

Maryland

In early 2018, the Maryland Judiciary, in collaboration with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), began the process of developing performance measures for Maryland's mental health courts. The performance measures were developed through a series of visits to mental health courts in Maryland to gather data and engage mental health court teams regarding current practice, policies and outcomes. After several months of work, the performance measures were completed, and in January 2019, the report [*Maryland Mental Health Court Performance Measures*](#) was released.

Performance measures are important because they help courts to gauge the efficacy of current policies and highlight any areas that may benefit from a change. They also give courts the ability to examine the effects of newly implemented policies to determine if they are functioning as intended or if further revision is needed. Performance measurement is also important because mental health courts compete for resources with other facets of the criminal justice system. Therefore, mental health courts must demonstrate that the limited resources provided to them are used efficiently and that this expenditure of resources produces the desired outcomes for participants. To this end, mental health court performance measures permit stakeholders to demonstrate that: (1) participants are identified and linked to services in a timely manner; (2) participation improves the capability of participants to function effectively in society; (3) recidivism is reduced; and (4) participants have access to resources in the community to maintain their mental health stability after their program participation ends.

The final challenge, and essential component, in implementing the mental health court performance measures, was provide a comprehensive training to mental health court teams on how to use the performance measure framework, and data, to assess performance and make any necessary modifications. Following a nearly 12-month delay caused by COVID-19 restrictions, in May of 2021, NCSC, in collaboration with the Maryland Judiciary, provided a course-based virtual training that utilized realistic scenarios to represent performance issues and challenges frequently encountered by mental health courts. Throughout the training, court teams worked through each scenario together to learn how to use performance measure data to determine the best way to identify and address an issue, so that better program outcomes can be achieved. The training was provided in 4-hour segments over three Fridays in May to all mental health court team members including, judges, court administration, community-based treatment providers, and staff from local state's attorney's offices and the Office of the Public Defender, parole and probation, and local law enforcement. At the conclusion of the training, participants left with a framework for mental health court performance measure implementation.