

The Polk County Behavioral Health Court is a collaboration between:

- ❖ Polk County Health Care Plan
- ❖ County Court for Polk County
- ❖ Office of the Public Defender
- ❖ Office of the State Attorney
- ❖ Polk County Pre-Trial Services
- ❖ Polk County Probation
- ❖ Peace River Center
- ❖ Tri-County Human Services
- ❖ BayCare
- ❖ Central Florida Behavioral Health Network
- ❖ CareerSource Polk



Polk County Behavioral Health Court

The Honorable Susan Barber
Presiding Judge

Polk County Courthouse
255 North Broadway Avenue
P.O. Box 9000, Drawer J171
Bartow, FL 33831-9000

For information about BHC
or to make a referral,
please contact:

Desiree Meaton-Francisco, LHMC, MCAP
Manager, Problem Solving Courts
(863) 534-4612

Anita Sullivan
BHC Program Specialist (863) 534-7785

Nancy Bush, BA
BHC Case Manager (863) 221-4472

Aretha Catchings, BA
BHC Case Manager (863) 221-4326

WeCare Services
Public Defender's Office
(863) 534-4200

(4-6-18)

BHC

Polk County Behavioral Health Court



*Making communities
safer and healthier,
one restored life*



This program is sponsored by the voter-approved half cent sales surtax fund for indigent healthcare.

Background

The large number of offenders suffering from a mental health issue and/or co-occurring substance abuse disorder create a growing social problem affecting both the criminal justice system as well as the public health system. Without adequate behavioral health services, these offenders tend to be re-arrested and cycle through the criminal justice system over and over again.

With the assistance of a Criminal Justice, Mental Health, & Substance Abuse Reinvestment Act Grant, the Polk County Behavioral Health Court was implemented in October 2007 in response to this growing problem. It is currently funded by the Polk County Health Care Plan and Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, Inc.

The dedicated Behavioral Health Court team includes the Honorable Susan Barber, the Public Defender's Office, the State Attorney's Office, Polk County Probation, Pre-Trial Services, Polk County Clerk of Courts, treatment providers, case managers, and Court Administration.

Our Vision

Our vision is, on an individual basis, to treat each person's behavioral health needs, and to reconnect the broken threads of trust and confidence that these offenders have lost through years of untreated mental health issues. We expect responsibility and accountability for actions, but we temper those expectations with the understanding that many issues need to be resolved before treatment can be effective. We are working to create a safety net for individuals, who, through loss of resources, cannot access treatment, jobs, medications and other support. Each of us believes that, if we are able to turn even one life around, and make permanent changes for the future for just one person, we have done well for that person and for society as a whole. If not us, who will?

Who is Eligible?

The Polk County Behavioral Health Court is a voluntary program for Polk County residents who are charged with a misdemeanor or a third degree felony offense, and who suffer from a mental health issue, co-occurring substance abuse disorder, or a developmental disability. Participants are offered treatment-

based sentencing alternatives that utilize judicial oversight and appropriate community-based treatment plans in lieu of incarceration. Treatment can last up to 12 months, and incorporates counseling, encouragement, medication management, case management, court appearances, incentives, and therapeutic consequences. Diverting these offenders from our jails and into more appropriate community-based mental health treatment is vital to:

- ▶ Enhance public safety by providing judges and prosecutors with alternatives to incarceration and making jail bed space available for violent offenders.
- ▶ Promote the safety and well being of persons with mental health issues by reducing inappropriate incarcerations.
- ▶ Reduce county jail costs to house affected persons, who generally, because of their mental health issues, cost more to house.