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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 30, 2014

Massachusetts Trial Court to Add Nine New Specialty Courts

BOSTON, MA – Trial Court Chief Justice Paula M. Carey and Court Administrator Harry Spence today announced that the Trial Court will add nine specialty court sessions across Massachusetts, mainly due to the \$3 million designated for specialty courts in the recently-approved FY2015 state budget.

The new specialty courts include five drug courts, two mental health courts, and two veterans treatment court sessions as follows:

Drug Court Sessions:	Brockton District Court Fall River District Court Taunton Juvenile Court Dudley District Court Lowell District Court
Mental Health Court Sessions:	Quincy District Court Roxbury Division of Boston Municipal Court
Veterans Treatment Court Sessions:	Middlesex County Session at Framingham/Natick District Court Western Mass. Session at Holyoke District Court

The Dudley, Lowell and Roxbury courts began conducting specialty sessions in June and the other locations will introduce sessions in the coming months. The implementation schedule of these additional sessions will vary by location, as planning and training occurs.

“Expanding specialty courts across the Commonwealth is a key initiative outlined in the Trial Court’s strategic plan,” said Chief Justice Carey. “Offering these new court sessions will help the Court achieve its vision of doubling the number of specialty courts in Massachusetts in the next three years. The specialized sessions will help us establish state-wide alternatives to incarceration while improving public safety. Expanding our specialty courts from 26 to 35 sessions will enable more at-risk youth and adults to get access to the resources they urgently need.”

“The current opiate crisis is just one example of why the increase in state funding for specialty

courts comes at an especially critical time for the Commonwealth,” said Trial Court Administrator Harry Spence. “This program provides evidence-based models to help those with substance use disorders, mental illnesses, and other related issues become productive, healthy members of our community.”

Specialty Court integration and expansion have been the result of extensive collaboration. Over the last two years, the Trial Court, the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, and the Department of Mental Health have engaged in numerous initiatives to promote public safety and increase resources, by developing a strategic plan for the certification, data collection and expansion of specialty courts. These sessions will enable the court system to effectively address issues of mental health, substance use disorders, and trauma within the criminal justice system.

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