



Media Advisory

Superior Court of California

County of San Francisco

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MENTAL HEALTH EXPERT TO GIVE KEYNOTE DURING THE 6TH ANNUAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COURT GRADUATION

34 Graduates Will Participate in Ceremony and Share Success Stories

SAN FRANCISCO -- A graduation ceremony will be held Wednesday, October 21, 2009, for 34 participants who have successfully completed their treatment programs in the San Francisco Superior Court's award-winning Behavioral Health Court (BHC).

Dr. Terry A. Kupers, a professor at the Wright Institute (http://www.wi.edu/faculty_kupers.html), will give the keynote address during the graduation ceremony, which will be held at **5 p.m. Wednesday, October 21, at the Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center, 240 Turk St.**

According to Dr. Kupers, "San Francisco's Behavioral Health Court is a perfect national model for outreach and services to deserving individuals who would otherwise lose their way in these difficult times. The BHC gives them a new opportunity to become productive participants in our democracy, and these graduates have grabbed that opportunity."

The author of *Prison Madness: The Mental Health Crisis Behind Bars and What We Must Do About It*, Kupers is a 2005 recipient of the Exemplary Psychiatrist Award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

The graduates, seven women and 27 men, will describe how the BHC program

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helped them to successfully address their mental health and substance abuse issues and resolve their criminal charges. Graduates and their families will gather for a reception immediately following the ceremony.

"Instead of jails, institutions and death, I chose BHC," said a graduate who did not want her name used. "It helped me regain control of my life."

On behalf of the BHC team, Deputy Public Defender Jennifer Johnson will present the Herbert Donaldson Award for Outstanding Contribution to Behavioral Health Court to the San Francisco chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

The BHC is one of San Francisco Superior Court's nine collaborative justice courts, which focus on problem-solving to prevent recidivism by providing the participants with rehabilitation and treatment services. The program offers criminal defendants the opportunity to receive services and dispose of their criminal charges while taking into consideration the client's mental illness and the seriousness of the offense.

Participation in the voluntary program requires the client to meet mental health eligibility. The BHC hears matters for defendants charged with felonies and misdemeanors as well as clients serving probation. However, defendants charged with homicides and sex offenses are not eligible for participation. When a participant is accepted into BHC, they receive an individualized treatment plan that includes medication management, psychiatric rehabilitation, supportive living arrangements, substance abuse treatment and intensive case management. To graduate from BHC, a client must adhere to their treatment plan.

San Francisco Superior Court Judge Mary Morgan is the Supervising Judge for the Behavioral Health Court, which is also run by Lisa Lightman, Director of the Office of Collaborative Justice Programs.

The BHC was the recipient of the 2008 Council on Mentally Ill Offenders Best Practices Award. Since 2004, more than 200 clients have graduated from BHC.

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