



EMMET COUNTY NEWS RELEASE

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Veterans Will Have New Options After 90th District Court Awarded Grants to Expand Treatment Courts

Veterans in Emmet and Charlevoix counties will soon have additional options available should they find themselves facing some types of charges in the 90th District Court.

The Honorable Angela J. Lasher recently learned the 90th District Court has again been awarded \$19,000 in grant funds to boost its sobriety court. The court had received the same grant last year. Lasher's court was also awarded a grant for \$12,000 to facilitate a new veterans treatment court.

The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) offers several grant opportunities to Michigan's trial courts to help fund problem-solving, therapeutic jurisprudence programs that deal with charges related to drugs, alcohol, and/or mental health.

The 90th District Court began operating a sobriety court in 2007. In 2017, the SCAO announced that specialty courts in Michigan would need to meet certain requirements to continue operating a treatment court. In June 2018, after a year-long certification process, the SCAO notified the 90th District Court that its sobriety court had met the requirements.

Having a status as a certified specialty court allows District Court staff to apply for grant funding. The \$19,000 received by the 90th District Sobriety Court will be used to offset expenses that would otherwise be incurred by the participant.

The local sobriety court is a 24-month program available to those charged with a second drunk driving offense. Those participating must wear an alcohol monitoring bracelet for the first 90 days of the program. Participants are also drug-tested bi-weekly for the majority of the two-year program.

Veterans treatment courts incorporate the principles of a sobriety court and mental health court to serve military veterans, and sometimes active-duty personnel. The veterans' courts promote sobriety, recovery, and stability. Veterans treatment courts also rely on U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs health care networks, the Veterans Benefits Administration, volunteer veteran mentors, and veterans and veterans family support organizations.

The \$12,000 grant awarded to the 90th District Court will help fund the position of a mentor coordinator, alcohol monitoring, and drug screens.

“The grant money allows us to supplement the costs associated with providing these programs, easing the financial burden for the participants,” reported District Court Administrator Amanda Miller. “We don’t want our program to be cost prohibitive for people. These grants really help that.”

Besides the early monitoring and testing, the intense treatment programs include enhanced supervision and counseling to assist those struggling with addiction. When the participants graduate from the treatment courts, they are discharged successfully from probation, clean and sober.

“The primary focus is treatment and building a foundation of sobriety during the recovery program,” said Miller.

Judge Lasher pointed out the sobriety court’s history of significantly decreasing recidivism as another important feature that affects other family members, friends, and employers, as well as the overall health and safety of the community.

“Seeing firsthand how our sobriety court has helped make a difference in the lives of our participants is a reminder that the court can bring about positive change,” said Judge Lasher. “We look forward to witnessing the same successes happen in our veterans court when it is established. It will be an honor for us to provide these additional options to the men and women who’ve served our country.”

Miller said the 90th District Court hopes to launch the veterans treatment court in the next few months. The court’s staff is in the process of training and team creation at this time.

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