



STATE OF MICHIGAN
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Calley signs bills allowing creation of additional mental health courts

Lower recidivism rate among benefits of program

LANSING, Mich. – Lt. Gov. Brian Calley today signed legislation allowing for the expansion of Michigan’s mental health court program, which is successfully reducing the number of offenders dealing with mental health or substance abuse issues who commit subsequent crimes.

Calley was appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder to serve as chairman of the Michigan Mental Health and Wellness Commission. He also is chairman of the Mental Health Diversion Council, which is housed within the Michigan Department of Community Health and provides recommendations for ensuring that offenders with mental health or substance abuse issues receive appropriate treatment rather than jail time. This legislation is a key component of the council’s plan.

“The most effective and humane way to deal with the problem of recidivism is through a comprehensive system of ‘smart justice’ that recognizes the connection between enforcement and prevention,” Calley said. “Mental health courts play a critical role in that system. They have demonstrated their value by ensuring public safety, easing the strain on our corrections system and providing mentally ill offenders with needed treatment. Allowing for the creation of additional mental health courts is both compassionate and cost-effective. Breaking the cycle in which jail becomes a revolving door for mentally ill offenders means a safer, healthier Michigan.”

Calley signed:

- House Bill 4694, sponsored by state Rep. Kevin Cotter. The bill authorizes circuit and district courts to institute a mental health court, and authorizes the family division of a circuit court to institute a mental health court for juveniles. It also defines the conditions in which a person can be brought into a mental health court. The bill is now Public Act 274.
- HB 4695, sponsored by state Rep. John Walsh. The bill requires a person to comply with all court orders to participate in and complete a mental health court. HB 4695 also establishes procedures that the court must follow upon a participant’s completion of or termination from a mental health court. It is now PA 275.

- HB 4696, sponsored by state Rep. Gail Haines. It establishes conditions under which a defendant in a criminal case can be admitted to a mental health court. The bill also requires a mental health court to provide participants with monitoring and interaction between the court and treatment providers; random drug or alcohol testing; a strategy for rewarding compliance or sanctioning noncompliance; and mental health services, substance use disorder services, education and vocational opportunities as appropriate. The bill is now PA 276.
- HB 4697, sponsored by state Rep. Margaret O'Brien. It requires each mental health court to collect and provide data on the program and individual participants. It is now PA 277.

Snyder and Calley are strong proponents of mental health courts. The governor called for a continued investment in the program in his March 2012 [Special Message to the Legislature on Public Safety](#), and later worked with his legislative partners to secure the funding. Michigan currently has 18 mental health courts.

A recent [study](#) by the State Court Administrative Office shows the program's success. In August 2013, the SCAO released a three-year evaluation of 10 Michigan mental health courts, which found that participants re-offend at significantly lower levels than comparable groups of offenders who do not participate in the mental health courts.

The evaluation found that one year after starting the program, mental health court participants' recidivism rate was 300 percent lower compared to similar offenders. The difference persisted even after the courts no longer supervised the offenders: 30 months later, over a year after graduation, participants had a recidivism rate of 18.97 percent, compared to 43.22 percent of the comparison group.

Mental health court participants also enjoyed improved mental health, education, and job outcomes, the survey found.

Visit www.legislature.mi.gov for more information on the bills.

Article V, Section 26 of the Michigan Constitution gives authority to the lieutenant governor when the governor is outside the state.

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