



NEWS RELEASE

**Los Angeles Superior Court
Public Information Office**

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Superior Court Backs Pilot Treatment Program for Mentally Ill Offenders

Tomorrow, Los Angeles Superior Court Presiding Judge David S. Wesley joins Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, District Attorney Jackie Lacey, and L.A. City Attorney Mike Feuer in unveiling the county's Third District Diversion and Alternative Sentencing program for seriously mentally ill offenders at 9:30 a.m., Van Nuys West Courthouse, 14400 Erwin Street Mall, Van Nuys.

"Increasing treatment resources has the potential to increase public safety while improving the well-being of nonviolent, mentally ill defendants, and that is why the Court supports the pilot program," said Wesley.

The court-based effort diverts qualifying defendants from incarceration into mental health treatment and additional medical and social services. Designed for chronically homeless and mentally ill adult defendants, the pilot program diverts them from traditional punishments such as fines, incarceration and probation to a path offering permanent housing and consistent mental health treatment.

San Fernando Valley Mental Health Services will oversee their treatment while participants live in transitional housing and receive mental health and various other services, including vocational and employment counseling.

The long-term program goal is to reduce recidivism rates among nonviolent offenders and minimize the drain on scarce justice system resources while helping the chronically homeless and seriously mentally ill population acquire permanent housing linked to other supportive services. For program details call Joel Bellman, 213-974-3333.

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