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Sixth Judicial Circuit Receives \$3 Million in Federal Grants for Drug Courts Expansion

CLEARWATER – Thanks to a total of \$3 million in federal grant money, the Adult Drug Court in Pinellas County this summer has begun providing more services to its participants, while the Adult Drug Court in Pasco is now able to serve more people.

Pinellas County children whose lives have been upended because of their parents’ addiction to opioids will receive more intensive therapeutic treatment through the court system as a result of a \$1 million federal grant. The Opioid Affected Youth Initiative, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, under the U.S. Dept. of Justice, was launched in July after a year of planning.



Judge Patrice Moore

It will serve children in Early Childhood Court, which is designed for children up to the age of 3, and children in Dependency Drug Court up to the age of 17.

Now, roughly 95 children in the two groups are served annually in Pinellas County’s Unified Family Court division. The aim of the grant is to greatly enhance the availability of community-based services to meet the needs of these children.

For instance, the grant will pay for more child-parent psychotherapy. Child-parent psychotherapy is designed to help children who have suffered from trauma, and may have mental health, attachment, or behavioral problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Therapeutic sessions involve both the child and parent. The primary goal is to strengthen the relationship between a child and his or her parent or parents so as to restore the child's cognitive, behavioral, and social functioning. Before the grant dollars were available, the only way for a child to receive CPP was typically through Medicaid.

Other services that will be provided include individual tutoring, so the children’s math and reading scores increase, while truancy decreases. There will also be increased visitation with their parents, from whose homes they had been taken. Among those providing services are Eckerd Connects, Adoption Related Services, the University of South Florida, and Westcare Gulfcoast Florida. The increased services made possible by the grant will be provided through September 2022.

Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Patrice Moore is the presiding judge in Dependency Drug Court, while Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Phil Matthey is the presiding judge in Early Childhood Court in Pinellas.



PHILIPPE MATTHEY
 CIRCUIT JUDGE

Judge Philippe Matthey

Pasco County’s Adult Drug Court will be able to treat roughly 50 more clients a year thanks to a \$2 million federal grant that kicked in at the end of July. The grant, awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which falls under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is for a period that began July 31, 2020, and ends on July 30, 2025, and its purpose is to provide outpatient protocol for 245 clients from Pasco County over the five years, or roughly 50 a year.

Now, Pasco County’s Adult Drug Court takes in about 380 cases a year; so the SAMHSA grant will fund a 13 percent increase in the number of clients. The money is intended to, among other things, prioritize those offenders who, in addition to using drugs, suffer from trauma-related symptoms, such as those associated with post-traumatic stress disorder. It is also intended to pay special attention to those who are using opioids and methamphetamines and are at risk of overdosing.



Judge Shawn Crane

Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Shawn Crane is the presiding judge in Adult Drug Court in Pasco County.