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**Essex Vicinage to Hold Drug Court Graduation and Commencement Ceremony**

The Essex Vicinage will hold its drug court graduation and commencement ceremony on Wednesday, May 11 at 11 a.m. in the Leroy Smith Building, 14<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, 60 Nelson Place, Newark, Assignment Judge Sallyanne Floria announced.

The event will honor 41 drug court participants who have maintained recovery from drugs and alcohol, including 17 early graduates who have successfully completed the program sooner than the prescribed time, three graduates, and 21 participants who are moving to the fourth and final phase of the program

Drug Court Judge Ramona A. Santiago will preside over the event. Mark Brown, manager of the Detox Clinic at St. Michael's Medical Center and the administrator at Angel Hope House, will be the keynote speaker.

The drug court program is a highly specialized team process within the existing Superior Court structure that relies upon a collaborative relationship between criminal justice officials and drug treatment professionals to assist non-violent drug offenders in rehabilitation. Drug court programs are rigorous, requiring completion of four phases during five years of intensive drug and alcohol treatment and testing. Drug court participants are expected to comply with all treatment recommendations, attend AA/NA meetings, gain employment, obtain a GED if not already attained, and demonstrate payment of fines.

The Essex Vicinage Drug Court program has more than 475 active participants.

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