



“Mental health and wellness are an essential part of overall health and well-being. New Jersey, including through our Division of Mental Health and Addiction

Services, has been focused on building effective, responsive, and integrated services and support for children, youth, and adults.

We continue our commitment to enhancing mental health care services and a more modern understanding of the interplay between mental health and justice-involved individuals.

The positive progress made in connecting people to services and successful completion of pre-trial diversion programs could only be possible through our partnership with the Administrative Office of the Courts.”

- ***Sarah Adelman***

Commissioner, New Jersey  
Department of Human Services



“Too many individuals with mental health issues are released from jail without receiving any treatment and are likely to face criminal charges again.

Through our partnership with the New Jersey Department of Human Services, we hope to break that cycle of reincarceration by focusing on mental health and criminal justice issues at the same time. We have worked with vicinage leadership and criminal justice stakeholders to develop pilot programs in several counties.

- ***Chief Justice Stuart Rabner***



**STUART RABNER**  
CHIEF JUSTICE

**MICHAEL J. BLEE, J.A.D**  
ACTING ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COURTS

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New Jersey Judiciary

# Mental Health Diversion Pilot Program



## **What is the New Jersey Judiciary Mental Health Diversion Pilot Program?**

The New Jersey Judiciary Mental Health Diversion Pilot Program connects behavioral health teams to individuals with serious mental illness who face low-level indictable charges. The goal is to provide treatment and services so that the charges could be dismissed.

Significant barriers for individuals with serious mental illness and criminal charges include quickly identifying their unmet social needs, such as housing, food and transportation, and offering support for treatment services such as therapy and medication options.

Through the behavioral health team with the New Jersey Department of Human Services, the pilot program can connect individuals to these important community resources. This is particularly important for those released from jail or placed on pretrial monitoring.

Addressing critical needs early reduces the risk of individuals remaining in the criminal justice system.

The pilot program involves many stakeholders. In addition to the Department of Human Services, the Judiciary has partnered with county prosecutors, public defenders, criminal defense attorneys and jail medical providers.

The program is voluntary and presents an exceptional opportunity to strengthen the collaboration between government and community-based providers while giving people a chance to reclaim their lives.

## **How does the program work?**

The program is designed to identify individuals as early as possible, address their social needs, and connect them with appropriate services and treatment in the community, regardless of the outcome of their criminal case.

Some individuals who meet certain legal and clinical criteria can file an application with county prosecutor for admission into the program. The person will be placed into the pilot program court docket with regular court hearings to monitor the individual's progress. Successful completion could result in dismissal of charges.

## **Who is eligible for dismissal of charges?**

To qualify for the program, individuals must be facing certain low-level indictable charges and have a serious mental disorder confirmed by the behavioral health team. The prosecutor could consider additional factors such as an individual's criminal history before admitting them into the judge-led program. The charges must have been filed in a county participating in the program.

## **What are the expectations of the participants?**

Clients are expected to participate in treatment and services, attend regular court sessions and meetings with Judiciary diversion officers, and follow the conditions of the program.

## **How can I participate?**

To learn more about the program and if you are eligible to participate, contact your defense attorney.

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**“This is a truly transformative program that provides the highest level of psychiatric care along with life skill training. It allows our most vulnerable population to remain in the community with their loved ones while they earn a dismissal of their charges.”**

**- Susan McCoy**

Deputy Public Defender, Morris County

**“The Mental Health Diversion Program is the New Jersey Criminal Justice System's answer to the ever-growing mental health crisis. The collaborative approach has allowed individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system to utilize this program as an effective means of rehabilitation.”**

**- Yolanda Ciccone**

Middlesex County Prosecutor