



## News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge  
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Lake County  
Waukegan, Illinois 60085-4359

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Waukegan, Illinois

### LAKE COUNTY ADULT PROBATION RECEIVES ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Chief Judge Jay W. Ukena is pleased to announce that the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit's Adult Probation and Psychological Services Division was honored with a 2019 Achievement Award for their program titled "Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) – Changing Minds in Adult Probation," from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The awards are presented to honor innovative and effective county government programs that enhance services for its county residents. The Criminal Justice and Public Safety award that Adult Probation was honored with identifies organizations that improve public safety systems, justice systems, community crime prevention and crisis intervention.

"It is always rewarding to honor and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our Probation Officers. In addition to their daily responsibilities, these Probation Officers provide additional resources that positively impact individuals who are on probation," said Rosemarie J. Gray, Director of Adult Probation

Moral Reconciliation Therapy is a systematic, cognitive-behavioral step by step treatment strategy designed to enhance self-image, promote growth of a positive, productive identity and facilitate the development of higher states of moral reasoning while confronting the offender's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. MRT was placed on the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices in 2009. However, since 2001 studies have shown MRT reduces recidivism with probation and parole participants. The program is designed to alter how participants think and make judgments about what is right and wrong and address their flawed beliefs and reasoning. The participants must be confronted with consequences of their behavior and the affect that it has on their family, friends, and the community.

The Lake County Probation Division began utilizing MRT as a Substance Abuse Program in 2016 for Drug Court clients. In 2018, the program was opened to all probationers as a treatment option to address substance abuse and domestic violence. The program consists of 12 steps, and generally a participant can complete the program within 24 – 30 group sessions. During these sessions, facilitators maintain a focus on participants completing and presenting steps in the group and then decide on the suitability of the participant's work based on the objective criteria. The facilitator can then either pass the participant onto the next step or have them re-do the work and present at the next class. New participants can enter ongoing groups at any time.

MRT is easy to implement and is cost effective. The program was developed to target issues specific to an offender population. The only cost to the probationer for the MRT program is \$25, which is the cost of the workbook. Keeping this cost at a minimum allows participants to address their needs, satisfy court orders, and provide the probationers with the tools to live healthier lifestyles. Due to economic downturns and the loss of state funding in Illinois for substance abuse

and mental health services, many local treatment agencies have found it difficult to provide affordable services for justice involved clients. Lake County, to date, has had a 50% completion rate for MRT Substance Abuse Program clients and 63% completion rate for the Domestic Violence Program clients. Currently, six probation officers are facilitating four groups per week and approximately 10 participants are awaiting placement in the program.

“Congratulations to Adult Probation and those involved with the Moral Reconciliation Therapy program. It is an honor to be recognized by the National Association of Counties for our probation officers’ dedication to the community by maintaining and facilitating an affordable, evidence-based program that is designed to provide treatment and reduce recidivism in Lake County,” said Chief Judge Ukena.

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