



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 23, 2008

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MENTAL HEALTH URGENT CARE CLINIC OPENS AT COURTHOUSE
*Superior Court and Department of Mental Health Launch Innovative Program to Improve
Access to Care*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Department of Mental Health will open an urgent care clinic at the Moultrie Courthouse, starting Monday, June 23, 2008, to assist persons who are in contact with the court system and who may need mental health services.

The Department of Mental Health has awarded a \$1.5 million dollar contract over three years to the Psychiatric Institute of Washington to provide direct mental health services to defendants who need them and to assist the court in referring defendants to mental health treatment when appropriate.

The urgent care clinic will provide easy access to mental health services primarily for individuals who appear in misdemeanor and traffic court who may show signs of mental illness, have been diagnosed as mentally ill, or show signs of both mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

“The Superior Court is very pleased to be able to join with the Department of Mental Health to make mental health services available to criminal defendants in a more easily accessible and user-friendly manner. There are a number of defendants who come before the court suffering from major mental illnesses that are treatable but have been untreated, often for a prolonged period of time.” said Judge Ann O’Regan Keary, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court’s Criminal Division. “The Court Urgent Care Clinic should help them connect with necessary mental health services, and reduce the chances of them re-offending. In both ways our community will be better off.”

“The mental health urgent care clinic at the court will provide immediate access to people who might otherwise not be reached, particularly homeless people who are arrested repeatedly for misdemeanor offenses and may have untreated mental illness. It’s an important resource in the public mental health system,” said Steve Baron, Director, D.C. Department of Mental Health.

While it is expected that the D.C. Misdemeanor and Traffic Community Court, the Mental Health Diversion Program, and the East of the River Community Court will be the primary referral sources for the urgent care clinic, all Criminal Division judges and the D.C. Pretrial Services Agency will have the authority to make referrals to the program.