



# Specialized and Problem-Solving Courts 106<sup>th</sup> Congress

Government Relations Office

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## Drug Courts/Substance Abuse/Mental Health

### Issue:

#### Mental Health Courts

### Impact:

If funded, this program would provide a significant funding source for courts as well as be a source of pressure to create another specialized court proceeding.

### Summary:

S. 1865, America's Law Enforcement and Mental Health Project, sponsored by Senator DeWine (R-OH), authorized \$10M in grants for each fiscal year through FY 2004. Grants are for programs that provide "continuing judicial supervision" over misdemeanor and nonviolent offenders with mental illness, retardation, or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

As authorized, the bill would fund up to 100 mental health courts, modeled after existing programs in Broward County, FL and King County, WA. In those programs, offenders charged with misdemeanors or nonviolent felonies that are believed to be suffering from mental illness or retardation, including substance abuse disorders, go before specially trained judges knowledgeable about mental illness and local treatment programs. The offenders, in exchange for dismissed charges or reduced sentencing, voluntarily receive outpatient or inpatient care, along with coordination of other services, such as life skills, housing placement, vocational training, job placement, and health care. The court maintains jurisdiction over the offender for a term up to the maximum sentence or probation that the offender could receive for the offense.

The Act specifies that grants are to be made to "States, State courts, local courts, units of local government and Indian tribal governments."

**Position:**

State courts advocate for the resources necessary to advance and apply the principles and methods of problem-solving courts in the general state court systems.

**References:**

- CCJ Resolution 00-A-22
- COSCA Resolution 00-A-4
- America's Law Enforcement and Mental Health Project (P.L. 106-515)

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Contact the **Government Relations Office** with inquiries or requests for copies of any resources regarding

**Mental Health Courts**

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