

Overview

Manhattan Justice Opportunities helps build safer communities and a fairer justice system by providing social services and supportive resources as effective alternatives to the traditional responses to crime. Manhattan Justice Opportunities works to empower people to make positive changes in their lives, while reducing incarceration and the harms caused by criminal justice involvement—harms that disproportionately impact Black and Brown New Yorkers.

In partnership with judges, lawyers, and community organizations, Manhattan Justice Opportunities operates two initiatives: a program that provides meaningful alternatives to jail, fines, and convictions for hundreds of people charged with misdemeanor offenses each year; and a program that provides holistic community-based programming and treatment instead of prison sentences for people charged with felony crimes.

Misdemeanor Alternatives-to-Incarceration

Located next door to Criminal Court, Manhattan Justice’s misdemeanor program works with people to build stability in their

lives and decrease their likelihood of further justice involvement. Program engagement begins with an individualized assessment, followed by a collaboratively developed plan for services, including:

- individual counseling, case management, and connections to mental health, substance use, and primary healthcare services;
- educational opportunities and job-readiness training;
- restorative justice circles to address harm and promote healing; and
- community service and civic engagement opportunities that connect people to communities in meaningful ways.

Manhattan Justice’s services are free and are available to program participants—as well as to their families, friends, and others impacted by the justice system—on a voluntary basis after they resolve their court cases. In delivering these services, Manhattan Justice Opportunities brings together social workers, case managers, peer navigators, and other staff drawn from the Center for Justice Innovation and partner agencies across New York City, such as the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Partnership with Manhattan’s Felony Alternative-to-Incarceration Court

As cities nationwide seek to reduce incarceration and enhance public safety, New York is pioneering an innovative response to serious crimes that engages people in individualized services so they can remain in their communities while making positive changes in their lives.

Launched in 2019, the Manhattan Felony Alternative-to-Incarceration Court—an initiative of New York County Supreme Court—expands on the principles of specialized drug and mental health courts to create alternatives to incarceration for all types of felony cases including violent offenses. The court is among the first all-purpose felony alternative courts in the country.

Manhattan Justice Opportunities partners with the Felony Alternative-to-Incarceration Court to realize its vision of reducing the harms caused by incarceration and supporting people to address the issues that often underly their contact with the justice system. Staff conduct independent assessments of the court’s prospective participants and develop individualized plans for services to address mental health and substance use issues, as well as education, housing, and employment needs. Once participants formally enter the court, social workers connect them to an extensive network of service providers across New York City, including those who specialize in the needs of young adults. Manhattan Justice Opportunities also provides ongoing case management support for participants until they complete their legal mandate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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