

Launching and Sustaining  
Your Program

# Activities Guide



**Launching and Sustaining Your Program**

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### Launching and Sustaining Your Program

These activities are designed to help you think about how to launch and sustain your mental health court. Sustaining your program will require you to adapt as your program matures, your stakeholders' priorities change, and your resources fluctuate. The members of the mental health court team and the advisory group will need to pay careful attention to a variety of issues that fall under the category of program management, including how to collect data to “make the case” for sustaining the program and how to plan for adverse events.

The activities, which include questions and worksheets, should be completed by the people who will serve on your mental health court team, including its primary champion(s) who will be involved in planning. You will complete some activities on your own and others as a group. One of the activities in this module requires that you watch a short video segments of a mental health court team in action. You will be asked to list issues that the activities have raised for your own program planning.

Each activity is explained in the sidebar on the right-hand side of the page. The sidebar can also be used for notes as you complete the guide. If you are reading this document online, you can link to the resources for each activity below the activity description.



### Activity 1: Communicating Program Information to Different Audiences

As you'll recall from the online Presentation, effective communication is critical to managing and sustaining your mental health court program. Creating a memorandum of understanding to spell out different roles, having a management information system to manage data, equipping stakeholders to promote the program in the community, and setting up regular advisory group meetings are just some of the ways to promote communication. Different stakeholders need to fully understand the program to communicate about it effectively with others.

This activity is designed to help you determine how to describe your mental health court program to different stakeholders in a manner that is accurate and sensitive to their different needs and concerns. Some program-related information will be relevant to all stakeholders; other information will be more specific to particular stakeholders' interests and concerns. A mental health court program's stakeholders—or those with a stake or interest in the program—can include prosecuting and defense attorneys, professionals from the clinical and social services sector, and members of the broader community, including participants' families, friends, and advocates. In this activity, you will discuss what general information a standard presentation to stakeholders in your program could contain. Then you will engage in a simple role-playing exercise in which you address the interests and concerns certain stakeholders may have. The chart on the next page outlines steps to complete the activity, actions required, and how long each step will take.






**Activity 1 involves a set of role-playing exercises to develop strategies to use when communicating with different constituencies about the program.**

#### Output

- Notes on topics and phrasing to incorporate into informational products (e.g., brochures) and other materials about the program designed for different audiences

## Module 8

Notes:

Steps	Action	Complete as	Completion Time (in minutes)
<b>a. Discussion:</b> Communicating program information to a general audience	Discuss		15
<b>b. Worksheet:</b> Communicating program information to specific audiences	Role-play		30
<b>c. Discussion:</b> Developing public relations materials	Discuss/Respond		30
			<b>75</b>
 Complete as a team		 Complete on your own	

**a. As a group, discuss what categories of information you would include in a standard presentation about the mental health court program to stakeholders.** Consider this list of categories of questions that a group of diverse stakeholders may have about the program. Are there other questions you anticipate these stakeholders may ask?

- When did the program start and what agency/organization funded its development?
- Why does the program exist? What is the problem that the program addresses?
- What are the goals of the program?
- What activities does the program undertake to achieve these goals?
- What resources are allocated to the program?
- What are the expected outcomes (short-term and long-term) of the program?
- What does success look like for participants in the program?

# Module 8

Based on your list, develop five general talking points for a presentation about the program that can be adapted for different audiences. Think of this as anticipating answers to frequently asked questions stakeholders may have.

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**b. As a group, identify the stakeholders representing various constituencies you will need to reach out to as you build and maintain your program.** Establish a set of role-playing situations in which members of your team describe the mental health court program to these stakeholders.

### Instructions:

1. Members of the team will pair up, with one person playing the role of stakeholder from one of the key mental health court constituencies (e.g., prosecutors, crime victims, family members, defense attorneys, county commissioners) and one person playing a representative of the mental health court in a face-to-face meeting with the stakeholder. Depending on the size of your team, there should be 3-5 pairs that will take part in this exercise.
2. The person playing the stakeholder has heard that there is a mental health court program but does not know much about it other than that it is a problem-solving court. First, working alone for ten minutes, the member of the pair who has elected to play stakeholder will generate a list of concerns or questions s/he may have about participating in or contributing to a mental health court.
3. While the stakeholder is working, the mental health court program representative will prepare notes for a brief presentation about the mental health court tailored to what s/he anticipates are the interests and concerns of his/her stakeholder partner. Again, some interests and concerns will be universal to all stakeholders, while others will be unique to that particular person or the constituency s/he is representing. For this reason, the presentation can incorporate the talking points developed in **part 'a'** of this activity, but must also include talking points that are tailored specifically to the individual stakeholder. For example, if a person on the team will be playing the role of a defense attorney who is unfamiliar with the program, the team member representing the program must develop talking points addressing a defense attorney's likely interests and concerns.
4. Once the ten minutes of preparation time have elapsed, the stakeholder and mental health court program representative will role-play a one-on-one meeting. First, the mental health court program representative will present his/her talking points about the program to the person playing the stakeholder. The stakeholder will respond to the presentation and voice his/her concerns and questions about the mental health court [Note: those playing the role of stakeholders should pay attention both to what information is provided and issues addressed and the language/jargon

used to express this information].

5. Pairs should role-play this exercise one at a time, with the rest of the team observing. The observers should make notes of what information and phrasing work and where problems and difficulties with communication arise, including in responding to questions and addressing concerns raised by the stakeholders.
6. Once all pairs have role-played the exercise, team members should compare notes and discuss what they learned about communicating about the mental health court program accurately and sensitively to the different stakeholders. A member of the team should take notes during this debrief discussion and type them up as soon as possible afterward. Your team will refer to them when developing brochures and other outreach and referral materials for your mental health court program.

**c. As a group, discuss the sort of materials that you will use to educate external stakeholders about your program.**

1. What types of materials do you think will be most useful to develop (e.g., presentations, brochures, talking points, website, articles)?
  - a. How will you take the intended audience into account in developing these materials? What sorts of questions are certain stakeholders likely to have? What sorts of materials are they most likely to encounter/gain the most from?
  - b. What information should be included in these materials? Which information is constant (e.g., name of program, eligibility criteria) and which information will need to be updated (e.g., graduate recidivism rates)?
  - c. Who will be responsible for delivering/disseminating these materials? For example, some mental health court teams develop a presentation that is co-presented by team members from the criminal justice and mental health systems.
2. As a group, list the types of materials you plan to develop, what will be included in each of them, and how you will distribute them (i.e., a dissemination strategy).





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## Activity 2: Adverse Event Planning

In this activity, you will consider how a mental health court team responds to the concerns of stakeholders after a negative event involving two former mental health court participants. You will view and then discuss a video segment of a mock Bonneville County (ID) Mental Health Court team meeting called by the judge to respond to a fictional negative event. Although an established team should be able to respond to a negative event once it happens, the team should have a plan in place for responding to adverse events before they occur. The video and discussion questions will help your team think about what you might include in a plan to respond to adverse events. The video and questions will also help you to see how best practices, such as collecting data from the beginning, are useful when a team crafts its response to a negative event. The chart below outlines steps to complete the activity, actions required, and how long each step will take.

Steps	Action	Complete as	Completion Time (in minutes)
<b>a. Video Clip:</b> Adverse event planning	View		20
<b>b. Questions:</b> Responding to a negative event	Discuss		30
			<b>50</b>
 Complete on your own  Complete as a team			

**Activity 2 is designed to help you understand how a mental health court team addresses events that can threaten the sustainability of the program, such as a high-profile negative incident involving a program participant or graduate. You will see how a mental health court team considers the needs of different stakeholders in planning its response to a negative event.**

### Outputs

- An understanding of what roles mental health court team members play in addressing negative events
- A list of stakeholder concerns that will need to be addressed if there is a negative event

- a. As a group, view the following video segment of a mock Bonneville County (ID) Mental Health Court meeting to address a fictional negative event that impacts the program.**

To access the video, follow the link below to the course site.

### **Video Link:**

### **Video 1: Adverse Event Planning**

- b. As a group, discuss the following questions.**

1. Reacting to the video clip:
  - a. How is the Bonneville team using the data that it collects to respond to the negative event? What types of data is the Bonneville team going to prepare for stakeholders?
  - b. Can the team share success stories to reassure stakeholders of the program's value while at the same time protecting the privacy of program participants and program graduates? Would sharing success stories need to be handled differently in rural and urban jurisdictions?
2. Planning for your own program:
  - a. Which stakeholders need to be provided with updated information about the program, and why do they need this information? What sort of information do these stakeholders require?
  - b. What sort of regular engagement do you see doing with the media and other community constituencies to prevent misunderstanding of the program?
  - c. How can written policies and procedures be used to address stakeholders' concerns if a former program participant commits a serious crime?
  - d. How would your program's current data collection/analysis strategies support the program in light of an adverse event?
  - e. How would the outreach you do to the program's champions change in response to an adverse event?
  - f. What should be done to address program participants' concerns if a

Notes:

## Module 8

former program participant commits a high-profile crime? What type of information should be communicated to program participants? Who on the mental health court team should be responsible for communicating with program participants after a negative event?






- g. What do you see as the core elements of an adverse event plan for your own jurisdiction? What do you need to do to put these in place?

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## Activity 3: Creating a Program Manual

It is important to capture in writing the decisions you make about the program’s design and operations. Many mental health court programs compile all of this information into a program manual (or policies and procedures manual) that can be revised as the program evolves and modifications are made. In this activity, you will begin to write a program manual for your mental health court. You will consider what information you have learned and discussed should be included in a program manual, including your program’s target population, case planning process, and policies designed to facilitate the success of mental health court participants. As you write, consider the multiple audiences for this program manual. You may create an initial draft that has information that would be useful to multiple stakeholders, and later you can refine this document using the materials you draft here. Ultimately, you will create several program materials, including brochures for potential program participants, written general information for stakeholders, and documented program policies and procedures that your mental health court team members will follow. The chart below outlines steps to complete the activity, actions required, and how long each step will take.

Steps	Action	Complete as	Completion Time (in minutes)
<b>a. Manual:</b> Table of contents	Write		30
<b>b. Manual:</b> Example comparison	Write		20
<b>c. Questions:</b> Descriptions for table of contents	Write		20
			<b>70</b>
 Complete on your own  Complete as a team			

**Activity 3 is designed to help you create a manual describing your program’s policies and procedures. This manual (or variants of it) will help instruct team members and clarify the program for potential participants. Your program manual will likely evolve as your program matures.**

### Outputs

- Elements of a program manual for your mental health court

Notes:

- a. Using a large piece of paper, list the components that a Table of Contents for your mental health court's program manual should include. What types of information would program staff or program participants want to have?** How do the materials you have studied and developed throughout this curriculum factor into your program manual? While developing your Table of Contents, include your eligibility criteria; policies and procedures for program entrance, participation, and graduation; process for case planning; and policies and procedures for facilitating a participant's success and responding to events. What other information should be included in your program manual?
  
- b. As a group, discuss how the Table of Contents you drafted for your program manual compares to that of the Washoe County Mental Health Court in Nevada (available in the Activities Guide section of this module).** What does this manual include that you would like to add to your Table of Contents? What else would you like to add to your Table of Contents that isn't included in this manual?
  
- c. As a group, fill in descriptions for as many of the items as possible identified in the Table of Contents.** If you have completed modules one through seven of this curriculum, go back to the relevant modules to find activities that you have already completed to help fill in these items. If you have not completed these modules, fill in as much as you can.

### Summary of Key Topics

Use this summary of key topics covered throughout the curriculum to help you assess the items in your program manual's table of contents and what description you provide for each item.

Notes:

## Eligibility Criteria

*Have you described your program participant eligibility criteria?*

### Eligibility criteria to consider:

1. Residency requirement
2. Criminal justice criteria
  - a. Criminogenic risk level
  - b. Type of charge
  - c. Case status (i.e., pre-adjudication vs. post-adjudication)
3. Clinical criteria
  - a. Serious mental illness (e.g., Axis I diagnoses such as schizophrenia, Axis II diagnoses such as borderline personality disorder)
  - b. Traumatic brain injury
  - c. Developmental disability
  - d. Co-occurring disorders
4. Nexus between crime and mental illness

*Did you include a description of why you made the choices you did about your eligibility criteria?*

### Factors that influence eligibility criteria to consider:

1. State and local legal standards
2. Supervision resources
3. Behavioral health resources
4. Stakeholder priorities (including funders)

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## Program Entrance

*What policies and procedures have you written out to ensure the legal rights of prospective participants are protected?*

### Legal rights to consider:

1. Constitutional rights of criminal defendants
  - a. Due process
  - b. Right to be defended by counsel
  - c. Informed consent
    - i. Ensuring voluntary participation
    - ii. Assessment of competency to decide whether or not to participate in the program
    - iii. Informed choice

*You may want to write out the terms of participation, i.e., what do participants have to do and what will they get in return*

2. Sharing information
  - a. Health information privacy (including information pertaining to mental illnesses and substance use disorders, if applicable)
3. Crime victims' rights (only if you will accept participants who are charged with a crime against another person)

*What policies and procedures have you written out for how individuals are referred to your mental health court program?*

### Referral source questions to consider:

1. Where are your different referral points?
2. What types of information do these referral points have access to and what types of information can they legally share?

*What policies and procedures have you written out for how individuals are screened for various qualities and have their needs assessed before they participate in a mental health court program?*

**Screening and assessment categories to consider:**

1. Mental illness(es)
2. Substance use disorder(s)
3. Criminal history
4. Current charge(s)
5. Residency

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## Program Participation

*What policies and procedures have you written out for a participant in accepting and following the case plan?*

### Questions to consider about the terms of case plans:

1. How are participants provided with the case plan and how do they agree to its terms?
2. What happens if participants do not follow the terms of the case plan?
3. What are the requirements for participants in terms of status updates and hearings?
4. How do participants move through the program and how is success conveyed to program participants?
5. If there are phases, what are these, and what is expected of participants in each phase?

*What policies and procedures have you written out for the mental health court team to follow to assist participants throughout the program?*

### Case plan management questions to consider:

1. How does the mental health court team develop and update the case plan?
2. Who is responsible for which elements of the case plan?
3. How does the team individualize each case plan and ensure procedural fairness?
4. How is information shared within the team?
5. Who will have access to which information?
6. Where will information be stored?
7. How do team members participate in status updates and hearings?
8. Will there be phases to your program?
9. What will be the team's strategy for celebrating participant successes and responding appropriately to setbacks, including violations of the conditions of supervision or missed goals in the treatment plan?

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10. Develop a list of responses your program will use to promote behavioral change.

*What policies and procedures have you written out for facilitating participants' success and responding to positive and negative events?*

**Best practices to consider in facilitating participant success:**

1. Increase the ratio of positive to negative feedback
2. Clarify expectations and consequences
3. Respond to all events as promptly as possible
4. Make responses meaningful to the participant and consider adjusting treatment as an appropriate response
5. Tie responses to near-term and long-term goals
6. Explain responses

**Questions to consider in responding to negative behavior:**

1. Will you provide an informal response when a formal response is deemed unnecessary?
2. Will you administer formal sanctions?
3. Will you allow participants to work through contingency plans?
4. Will you use jail as a sanction?

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### Program Completion

*What policies and procedures have you written out for program graduation?*

#### Questions to consider about successful program completion:

1. Most programs define success as (1) engagement with treatment and (2) law-abiding behavior for successful program graduates. What does this mean for participants in your program?
2. What will you need to do to carry out the terms of participation:
  - a. For pre-adjudication cases:
    - i. What papers must be filed to officially withdraw charges?
    - ii. What steps must be taken to clear the participant's record?
  - b. For post-adjudication cases:
    - i. Is there a plea on record that will be vacated? If so, will the participant still face any charges?
    - ii. If a sentence is ordered but not imposed, will this sentence be removed from the record?
    - iii. If mental health court participation is a term of probation, will the successful graduate remain on probation? If so, how does his/her status change?
    - iv. What, if anything, can be done to ensure that the successful participant does not suffer the collateral consequences of a conviction?

#### Questions to consider about unsuccessful program completion:

1. Must there be a hearing?
2. May the mental health court judge preside over trial or sentencing for a former mental health court participant?
3. What efforts will be made to transition a treatment plan in the case of unsuccessful program completion?