

Overview of Dallas Community Courts

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City of Dallas

Introduction

- Provide background and overview of the Community Courts Program
- Review Community Courts growth and performance
- Outline changes and improvements
- Review future plans for the Community Courts Program

Moving Forward with Community Courts

- Creation of Community Courts as a stand-alone section of the City Attorney's Office with Dianne Gibson as the first non-lawyer head of a section of the City Attorney's Office.
- Renovation of the old Fire Station in Vickery Meadow Neighborhood as a permanent home for the Northeast Community Court. In addition to housing the Community Court, this location will also house community partners which will allow it to become a vibrant part of the Vickery Meadow Neighborhood.
- Established the position of the Assistant Court Manager to free-up the Court Manager to explore expanding and improving the Community Courts Program.

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Community Courts History

- The City of Dallas opened its first Community Court in 2004 in South Dallas.
- Shortly thereafter, the West Dallas and South Oak Cliff Community Courts opened in 2008 and 2010 respectively.
- In 2014, the City of Dallas opened its first Specialty Court: The Adult Drug Treatment Court.
- In 2016, the Northeast Community Court was opened.
- Additionally in 2016, the City of Dallas opened its second Specialty Court: The Veterans Treatment Court.

Community Court – A Mentor Court

- In 2008, the South Dallas Community Court was one of only three sites nationwide to be selected by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance to serve as a National Mentor Court for community courts across the world.
- As a mentor court, the South Dallas Community Court supports the Center for Court Innovation in advancing the community court model and hosts site visits from jurisdictions that are seeking to start or enhance a community court.
- In 2014, the South Dallas Community Court, after a competitive selection process, was again designated as a National Mentor Court.

Community Courts Program

- The Community Court arraigns defendants cited for “quality-of-life” crimes including: hazardous code violations, possession of drug paraphernalia, litter, minor assaults, manifestation of prostitution, overgrown vegetation, illegal dumping, and others within 7 days of a citation being issued.
- Defendants who plead guilty or no contest are ordered to perform community service, pay restitution, and/or attend rehabilitative and educational programs. Defendants who plead not guilty are referred to Municipal Court.

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An Effective Model that Works

- **Rehabilitate.** The Community Courts provide defendants with the opportunity to address their Class C misdemeanors and connect them to valuable resources to deal with any higher level offenses.
- **Restore.** Community Courts provide a seamless integration of services to address a defendant's needs, including criminal, mental health, substance abuse, housing, employment, and transportation.
- **Respect.** The Community Courts Program treats all defendants in a respectful manner which helps them to return to being productive members of society.



The Community Court Difference

- **Eliminating Financial Hardships:** In lieu of court costs and tickets, defendants perform supervised community service in the community where the crime was committed. Additionally, the social worker assists the defendant with finding employment, job training programs, and scholarships.
- **Reduces Barriers:** Defendants are supplied with transportation (bus passes), clothing, basic needs, and quality of life needs via different partnerships and programs. Furthermore, all eligible offenses are addressed with that defendant; there is no need to split cases between multiple days.

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The Community Court Difference

- **Supervised Community Service:** Paid staff identifies project needs in the community and supervises defendants in performing community service. All service hours are tracked.
- **Wrap-Around Services:** The defendant receives social services through an on-site social worker while simultaneously satisfying fines and outstanding citations.
- **Assists High Risk/High Needs Individuals:** Access to different substance/alcohol abuse and/or mental health treatment and recovery support services is provided to assist the defendant.

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The Community Court Difference

- **Visible in the Community:** With help from valuable partners, the Courts provide career and health fairs, school supply distribution, Thanksgiving baskets, utility, rental, and housing assistance, as well as Christmas gifts for the entire family. Additionally, the courts participate in City of Dallas Special Initiatives, Town Hall Meetings, and Task Force Committees.
- **Relationship Building:** The Community Courts have established a rapport with the community and defendants using its unique approach to swift and restorative justice.
- **Reduces Burden on Seniors:** Many seniors are on a fixed income and cannot afford to make necessary changes to be in compliance. Community service workers will provide minor home repairs (tearing down sheds, repairing fences, painting, etc.) The Courts provide the manpower and supplies – this also reduces code violations in that neighborhood.

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City Collaboration

- Streets and Sanitation
- Dallas Police Department
- Court and Detention Services
- Dallas Fire Rescue
- Code
- Mow Clean
- Growth South Initiative
- Neighborhood Plus
- Office of Community Services
- Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs
- Equipment and Building Services
- Mayor & City Council

Community Service in Action



Community Courts Impact

For FY 16-17:

- Completed **16,478** hours of community service
- Completed **1,116** community service projects
- Compliance Ratio of **83%**
- Value of Community Service Performed: **\$119,465.00**
- **752** defendants graduated from the program



Special Events and Community Engagement



Race for the Cure



Community Court Career Fair



National Night Out



City of Dallas Budget Town Hall



Community Court Staff Retreat



TR Hover Rec Ctr Painting



Community Cleanup

Special Initiatives and Partnerships

- New Downtown “Night” Court
- Prostitution Diversion Initiative
- Second Chance Community Improvement Program (S.C.C.I.P)
- GANG Initiative
- Protective Orders with Dallas County District Attorney’s Office
- Expunction Clinic

Downtown “Night” Community Court

- **Pilot Schedule:** Thursday, Nov. 2nd, 9th, Dec. 7th and Dec. 14th from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.
- **Location:** This docket is held at the Municipal Court building.
- **Focus Area:** Targeting habitual high-risk/high-needs individuals previously identified by Panhandling Initiative Task Force
- **Opening Night:** On the first day of the Downtown Community Court, we assisted 22 defendants.

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Second Chance Community Improvement Program (SCCIP)

- Established in November 2014
- An intergovernmental community court that transforms participants' lives and behaviors through exposure, support, responsibility, accountability, and empowerment.
- Collaboration between Dallas County and the City of Dallas
- Target Population: 18-30 year olds, non-violent offenders, drug/drug related offenses (e.g. possession, manufacturing, delivery drugs, theft, evading arrest, among other offenses)
- Target Location: The following zip codes in the City of Dallas-- 75215, 75210, and 75223.

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Future/Next Steps

- Enhance and expand program services:
 - Domestic Violence Court and increase HIV/AIDS Awareness Community Events
- Establish new partnerships:
 - Child Protective Services, Inpatient Psychiatric facilities, El Centro College
- Continue to improve efficiencies:
 - Cross training positions to improve flow of the court and to better assist defendants during and after court

QUESTIONS

