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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **DA Lykos Intervenes with "Tough Solution" for Troubled Teens**

Provides \$500,000 Funding to Interrupt Criminal Cycle at Earlier Ages

May 2, 2012 (HOUSTON) - Harris County District Attorney Patricia Lykos used money seized from criminals to fund a youth program that helps teens get and stay off drugs. Lykos presented a \$500,000 check to the Council on Drugs and Alcohol to expand the Drug-Free Youth Program. This initiative was developed by the Council to assist vulnerable youth, ages 10 - 17, who exhibit problem behaviors that have led to involvement in the criminal justice system. Studies show that the earlier adolescents begin using alcohol and other drugs, the more likely they are to continue the behavior and escalate to riskier behaviors in their later teen years.

"Dealing with unsafe adolescent behaviors at the first sign of trouble interrupts the progression to more serious criminal justice involvement," said District Attorney Lykos. "This program does not cost taxpayers a penny, as the grant is being paid for by criminals. The funds, which have been recovered through prosecution of criminal activity, provide a cost-effective strategy—every dollar invested in prevention saves up to \$10 for the cost of addressing a full-blown substance use disorder. Further, we are taking the steps necessary to protect our children from the toxic influences of callous bullies and criminal street gangs. We are setting them on the right path for life."

"This is a "tough-on-solutions"-driven program that has shown remarkable effectiveness in keeping young people at-risk out of the criminal justice system," said Mel Taylor, President and CEO, the Council on Alcohol and Drugs Houston. "Equipping high-risk youth with the skills to cope with peer, family and environmental issues can shift a young person's life path away from problems and toward positive behaviors."

The Drug-Free Youth program envisions implementing six areas of support that have proven the most effective for early intervention for 10-17 year-olds:

Screening for substance use issues

Assessment to identify risk factors and referral to counseling and other support services

Individual and family counseling

Case management services

Crisis intervention support provided promptly

Education to increase protective measures and decrease risk factors

In 2011, of more than 3,000 juvenile probationers screened in post-court interviews, 62% needed referrals to substance abuse education or counseling. But the resources to provide the crucial follow-up and support were limited.

Funding from the DA's office will enable the Council to expand its current Drug Free Youth (DFY) services for Harris County's Juvenile Probation Department into a comprehensive program available at seven Community Unit Probation Services (CUPS) offices, with licensed counselors providing on-site substance abuse prevention/intervention services to youth and their families who show early warning signs of substance abuse and related problem behaviors.

For additional information, contact LaVonne Carlson (lcarlson@council-houston.org) at (713)254-3256 or Monica Brown-Broussard (mbrown-broussard@council-houston.org) at (713)826-6876.

**About the Harris County District Attorney's Office:**

The Harris County District Attorney's office investigates and prosecutes approximately 110,000 criminal cases annually. The Office employs close to 300 Assistant District Attorneys and approximately 300 support staff, including investigators and paralegals. Harris County is the nation's third most populous county with an estimated four million residents. Visit <http://app.dao.hctx.net>.

**About the Council on Alcohol & Drugs Houston:**

The Council on Alcohol and Drugs Houston, founded in 1946, is committed to keeping our community healthy, productive and safe by providing services and information to all who may be adversely affected by alcohol and drugs, impacting over 265,000 annually. The Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and receives funding from the United Way of Greater Houston and the Texas Department of State Health Services as well as private contributions, special events and program fees. Visit [www.Council-Houston](http://www.Council-Houston)



**Mel Taylor accepts check from Pat Lykos**