



The Superior Court
COUNTY OF SAN JOAQUIN
222 E. WEBER AVENUE, ROOM 303
STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA 95202

TELEPHONE
(209)992-5555
WEBSITE
www.sjcourts.org

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Press Contact: Helen Ellis, Collaborative Court Manager
(209) 992-5225

DUI COURT PILOTS MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT TOOL

STOCKTON – The San Joaquin Superior Court’s Collaborative Courts Department has been selected by the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility (Responsibility.org) and the Division on Addiction, Cambridge Health Alliance, a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School, as one of six pilot sites in the nation to use a mental health screening tool on repeat DUI offenders. The tool, the “Computerized Assessment and Referral System (CARS),” was developed by the Division on Addiction, Cambridge Health Alliance with funding from Responsibility.org.

“When choosing pilot sites for the CARS program, San Joaquin was an obvious choice,” said Ralph Blackman, president and CEO of Responsibility.org. “The Superior Court’s DUI Court Program is committed to stopping repeat offenders, identifying individuals’ different needs and risks and customizing supervision, sanctions and treatment to effectively influence behavior change. We are grateful San Joaquin agreed to participate in the CARS pilot program, and I know we can make great progress together.”

Collaborative Courts case managers and substance abuse counselors will perform the screenings on repeat offenders sentenced to DUI Court to determine if those participants show indications of mental health disorders. This information will be used by the court to make better-informed decisions and referrals to mental health services and further assessment. Research shows that mental health disorders are common among people with addiction issues, and can affect substance abuse treatment outcomes.

“Substance abuse disorder is a difficult disease to overcome in itself, and when you add mental health disorders, the fight for sobriety is infinitely more challenging,” said Helen Ellis, Collaborative Courts Manager. “We are pleased to have been selected to pilot a tool we believe will be instrumental in addressing core issues that will lead to more effective results.”

“Determining why a person drives drunk is often complicated and multi-faceted,” Blackman said. “That’s why we’ve developed the CARS tool. The six pilot sites will be the first in the country to integrate the CARS tool into their existing programs, and they will provide valuable information for further implementation of the tool nationwide. Every step we take in learning more about repeat drunk driving offenders is a step closer to saving more lives on our nation’s highways, and we look forward to the insight we’ll gain from San Joaquin’s participation.”

Collaborative Courts is on the cutting edge of utilizing standardized and validated assessment tools to identify risk factors, needs and treatment level of participants, who are then referred to services in the community. The court partners with local agencies and private providers in the community to offer appropriate services that are meant to reduce recidivism; hence, improving public safety.

NPC Research, in a 2012 study of San Joaquin County’s DUI Court, documented a one-third decrease in recidivism and a 50% reduction in alcohol related collisions among participants of the DUI Court.

During the same time frame, San Joaquin County became among the best ranked counties by the Office of Traffic Safety, in comparison to 2008, the year the DUI Court was established. Stockton, which had been ranked among the worst cities in the state, has also become one of the best ranked:

	Collision Type	2008		2013		Decrease
		Ranking	Victims	Ranking	Victims	
San Joaquin County	Fatal and Injury	8 out of 48	5,365	48 out of 58	715	750%
	Alcohol Involved	17 out of 58	670	55 out of 58	108	620%
Stockton	Fatal and Injury	1 out of 13	2,239	14 out of 14	55	4071%
	Alcohol Involved	2 out of 13	180	13 out of 14	26	692%

About Collaborative Courts

Collaborative Courts is an innovative department of Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin, which combines judicial supervision with monitoring and rehabilitation services to reduce recidivism by addressing issues that contribute to criminal behavior. A department fully supported by grants and other outside funding, Collaborative Courts operates eight programs including Drug Court; Dependency Drug Court; DUI Court; Parole Reentry Court; Post Release Community Supervision Court (AB109); Monitoring Court (AB109); Mandatory Supervision Court (AB109); and the “Choices and Consequences” prevention program, which are school presentations that aim to deter middle school and high school children from using drugs and alcohol.

About the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility

The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility (Responsibility.org) is a national not-for-profit that leads the fight to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking and is funded by the following distillers: Bacardi U.S.A., Inc.; Beam Suntory Inc.; Brown-Forman; Constellation Brands, Inc.; DIAGEO; Edrington; Hood River Distillers, Inc.; and Pernod Ricard USA. For 25 years, Responsibility.org has transformed countless lives through programs that bring individuals, families and communities together to guide a lifetime of conversations around alcohol responsibility. To learn more, please visit us at Responsibility.org.