

# Developing a Mental Health Court: An Interdisciplinary Curriculum

## User Guide

The *User Guide* provides detailed instructions on how to use *Developing a Mental Health Court*, whatever your goals and reasons for picking it up. Anyone who is part of a multidisciplinary team that is planning and implementing a new mental health court program in their community should use the entire curriculum. Individuals who are joining or already serving on an existing mental health court or other type of problem-solving court team may only need to use portions of the curriculum.

## Modules

The curriculum contains two introductory lessons and eight instructional modules. The instructional modules are composed of Prep Work, a Presentation, a Quiz, an Activities Guide, and Additional Resources; the introductory lessons contain a Presentation and Additional Resources. You can access the modules from the homepage or through the “Learning Modules” tab in the navigation bar. Each module’s

*Individuals on existing program teams seeking to enhance their knowledge in specific content areas* should use the Learning Modules menu to identify topics of interest. Disregard the time estimates for completing the Activities. As discussed below, you will tailor your approach to the Activities to your specific needs.

summary page provides a brief overview of its content, learning objectives, links to its separate elements, and a time estimate for completion of each element. It’s best to complete each of the elements of a module in order—first complete the Prep Work, then view the Presentation, take the Quiz, complete the Activities Guide, and consult the Additional Resources.

It is also best to proceed through the modules in order, starting with the two introductory lessons, and to view the module Presentations sequentially, because the content in each Presentation builds on that of prior Presentations.

## Technical Requirements

*Developing a Mental Health Court* is available exclusively through [this website](#). You will need:

- a computer with high-speed Internet access and the most recent version of [Adobe Flash Player](#) installed (to play the audio and video features).
- access to YouTube to stream the videos.
- speakers or headphones to listen to the audio features.
- [Adobe Acrobat](#) to view PDF documents.
- access to a printer for the Activities Guides or any other curriculum materials you want to print out.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, closed captioning is available for all audio and video sections of the curriculum by clicking the quotation bubble icon at the bottom of the page.





## Step One: Completing the Prep Work

**Note:** The two introductory lessons do not contain this element.

As you're beginning a new instructional module, orient yourself to the topic with 35-45 minutes of the background reading provided. These are excerpts of policy reports about designing and implementing mental health courts, program examples, and other useful documents developed by the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG Justice Center) and others.



## Step Two: Viewing the Presentation

The Presentations consist of 30-40 slides containing text, graphics, and multimedia clips. Some slides distill complex research into fundamental take-away points. Others present the perspectives of experts and practitioners from different professional backgrounds, parts of the country, and programs at varying stages of development. You'll hear from policymakers, researchers, and mental health court graduates and practitioners—including judges, attorneys, behavioral health care providers, and mental health court program coordinators.

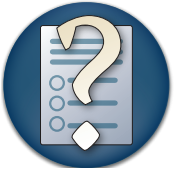
The Presentations are not meant to be a comprehensive treatment of the topics but will provide general background, prompts on how to learn more, and context for completing the accompanying Activities with your team.

Viewing each Presentation should take 30-45 minutes, though you can set your own pace. You can watch the Presentations with your teammates or on your own before meeting with your team to complete the Activities.

## Real World and Hypothetical Examples

Some of the videos in the Presentations and Activities Guides show members of the Bonneville County (ID) Mental Health Court team (a Bureau of Justice Assistance Mental Health Court Learning Site) discussing their experiences operating a mental health court. Others show the Bonneville team engaging in simulated team meetings in which they discuss hypothetical program participants. The Bonneville team is not shown as a “model” mental health court team; for example, some may note the absence of a defense attorney at team meetings. Rather, the Bonneville team represents real people facing real challenges in a mental health court setting. Over the course of the curriculum, you will learn more about the Bonneville team's work and have the opportunity to consider which aspects of their approach you will apply to your own work and community.

Some of the readings in the Activities Guides describe scenarios from hypothetical mental health courts. For example, one Activity presents a mission and set of goals developed by a hypothetical program and prompts your team to discuss its merits and flaws. The individuals and situations described in these hypothetical scenarios are fictional and developed to facilitate learning.



## Step Three: Taking the Quiz

**Note:** The two introductory lessons do not contain this element.

The Quizzes will help reinforce what you've learned from the Prep Work and Presentations. Each Quiz should take about five minutes to complete online.

After you finish a Quiz, your score will automatically be tallied. You can use these results to identify topic areas for further study and consult the Additional Resources for more information on those topics.



## Step Four: Completing the Activities Guide

**Note:** The two introductory lessons do not contain this element.

The Activities Guides help you apply the concepts you learn in the modules' Presentations. They prompt you and your team to reflect on and discuss particular topics, and in some cases to design specific elements of your mental health court program relating to the concepts covered in the module. Activities presented within an Activities Guide may include:

- watching a video and discussing it with your team members
- reading and discussing sample mental health court materials
- completing worksheets that prompt you to reflect on a key lesson from the Presentation
- discussing as a group how you would respond to hypothetical situations
- developing original materials for your court program.

***Individuals on existing program teams*** should review the Activities Guides and use them to identify any issues that the team would benefit from examining further. The Activities introduce design and operations challenges based on the latest experience of the field. Even if your program has operated for years, it is helpful to reconsider these challenges and evaluate whether your program's approach is working. It's also helpful to consult the Additional Resources for more information on topics you identify for further study.

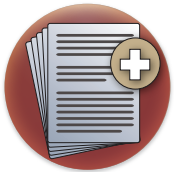
**Tip:** *In some Activities, you will develop key documents that may become part of your program's policies and procedures. You and your team will likely revisit these drafts throughout the process of implementing your program.*

While some Activities, such as reading assignments, are to be completed on your own, others are meant to be completed together with your team.

Each module has two to four Activities. In the sidebar on the first page of each Activity, you will see a brief description of the Activity's purpose and expected outputs. Each Activity also contains a chart identifying its components,

the actions required, whether you complete the action on your own or with your team, and how long the action will likely take. It is meant as a checklist to plan for the time and effort necessary to complete the Activity, as well as to help track your progress. Time estimates are approximations; where group discussions are involved, you may choose to focus on the topic for more or less than the estimated time.

**Tip:** *To make your team time more productive and efficient, review the Activities Guides on your own before you meet with your team. For example, one Activity prompts you to list treatment resources available in your community. By developing this list beforehand, you can be prepared to present a completed list to your team members during the meeting.*



## Step Five: Additional Resources

It can be extremely helpful to refer to the Additional Resources to learn more about the topics discussed throughout the module. These resources include research articles, policy and practice manuals, and websites. These Resources serve both to deepen users' learning experience and to connect them to the community of mental health courts and associations around the country.

When a Resource is available online, a link is provided to the site that hosts it. Most are available for free, although some articles and books may require purchase.

***Individuals on existing program teams*** should carefully read the Additional Resources related to topics you want to investigate further.