



Youngstown Municipal Court

9 West Front Street Youngstown, Ohio 44503

April 23, 2021

Local Court Receives State Certification

The Growth Restored through Acceptance, Change, and Empowerment of the Youngstown Municipal Court has earned final certification from the Ohio Supreme Court's Commission on Specialized Dockets.

In order to receive the certification, the local court had to submit an application, undergo a site visit, and provide specific program materials in response to certification standards that went in to effect in January 2014.

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor congratulated the Youngstown Municipal Court and Judge Renee M. DiSalvo for receiving final certification.

"Specialized dockets divert offenders toward criminal justice initiatives that employ tools and tailored services to treat and rehabilitate the offender so they can become productive members of society," said Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor. "Studies have shown this approach works by reducing recidivism while saving tax dollars."

Specialized dockets are courts that are dedicated to specific types of offenses or offenders and use a combination of different techniques for holding offenders accountable while also addressing the underlying causes of their behavior. There are more than 210 specialized dockets in Ohio courts that deal with issues such as:

- Drugs and Alcohol
- Mental Health
- Domestic Violence
- Human Trafficking

The standards provide a minimum level of uniform practices for specialized dockets throughout Ohio, and allow local courts to innovate and tailor to meet their community's needs and resources.

Judge Renee DiSalvo stated "The hidden nature of human trafficking has caused the victims to remain virtually invisible to the community and the Court. The majority of victims have

experienced childhood sexual abuse without receiving any type of treatment or counseling. It was found that those with a history of childhood sexual abuse have a strong likelihood of ending up in prostitution and experience substance abuse, homelessness, and poverty. Many women (and men) who have substance abuse problems also fall victim to drug dealers who use them as another income stream, some making as much as \$50,000.00 a year by selling one person. We have family members selling family members for drugs as well. This is occurring in our own backyards, it is not respective of income level, race, education or age. When a defendant enters our court and is identified as a victim of human trafficking we offer them a chance to participate in GRACE court. We then give them wrap around services which include various treatments, access to community services, counseling, assistance with housing and education...whatever it takes to get them to a place of wholeness and independence. In some cases our participants need to escape from their traffickers. We have collaborated with safe houses throughout the state to assist with this. Our goal is to establish trust with these victims, give them a sense of value and worth and to provide them with resources to heal and thrive.”

The certification requirements include establishing eligibility requirements, evaluating effectiveness of the specialized docket, and assembling a treatment team for implementing daily operations of the specialized docket. The team can include licensed treatment providers, law enforcement, court personnel, and is headed by the specialized docket judge.

The Commission on Specialized Dockets has 22 members who advise the Supreme Court and its staff regarding the promotion of statewide rules and uniform standards concerning specialized dockets in Ohio courts; the development and delivery of specialized docket services to Ohio courts; and the creation of training programs for judges and court personnel. The commission makes all decisions regarding final certification.