

# The Enterprise

By [Joseph Markman](#)

July 31, 2014 6:00AM

<http://www.enterpriseneews.com/article/20140730/NEWS/140739522>

## Drug court coming to Brockton

Brockton and Fall River are joining 20 other communities with drug courts.

BROCKTON – At any given time there are 60 to 80 young men recovering from addiction at Teen Challenge on Main Street in Brockton.

Many of them have repeatedly seen the inside of a jail cell.

“You see them get incarcerated, get out, go back in again,” Outreach Coordinator Allison Cruz said. “Offering treatment offers so much hope.”

On Wednesday, Cruz and others in the city celebrated the long-awaited arrival of a Brockton drug court. The city was selected along with Fall River to join 20 other Massachusetts communities with specialty court sessions focusing on drug addiction.

“This is very good news,” said Joanne Peterson, founder of the recovery non-profit Learn to Cope. “This is something we’ve wanted for a very long time.”

The drug courts will be funded primarily through a recent \$3 million state budget appropriation.

Quincy District Court will also be adding mental health sessions, and courts in Holyoke and Framingham and Natick will add veterans treatment sessions. Taunton will add a juvenile drug court.

Overall, including courts added in June, the number of specialty courts will go from 26 to 35. Plymouth, Quincy and New Bedford are among the communities with existing drug courts.

Trial Court Administrator Harry Spence said the news comes at an “especially critical time for the Commonwealth.”

The state has been fighting an opiate epidemic that brought a flood of suspected drug overdose deaths earlier this year, prompting Gov. Deval Patrick to declare a public health emergency.

In Brockton, civic leaders have been pushing for a drug court for years.

Mayor Bill Carpenter said he is not sure why it took so long, but that he made it a priority to continue his advocacy for the drug court when he took office in January.

“We had a great cross-section of community and government leaders who’ve supported this,” Carpenter said. “This was a clearly under-served area.”

Among the advocates was Brockton Interfaith Community, a nonprofit seeking to tackle problems facing the city. John M. Messia, chair of the group’s public safety campaign, said it took years of effort and more than two dozen letters of support from local leaders to get traction.

“We’re looking to educate people on the shame and stigma that is associated with drug abuse so that we can show these individuals deserve a second chance,” Messia said.

Plymouth District Attorney Timothy Cruz said he still believes his first priority is public safety and that when addicts “cross certain lines we have to deal with them in the criminal court.”

But despite his long-held skepticism about drug courts, Cruz said he is working with other stakeholders to help address the drug problem.

“My position hasn’t changed all that much,” Cruz said. “But the situation we’re sitting in has changed.”

Cruz’s office will work with probation, law enforcement and court officials to establish the drug sessions, most likely by late fall or early winter.

Brockton District Court, where the sessions will be held, serves Abington, Bridgewater, Brockton, East Bridgewater, West Bridgewater and Whitman.

Drug courts provide non-violent offenders who have substance abuse problems the opportunity to enroll in recovery programs instead of facing jail time.

Daniel Mumbauer, president and CEO of High Point Treatment Center, said the drug court will likely mean better coordination between case managers and the court system, rather than an influx of new patients.

“It’s an extremely positive thing,” he said. “It creates a good partnership.”

The drug sessions could also mean cost savings.

In 2013, the state Department of Corrections estimated it cost an average of \$47,000 per year to house each of its 11,000 inmates, including hundreds of people locked up for pre-trial detainment and civil commitments.

Norfolk County Sheriff Michael Bellotti, who has a drug court in his jurisdiction in Quincy, said offering treatment provides significant savings over jail time.

“We spend a lot of money on watching people who don’t need to be watched,” Bellotti said.

Joseph Markman may be reached at [jmarkman@enterpriseneews.com](mailto:jmarkman@enterpriseneews.com).

