



Superior Court of California, County of Fresno



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Fresno Superior Court Awarded \$1.031 Million Drug Court Grant

Fresno, CA – The U.S. Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services announced in early October that they will jointly award the Fresno Superior Court a \$1,031,249 grant to enhance the adult drug court program. Beginning in 2011, the three-year funding will afford targeted treatment and services for defendants whose mental health disorders may prevent them from successfully completing substance abuse rehabilitation and fulfilling other Post Conviction Drug Court (PCDC) requirements. Without specialized, intensive services, many of these defendants would likely fail out of the drug court program, incurring millions of dollars in additional law enforcement, court, and incarceration costs.

The new federal funding will enable the drug court to integrate mental health therapy addressing the participants' specific issues with their substance abuse treatment. Though more than half of drug court participants need this type of integrated treatment, severe budget constraints have thus far prevented Fresno County from implementing it. In addition, federal funding will be used to conduct assessments on all new defendants entering the PCDC in order to understand their mental health status. This will enable the multi-disciplinary drug court team to implement treatment and supervision plans that are tailored to address the participants' specific circumstances. The grant will also partially fund a project coordinator to provide concentrated services aimed at helping participants stabilize their lives and remain drug free. New computer software will enhance drug court case management and data tracking.

Successful drug courts reduce crime and associated costs in the communities they serve. Fresno Superior Court Presiding Judge M. Bruce Smith noted that in addition to helping individual drug court participants, the federal funds will benefit all of Fresno County. "The new services and treatment offered through this project will benefit defendants struggling with mental health disorders and an attendant drug addiction and will stop the revolving door in and out of the justice system," he said. "This will provide an opportunity for a better future as well as conserving severely strained law enforcement, correctional, and justice resources for everyone."

Like the drug court itself, the grant-funded project will be a collaborative partnership between the Fresno Superior Court, Fresno County Probation Department, District Attorney's Office, Law Office of the Public Defender, Department of Behavioral Health – Substance Abuse Services Division, and treatment providers.

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