



Superior Court of California, County of Orange

News Release

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Collaborative Courts News from Superior Court of Orange County

Santa Ana, Calif. – The hardcore alcoholic who got her third DUI for drunk driving at ten in the morning – what transformed her into a clear-eyed advocate of sobriety? The meth addict who committed burglaries for years to support his habit – what changed him from a repeat offender into a clean and sober, responsible taxpayer? The combat veteran who tried unsuccessfully to quell his nightmares with drugs and always kept a weapon close at hand – what helped him to overcome his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and re-integrate into society? Not a few months in an overcrowded jail.

These cost-effective, fundamental life changes were brought about by Orange County's nationally-recognized Collaborative Court programs which provide therapeutic alternatives to incarceration. The programs help people with addiction, mental illness, PTSD, and similar problems while enhancing public safety, saving money, and saving lives.

The Orange County Collaborative Courts model is being shared with justice professionals from federal and state agencies across the nation, as described in the attached Collaborative Courts Newsletter of Winter 2015. The newsletter also provides an update on Orange County's Drug Court after the passage of Proposition 47, which reduced many felony drug offenses to misdemeanors.



Collaborative Courts Newsletter



Winter 2015

Visiting Teams Learn the Ropes at Harbor DUI Court

November 18 was a busy day for the DUI Court at the Harbor Justice Center in Newport Beach. In the morning, a team of court and partnering agency representatives from Spokane, WA, arrived for the day, during which they met with the Orange County DUI Court team to learn about establishing their own DUI Court program.

In the afternoon, they were joined by three other teams, from Missouri, Montana, and Monterey County, who were making the site visit as part of a three-day training arranged by the National Center for DWI Courts (NCDC).

All of the guests were able to sit in on the team meeting, in which the cases on calendar for that day were discussed, and the court session, in which the participants appeared for their progress reviews.

The HJC DUI Court has been designated by the NCDC as an Academy Court, one of only four in the country, at which evidence-based best practices are shared.

Community Court Hosts State and Federal Observers

The Orange County Community Court received visits recently from court staff and justice partner personnel at both the state and federal levels.

On October 7, a treatment court team from Great Falls, Montana observed the team meeting and court session of the Veterans Treatment Court. Two days later, the Senior US Pretrial Services Officer from the federal court in Los Angeles observed Drug Court; and during the week of November 3-7, a representative from the US Probation Office, Eastern District of Missouri, observed all of the programs convened at the Community Court.

The Community Court, located at 909 N. Main St. in Santa Ana, offers a variety of therapeutic alternatives to incarceration, including Drug Court, DUI Court, Veterans Treatment Court, Homeless Outreach Court, and several mental health courts. In addition, a wide range of supportive services are co-located onsite.

The Community Court has been designated a mentor site by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Center for Court Innovation.

Treatment Courts Still Standing After Proposition 47

Proposition 47, a controversial ballot measure which took effect immediately upon its passage in November, has so far had only a modest effect on Orange County's Drug Court, and there is cautious optimism that partici-



**Drug Court participants
choose to continue treatment**

pation in all of the County's life-changing therapeutic court programs will continue to be strong.

The initiative reduced many felony drug offenses to misdemeanors, minimizing the defendant's exposure to jail time and diminishing the leverage of the court and its criminal justice partners to encourage participation in lengthy but highly effective treatment programs.

Although nearly 200 petitions to revise charges and sentences have been granted in the two months since the election in November, the number of participants who have thereafter chosen to opt out of either Drug Court or any of the mental health court programs has been quite low — with fewer than 10% of those re-sentenced choosing to leave their treatment.

It is apparent that most of the people who are in the programs understand that simply changing the legal classification of their offense does not change either the gravity or the tragic consequences of their addiction — and that, even though many months of hard work still lie ahead, most are willing to continue on the path to achieving lasting sobriety and a new start in life.