

REVENUE: No revenue impact
FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action:	Do Pass as Amended, Be Printed Engrossed and Be Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means by Prior Reference
Vote:	5 - 0 - 0
Yeas:	Bonamici, Boquist, Dingfelder, Whitsett, Prozanski
Nays:	0
Exc.:	0
Prepared By:	Bill Taylor, Counsel
Meeting Dates:	3/17, 4/13, 4/17

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Allows the presiding judge of a circuit court to establish a mental health court program. Allows the judge to appoint a local health court team if the judge establishes a mental health court. Allows the governing body of the county to set fees for individuals participating in the program. Requires that the records of the mental health court must be maintained separately from other court records and are confidential unless the individual who is the subject of the records consents or the court finds good cause for the introduction of the records into evidence of a legal proceeding. Allows the State Court Administrator or the Criminal Justice Commission to use the records for the purposes of tracking and developing statistics. Allows the Criminal Justice Commission to receive grant applications to establish or expand mental health court programs. Allows a court to order a person convicted of animal abuse to participate in a mental health court program. Allows forfeiture proceeds to be distributed to mental health courts as well as drug courts. Gives the presiding judge of a circuit court the discretion to appoint a local mental health team. Requires the presiding judge to include in the team the county district attorney, one or more attorneys who have clients participating in the program and one or more representatives from county corrections agency and mental health treatment providers if the judge does appoint a mental health team.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Number of mentally ill in our court system

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Gives the presiding judge of a circuit court the discretion to appoint a local mental health team. Requires the presiding judge to include in the team the county district attorney, one or more attorneys who have clients participating in the program and one or more representatives from county corrections agency and mental health treatment providers if the judge does appoint a mental health team.

BACKGROUND: At least thirty percent of those in our jails, prisons and court system suffer from mental illness. A significant portion of them commit less serious criminal offenses, but do so repeatedly. Many of these same people use illegal drugs to self-medicate. Mental health courts operate similarly to drug courts. The judge assembles a team consisting of a probation officer, an assistant district attorney, a defense attorney and treatment providers who review the offender's records and work with the offender. Sanctions are graduated but swift. At the same time, the offender is rewarded for good behavior.