Graduation

Participants become eligible to graduate from BHC if they adhere to probation terms for the designated period of time and achieve rehabilitative goals. The length of BHC participation will vary based upon probation terms and a participant's ongoing needs. There may be consideration for early termination of probation based on the participant's commitment and success in treatment and BHC. Final determination for early termination will be at the discretion of the Judge.

Benefits of Participation

Participants in BHC have experienced:

- Fewer days in jail
- Fewer days in the hospital
- Fewer days of homelessness
- An increase in workdays
- An increase in medication compliance
- An increase in days of sobriety

Updated 4/29/2025

Behavioral Health Court Contact

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Time/Location

Behavioral Health Court takes place every Monday at 10:30 a.m. in Department 1, and is presided over by the Honorable Judge Tovar.

701 Ocean St. Room C-1122352
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Phone: 831- 420-
Fax: 831-420-2360
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"WHEN 'I' IS REPLACED WITH 'WE', EVEN ILLNESS BECOMES WELLNESS." -MALCOLM X

Behavioral Health Court
Superior Court of California,
County of Santa Cruz
Collaborative Courts

What is Behavioral Health Court?

Behavioral Health Court (BHC) is a supportive post-adjudication review court that aims to improve treatment outcomes, reduce recidivism, respond to public safety and victims' rights concerns, and more effectively utilize public resources.

This "problem solving court" is designed to improve participants' lives by increasing their support networks, helping them to avoid unhealthy patterns and supporting in the achievement of their goals. This is accomplished through a collaborative team-based approach. The **Court, Probation, Behavioral Health, District Attorney, Public Defender, and Law Enforcement all work together during a person's participation in Behavioral Health Court,** to ensure that individuals have the necessary support needed to achieve their individual goals.

A participant's relationship with the court may have previously been adversarial; BHC is intended to facilitate a more collaborative and supportive environment and experience.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." – Helen Keller

How does someone join BHC court?

Eligibility Criteria

BHC is intended to serve those individuals on formal probation with MOST terms or mental health diversion, who are living with serious mental health conditions which is impairing their daily functioning.

To participate, a client must meet the following criteria:

- Diagnosed with significant and persistent mental illness
- Significant impairment in functioning as a result of mental health
- On Formal Probation with Mental Health Terms
- Eligible for Santa Cruz County Medi-Cal
- Under MOST Team Probation Supervision or assigned to Specified Formal Mental Health Probation Caseload
- Amenable to participation in BHC

To participate in Behavioral Health Court (BHC), individuals must be connected to the **MOST Team** and regularly communicate with the **Collaborative Courts Coordinator** to ensure proper scheduling. Eligible participants must be either on **probation** or enrolled in **Mental Health Diversion**.

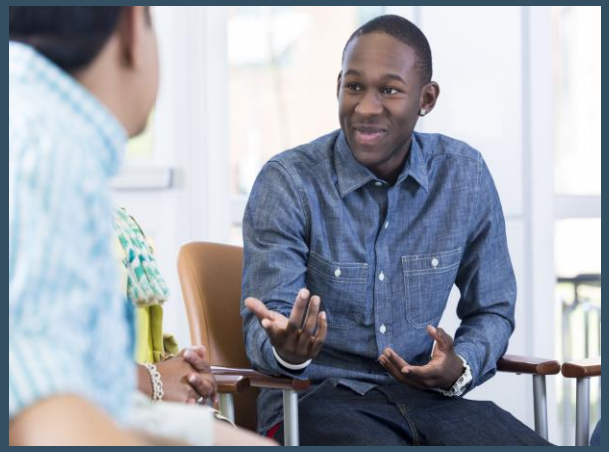
Referral Process

If you're interested in joining BHC, ask your attorney to help you complete a **Collaborative Courts Referral Packet**. A BHC team member will review your application to determine if you qualify.

Referral packets are available online or at the courthouse

Program Requirements

Participants are expected to attend court as directed, follow probation terms, and to collaborate closely with a case manager and BHC team to develop and follow a case plan.

Case plans are individualized to meet the participant's needs and will contain a considerable amount of structure that may include:

•Regular appointments with probation officer, case coordinator and psychiatric provider
•Pro-social activities including participation in the Avenues program, NA/AA meetings (as appropriate)
•Regular urinalysis testing (as appropriate)
•Participation in outpatient or residential treatment programs
•Residence at approved housing
•Take medication as prescribed
•Attend court as requested