

3-23-26

Support for S-3099 and H-8247: Renaming Drug Court to Recovery Court

Dear Honorable Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Council on Problem Gambling, I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill S-3099 and House Bill H-8247, which propose renaming the state's Drug Court to the "Recovery Court."

We respectfully support the proposed name change from "Drug Court" to "Recovery Court" because it more accurately reflects the mission, values, and outcomes that these programs are designed to achieve.

First, the term "Recovery Court" emphasizes hope, healing, and the potential for positive change. Individuals who participate in these programs are working toward rebuilding their lives, not simply being defined by past substance use. Language that highlights recovery helps foster dignity and respect, which are essential components of successful engagement and long-term outcomes.

Second, this change helps reduce the stigma often associated with substance use disorders and related behavioral health challenges, including problem gambling. Stigmatizing language can discourage individuals from seeking help or fully engaging in treatment. A recovery-oriented name signals a supportive and person-centered approach that aligns with modern public health practices.

Third, renaming the court aligns with evidence-based approaches that recognize addiction as a chronic, treatable condition. It reinforces the understanding that these courts are not solely punitive, but are designed to support sustained recovery, reduce recidivism, and improve overall community well-being.

Finally, the term "Recovery Court" better reflects the evolving scope of these programs. Many participants experience co-occurring issues, including mental health challenges and problem gambling. A broader, recovery-focused name is more inclusive and representative of the comprehensive services provided.

For these reasons, the Rhode Island Council on Problem Gambling strongly supports the passage of S-3099 and H-8247 and the adoption of the name "Recovery Court." We believe this change will help advance a more compassionate, effective, and forward-thinking approach to addressing substance use and related challenges in our state.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Joyce LCDP, CPRS, CCHW

President

Rhode Island Council on Problem Gambling