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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**NEW PROGRAM TO HELP THE HOMELESS FACING PROSECUTION  
WILL BEGIN SOON IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY**

**RIVERSIDE** – A new alternative sentencing program to help the homeless who are facing criminal prosecution for low-level crimes is expected to start in Riverside County Superior Court in next few weeks.

The Riverside County Partnership for the Homeless Outreach Mediation and Education (HOME) program promotes community-based treatment to assist homeless individuals with underlying issues such as mental illness, substance abuse disorders, joblessness, and familial issues with their transition to a stable environment of health, family, and employment.

The HOME program will promote a therapeutic approach to sentencing for non-violent and low-level crimes instead of incarceration and fines and fees.

“The two main factors driving the increase in homelessness are substance abuse or addiction and mental illness, and can often be a combination of both,” DA Mike Hestrin said. “This new Collaborative Court will allow us to use innovative approaches to getting people into the drug treatment and rehabilitation programs they need.”

The DA’s Office will work in conjunction with the following agencies in the HOME program: the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department, the Office of the Public Defender, Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health Department, Riverside County Probation Department, Riverside City Attorney’s Office, Riverside Police Department, and several other community partners.

“The Public Defender’s Office is very pleased to welcome the new Homeless Court to Riverside,” said Public Defender Steve Harmon. “We will work together to help these vulnerable members of our community. Many lives will be changed for the better, and our community will be proud of what we all do here. We in the Public Defender’s Office will dedicate ourselves to working hard and doing everything possible to make this a success.”

Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco said: “Being able to address substance abuse and mental health is the most important aspect of confronting the issues we face with the homeless. This program will not only allow offenders to detox in a safe environment where they will receive proper medical and mental health treatments, it will provide the structure and assistance for participants to break the cycle of addiction that contributed to the situation they find themselves in.”

The partnership of all those dedicated to the HOME program shows the mutual goal of providing a collaborative response to the issue of homelessness and crime within our communities -- all with the intent to work cooperatively to benefit these offenders by offering treatment and rehabilitation while still holding them accountable for their actions. The HOME program will work to reduce homelessness and crime while promoting accountability, integrity, independence, and personal development of its participants through supervision, support, and treatment.

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