

DIVERSION STAFF

The Diversion Program is run by Andrew Mathis, M.Ed., L.P.C., L.M.F.T., the Director of Social Services for the Orleans Parish District Attorney's office. Seven Masters Level Counselors and Social Workers assist Ms. Mathis, each of whom provide individual and group counseling to all program participants. For more information, please contact us at:

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BJA
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Criminal Justice Section

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Diversion Treatment Program

for Defendants in Criminal District Court



OFFICE of the

ORLEANS PARISH
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

"The Diversion Treatment Program is designed to promote community stability and responsible living. While all criminal conduct is corrosive to our community, I firmly believe that the safety of our community is best served by allowing some non-violent offenders to participate in an intensive rehabilitative program in lieu of prosecution." Leon A. Gonzalez, Jr. - Orleans Parish District Attorney



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Diversion Program is designed to promote community stability and responsible living. The Diversion Treatment Program promotes public safety in two important ways. First, it allows motivated individuals to receive meaningful rehabilitation without the negative collateral consequences of a criminal conviction, which reduces recidivism and increases the likelihood that participants become more productive members of our community. Second, the cost of the program do not drain the limited resources of the criminal justice system. As such, the program uses the District Attorney's office in reaching to prosecutorial resources on viable criminals.

All new criminal cases are screened by the District Attorney's office to determine **division eligibility**. **Period delinquents are generally eligible for the Diversion Program if they are not charged with a "crime of violence" or a drug distribution offense.**

Other relevant factors include criminal history (especially crimes involving violence, weapons or drug distribution), the amount of restitution (in excess of \$1,000); possession of weapons while in possession of drugs; and any prior failure to comply with pretrial release, diversion, probation or parole in the past; and consent of the victim. The final eligibility determination will generally be determined following the initial screening and intake interview. Admission to the program is at the discretion of the District Attorney's office.



PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Counseling and Office Visits • Participants are required to have office visits once per week for 8 weeks (minimum of 26 minutes). Weekly monitoring may be reduced after 12 months of compliance or extended for up to 12 weeks for non-compliance. Counselors will develop a treatment plan for each participant which includes full psycho-social assessment and referral to substance abuse, education, employment, mental health and housing resources. Clients must sign a diversion agreement (consent to attend, waiver of speedy trial), if criminal charges involve a co-defendant who is not participating in diversion, testimony against the co-defendant may be required.

Drug Testing • Clients must remain drug and alcohol free, weekly drug testing for 8 weeks, plus random testing ordered by counselor; if case involves a mandatory charge or client admits to and/or tests positive for drugs, weekly testing may extend to 12 weeks before being reduced to 2x/month with random testing as well.



Drug Treatment • All clients are assessed for substance use/dependence. The results of the assessment will determine the level of care recommended.

EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATION • Participants must provide verification of full-time employment or full-time student status. If clients are unemployed and able to work, then must provide proof of an active job search.

SANCTIONS

Non-compliance with program requirements can result in a wide range of appropriate sanctions ordered by the diversion counselor. Failure to successfully complete the Diversion Program will result in the prosecution of the offenses deferred.

FEES

The cost of participation in the Diversion Program is \$200 which can be paid in installments. Drug testing costs vary but may range from \$35 to \$70 per test; drug treatment is charged on a sliding scale, though there is no cost to attend in-house groups.

DURATION

The Diversion Program requires 24 months to complete. All felony offenders require a minimum of 2 years to complete diversion.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

To ensure that all persons who meet the eligibility criteria are able to participate in the Diversion Program, the District Attorney's office has received funding to provide language translation services for Spanish speakers. In addition, our program materials are available in Spanish, and we have a translator available to assist the staff and the participants.

Upon successful completion of the program requirements, the criminal charges will be dismissed.



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