

MEDIA ADVISORY

For immediate release: **October 23, 2012**

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What: Post Conviction Drug Court Graduation. The Fresno County Drug Court partners will recognize 29 participants who either successfully completed the Post Conviction Drug Court in the past six months or are on track to finish by January 2013.

When: 3:00 to 4:30 pm, October 26, 2012.

Where: Jury Assembly Room, **B.F. Sisk Courthouse**, 1130 O Street, Fresno.

Background: Drug court is an intensive program that links treatment and services with frequent drug testing, ongoing probation supervision, and strong judicial monitoring. In fact, the 29 graduation participants have appeared in drug court a combined total of 1,140 times. The rigorous program takes a minimum of 18 months to complete and requires attending daily substance abuse treatment in the first three months of recovery. To graduate, participants progress through five phases in which they must increase self-management by setting and achieving goals for education, housing, life-functioning skills, and employment. Of the 24 graduates that finished drug court in the 2011-12 fiscal year, 18 are now employed and productive, tax-paying members of their communities. Eight are actively pursuing college degrees. They are also mending family relationships and actively engaged in parenting their children.

Many of the participants that finish drug court attribute their success to mental health services such as individual, group, and family therapy afforded for the past two years through federal grant funding. Intensive supportive services complement the mental health therapy and substance abuse treatment. This comprehensive approach enables drug court participants to explore the issues of their addiction and work on all areas of their lives to increase balance and wellness in support of their sobriety.

Fresno County's Post Conviction Drug Court was started in 1998 to provide a cost-effective rehabilitation alternative to incarcerating non-violent defendants facing drug or property crime charges due to their habitual drug use. Because it is so intensive, the drug court's capacity is limited to 115 participants at one time. Since California's corrections realignment under AB 109 last fall, space at the Fresno County jail is a growing community concern. Drug court participants are in community-based treatment and are not taking up local jail space needed for more serious and violent offenders.

The Fresno County Post Conviction Drug Court program is a cooperative partnership between the Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health – Substance Abuse Services, Fresno County District Attorney's Office, Fresno County Office of the Public Defender, Fresno County Probation Department, and the Superior Court of California, County of Fresno. Mental Health Systems, Inc. - Fresno Center for Change provides substance abuse treatment and mental health therapy for the drug court participants.

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