



The Trauma-Informed Courtroom

Scenario #1 -- Crystal

Crystal Harrison (18) is on your docket to discuss whether she should become a participant in your drug treatment court. She is high risk/high need and, thus, eligible. The team is discussing her case during staffing before the court opens. When arrested, she was involved in a domestic violence incident with her boyfriend, Rocky Beltramo (27). She had a cut lip, bruises on her biceps, a contusion above her left eye and red marks on her throat. She told the police Rocky had beat her up because dinner wasn't ready when he came home. When she tried to call the police, Rocky grabbed her cell phone and stomped on it destroying it in the process. During a weapons search of their apartment, multiple bindles of methamphetamine were found. Rocky said they weren't his and both were arrested – Rocky for DV and Crystal for possession with intent to distribute.

In a pre-court interview, Crystal told the Clinical Assessment Specialist she had been using meth since she left home at 14. She ran away from foster care when she was 15. She saw her father, who suffered from a substance use disorder, kill her mother and she testified against him during his murder trial. He is now in state prison. She has several juvenile arrests including status offenses, prostitution, petty theft, drunk in public and simple possession. She has never spent substantial time in custody.

Rocky sells product to keep them supplied. She pled guilty to the possession charge because Rocky told her to. He is verbally and physically abusive but he's always sorry after he hurts her, and she forgives him. She has never sought substance use disorder treatment nor received any mental health interventions. She wants to be in drug treatment court because she does not want to go to jail.

What are your thoughts about admitting Crystal into the drug treatment court? What kind of interventions might she need? What might the judge consider when interacting with Crystal?

"Every interaction between a judge and a treatment court participant is an opportunity for engagement. For a person who has experienced past trauma or may still be experiencing violence in their lives, a judge's words can be potentially hurtful or potentially healing. Trauma-informed judicial practice recognizes the role that trauma may play in how an individual perceives what the judge says and how he or she says it." "Essential Components of Trauma-informed Judicial Practice," SAMHSA (2013)