

# News Release



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## **Mercer Vicinage to Hold Drug Court Graduation**

The Mercer Vicinage will hold its semi-annual drug court graduation ceremony on Tuesday, Dec. 5 at 11 a.m. in the Special Proceedings Courtroom on the fourth floor of the Mercer County Criminal Courthouse, 400 S. Warren St., Trenton.

Superior Court Judge Timothy Lydon, who presides over the vicinage's drug court program, will address 13 program graduates on their successes and accomplishments. Assignment Judge Mary C. Jacobson will host the ceremony. Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes also will speak to the graduates.

Vanessa Vitolo, outreach coordinator at Victory Bay Recovery Center and a volunteer recovery advocate, will deliver the keynote address. Sharing her own story as a recovering addict, Vitolo draws on her experiences to offer a message of hope, reduce the stigma of addiction and advocate for change.

The Judiciary's drug court program operates within the Superior Court to address nonviolent, drug-related cases.

Drug court programs require completion of four phases of intensive drug and alcohol treatment and testing. Participants follow a tightly structured regimen of treatment and recovery. This level of supervision permits the program to support the recovery process, but also allows supervisors to react swiftly to impose appropriate therapeutic sanctions or to reinstate criminal proceedings when participants do not comply with the program.

The Mercer Vicinage implemented its drug court in 1999 and in 2014, joined five other vicinages requiring mandatory drug court for certain offenders. Since its inception, More than 236 participants have graduated from the program and there are currently 217 active participants.

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