



**COUNTY OF YOLO**  
**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
**JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Yolo County District Attorney Gives Presentation on Neighborhood Court at 21<sup>st</sup> Century Modern Prosecutor Conference**

(Woodland, CA) – October 10, 2018 – On September 28, 2018, Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig presented at the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Modern Prosecutor Conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah on Yolo County’s innovative Neighborhood Court program. The Prosecutors’ Center for Excellence organized the conference and invited Reisig to speak. The conference focused on a discussion of the role of the prosecutor in addressing the modern needs in the criminal justice system. It featured a wide array of topics, ranging from bail reform, violence reduction strategies, data-informed decision making, and community involvement. The Prosecutors’ Center for Excellence works with prosecutors nationwide to address emerging issues as the criminal justice system undergoes “a revolution of change and introspection,” according to the group’s mission statement.

Reisig’s presentation focused on the Neighborhood Court program’s unique community engagement, with over 200 volunteers trained county-wide since 2013. Neighborhood Court is a restorative justice diversion program that allows defendants to circumvent traditional court proceedings. Instead, these individuals participate in a conference with community members to discuss the harms of the offense and collaboratively develop a plan to move forward in a positive way. Volunteers from each of Yolo County’s major cities convene to discuss cases originating in their own cities, giving community members the authority to resolve these cases.

Neighborhood Court also engages with direct victims, allowing them to choose how they’d like to participate in the program. If a victim wants to pursue traditional prosecution, the District Attorney’s Office will honor that request. Victims are able to participate directly in the conference process, a “victim-offender conference,” indirectly through a victim advocate, or can allow the case to be diverted without their participation.

Reisig also discussed how the program has evolved over time, originally focusing on infraction and misdemeanor-level offenses as a pilot project in Davis. An internal study, designed by the program’s independent evaluator, found that only 4.8% of Neighborhood Court’s misdemeanor-level participants were re-arrested within the first year post-completion. Since 2013, Neighborhood Court has resolved over 1,500 cases. 92.7% of program participants have successfully completed their agreements. As of 2017 the program’s caseload was 90% misdemeanors, compared to 42% during the program’s infancy.

Due to the success of the program, the Yolo County District Attorney's Office gradually expanded into diversion of more serious misdemeanors and, as of August, 2018, felony-level charges. Neighborhood Court has accepted referrals for felony Grand Theft, Vandalism, and Welfare Fraud charges. Diversion has also been offered as part of a plea deal for a combination DUI/Resisting Arrest charge, where the Resisting Arrest charge was dismissed after participation in Neighborhood Court and the defendant pled to the DUI charge.

Neighborhood Court also spawned the new Steps to Success program, a collaborative effort involving the Health and Human Services Agency, Empower Yolo, CommuniCare Health Centers, and the Probation Department. This program uses the restorative justice conference process to divert cases for individuals diagnosed with mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The program provides a full-service partnership for clients, in addition to the diversion and dismissal of pending criminal charges upon completion. The Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) authorized the diversion of felony-level offenses through Steps to Success in August, the program has received nine felony referrals so far. The program has successfully diverted chronically homeless individuals, and has also taken severely mentally ill clients that were released from Napa State Hospital with felony charges after having their competency restored.

"It is truly an honor to be able to share our Neighborhood Court program with prosecutors from all across the nation," said Reising. "We have presented at conferences in Cleveland, Anaheim, Washington DC, New York City, and now Salt Lake City. Our office is proud to be leading the charge for restorative justice programs. Neighborhood Court is smart criminal justice reform that actually works. The results speak for themselves."

Kristine Hamann, who is the Executive Director of the Prosecutors' Center for Excellence coordinated the conference and commented on the Neighborhood Court program. "Jeff's presentation in Salt Lake City was powerful and educational. Many of the District Attorneys in attendance were very interested in your Neighborhood Court program, especially after hearing about how the program diverts such a wide variety of offenses."

For more information about the Neighborhood Court and Steps to Success programs, or to sign up as a volunteer, please visit <http://www.yolo.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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