



COUNTY OF YOLO  
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

301 SECOND STREET - WOODLAND, CALIFORNIA 95695 - 530.666.8180 - FAX 530.666.8185

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** April 10, 2020

**Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy DA  
Jonathan.raven@yolocounty.org  
Bilingual Spanish Representative Available  
at (530) 666-8356

**COVID Physical Distancing Doesn't Stop Mental Health Court**  
**The Mental Health Court team used video conferencing to continue having informal "court"**  
**with the team and judge**

(Woodland, CA) – April 10, 2020 – This week, Yolo County’s justice partners rebooted Mental Health Court (MHC) by having its first informal “Mental Health Court” where participants met with team members and the MHC judge through Zoom video conferencing. Prior to the “shelter in place order,” the MHC team decided to discontinue all court appearances until mid-May to avoid further spread of the virus. The team continued meeting and discussing cases while Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) clinicians provided MHC participants with services through telephone and Zoom video. Since the Yolo County Superior Court is currently closed and handling only essential matters, the MHC team moved quickly to set up informal video court hearings to ensure the participants continued meeting with the judge and MHC team. During a meeting on April 2, the team decided to use Zoom video conferencing to continue MHC meetings. After HHS clinicians contacted participants and helped them learn how to use Zoom, on Thursday, April 9, 2020 the MHC team held its first ever live, virtual informal court hearing. Eleven MHC participants appeared by video in a separate location with many being in their own homes.

Mental Health Court is a minimum 18-month court-based treatment and monitoring system for adult offenders with a serious mental illness. Mental Health Court is designed to increase the treatment engagement of the participants while reducing both arrests, hospitalizations, and jail time both during and after their involvement and participation in the program. The program is a collaborative effort between the Yolo County Superior Court, Probation, Health and Human Services Agency, the Public Defender, and the District Attorney. Mental Health Court follows the

Forensic Assertive Community Treatment model where participants get intense services two hours per week or meet with staff four times per week. The team provides participants with wrap-around treatment which includes a focus on mental health, substance abuse, housing, vocational and school, and physical health. The goal is to address the criminogenic factors and reduce recidivism.

During this first, live, virtual court hearing, Judge David Rosenberg opened up “court” from his home wearing his judicial robe. He greeted the 11 participants and then he and team members shared words of encouragement. Participants then talked about how they were managing through the COVID crisis. “This was very exciting,” said Judge Rosenberg. “We believe we are one of the first in the state to run a mental health court gathering by video conference.”

District Attorney Jeff Reisig praised the Mental Health Court team. “By hosting this informal court hearing via video conference, participants are able to continue the valuable experience of meeting with the judge and the rest of the team,” said Reisig. “I applaud the team for being creative and using technology to help participants continue on their road to self-healing.”

###