

SOUTH EUCLID MUNICIPAL COURT



JUDGE
Gayle Williams-Byers

CLERK OF COURT
Annetta L. Fisher

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Mental Health Docket Comes to South Euclid Court

South Euclid, OH- The South Euclid Municipal has become the first Suburban Municipal Court in Cuyahoga County to receive Ohio Supreme Court initial certification for a Specialized Mental Health Docket. The FREE (Fighting Recidivism by Elevating Excellence) Program is a specialized court docket designed to address defendants who have mental health issues.

For the past year, Judge Gayle Williams-Byers, along with the South Euclid Prosecutor's Office, defense attorneys and area mental health professionals have worked with the Ohio Supreme Court to earn initial certification.

Under this program model, individuals who qualify for FREE will have their sentence suspended while undergoing twelve (12) months of community control, which could be extended to 18 months to ensure compliance. During community control, the participant is supervised by Judge Byers, along with mental health professionals to receive counseling and treatment and other services to address their mental health and stability issues. Other program requirements include gaining steady employment, receiving a GED or high school diploma and remaining drug and alcohol free during program participation.

A person who completes the program will have an opportunity to have their fees and court costs waived and case dismissed.

"The court started the FREE Program to reduce recidivism among those with severe and persistent mental health issues. The Court understands that mental health problems play a big role in many of the crimes heard by the municipal court," said Judge Byers, who believes criminal behaviors will change once a person receives treatment for their mental health needs.

"The FREE Program connects the person who has committed these crimes with needed treatment and other life services. In making these connections, FREE helps that person make a permanent change to a stable, law abiding life," she added.

For more information about FREE, visit www.southeuclidcourt.com.

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