

Transcript of District Attorney for Orange and Chatham Counties, Jim Woodall, introducing OC-PAD (Orange County Pre-Arrest and Diversion Program)

As District Attorney for Orange and Chatham Counties, I'm pleased to announce the launch of the Orange County Pre-arrest Diversion Program, OC-PAD. This unique pilot program will allow Law Enforcement Officers the discretion to divert individuals who commit certain misdemeanor offenses away from the criminal justice system.

The purpose of OC-PAD is to provide accountability by requiring appropriate programming or service hours and offering each individual participant information about the collateral consequences of criminal justice involvement.

The goal is to increase community safety and well-being by offering earlier and direct interventions that reduce the likelihood of recidivism and allow law enforcement to prioritize more pressing public safety issues.

A pre-arrest diversion program is more effective and less costly than court referrals and incarceration and has long-term economic benefits for social service and medical systems. In addition, pre-arrest diversion improves community relations with law enforcement, reduces racial disparities, and improves public health outcomes.

If a participant successfully completes their program requirements within the 90-day diversion period, the referring law enforcement agency will be notified by the Criminal Justice Resource Department's diversion coordinator and the case is closed without the initiation of any formal charges. There will be no public record of the matter and the participant avoids the collateral consequences of a criminal charge.

If a participant does not complete the programming or is charged with a new offense during the diversion period, Law Enforcement will be notified and the filing of formal charges will be considered.

This voluntary pilot program is available to all eligible first offenders in Orange County, including UNC students and individuals who may be unable to pay for any programming. It is also important to note that no admission of guilt is required.

OC-PAD will be limited to first offenders who are 18 years or older who commit certain eligible misdemeanor offenses. A list of those offenses and further details can be found on the Criminal Justice Resource Department website, the agency administering the program. OC-PAD has the full support of each of Orange County's law enforcement agencies, our senior criminal justice stakeholders, and the board of County Commissioners.

I have encouraged law enforcement to refer all eligible offenders that would have otherwise been charged. They retain individual discretion and their continued support of OC-PAD is critical. I am grateful for the strong community support for OC-PAD and I look forward to its success and expansion in the months ahead.