

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **29 convicted by Drug Team; 19 referred to Recovery Courts**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – During the week of June 3, 2019, the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Drug Team convicted 29 defendants in courtroom 5310 before The Honorable W. Robert Bell, Superior Court Judge. The convictions were for crimes that included possessing, selling and trafficking in illegal drugs. Based on the structured sentencing laws in North Carolina, sentences ranged from probation to active prison sentences.

While the team works to hold drug sellers and traffickers accountable for their crimes, prosecutors also connect defendants facing addictions with treatment services. Since May 5, 2019, a total of 19 defendants have been referred to Mecklenburg County Recovery Courts, and 11 defendants have enrolled. Seven were referred to Superior STEP Recovery Court, six were referred to District STEP Recovery Court, four were referred to Wellness Court (formerly Mental Health Treatment Court), and two were referred to DWI Recovery Court.

Among the defendants convicted were:

Jacquanus Chesney, 35, pled guilty to 1) sale of heroin, 2) attempted trafficking in opiates by possession and 3) possession of heroin. Judge Bell sentenced Chesney to a total of 38-65 months in prison. In April 2018, an undercover officer with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department purchased heroin from Chesney on two separate occasions. Upon Chesney's arrest, officers located additional heroin, which was mixed with fentanyl, and more than 5 grams of oxycodone.

Lester Morales, 25, pled guilty to 1) attempted trafficking in cocaine by possession and 2) attempted trafficking in cocaine by transportation. Judge Bell sentenced Morales to a total of 20-42 months in prison. Between June and September 2016, undercover Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officers purchased cocaine from Morales on three separate occasions.

Justin Flip, 41, pled guilty to sale of cocaine. Judge Bell sentenced Flip to 15-27 months in prison.

George Reid, 28, pled guilty to two counts of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Judge Bell sentenced Reid to 14-26 months in prison.

*Note: Almost all guilty pleas entered in criminal administrative court are the result of an agreed upon plea arrangement between the State and the defendant, which is then approved by the sentencing judge. For more information about why most cases must be resolved by plea negotiation instead of jury trial, please visit the "Understanding Criminal Court" section of the DA's website at [www.charmeckda.com](http://www.charmeckda.com).*

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