



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



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Contact: Jonathan Raven Chief Deputy District Attorney
jonathan.raven@yolocounty.org
Bilingual Spanish Representative Available
at (530) 406-4509

Yolo County District Attorney's Neighborhood Court Program Seeks Volunteers

(Woodland, CA) – December 14, 2020 –The Yolo County District Attorney's Neighborhood Court (NHC) Program is seeking volunteer panelists. Trainings are set to take place virtually in January, 2021.

NHC, which has been in operation since June of 2013, is an innovative restorative justice diversionary program within the Yolo County District Attorney's Office. NHC also includes the Steps to Success (S2S) program, which is geared towards offenders experiencing challenges due to mental health and addiction issues.

NHC conferences are staffed by local volunteers who facilitate and hear criminal cases to develop agreements with the offenders aimed at providing individualized outcomes, using the principles of restorative justice. This process provides a voice for members of the community, and those affected by crimes, to express how they have been harmed and what they need in order to make things right.

Program outcomes are designed to address the underlying issues affecting participants while prioritizing their acceptance of responsibility and reparation of harms to the community and any direct victims affected. These conferences function best by involving a diverse group of volunteers who represent their local communities. Agreements created through this process are designed to educate and address underlying issues affecting participants, while also emphasizing acceptance of responsibility by encouraging actions that focus on reparation of harms to the community and any direct victim affected, as well as self-reflection.

Panelist service hours are flexible. Through their input, volunteers are able to positively impact the trajectory of participants' lives. We asked Woodland Panelist Alexis Olmedo about her experience as a volunteer and she explained, "I want to make a difference in our community by supporting others and helping offenders gain an insight into the problems that led to their offense. To restore justice for all parties within the community."

NHC volunteers receive training in the basic principles of restorative justice and the three-step Neighborhood Court conference process. The NHC panelist training course is a prerequisite for service in any of the DA's restorative justice programs. Since the training is being done virtually, it will be broken up in to three sessions. Upcoming Volunteer Panelist Training Dates: Session one: Thursday, January 14, 2021 3:00pm- 7:00pm, Session two: Saturday, January 16, 2021 9:00am- 1:00pm and Session three: Thursday, January 21 3:00pm – 7:00pm. Potential panelists must attend all three sessions. Interested local community members are encouraged to apply online at www.yoloda.org/nc. For more information, please email maria.olmedo@yolocounty.org.

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