



**OFFICE OF THE
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PRESS RELEASE

STATE'S ATTORNEY LAUNCHES DIVERSION ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

KANKAKEE, IL – The Kankakee County State's Attorney's Office has launched a pilot Diversion Accountability Program ("DAP") to divert non-violent misdemeanor and first-time low-level (class 3 and 4) non-violent felony offenders away from traditional prosecution and towards sentences that involve educational components, service hours within the community impacted by their crime, and restitution to those impacted by the offense.

Offenders that are eligible for "DAP" will be offered the opportunity to participate in the diversion program before any charge is filed against them. If they decide to enroll in the program, they will have up to 120 days to:

1. Complete an offender assessment;
2. Complete an evidence-based intervention educational class;
3. Perform up to 50 hours of community service at designated churches, not-for-profit and Veterans service organizations within the community where the crime was committed;
4. Meet with a GED and/or college admissions/financial advisor to explore educational opportunities; and
5. Pay restitution when applicable, and pay all fees associated with the above services.

Those currently facing charges that are eligible for diversion into DAP will be given the same opportunity at their next court date and, if they successfully complete the program, their case will be dismissed. DAP is being implemented on a pilot-program basis; after 18 months the program will be assessed to determine its effectiveness at reducing recidivism among these offenders and overall crime in our county. This program is already in place in over 140 jurisdictions spanning 17 states, including St. Clair County, Illinois. In most jurisdictions, the fee for this program ranges from \$400 to over \$900. In Kankakee County, the fee will be only \$250 – all of which is paid by the offender. This program comes at no cost to the taxpayers. As a point of reference, the \$250 fee is less than nearly all other similar programs nationwide; less than the total of fines and costs assessed against an offender upon entry of a misdemeanor conviction if their case were to proceed the traditional prosecution route; and is even less than the fine assessed for supervision on most traffic tickets in Kankakee County. Thus, an offender who opts to participate in DAP will not only avoid a conviction on their record but may also see less of an impact on their wallet.

Offenses eligible for DAP include theft, retail theft, property damage, disorderly conduct and other non-violent misdemeanor and non-violent low-level felony offenses. Drug and gun offenses, sex offenders, career offenders, gang-related crimes, domestic violence, DUI, other violent crimes and class 1 and class 2 felonies are not eligible for DAP. An offender may only participate in DAP once – failure to complete the program will result in the filing of the original charges.

"This program holds offenders accountable at no cost to the taxpayers; as a result we can focus our resources on prosecuting the most serious and violent offenders in our county, reduce the caseload on our public defenders, reduce the backlog of cases awaiting trial and obtain justice for victims of violent crime more quickly. Also of benefit, the offender will perform community service in the very village or city where their crime impacted the quality of life – this local restorative approach to criminal justice will make our county stronger and allow people to avoid a conviction that may otherwise leave them unemployable. We consider this a win-win for Kankakee County residents and taxpayers," said State's Attorney Jim Rowe.

For more information, contact the State's Attorneys' Office at (815) 936-5800.