**District Attorney Anderson Speaks at DWI Court Graduation**

*Eight defendants graduate from intensive and unique program*

Today District Attorney Devon Anderson will congratulate the graduates of the Harris County SOBER court. SOBER court is a specialty court program that provides DWI offenders with comprehensive alcohol treatment, intense supervision and full accountability in lieu of jail time.

SOBER court is a cooperative program between the District Attorney’s Office, the Harris County Criminal Courts at Law, defense attorneys, the Community Supervision and Corrections Department and the Harris County Sheriff’s Department. The court is an alternative punishment option for deserving drunk driving offenders and is designed to increase public safety and reduce recidivism. Defendants are provided treatment and counseling for 3 months or more. The program also reduces long-term costs to the criminal justice system and the community.

“Participants in Sober Court are held accountable for their actions, but are given treatment to help them break their addiction and change their behavior,” said District Attorney Anderson. “The participants graduating today worked very hard to achieve their sobriety goals. Providing alcohol treatment through a program like this reduces crime and saves lives.”

Currently, the Harris County SOBER court has 90 defendants. All the defendants must meet strict criteria to qualify to enter the program starting with a guilty plea. Offenders receive an individualized treatment plan, including education, outpatient substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment and support groups. The eight defendants who are graduating today are sober and have completed 12 months of the highly supervised and comprehensive alcohol treatment.

More than 175 people have graduated from SOBER court since the program started in 2008.The graduation ceremony is scheduled to begin at 1p.m. and will take place in the Ceremonial Courtroom of the Harris County Criminal Justice Center at (1201 Franklin – 20th Floor).

**NOTE:** Cameras will be allowed in the courtroom. Interviews with the graduates will be arranged after the ceremony.