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Pretrial Diversion Program Seeing Progress in County

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Editor**

Geneva County District Attorney Kirke Adams can see results of the Geneva County Pretrial Diversion Program after just two months. Adams likes what he is seeing and believes that there will be more good news to come from the program in the months to come.

"We can't make people want to get help," says Adams. "They have to make the decision to straighten their lives out." Adams believes that the success stories will show that the program is truly worthwhile.

One of these stories to date is a young man (who will remain nameless at this point) who is working hard to show that he appreciates his second chance. Currently he is attending an anger management class once a week that costs \$40 per session along with a drug treatment program that costs \$30 per session. In addition to this, he must

pay \$50 to the court referral service. In all, this is a total of \$330 per month in rehab services. Although he hasn't completely paid up his costs for the diversion program, Adams is glad to see the other efforts he is making and will work with him to make sure the program costs are eventually paid.

Currently there have been 118 applicants for the program with only 34 of the applications being approved for the program. "We are very happy with the percentage of the cases that we have accepted at this point," says Adams. Of the 34 applicants into the program only 23 are currently in full compliance. Adams says that those not in compliance were sent a letter in the last week telling them of the consequences they face if they don't get things in order.

One of the 11 that is not in compliance came to the DA office on Friday, August 12. While the individual was there, she was told

that she would have to undergo a drug test before she left. She took the test and came back positive for methamphetamine in her system. This was the second such time in 12 days according to Adams. "You can't just sign up for the program and the case will go away."

In this instance, Adams says the individual in question has already pled guilty in court and will now have her diversion program opportunity revoked. From there, she will go to a sentencing hearing where she will serve time for her offense and get help in prison rather than through the diversion program. "By failing to meet the requirements, she will probably get her rehab in a state corrections facility that will be funded by the taxpayers rather than paying for the rehab on her own."

The process for entering the pretrial program is not as easy as some might think. The process begins when an attorney requests

that his client be placed in the program. The client is then required to fill out an application for admission into the program. From there, Geneva County Program Coordinator Heather Griffin reviews a criminal history of the client and the arresting agency is contacted to determine if the applicant should be considered. "There might be a situation where this is the first time that an applicant has been arrested for drugs but the arresting agency has been trying to arrest him for years and couldn't. This could way into our decision to accept or deny the applicant."

Following the information check of the individual, Griffin will do an interview with the applicant. Following the interview, Griffin will sit down with Adams and discuss the case and determine if the applicant should be accepted into the program or denied the opportunity.

After acceptance into the program, a contract is

signed between the applicant and the DA's office. The applicant's attorney is also involved in the process so that everyone is clear on the terms of the agreement.

After agreeing to the diversion program contract, Adams says that the applicants are given a drug evaluation where it is determined the extent of the drug problems. An evaluation will be provided to the DA's office as well as to the applicant so that the proper drug program can be sought. The applicant has the opportunity to pick a program of their own that meets the DA requirements or they can participate in the court referral drug program.

Although they are in a drug program that has been approved of, Adams says that each participant in the program is subject to random tests by the DA's office and that Mrs. Griffin will periodically contact each participant to see how things are going for them. "It's important to me to see

how each person in the program is doing," says Adams. "We want to be able to give them the boost that they need from time to time."

Adams says that he likes his program and feels that a statewide program will be approved in the near future similar to the one Geneva County already has in place. "The main reason that a statewide program didn't pass during the last legislative session was because it allowed DUI arrests to be eligible for the program and many DA's were not in favor of this decision including myself."

While this may seem like a program for drug offenders, the program is also available for those who commit traffic violations. Information about the program is currently being given to those who commit the traffic violations by the Alabama State Troopers and District Judge Charlie Fleming. "I think this program will be very beneficial for those cases as well," says Adams.