



# Circuit Court of Missouri

Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Court  
Kansas City Municipal Division  
511 E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

(816) 513-2700  
Fax: (816) 513-6782

**November 12, 2024**

## **Kansas City Municipal Wellness Court and Women’s Court Executive Summary**

Wellness Court is a merger of Municipal Drug Court and Mental Health Court with the goal of promoting the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of all participants, reducing recidivism, and increasing public safety. It also will form the framework for another new program on the horizon-Women’s Court.

### **Opportunity**

Historically a substantial portion of specialty court participants have co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. It is extremely difficult during initial screening to determine which is primary and whether to refer them to Drug Court or Mental Health Court. Which issue is primary does not become clearer until they are more stable.

### **Solution**

Municipal Court will now serve EVERYONE under one umbrella, Wellness Court, where we can truly meet the people where they are and provide the treatment and support they need. Wellness Court will serve the whole person. It will bring together treatment providers and other services currently working separately with either Drug Court or Mental Health Court. The court is converting a courtroom into a flex-space large enough for all of them to meet weekly before the Wellness Court docket for staffing where they review the treatment plans and progress of each participant.

### **Key Features and Benefits**

Wellness Court will have a person-centered approach. In addition to required programming, participants will be able to choose from a variety of elective pro-social programs and activities based on their individual interests. The new Wellness Court will be presided over by current Drug Court Judge Courtney Wachal, who also presides over Domestic Violence Court. Grants or funds currently dedicated specifically for either mental health treatment or drug treatment will remain separate and be used for their designated purpose. The use of those dollars will be more efficient and effective. While there are other courts that are labeled “Wellness Courts,” in the country, their focus is on mental health or tribal courts, not co-occurring disorders, which is the focus of Kansas City Wellness Court.

According to SAMHSA's 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, about 21.5 million adults in the United States have a co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder.

- Researchers estimate that 50% of people who experience a substance use disorder will also have a mental health disorder, and vice versa.
- However, only about 10% of adults with co-occurring disorders receive treatment for both conditions.
- Women with co-occurring disorders are almost 20 times more likely to be arrested each year than women without a mental illness or substance use disorder.

Recently the Municipal Court received a \$656,925 Department of Justice Grant to implement a Women’s Court, a women’s recovery pathway inside of the new Wellness Court. Women’s Court will be presided over by Judge Shayla Marshall and will incorporate gender-responsive and trauma-informed approaches to better meet the unique needs and risks of system-involved women, specifically those victimized by sexual assault and trafficking.

### **Next Steps**

Wellness Court plans to launch in January. Women’s Court will function as a track of Wellness Court and will launch in March to honor Women’s History month. This new structure builds on Kansas City’s more than 20-year history of operating successful specialty courts. We expect this new, unique approach will increase completion rates, increase graduation rates, expand the number of court-involved defendants served and decrease recidivism.

Corey A. Carter	Judge of Division	201	Shayla M. Marshall	Judge of Division	205	Todd D. Wilcher	Judge of Division	209
Michael C. Heffernon	Judge of Division	202	Katherine B. Emke	Judge of Division	206	Megan F. Pfannenstiel	Court Administrator	
Courtney A. Wachal	Judge of Division	203	Anne J. LaBella	Judge of Division	207			
Vacant		204	Martina L. Peterson	Judge of Division	208			