



COUNTY OF YOLO  
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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YOLO COUNTY  
**NeighborhoodCourt**  
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY  
*A Division of the District Attorney*

**District Attorney's Neighborhood Court Program Receives \$2.1 Million Grant**  
Board of State and Community Corrections approved the grant, which will sustain and expand the program

(Woodland, CA) – October 1, 2019 – On September 12, 2019 the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) Board of Trustees voted to approve a grant, totaling \$2.1 million over three years, to sustain and expand the Yolo County District Attorney's Neighborhood Court (NHC) program. Program staff will focus on achieving five goals outlined in the grant proposal: 1) Expanding criteria to accept some participants in the program with felony-level charges and more substantive criminal histories; 2) Using an assessment tool to effectively address participant needs and risk; 3) Providing comprehensive services to address risk factors; 4) Addressing language barriers by providing full Spanish-language programming, and; 5) Studying program effectiveness using quality of life measurements in addition to traditional recidivism outcomes.

Earlier this year, Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced his office's intention to use additional funding to implement a wide-ranging expansion of NHC. This diversion program allows individuals to resolve criminal cases outside of the traditional court process without receiving a conviction. Under the grant proposal, the Yolo County District Attorney's Office will strive to divert 5% of the total number of felony filings in year one of the expansion, with the goal of increasing that to 10% in the third year of funding.

NHC utilizes community volunteers to resolve cases; they meet with participants to discuss the case, the harms from the conduct, and reach an appropriate resolution that addresses the underlying causes of the criminal

offense. This model is based on the principles of restorative justice, a philosophy that is gaining traction throughout California and nationwide.

The expansion will incorporate a risk assessment process to prioritize services for individuals with a significant chance of future arrest. In partnership with the Yolo County Day Reporting Center, NHC participants in felony-level cases that are assessed as moderate or high risk will receive case management services, benefits screening, and rehabilitative programming as part of the diversion program.

An independent evaluation completed in 2019 revealed that program graduates were 37% less likely to recidivate compared to a control group. The study found that only 5.9% of program participants were rearrested within one year of program completion. Two hundred individuals were diverted through NHC in 2018, with a completion rate of 92.7%.

These strong outcomes give the Yolo County District Attorney's Office confidence in continuing to expand NHC to include individuals facing more serious offenses and with more substantive prior criminal histories. The additional capacity provided by partnering with the Day Reporting Center will enable NHC to effectively serve a significantly broader segment of the criminal justice involved population. NHC will not only focus on reducing recidivism, but also aim to improve the quality of life for participants by addressing employment stability, education, self-sufficiency, and access to services.

Yolo County previously received the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) funding to support NHC from 2015-2018. The JAG program became the subject of litigation between the state of California and the Federal Department of Justice regarding sanctuary laws, which resulted in a funding gap in 2019. The Board of Supervisors funded the program for that year, but the program's sustainability remained an ongoing question. The Board of State and Community Corrections successfully secured the release of funding withheld by the federal government and reinstated the state's JAG program.

The Yolo County District Attorney's office has been at the forefront of the restorative justice movement, becoming a model program for other jurisdictions to study. The Los Angeles City Attorney's Office used Yolo County's program as a model in developing their Neighborhood Justice Program. Program staff have also collaborated with officials in Amador, Sacramento, Solano, Sonoma, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Fresno, Sutter, and Shasta counties to begin development of their own similar programs. On a national scale, program staff have also assisted officials in Milwaukee, WI, St. Paul, MN, Memphis, TN, Philadelphia, PA, and New York City. In 2017 the Board of State and Community Corrections nominated Yolo County's Neighborhood Court program for the National Criminal Justice Association's Outstanding Criminal Justice Program Award. Additionally, District Attorney Reisig, Chief Deputy Jonathan Raven and Supervising Deputy Chris Bulkeley have presented at criminal justice conferences throughout the state and country on the NHC program.

"With the support of JAG funding, our office will continue implementing smart reforms that involve proven restorative justice-based practices. Our innovative approach is focused on creating a continuum of community-based alternatives to prosecution that encompasses a wide swath of individuals involved in the criminal justice system," District Attorney Reisig emphasized.

For more information about the Neighborhood Court program, or to sign up as a volunteer, please visit <http://www.yoloda.org/nc>. You may also contact the program staff directly by e-mail at [neighborhoodcourt@yolocounty.org](mailto:neighborhoodcourt@yolocounty.org) or by phone at (530) 666-8378.

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