CITY OF TOPEKA

Alternative Sentencing Court

Established 2015

What is the Alternative Sentencing Court (ASC)?

A specialized docket designed to address the unique needs of defendants with mental health challenges, including addiction.

Established in 2015 (only three other City Courts of this type in the State)

GOAL: Reduce recidivism and increase utilization of Services in our community.

Need for this Court

Nationally, at least 2 million people with these mental health challenges are booked into jails each year. About 72% also have a co-occurring substance use disorder.

The vast majority are not violent criminals and are serving short sentences for minor crimes.

They stay longer than their counterparts without mental illness and often their conditions get worse.

At least 83% of jail inmates with a mental illness did not have access to needed treatment.

Benefits of ASC

Rehabilitative as opposed to punitive disposition options

Individuals are better served in the community with treatment programs in place than in jail

Jails spend two to three times more money on adults requiring mental-health interventions than on other inmates

There are significantly higher costs of medical care and greater deployment of manpower to safely house an inmate suffering from mental health challenges

ASC Program Details

Voluntary Participation

Probation or Diversion

12 months in duration

30, 60, or 90 day underlying sentence

Subject to sanctions for non-compliance

Referrals for ASC

Referral sources include:

- Judges
- Valeo staff (clinicians, case managers, CIT, etc.)
- Veteran's Administration
- Defense attorneys
- Jail Mental Health Staff
- TPD officers
- ASC Coordinator

ASC Requirements

One-Year Program (minimum) that includes:

- Treatment
- Regular court appearances
- Regular drug testing
- Payment of all court fees
- Responsible for payment of treatment

ASC Program Phases

Prior to admission- must meet with defense attorney and complete a mental health intake and evaluation w/ Valeo

- Phase 1 (weekly): establishing treatment plan and referrals for services, start probation meetings, sobriety support
- Phase 2 (biweekly): continued participation in treatment, probation compliance, drug/alcohol-free
- Phase 3 (monthly): participation/completion of treatment programs, probation compliance, drug/alcohol-free

Weekly Staffing Meeting – ASC Team

Administrative Judge, Karan Thadani

Chief of Prosecution, Kelly Trussell

Probation Supervisor, Tricia Wiebe

ASC Clinician via Valeo, Morgan Gragert-Stewart

Court Appointed Counsel, Kevin Cook

BHU Officer

Veteran's Specialist, Stacey Downey

ASC Coordinator, Gail Lewis

Incentives

Clap, Clap, Clap…Sobriety, treatment completion, paying off fines, etc.

Chocolates

Gift Cards

Rocket Docket

Promotions to the next phase

What does success look like?

Medication compliance

Employment

Graduate of therapy services

Disability benefits obtained

Permanent housing

Substance abuse treatment completed

STAYED OUT OF JAIL!

How to make a recommendation for ASC?

Email ASC Coordinator Gail Lewis: ASC@topeka.org

Email Judge Thadani: kmthadani@topeka.org

Email Chief of Prosecution: kjtrussell@topeka.org

Reach out to a BHU or Valeo Team Member