



COVID-19: DARTMOUTH WELLNESS COURT TO RESUME REMOTE HEARINGS

Friday, May 15, 2020

Effective June 4, 2020, the Dartmouth Wellness Court will resume telephone hearings only for scheduled matters in the Mental Health Court Program, the Opioid Court Program and the Alcohol Court Program.

Until further notice, all new referrals to the Dartmouth Wellness Court will be held in the order they are filed with the Court and screening will be put off until health-care staff can safely meet with the applicants in person.

For defence counsel whose clients were already in the screening phase prior to the pandemic, those screenings will be completed, if it is possible to do so while respecting public health directives. Applicants who complete the screening phase will have their files referred to the court team for final review and approval; however, any formal admissions into the Dartmouth Wellness Court will be adjourned until the Court resumes in-person appearances.

To respect public health advice regarding social distancing, the court team will meet Thursday mornings by telephone to discuss the docket. Following the morning meeting, the Judge, court clerk, prosecutor and defence counsel will go on the record to deal with that day's matters as a recorded teleconference.

Participants in the program will not be required to call in to the court proceedings. Counsel will adjourn those appearances in their absence. Individuals who have completed their program requirements will be permitted to call into the Court at a specified time to complete their graduation.

Counsel planning to refer a new matter to the Dartmouth Wellness Court during the pandemic are encouraged to contact Aileen McGinty, the designated Crown for the Dartmouth Wellness Court, beforehand to determine whether the Public Prosecution Service will consent to the application. Acceptance into the Dartmouth Wellness Court would still require screening and approval from the entire court team.

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