

Mentally Ill Defendants Benefit from Kane County Treatment Alternative Court

The Kane County Treatment Alternative Court (TAC) serves defendants who have serious and persistent mental illness, co-occurring disorders, or developmental disabilities that become involved in the criminal justice system. The Kane County Treatment Alternative Court is intended to be a systematic approach that brings together community based agencies to address defendant's needs and to provide comprehensive case management in an effort to reduce future criminal activity and incarceration in the Kane County Adult Justice Center. The defendants work closely with the Court personnel and the treatment team to reach psychiatric stability, achieve positive behavioral changes and reduce criminal recidivism.

Choosing to participate in the TAC program may provide a defendant the opportunity to avoid jail or prison time on their current charge(s). If a TAC participant successfully completes the program their charges may be reduced or dismissed. The estimated program length for a TAC participant is approximately 12 months for misdemeanor offenses or 24 months for felony offenses. Program length varies for participants and participants may qualify for early termination based on program compliance/progress.

A 2012 TAC program graduate submitted the following statement when asked how the TAC program had helped him: "The treatment alternative court program changed my life. Before the program I was getting into trouble and not taking my medication like I was suppose to; I was very unstable. Instead of spending time in prison I was given a chance with TAC. The psychological social rehabilitation program gave my coping skills when dealing with my disorder. Because of TAC I am on the correct path; I take my medicine for my bipolar disorder and I am stable now. TAC allowed me to redeem myself with out prison, and I am grateful for it."

The Treatment Alternative Court is designed to incorporate mental health treatment as well as substance abuse treatment (if appropriate) with intensive judicial monitoring. Treatment offered to participants focuses primarily on mental health or MISA (Mental Illness and Substance Abuse) services. The treatment methods implemented for TAC participants will work towards increasing each participant's level of personal wellness, reducing psychiatric symptoms and increasing individual levels of adaptive functioning.

TAC participants may be required to attend mental health or MISA treatment groups, psychiatric appointments, case management and/or counseling appointments, psychosocial rehabilitation programming, self-help/ support groups and vocational and/or educational programming while they are participating in the TAC program.

The primary mental health treatment providers for the Kane County Treatment Alternative Court are:

Association for Individual Development

1230 N Highland Avenue

Aurora IL 60506

Gateway Foundation Aurora

400 Mercy Lane

Aurora IL 60506

Ecker Center for Mental Health

1845 Grandstand Place

Elgin IL 60123

The TAC program has specific eligibility and exclusionary criteria to consider prior to admitting a defendant into the TAC program. To be eligible to apply for the TAC program the defendant must be at least 18 years old at the time of referral, reside in Kane County, have no current probation status, and currently be charged with a non-violent offense with no history of prior violent offenses. In addition, there are particular offenses excluded from TAC application, such as residential burglary, DUI offenses, any offense involving a deadly substance and all non-probationable offenses. Please see **730 ILCS 168/ Mental Health Court Treatment Act** for eligibility information.

Most importantly, the defendant must have a verifiable mental illness, co-occurring disorder or developmental disability. Referrals are welcome for any individual whom the referring party believes is diagnosed with one of these conditions.

To apply for admission, a referral form must be completed by the referring party and submitted to Leigh Bell, TAC Program Coordinator as the first step in the application process. Either the presiding TAC Judge, State's Attorney Office representative, or defendant's designated counsel can complete the referral form. Referrals may be obtained from Leigh Bell, TAC Program Coordinator, and submitted via fax at (630)232-5825, via inter-office mail (Court Services Department), or via email at bellleigh@co.kane.il.us.

The TAC Program Coordinator can provide informational program brochures and referral packets to all interested referring parties at the time of inquiry. Referring parties are asked to request a 45-day continuance in the assigned TAC courtroom, to allow the TAC referral process to begin. The TAC Program Coordinator will be in continued contact with the referring party throughout the referral process.

Additional TAC program information is available in the Member Services section of the Kane County Bar Association website <http://www.kanecountybar.org>.