



# **Gambling Treatment Diversion Court**

Update Report – February 2021

## **Program Update**

Since the Governor's directive and Administrative Orders by the Chief Judge of the Eighth Judicial District Court to postpone all physical gatherings due to COVID-19, Gambling Treatment Diversion Court (GTDC) has been meeting virtually, using BlueJeans for court appearances and other telephonic means for meetings and check-ins. There is currently no tentative date for GTDC to meet in-person again at this time.

The GTDC coordinator conducts weekly check-ins with all participants by email and phone. During these check-ins, participants are asked to discuss their current updates and any situations that may affect their ability to be compliant with the GTDC program. This includes how their jobs have been affected by COVID-19 and what precautions they are currently taking to stay safe. Additionally, the GTDC coordinator requests financial documents to continue to track restitution payments, spending, incoming, expenses, etc. as usual, with the expectation that there may be some changes due to the current state of things. The GTDC coordinator reassures that participants continue to receive support and appropriate treatment for their Gambling Disorder. The coordinator speaks with the treatment providers for the participants frequently and encourage participants to connect with each other for peer support. Participants farther along in the program act as mentors to those who have been in the program for less time.

There are currently 8 active GTDC participants. Two of the eight participants were approved for a "Restitution Only" program at the December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020 GTDC hearing. This includes proof of restitution monthly and a 90-day status check in court. Participants are still expected to adhere to the GTDC contract but are not monitored or supervised like other participants. Two participants are on a monthly instead of a bi-weekly check-in. One participant is currently suspended pending new charges, with an upcoming hearing later this month.

GTDC had its very first graduate on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021. This particular participant successfully participated in the program for 22 months, completed all of her treatment requirements, and was able to pay back her entire restitution and administrative court fees.

GTDC sessions have been moved to every other Tuesday mornings at 8:30am. The next GTDC is scheduled for February 23, 2021.

## **COVID-19 Program Precautions**

Precautionary guidelines and actions have been implemented for the safety of GTDC participants. In addition to postponing physical court appearances and holding hearings by video conference, most treatment and ancillary service requirements have moved to telehealth sessions and virtual meetings. GTDC participants are drug testing between 2-4 times a month at an approved lab with their own COVID-19 protocols. There have been no issues or complaints from participants regarding drug testing at the lab and the frequency of drug tests requested.

Some in-person services have resumed. Restitution payments are being made at the Regional Justice Center rather than by mail. However, this is up to the participant's discretion as long as they have proof of payment. Treatment groups and support group meetings (GA, Gam Anon) are provided both in-person and virtually. Participants are encouraged to attend in-person treatment and groups when possible but remain optional. Most participants still attend virtual support groups but have begun to attend in-person groups where available. With recent "shut downs" again, certain in-person groups were canceled.

The safety and health of GTDC participants and team are of utmost importance and actions will be taken to maintain this as a priority. All participants are encouraged to inform the GTDC Coordinator and the courts if there are any concerns about COVID-19. At this time, no participant has reported any positive tests or risks. However, if this occurs, all participants are required to quarantine for at least 10 days and provide a negative COVID-19 tests before resuming any in-person activity.



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## **Training and Awareness**

The GTDC Coordinator and community partners will plan to provide training and awareness opportunities through internal and external training, conferences, and virtual opportunities. This is to provide more information on the program requirements, effectiveness, and share the unique aspect of a one-of-a-kind treatment diversion program. Additionally, retired Judge Cheryl Moss will also continue to provide training and awareness opportunities regarding GTDC locally and nationally.

Updated 2/10/2021