



**VIRGINIA
DEFENDERS**



Today's Date: March 27, 2024

Release Date: IMMEDIATE

Gabriella Smith, Director of Communications, Horizon Behavioral Health, (434) 238-7727

New Behavioral Health Docket in Lynchburg City

Lynchburg, VA – According to the latest research, many individuals lack access to appropriate treatment during incarceration, and individuals with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) are more likely to be arrested, spend time in jail, and have higher rates of recidivism (Fox et al., 2021), calling for innovations to integrate behavioral health treatment into community re-entry to improve access to care, support community integration, and reduce recidivism.

With the establishment of a Behavioral Health Docket in the City of Lynchburg, community organizations collaboratively seek to address major barriers to re-entry and community integration for individuals diagnosed with a mental illness. In collaboration, Horizon Behavioral Health, the Lynchburg Judicial System, Commonwealth Attorney's Office, Public Defenders Office, the Lynchburg Police Department, the Department of Community Corrections, Liberty University, and Centra Health, seek to provide an alternative pathway through the judicial system for individuals who are diagnosed with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) and whose crime or offense is tied to their mental illness while balancing the need for public safety. Horizon Behavioral Health will be the primary treatment provider for the Mental Health Docket, utilizing two evidence-based models for providing care which include Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and Illness Management Recovery (IMR).

“Horizon is pleased to support this collaborative effort to serve our community and establish innovative services that would not otherwise be possible without robust community partnership and cooperation.” Melissa Lucy, Horizon CEO.

Judge Krantz shares, “The Court is pleased that qualified non-violent offenders whose involvement in the criminal justice system is primarily caused by the lack of proper mental health diagnosis and treatment can potentially be diverted from jail into appropriate monitoring and supervision by the Behavioral Health Docket team.”

The Behavioral Health Docket will be comprised of a multidisciplinary team including honorary Judge Krantz, Lynchburg Commonwealth's Attorney Office, Lynchburg Public Defender's Office, Lynchburg Community Corrections Office, a Treatment Provider, Mitigation Specialist, and Peer Recovery Specialist.

The final application for the docket was approved by the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on August 18, 2023, and the docket is slated to accept its first participants in March 2024.

##