



NEWS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Eugene D. Faughnan
Administrative Judge
Sixth Judicial District**

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Mental Health Court Opens in Chemung County

ELMIRA, NEW YORK– Sixth Judicial District Administrative Judge Eugene D. Faughnan has announced the launch of the Elmira City Court Assisted Recovery Effort (CARE), a specialized court for justice-involved individuals living with a mental health disorder

Located in Elmira City Court, the CARE mission is to improve public safety, court operations, and the well-being of justice-involved individuals living with mental health challenges by linking them to court-supervised community-based treatment. CARE goals include assisting participants in managing their mental health conditions through proper treatment, improving criminal justice response to individuals living with mental illness, and decreasing recidivism.

Each participant will have an individualized treatment plan based on their needs, with CARE offering a range of services including housing and transportation assistance; mental health and trauma treatment; substance use treatment; financial stability; personal security; medical care; building support groups and family relationships; education assistance and job training.

The new court is a collaborative effort of the Sixth Judicial District, the Chemung County District Attorney's Office, the Chemung County Public Defender's Office, the Public Advocate Office, the Chemung County Mental Health, and local service providers. In addition, New York State Unified Court System Statewide Mental Health Court Project Director Kimberly M. VanCamp, under the leadership of Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives Judge Edwina G. Richardson, has been working with CARE throughout the planning and implementation process.

To be accepted into the program, CARE participants must be deemed eligible by the CARE judge, prosecutor, and CARE Team. The CARE requires voluntary participation whereby the participant agrees to enter the program after discussing the legal benefits and risks with their defense attorney. The participant, along with the CARE judge, defense attorney and prosecutor, signs a Participation Agreement/Contract. CARE participants are closely monitored by the court with weekly court appearances. They directly interact with the judge and report to the court coordinator multiple times a week. Successful outcomes could result in reduction or dismissal of their charges.

CARE referrals can be made by judges in other criminal parts, the County's District Attorney's Office, defense attorney, law enforcement, Department of Probation, or a mental health provider.

CARE will operate on Monday afternoons. Acting Chemung County Court Judge Peter F. Finnerty will serve as the CARE presiding judge.

“We are pleased to be launching this mental health treatment court in Chemung County. This Court represents an important step toward addressing the underlying mental health needs of individuals in the justice system while promoting treatment, accountability, and safer communities”, said Judge Faughnan.

“The implementation of the Elmira City CARE Court is an incredible opportunity for people who are struggling with their mental health and navigating the judicial system at the same time. This includes a significant population of our clients at Family Services of Chemung County (FSCC). The court and FSCC recognize the positive impact that coordination and connection with local services has on the outcomes for our clients and the surrounding neighborhoods. We are grateful that our clients can be a part of this initiative and have already experienced the meaningful difference in their treatment while involved with the program. CARE Court will help to reduce the stigma of living with mental health issues in our community while providing participants with a chance to improve their lives”, said Kristen Carpenter, Director of Community Supports and Development Family Services of Chemung Co, Inc.

“CASA-Trinity is proud to partner with the local CARE team to support individuals whose behavioral health needs intersect with the justice system. Through this collaboration, we will be able to connect participants with timely treatment, recovery supports, and coordinated care that promote stability, reduce recidivism, and strengthen healthier outcomes for individuals and the community” said Allison Macon, Senior Program Director CCBHC, CASA-Trinity, Inc.

“Our community has been waiting many years for a court model like CARE, and its strength truly comes from the team behind it. As CARE Court continues to develop in its early stages, the team remains committed to strengthening our processes, supporting our participants, and ensuring the program continues to make a meaningful and positive impact. I want to personally thank each member of our CARE Court team for showing up every Monday ready to support, collaborate, and make a difference in the courtroom and in our community” said Haley Youngs, CARE Resource Coordinator.

There are currently 42 Mental Health Courts in operation across the State with 15 more in planning stages. Further information about New York’s mental health and other problem-solving courts is available at: http://ww2.nycourts.gov/COURTS/problem_solving/index.shtml.

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