

**Judge Collier Trying to Change Lives
with Drug Court Program, by Kate Feeks,
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Judge Christopher Collier Studying Drug Court File

Judge Christopher Collier of the Medina County Court of Common Pleas began his Drug Court program after thinking about the number of probation violation hearings he was conducting in his courtroom. Judge Collier realized defendants, although on probation, were often testing positive for drugs. It occurred to Judge Collier that incarceration wasn't making a difference in the lives of these defendants. He felt a need to create a better solution for defendants who were using illegal drugs.

In 2004, the Drug Court was created. Judge Collier along with his administrative assistant Christine Demlow, set up a meeting with County Prosecutor Dean Holman and Medina City Police Chief Dennis Hanwell to discuss the creation of the Drug Court. Under the drug court program, a defendant who has qualified under a felony four or five charge or who has a probation violation is offered the Drug Court intervention program in place of their conviction.

Once accepted into this program, the defendant will agree to plead guilty to their offense and sign a "Terms and conditions" agreement. This agreement will then become an order of the court which in turn means the defendant is

in a position where if at any time they fail to successfully complete the Drug Court program they will be sent directly to prison.

A defendant who takes the Drug Court seriously and sees the many opportunities it can provide will make a commitment to work directly with Judge Collier and his staff throughout the year. After one year of completing the Drug Court program, a defendant will stand before the court and graduate. The success rate of this program is at 48.7% according to Collier. Collier said "Once the defendants graduate the program they are on their own. I don't want them to depend on me anymore; I want them to live clean and free. I want this to be a permanent way of life".

There is no additional funding for the Drug Court program. Judge Collier assigned the Drug Court responsibilities to his administrative assistant, Christine Demlow, whom is now known as Drug Court Administrator. Collier saves the county money by using only resources and staff available already by the county. Judge Collier will not accept federal or state grants. His goal is to run his program his way, under his control, using his own effort.

Be sure to set time aside and watch Judge Collier explain his Drug Court in detail this September on the show Law Talk which appears on community access television stations across Medina County. Check your local television listings for times. LawTalk is hosted by Mr. John Celebrezze, Chair of the non-profit corporation CZ-CLEP.