

How do I get started?

1. Discuss your eligibility with your attorney. If you proceed, you will need to complete a pre-trial application.
2. You and Your attorney will set an appointment with the pretrial coordinator for intake. This will take about an hour. You must bring picture ID and \$200 (money order only). If restitution is owed, 20% must be paid at day of intake. This appointment will take about an hour and will include a drug screen.
3. Your intake will focus on basic information about you and your educational, vocational, social, and psychological history. You will need to supply contact information for your family , anyone you live with , and work and school contact information. You must always keep the Pre-Trial Director informed of any changes in your physical address or phone number.

Here's an example of a sample case management plan:

Jane is a 30 year old woman who is charged with possession of marijuana. She is not working and has not completed her GED. To successfully complete pretrial, she will be required to have monthly drug tests. She will also have to complete her GED (free through our partnership with the Greater Columbus Learning Center) and obtain and maintain full time employment. Once these are completed and she has paid her \$1200 pretrial fee, her charges will be dismissed



Pre-Trial Director

Ericka is a Starkville native and a graduate of Starkville High School. She attended Mississippi State University where she received her Bachelor's in Educational Psychology, Master's in Special Education, Educational Specialist in Community Counseling, and Doctorate of Philosophy in Instructional Systems and Workforce Development.

In June 2020, Ericka joined the District Attorney's office as the Pre-Trial Diversion Director for the 16th Judicial District. Prior to working at the District Attorney's office, Ericka has worked with sexual assault victims, children with emotional and behavioral disorders, and adolescent offenders. She has also spent over 10 years working as an Educational Psychology instructor, Student Services Coordinator, and Academic Counselor at East MS Community College.



Pre-Trial Diversion

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Pre-Trial Diversion



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Pre-Trial Diversion

Our pre-trial diversion program is an important part of our office. The program is an alternative to prosecution, which seeks to divert certain non-violent offenders from traditional criminal prosecution into a program which focuses on rehabilitation and supervision.

Participants who successfully complete the program will have the charges against them dismissed and avoid potential prison time and the life-time repercussions of a felony conviction.

The major objectives of the pre-trial program are:

To prevent future criminal activity among certain offenders by diverting them from traditional processing into community supervision and rehabilitative services.

To save prosecution and judicial resources for concentration on violent and repeat offenders

To provide, where appropriate, a vehicle for restitution to communities and victims of crime

How the Program Works:

Pre-Trial is goal based, which means your progress and length of time on the program is determined by how quickly you reach the goals set forth in your case management plan. Completion of your case management plan can take between six and thirty-six months.

This plan might include: to demonstrate sustained full time employment, to obtain a degree, complete a treatment program, restoring justice to any victim involved in the case, or to have a significant time of sobriety (minimum 6 months) if indicated. This is not your traditional probation-type program that is based on a certain length of time. Other program requirements must also be met prior to successful completion of the program. These include: monthly meetings, regular and random drug tests, paying the \$1200 program fee, and other tasks as assigned by the Pre Trial Director

When you sign the agreement to enter Pre Trial, your case goes in the Circuit Courts inactive files. When you complete your Pre Trial program by meeting the goals set forth at intake, your case will then be dismissed. If you were to violate the program by (for example) not reporting, not meeting goals, or failing a drug test, your case would go back on the active docket for trial and a bench warrant issued for your arrest. If this happens, no fees are refunded.

Program Regulations

Please review the Pre Trial Application Packet for a complete list of rules and expectations

1. You are required to meet monthly with the Pre-Trial Coordinator. You will discuss progress on your program goals, any changes in contact information, and any new developments in your life. You may also take a drug tests if applicable. These meetings and work towards goals are not optional. Three appointments missed due to no call/no show prior to the appointment time will result in termination from the program.
2. Pay Program fees totaling \$1200. \$200 is due at intake and \$100 each month thereafter. If indicated, pay restitution, child support, and other court fines. For restitution, 20% is due at intake and at least \$100 each month thereafter. Cash will not be accepted—Money Orders only.
3. You must be gainfully employed OR enrolled in a learning/vocational program at the time of completion. You will not complete program until this occurs (36 months is the maximum time allowed).
4. Any arrests (including misdemeanors) could result in immediate termination.
5. Use of or possession of narcotics or any other controlled substances or paraphernalia can result in immediate termination. All medications must be declared at intake. Bring prescriptions for any controlled substances, including pain medication, anxiety medication, ADD/ADHD medication, etc. Over the counter stimulants will show positive for amphetamines and are prohibited.
6. You will be called in for regular and random drug testing if you have a substance related charge, a history of drug or alcohol misuse, or at the discretion of the Pre-Trial Coordinator. Appearing for random drug tests is expected and will not be excused. Failure to come in for a random drug test will count as a failure and will result in immediate termination

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What do I need to bring to my intake appointment? **A:** You must have picture ID and \$200 in the form of a money order. Cash and personal checks will not be accepted.

Q: What will my case management plan include? **A:** If you are not employed, your primary goal will be to obtain gainful employment. At minimum, you will obtain a GED if you do not have a high school diploma. Resources such as the Greater Columbus Learning Center, employment agencies, and more are available to you. As a full time student, proof of your (passing) grades will be required at each monthly visit. Other areas of focus/assignments may include: budgeting, increasing positive coping skills, outpatient therapy, group counseling, community service, and character enrichment assignments such as book reports and interviews of positive role models. Whenever possible, restorative justice (writing letters, making amends, etc) can help make victims whole.

Q: Why do we have to meet each month? **A:** Monthly is the minimum amount of contact required while in PreTrial. In addition to updating any contact or status info, progress on your goals and therefore towards completion will be discussed. Any additional needed resources can be provided. You will be given a monthly goal sheet after each appointment.

Q: What happens if I can't pay my monthly fee? **A:** This is to be addressed on a case by case issue with the Pre Trial Coordinator. You must pay the entire fee to complete the program, but should not avoid meeting with or contacting the office if immediate payment is an issue. Until you have a zero balance, you will continue to be required to have monthly meetings with the Pre-Trial Coordinator.

Q: Do I have to pay restitution? **A:** Yes! You will be required to pay 20% of restitution (via money order) at intake. You must make minimum payments EACH MONTH of at least \$100 each month thereafter. Your particular restitution payment plan will be discussed at intake and is a condition of your Pre Trial agreement.

Q: What happens if I fail a drug test? **A:** Failure of drug tests is taken very seriously in our program. A failure is grounds for immediate termination from the program.