Drug Treatment Court in Harrisonburg Provides Alternative Approach for Non-Violent Offenders

January 30, 2019

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An alternative treatment program in Harrisonburg, Virginia is giving high risk, high need patients the hope and the help they need to change their lives. The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Drug Treatment Court is a new approach for people with chronic drug or alcohol addiction.

It is a two-year program that currently has about twenty participants. Back in 2017, offenders had no other option except going to jail. However, the Drug Treatment Court is focused on giving people another route.

Drug Treatment Court: A Collaborative Effort

The program, considered a community effort at all levels, involves Judge Bruce D. Albertson, Commonwealth Attorney?s Marsha Garst, members of law enforcement, the Community Service Board, and defense attorneys representing each applicant.

For financial funding, the Harrisonburg City Council and the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors provide assistance. It is also supported by state grants. The participants entering the Drug Treatment Court

are classified as high risk, high need, and likely to re-offend. Click here to see Detroit's top rehab placement programs.

Jimmy Gibson, who has been addicted to drugs for more than twenty years, is one of the applicants approved for the program. He says he has been sober for months since beginning the program. ?I was in and out of trouble, in and out of prison,? said Gibson. ?I guess drugs was my way out; I started using when I was about 12.? His longest stint in prison was four and a half years. ?I was addicted to anything that changed my thought process. Anything, didn't matter what it was, whether it was marijuana, or meth, or pills,? he said.

The five months Gibson has so far spent in the program are the longest he has ever been clean since he became addicted to drugs. ?Being sober and doing the right thing, I've seen how it pays off for me, and everything good that comes from it, and I like that. You have to change the people, places, and things if you really want it. And this program, you have to want it.?

An Alternative to Prison Time

Although the Drug Treatment Court helps many people, the approach is not always the same. Just like in other rehab facilities, each plan is tailored to the person?s specific needs. Everybody experiences addiction differently, and treatment must suit each individual situation.

The program has multiple phases, offering classes such as Moral Recognition Therapy and other alternative methods. Other classes include ?Decisions? and ?Strategies,? teaching real-life scenarios that participants may deal with once they are completely sober. Addiction affects a person?s decision making and addictive behavior often involves neglecting responsibilities. These classes may help teach participants to lead a more responsible and productive life.

Harrisonburg City and Rockingham County Commonwealth's Attorney Marsha Garst believes it is a viable alternative to serving prison time. ?You can incarcerate people repeatedly, but they're not getting better," she said. ?This is a structured environment where they report and actually come in and see Court Services.?

Garst calls the Drug Treatment Court a bargain. ?Our jail is very crowded. This is an opportunity for non-violent offenders to actually be out, be getting better, and contributing, to make a situation where you're not a burden on taxpayers.?

Garst visited other jurisdictions to study their court systems. She hopes to eventually double the court size to forty members.

The Drug Treatment Court also considers mental health as another primary concern. Garst cited the

importance of the Intensive Outpatient Therapy the program provides.

The court is a two-year program, and the first person will graduate at the end of 2019.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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