

Office of the Sheriff

311 Miner Ave. E., Suite L100
Ladysmith, Wisconsin 54848-1896
(715) 532-2200
www.ruskcounty.org/sheriff

Rusk County

Jeffery S. Wallace, Sheriff
Phillip A. Grassmann, Chief Deputy

October 31, 2023

Rusk County Justice, Youth & Extension Committee

Terry DuSell, Chair

John Kalepp, Vice Chair

Tom Cudo

Lois Goode

Jonathon Unterschuetz

Re: Rusk County Recovery Court Program

Dear Members of the Justice, Youth and Extension Committee,

Over the past several months, the working environment within the Rusk County Recovery Court program has progressively become more toxic. The Sheriff's Office involvement with the program is reliant on open and honest communication between all members of Recovery Court; community partners and participants alike.

Due to the increase in confusion, lack of trust and a limited line of communication, the Sheriff's Office participation in the Rusk County Recovery Court program will be put on hold until a more constructive outline of the program is established.

I agree to continue working with any and all entities as needed in relation to Recovery Court with the hope of getting this program back on track and functioning in a manner that benefits all involved.

Sincerely,



Sheriff Jeffery Wallace
Rusk County

If you are deaf and/or hard of hearing, call us through Wisconsin Relay at 711

PROTECT & SERVE

ELLEN M. ANDERSON, DISTRICT ATTORNEY
KARL KELZ, ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY
CRYSTAL M. CLEVELAND, PARALEGAL
MARK PLATTETER, PARALEGAL
MARCIA L. CALKINS, LEGAL SECRETARY
NANCY L. HAHN, VICTIM/WITNESS COORDINATOR

RUSK COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

311 EAST MINER AVENUE, SUITE L327
LADYSMITH, WI 54848 (715) 532-2159 * FAX (715) 532-2267

November 1, 2023

Rusk County Justice, Youth & Extension Committee Members

RE: Rusk County Recovery Court (RCRC)

Dear Committee Members,

I support treatment courts. I served as the District Attorney's Office designee on the AIM (Alternatives to Incarcerating Mothers) Treatment Court Team and the Triage Team in Eau Claire County. I have been a member of a variety of multidisciplinary teams in county human services departments. Teams are an effective way to coordinate and enhance services for those receiving them.

I admire the work that this committee and the full county board undertook over the past six months in both public and closed sessions and while under significant public pressure to make decisions that would preserve the RCRC and protect the county's employees. Recent events indicate that the challenges identified by the evaluation completed a year ago continue to plague the team despite these efforts. These events have hurt participants and team members alike. I cannot place a member of my staff into that environment.

Fortunately, it is possible to continue to work together to pursue program opportunities that will serve Rusk County community members in need. The District Attorney's Office will continue to work with the State, the county's department heads, treatment providers, and community stakeholders to develop these prospects and to forge these relationships. The Criminal Court Coordinating Council (CJCC) is where that can happen. I am also hopeful the RCRC can become an effective program through the meaningful participation of its stakeholders. In the meantime, it is necessary for the District Attorney's Office to focus its attention on its primary prosecutorial function.

Sincerely,



Ellen Anderson
District Attorney, Rusk County

cc: Honorable Annette Barna, Rusk County Circuit Court Judge; Jeremy Jacobs, Director Health and Human Services, Rusk County; Jeffery Wallace, Sheriff, Rusk County; Kevin Julien, Chief of Police, Ladysmith Police Department; Ryan Raymond, Regional Attorney Manager-Eau Claire Region, Wisconsin State Public Defender; Melissa Buesgen, Corrections Field Supervisor, Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

Department of Administration

Ashley Heath

Administrative Coordinator



1 November 2023

Rusk County Justice, Youth & Extension Committee

Terry DuSell, Chair

John Kalepp, Vice Chair

Tom Cudo

Lois Goode

Jonathon Unterschuetz

Re: Rusk County Recovery Court Program

Dear Members of the Justice, Youth & Extension Committee:

Over the course of the last several months, the environment within the Rusk County Recovery Court program has steadily declined, with more serious deterioration noted in recent weeks. Escalating dysfunction, a lack of trust, and insufficient attempts at meaningful communication continue to plague this program. This is not a welcoming or healthy workspace for County staff, community partners, or the participants themselves.

For these reasons, it is my recommendation that our staff no longer participate in this program until a constructive path forward can be determined.

I will continue to work with the State, treatment providers, mental health professionals, department heads within the County, and other community stakeholders to determine how best to serve the population that the Recovery Court program seeks to help.

I'm confident we can work together to bring the program back to a place where it's functioning effectively and fostering a healthy work environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ashley Heath".

Ashley Heath