

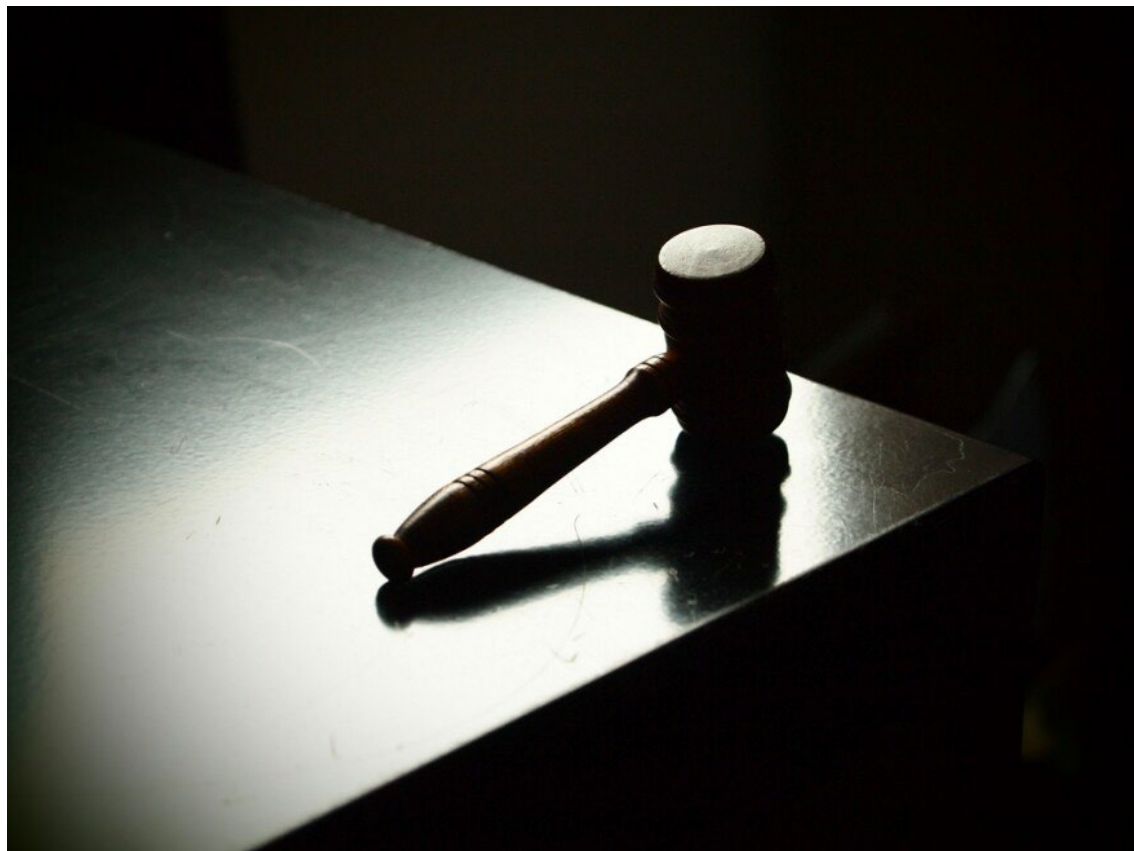
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News from New Hampshire and 

Hillsborough County Drug Court holds first full in-person graduation after COVID

New Hampshire Public Radio | By [Gabriela Lozada, Report for America Corps Member](#)

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Last year, Hillsborough County Drug Court graduates had to celebrate with a hybrid event due to the pandemic. But this year's class completed an in-person graduation this Tuesday. Participants celebrated their completion of a program that gives them the chance to recover from addiction instead of going to jail.

Drug court is a multidisciplinary effort between the criminal justice system, local police departments, and Greater Nashua Mental Health, which works as a community treatment service provider.

Three people received their diplomas this time, which is low compared to previous years. Program manager of substance use disorder services at Greater Nashua Mental Health, Julie Christenson-Collins, says the pandemic has given people a lot of anxiety, and the organization has seen an increase in relapses in people using heroin and fentanyl.

Still, graduates of this program usually enroll in college, reunify with their children, start their own business, buy homes, or are involved in recovery houses helping other struggling people.

And online access to the judiciary program during the pandemic has shown participants can be committed to the program, Christenson-Collins says. Hence, they continue to offer that option.

"They have a lot of goals to fulfill, but once they prove they can maintain abstinence and engage as a productive member of society, they can graduate," Christenson-Collins says.

Research shows drug courts [can help prevent future criminal activity](#) while reducing the costs of processing people involved in the criminal justice system. So far, Hillsborough County has graduated 80 people, and officials say recidivism is very low.