



# SAN FRANCISCO COLLABORATIVE COURTS

## Behavioral Health Court

San Francisco's Behavioral Health Court (BHC) was created in 2002 in response to the increasing numbers of mentally ill defendants cycling through the jails and courts. The mission of BHC is to enhance public safety and reduce recidivism of criminal defendants who suffer from serious mental illness by connecting them with community treatment services - and to find appropriate dispositions to the criminal charges by considering the defendant's mental illness and the seriousness of the offense.

## Misdemeanor Behavioral Health Court

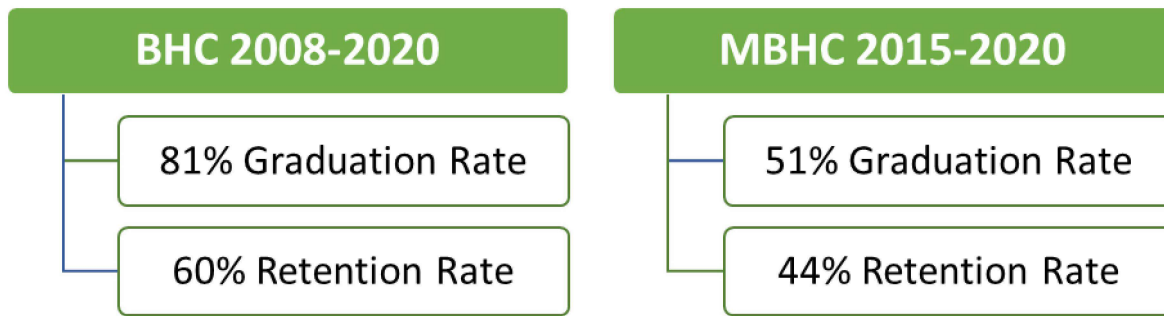
Established in June 2015, Misdemeanor Behavioral Health Court (MBHC) is a collaborative court designed to serve misdemeanants with complex mental health needs. The goal of the court is to identify and engage our participants with severe mental illness in community services by providing them with case management and access to mental health services. Housing is also provided, based on need. Participation in this program is voluntary.

## Collaborative Effort in the San Francisco Community

BHC and MBHC are a collaborative effort of the San Francisco Superior Court, Office of the District Attorney, Office of the Public Defender, Adult Probation Department, Department of Public Health, Jail Reentry Services, UCSF Citywide Case Management Forensics, the Sheriff's Department, and other San Francisco Community Treatment providers. BHC averages **130 clients** at any given time, and MBHC **50 clients** at any given time.

## 2020 Statistics BHC & MBHC

- BHC/MBHC **accepted 66 clients** into the program. **53%** of exiting clients **completed the program successfully**.
- 76% of newly accepted clients were Male, 21% Female, 3% Male to Female Transgender.
- 41% of new clients were Black/African American, 32% White, and 14% Other.
- 80% identified as Non-Hispanic, 17% as Hispanic.
- 47% of new clients had a Primary Diagnosis of Schizophrenia, 9% Psychotic Disorder, 8% Bipolar Disorder.
- 36% of clients that completed BHC/MBHC in 2020 were homeless at entry; **79% had stable housing at exit, 18% were in residential treatment at exit**.
- 47% of unsuccessful exits were clients who opted out of participation, 31% were court terminated, 12% abandoned treatment.
- Since 2003 over **515 clients** have successfully completed the BHC program.
- Since 2015 over **65 clients** have successfully completed MBHC.



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## Two Studies of BHC

### Saves Money<sup>2</sup>

- On average, each participant saves the criminal justice system over **\$10,000** during the first year of BHC (as compared to the previous year the participant was in the system).

### Reduces Recidivism<sup>3</sup>

- BHC participation reduces the probability of a new criminal charge by **26 percent** in the 18 months after entering the program.
- BHC participation reduces the probability of a new **violent** criminal charge by **55 percent** in the 18 months after entering the program, when compared to other mentally ill inmates.
- Length of jail time for BHC participants was reduced by 36.8%



Superior Court of California  
County of San Francisco



City and County of San Francisco

<sup>1</sup> Figures represent the time period of inception through August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> "Examining Program Costs and Outcomes of San Francisco's Behavioral Health Court – FULL REPORT". Authored by Arley Lindberg, MSW, May 2009.

<sup>3</sup> "Effectiveness of a Mental Health Court in Reducing Criminal Recidivism and Violence." Authored by Dale E. McNiel, Ph.D and Renee L. Binder, M.D, September 2007.