

*Administrative Office of the District Courts
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HARRIS COUNTY TO ESTABLISH VETERANS' COURT PROGRAM

This Veterans' Day, Harris County officials will outline the design of the Harris County Veterans' Court Program. State District Judges Mike Anderson and Marc Carter, along with Adam Walms, Director of the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and representatives from other county and state agencies and veterans organizations will address the media at **11:30 a.m. on November 11, 2009, on the steps of the Harris County Criminal Justice Center, 1201 Franklin.**

Initially, Harris County's Veterans' Court program will be a six-month pilot program in the 228th District Court. The program will address concerns of Harris County offenders who are honorably discharged veterans or current members of the United States armed forces, including members of the reserves. The Harris County's Veterans' Court Program will be the first in Texas.

Recently, the state enacted a statute for the development of Veterans Court Programs for persons arrested for or charged with any misdemeanor or felony offense. The program will provide participants with a court-ordered individualized treatment plan. The mission of the Harris County Veterans' Court Program is to rehabilitate eligible offenders who suffer from mental illness, mental disorder and/or substance use disorders due to military service, which was a contributing factor in their criminal offense.

A unique feature of Harris County's Veterans' Court plan is the development of a dedicated Jail Diversion Team within the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center, comprised of a court liaison, a forensic psychiatrist, and two case managers. The team will report regularly to the Court, which will closely monitor the offender's progress. By diverting veterans and service members from the traditional judicial system, the goal of the Veterans' Court Program is to reduce recidivism, improve public safety, and improve the quality of life for these offenders who have served their country.

What: Harris County Veterans' Court Press Conference
When: 11:30 a.m., November 11, 2009
Where: Harris County Criminal Justice Center, 1201 Franklin

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