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# SAN FRANCISCO COLLABORATIVE COURTS

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COURT Participant Handbook

# Welcome to San Francisco Superior Court's **Behavioral Health Court**

## **This handbook will:**

- Answer questions
- Address concerns
- Give you information about Behavioral Health Court

As a participant in Behavioral Health Court, you will need to follow the rules given in court by the Judge. You must follow the treatment plan that you develop with your treatment providers. This handbook will explain what is expected of you, and what you can expect from BHC.

If you have any questions about Behavioral Health Court, ask your case manager or your attorney.

## **What is Behavioral Health Court (BHC)?**

BHC is for people arrested in San Francisco who have a serious mental illness and need mental health treatment and other services. You can choose to participate in Behavioral Health Court instead of the regular criminal court process.

Behavioral Health Court (BHC) is a Collaborative Court of the San Francisco Superior Court. Collaborative Courts are teams that connect defendants to services in the community. BHC makes sure that you follow the program rules so that you do not commit new crimes. The BHC team includes a Judge, Treatment Providers, Assistant District Attorney, Deputy Public Defender, and Probation Officer.

## **What do I have to do?**

The BHC Treatment Team will work with you to create a **treatment plan** based on your mental health and other needs. Your treatment plan describes drug and alcohol use, housing, medical issues, education, and/or employment.

Your treatment plan will be just for you. It will meet your needs and address your interests and goals. In order to participate in BHC, you must agree to this treatment plan. The treatment plan is a contract between you, the treatment provider and the Court. You will be told about what will happen if you do not follow your treatment plan. You will have the chance to review these rules and have your questions answered.

You will have to appear before the BHC Judge on a regular basis.

### **How long will I be in BHC?**

The time you participate in BHC depends on your case and progress in mental health treatment. There is no fixed period of time, but participants will be in the program for at least one year. While you are participating in BHC, the Judge and your case manager will follow your progress in treatment.

If you are asked to leave the program because you are not following your treatment plan, your case will return to the regular criminal system. If you volunteer to leave BHC, your case will return to the regular criminal system.

### **How BHC can work for you?**

**Services:** Once accepted into BHC, you may receive some of the following services: case management, individual therapy, group therapy, medication management, benefits, housing, employment services and educational opportunities.

**Recognition of progress:** As you progress with your treatment plan, your success will be publicly recognized by the Judge and the team.

**Benefit to your criminal charges:** Every case is individual and unique. You will leave the criminal justice system in a better position after successful completion of your treatment plan. Your entrance into BHC is discussed by your attorney with the team. The final legal decision is decided between the treatment staff, the District Attorney, the Judge, and you.

The BHC team thinks about all the reasons behind your situation and they want you to be successful. Be positive about your treatment program and follow the rules that have been set for you. Complete your treatment plan. The benefit to your criminal charges depends on you. Examples of other benefits for BHC clients are an early end to probation or reduced charges. This is decided on a case-by-case basis.

**Opportunity:** BHC gives you many opportunities. You will get connected to services, receive treatment, and move forward in your life. Sometimes waiting to get into the program can be frustrating. However, BHC can offer you a chance to meet your goals.

**Graduation:** You must participate in BHC for at least one year or longer to graduate. Graduation depends on your progress. The whole BHC team talks about your date for graduation on a case-by-case basis. You must show that you are following your treatment plan. You must follow the Judge's orders. You need to remain arrest-free. Then, you may be eligible for graduation from BHC. Graduation is a very important time for celebration.

Remember, there are many people who make up the BHC team. They all want you to succeed. Take advantage of this support and you can learn about many ways to make a better life for yourself.

## What are the rules of BHC?

**Come to court as scheduled:** You must come to court on a regular basis. The Judge learns about your progress with your treatment plan. The Judge will ask you about your progress and discuss any problems you may have. You may have to come to court many times a month. As you make progress, you will have less court appearances.

**Follow your treatment plan:** Your treatment plan may include some of the following:

- Case management and therapy services
- Regular appointments with a doctor
- Participation in a day treatment program
- Medications
- Participation in substance abuse counseling
- Transitional housing
- Participation in support groups
- Productive activities (work, school, volunteer work, etc.)

**Case management services:** Your case manager will help you with the services you need in the community. Your case manager will provide information to the Court on your progress in treatment. As a BHC participant, you will have to sign a release of information form so that your case manager can provide this information to the Court. You must attend all appointments with your case manager.

**Treatment program:** Your treatment plan means that you participate in a mental health treatment program. Your treatment provider will give the BHC team information about your attendance reports and progress. You must go to all of your treatment appointments. You must follow all the rules of your treatment program.

**Medications:** It is very important that you take the medications that your doctor gives you. Medications are an important tool for managing your health. The BHC team knows that some medications have side effects and it can be difficult for a doctor to find the best medications for you. If you have trouble with your medications, you should tell your doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor may be able to change your medications.

**Drug abuse or alcohol treatment:** BHC wants you to use less drugs and alcohol. BHC knows that drug abuse can affect the safety, well-being, and mental health of our clients. Clients are encouraged to move towards not using drugs or alcohol.

**Housing:** Some participants in BHC will need to live in a certain kind of housing. This housing will support your treatment progress and makes sure that you are safe. If your treatment plan describes a type of housing, you must live there. You must follow the rules of the housing provider. Homelessness is not an option while participating in BHC.

## Rewards and Sanctions

There are results for your behavior when you are in BHC. You will receive rewards for doing well in Behavioral Health Court. Rewards are decided on a case-by-case basis by the BHC team.

“**Doing well**” means:

- Arriving on time for court hearings and treatment appointments
- Following the Judge’s recommendations
- Following your treatment plan
- Being involved in your treatment and being positive

**Rewards include:**

<b>Level One</b>	Positive feedback from the Judge Applause in court
<b>Level Two</b>	Decreased court appearances Fishbowl (receiving treats or gift cards) Honor Roll
<b>Level Three</b>	Opportunity to apply for an advanced Rewards Program Graduation

**Sanctions** are the reasons behind not following the rules of Behavioral Health Court. Sanctions will help you to succeed in the program.

The following events will be treated as **not following** the program:

- Missed treatment appointments
- Missed appointments with your case manager
- Missed court appearances
- Not taking your medication
- Not following the rules of treatment or your housing provider
- Verbal threat of violence
- Taking drugs
- Not following conditions of probation
- Missed appointments with probation
- Leaving your treatment program or supervised housing
- New criminal offenses

**Possible sanctions include:**

<b>Level One</b>	Disappointment from the Judge Writing assignment Drug test
<b>Level Two</b>	Coming to court more often Called last in court
<b>Level Three</b>	Community service Detox Going back to jail Leaving BHC before graduation

**What else is expected of me?**

**Treat others with respect:** You should respect the feelings of other BHC participants and staff. Verbal or physical threats to anyone will **NOT** be tolerated. This kind of behavior will be reported to the Court and a sanction may be given to you.

**Avoid drug-related activity and abuse of alcohol:** Change is not an easy process. Whatever your treatment goals may be, sometimes using drugs and alcohol again, after a long time of not using them, is part of the cycle of change. BHC is committed to working with you to reduce the emotional and physical damage created by using drugs and alcohol. Using again does not mean failure. However, continued drug and alcohol use is not part of the BHC program. Continued substance use may lead to ending your participation in BHC.

**Follow the law:** Breaking the law may result in team asking you to leave BHC. If you are on probation, you must follow all the conditions of your probation.

**Pay restitution:** If restitution has been ordered by the Court, you will be required to pay the restitution in order to graduate.

## Important Names and Numbers

### **My attorney:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

### **My case manager:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

### **My housing program:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

### **My probation officer: (if on probation)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

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