

Update from District Attorney Heather Adams at the February 16th, 2023 Prison Board Meeting

I wanted to share with you a few programs and initiatives supported, created, and/or implemented by this office and others in law enforcement that, I believe, already make us a leader in this field. This is not to say that there is nothing else to be done, but I believe we have made significant progress compared to many other counties and wanted to ensure that you are aware of steps being taken.

First, this office supports each of our treatment courts currently in operation – Drug, Veteran’s, and Mental Health Court. In fact, it was the Assistant District Attorney assigned to cover these treatment courts that initiated the change to the admission tracks in Drug Court to allow for greater eligibility and participation. The ADA drafted and prepared the policy on this change herself, a change to which I wholeheartedly supported and agreed. As Judge Ashworth mentioned, the Court adopted this new policy and procedure.

Next, in addition to the long standing Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition program for DUI and other non-DUI offenses for first time offenders, this office and law enforcement supports diversion programs prior to a case coming to the Court of Common Pleas level. This office supports the SecondChance PA program, a pre-arrest diversionary program for those struggling with addiction. Twenty-four police departments have also committed to this program and received training on drug addiction. The program allows LEO to use their discretion to offer a second chance to someone they encounter struggling with an addiction. Certified Recovery Specialists (CRS) are available 24/7 to respond to an officer’s call. The CRS assists the person in setting up a D+A eval and can arrange for treatment and placement within the same day. If the program is completed, the officer does not file the charges. This is a fantastic opportunity to get people the help they need all the while improving police-community relations. See <https://www.fox43.com/article/news/police-second-chance-program-offers-addicts-hope-and-treatment-options-over-jail-time/521-1d379c39-5087-4684-a393-853da247f085> (at this time there were only 14 departments committed). See also, <https://www.abc27.com/news/top-stories/ride-along-program-pairs-addiction-treatment-providers-with-police/> (8 departments participate in a ride-along program that pairs police with CRS).

I also worked with SecondChance PA to improve our diversionary program available at the MDJ level. The previous program was run by a company in California, offered no treatment option and was cost prohibitive (over \$500). “Pathways to Recovery” was launched in June 2022 in conjunction with Compass Mark and SecondChance PA. The diversion program is available to those who commit low-level offenses relation to a drug or alcohol addiction. Understanding addiction, we broadened the scope of eligibility allowing more than first-time offenders into the program. Eligible participant will be required to undergo a level of care assessment with a CRS, follow through with all treatment recommendations as well as perform community service and be subject to random drug testing – all for < \$150. The most significant aspect of this program is that it will offer education and treatment to individuals when it’s needed. This was accomplished by partnering with SecondChance PA and Compass Mark. Both received donations from forfeiture revenue of \$25,000 and \$15,000 respectively toward their participation in the program. If a participant completes the program, the charges are dismissed. <https://lanaster.crimewatchpa.com/da/11617/post/da-heather-adams-announces-launch-diversion-program-collaboration-secondchance-pa-and>

Finally, the District Attorney’s Office donated over \$122,500 in forfeiture proceeds to eight programs last year, including drug and crime-fighting programs/organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, Mental Health America and Restart Training Center. This is the most money ever donated from Lancaster County forfeiture proceeds and we will continue to make donations such as these, as I believe we have a duty to assist community-based efforts to address drug addiction, rehabilitation, and the prevention of crime – all of which help lower the prison population. <https://lanaster.crimewatchpa.com/da/11617/post/boys-and-girls-club-and-safety-coalition-among-six-organizations-receive-over-80k>

I am proud of the commitment this office has made to diversionary programs and supporting programs that offer people second chances. The above programs were implemented keeping public safety in mind and they are making a difference. I believe these programs do make us the leaders in the state. Rest assured, I am always looking and reading about possible programs and grants that we can implement or obtain to increase public safety. I hope you find the above information educational, and it allows you to better assess where this office and law enforcement stands on issues affecting incarceration.

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