



## **District Attorney's Office Update – August 2018**

The primary work of the Denver District Attorney's Office is the prosecution of criminal offenders and support of the victims of those crimes. The office prosecutes criminal cases, seeks justice for victims, works with the community to prevent crime, and protects public safety. To further and complement these efforts, the following are highlights of recent work and initiatives of the Denver DA's Office.

**Juvenile Gun Court** - There is an alarming increase in the number of young people carrying and using guns. In an effort to examine this issue more closely, the DA's Juvenile Unit along with the Juvenile Court and Juvenile Probation are considering starting a special court to handle juveniles arrested for gun possession and provide more intensive supervision of these young people. We know that those who carry guns are very likely to be shot or to shoot someone so our intention is to intervene early to prevent that from happening.

**Young Adult Diversion Program** – In May, the Denver District Attorney's Office launched a pre-file young adult diversion program in the office, which has two unique aspects:

- It is a pre-file program. This means that the case is never filed if the individual is accepted into and completes a diversion program which is run by my office. There is thus no record of a charge being filed.
- It is a young adult program (ages 18-26). The office has had a diversion program for many years for juveniles (under 18) but never a program, pre-file or otherwise, for the young adult population. Research shows that the brain is not fully developed by age 18 – particularly in the areas of impulse control and judgment.

The office applied for and received start-up money from the State Judicial Department to pilot this program. 19 persons have been enrolled to date, with a goal of accepting 50 young people by next year, the target number for which funding allows. Additional funding has been requested for the 2019 budget to expand this program and the office will be tracking recidivism and success over the coming year.

**Juvenile Life Without Parole Cases** - The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2012 that life sentences without the possibility of parole are unconstitutional for juveniles (under 18), thus requiring all 50 states to review such cases for re-sentencing. In 2016, the Colorado legislature passed a state law governing the re-sentencing process for those juveniles sentenced in Colorado to these unconstitutional sentences. There are 17 such cases in Denver. The office continues to review these challenging cases in an effort to determine appropriate sentences for these defendants who as juveniles took the lives of others, or participated in a crime that led to the death of another.

**LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion)** - This program, piloted in Seattle, WA allows police officers to divert folks on the street to case managers who will determine the more pressing needs for low-level drug offenders and prostitutes instead of entering them into the criminal justice system. Ideally, as a result of such intervention, these folks will never see anyone from the DA's Office or the City Attorney's Office as they will be diverted before any criminal filing. Denver was awarded a state grant to establish the program in Denver, which will be piloted along the Colfax corridor and Civic Center Park. Denver's new police chief, Paul Pazen, is fully on board.

**Fast Track Drug Program** – The office collaborated with the City Attorney’s Office and Pre-trial Services to obtain city funding to make early assessments of individuals after arrest to determine whether they could be served by treatment for substance abuse. The DA’s Office and the courts hope to identify and treat those with serious drug addiction early on while the individual is on bond or held in the jail. The program should be operation soon. In the meantime, Denver Health is doing a terrific job starting Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) in the Denver jails to assist those in withdrawal and provide them with medical treatment.

**Women’s Trauma Court** – Research shows that the vast majority of women involved in criminal activity, particularly alcohol, drug, and prostitution offenses, have suffered trauma in their own lives. The Director of Specialty Courts for the City and County of Denver has convened a collaborative group to consider creating a women’s trauma court in Denver. This court would handle lower level offenses committed by women, initially focused on city ordinance violations. The goal is to treat the underlying effects of trauma and help these women find meaning in their lives and be able to move out of the criminal justice system.

**Veterans in the Criminal Justice System** - One of the attorneys in the District Attorney’s Office, a Marine Corps veteran, specializes in cases involving those who have served in the military. One day a week in county court, veterans come to court and their cases are examined to determine if alternatives to the traditional criminal justice system are appropriate.

**Restorative Justice Expansion Efforts** – In July, the Denver DA’s Office, the Office of the Colorado State Public Defender, and the Colorado Restorative Justice Council (State Court Administrator’s Office) launched a new program designed to help expand the use of restorative justice (RJ) practices throughout the criminal justice system in Colorado. Thanks to a grant from the State Court Administrator, the Denver DA’s Office and the Public Defender’s Office will work together to analyze current best practices and policies, understand the barriers to implementing RJ practices, and educate prosecutors and defense attorneys statewide about RJ. Restorative justice takes many forms, but it is a victim and offender voluntary, facilitated process that provides victims, offenders, and community member with an opportunity to collectively address the impact of a crime and repair harm to the extent possible.

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For more information about the Denver District Attorney’s Office, go to [www.denverda.org](http://www.denverda.org).

For the 2017 annual report of the District Attorney’s Office, go to <https://www.denverda.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2017-Annual-Report.pdf>.

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