



STATE OF MICHIGAN

St. Joseph County

45th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT, FAMILY DIVISION

Hon. Kevin M. Kane, Family Court Judge

Emily Mowry, Juvenile Court Director/Attorney Referee
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PRESS RELEASE

“St. Joseph County Courts Striving for Reunification Success” FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Joseph County now has a new resource available to support parents struggling with substance abuse. The SJC Juvenile Court recently received state authorization to operate their new Family Treatment Court after Judge Kevin Kane spearheaded the program development over the past year. “Our community has truly come together to collaborate in bringing this program to life to provide better resources and services to families facing court involvement due to substance abuse,” Judge Kane stated as he prepared to admit the program’s first participant in March. Juvenile Court staff worked with the SJC Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, MDHHS, Pivotal, District and Circuit Court, the SJC Sheriff’s Office, Community Corrections, Covered Bridge Healthcare, and local attorneys in developing and implementing the program.

Family Treatment Court is a voluntary program for parents who are before the Court for abuse and neglect of their children as a result of substance abuse. As participants in the program, parents have access to daily case management and peer support interventions as well as more frequent court attendance to ensure that services are being provided appropriately and in a timely manner. Additionally, participants work through a series of milestones that provide increasingly more contact with their children and, ultimately, result in reunification with their children before the program is completed to allow for those extra supports to stay in place while parents resume an active role in their children’s lives. Juvenile Court Director Emily Mowry stated, “Our goal is to see more success in returning children to their parents’ care permanently without recurring problems or Court involvement. Intensive intervention on the front end can help prevent the need for repeated services for our families and create more stable, safe homes for the children in our community.”

Family Treatment Court anticipates accepting up to 10 parents in their first year of operation and hopes to serve even more in the future depending on grant funding. Community programs for housing, substance abuse, transportation, and basic needs are collaborating closely with the treatment team to ensure SJC families in the Court system have access to the help needed to keep their children safe. Closing out the first session of Family Treatment Court, Judge Kane emphasized, "The Court's goal for families is always reunification when possible, and we are so proud to have this new program available to help us achieve that goal for as many St. Joseph County children and their parents as we can."



Pictured left to right: Susan Pennock, MDHHS Supervisor; Joshua Robare, Chief APA; Preston Collett, FTC Co-Coordinator; Ann Forman, MDHHS Supervisor; Tara Smith, Pivotal Clinician; Melissa Bliss, FTC Co-Coordinator; the Honorable Kevin M. Kane, Family Division Judge; Darcy Borden, MDHHS Worker; Jenny Walden, FTC Bookkeeper; Laurie Hines, FTC LGAL; Emily Mowry, Juvenile Court Director; Audry Loosier, MDHHS Worker; Kassie Bogucki, Deputy Register; Luke Nofsinger, FTC Parent Counsel; and Ross Truckey, FTC Parent Counsel.