



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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Yolo County District Attorney Announces Pilot Project Felony Expansion for  
Neighborhood Court Diversion Program**

(Woodland, CA) – May 24, 2019 – Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that his office has implemented a pilot project that would significantly expand the local Neighborhood Court diversion program. Neighborhood Court offers individuals the ability to resolve criminal cases outside of the traditional court process without receiving a conviction. The program relies upon community volunteers, who meet with participants to discuss the harms from their conduct and reach an appropriate resolution that addresses the underlying causes of the criminal offense.

The expansion incorporates a validated risk assessment process to determine the likelihood of future arrest. The District Attorney's Office developed a partnership with the Yolo County Day Reporting Center (DRC) whereby participants assessed as moderate or high risk will receive case management services, benefits screening, and evidence-based rehabilitative programming as a component of their diversion. Beyond seeking a reduction in recidivism, this collaboration aims to improve the quality of life for participants by addressing employment stability, education, self-sufficiency, and access to services.

The Yolo County Public Defender's Office will also partner with Neighborhood Court to help identify appropriate cases for diversion. "Programs like Neighborhood Court lead to the best possible outcomes for our clients, victims, and the community as a whole. Our office has a strong working relationship with the District Attorney's diversion program staff, and we look forward to building upon that as these efforts expand into felony-level offenses," Yolo County Public Defender Tracie Olson said.

In 2018, 200 individuals were diverted through Neighborhood Court. Nine of those were individuals accepted for low-level felony charges. Of those, eight have completed the program to date (one remains in-progress). 92.7% of all individuals diverted have successfully completed the program or graduated. An independent evaluation completed in 2019 determined 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. These strong outcomes give the Yolo County District Attorney's Office confidence in continuing to expand Neighborhood Court to include individuals facing more serious offenses and/or who have a more substantive prior criminal histories. So far in 2019, 10 individuals, who would have otherwise faced a

felony conviction in criminal court, have been diverted through Neighborhood Court. The Yolo County District Attorney's Office recently applied for funding through the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) to support this expansion on a large scale. The proposal sets a goal of diverting 5% of the total felony caseload during the first full year of funding, and aims to increase this to 10% within three years.

At the time of its creation, Neighborhood Court was only the second program in the state to use restorative justice practices to resolve cases for adults facing criminal convictions. The program began as a pilot project serving first-time offenders in the City of Davis in 2013, with the support of local elected officials and the Davis Police Department. By 2015, the program had expanded to include West Sacramento, Woodland, and unincorporated areas of Yolo County. Neighborhood Court has broadened beyond the scope of its original design and expanded its eligibility criteria to include a wide variety of misdemeanor offenses. This new expansion effort will focus on providing the same promising diversion opportunities to individuals facing felony charges who are willing to engage in supportive services to address the underlying causes of misconduct.

"Neighborhood Court is a bold local reform with proven results that has become a nationally-recognized example of effective criminal justice reform. Our office is excited to undertake this unprecedented expansion, working to advance the goal of changing Yolo County's criminal justice system in a measured way that promotes opportunities for healing and redemption," explained District Attorney Jeff Reisig.

Yolo County has never shied away from innovation and Neighborhood Court is no different. Yolo County's Neighborhood Court program was recently featured in the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Journal as a model for criminal justice reform. 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 worked with 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. Neighborhood Court remains at the forefront of the restorative justice movement with this latest planned expansion.

The new eligibility criteria is significantly more inclusive, and will greatly expand the availability of Yolo County's Neighborhood Court program. Additional capacity provided by the DRC for supportive services will enable Neighborhood Court to more effectively serve a significantly broader segment of the criminal justice-involved population. Implementing restorative justice on this scale would be unprecedented, and achieving this goal would represent transformational change in Yolo County's criminal justice system.

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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