicinage in New Jersey and serve more than 5,800 people statewide. There are more than 300 Middlesex County Drug Court participants.

More information on drug courts can be found at [njcourts.com](http://njcourts.com).

The event is open to the press and the public.

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IF YOU REQUIRE ANY ACCOMMODATIONS AS A RESULT OF A DISABILITY, PLEASE CALL (732)519-3430