



Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF VENTURA
Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Michael D. Planet
Executive Officer/Clerk
and Jury Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PROPOSITION 36 COURT AND QUICK START PROGRAMS TO END

On Friday, July 22, 2011, Proposition 36 Court held its last session. In September, the Quick Start Assessment Center will cease operations. Both closures are a result of the ongoing state budget crisis.

Proposition 36 Court is a collaborative program of substance abuse treatment in lieu of incarceration for first- and second-time nonviolent offenders charged with simple drug possession. It was approved by the voters as Proposition 36 in 2000. The program is comprised of representatives from the Probation Agency, Behavioral Health Department, District Attorney, and Public Defender. Treatment providers are licensed or certified by the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs.

As a result of funding cuts, the District Attorney has already withdrawn from the program and the Probation Agency will soon follow suit. With only representatives from treatment and the Public Defender's office remaining, the operation is no longer viable as a functioning collaborative court.

Although the dedicated Proposition 36 Court is being disbanded, the requirements of treatment under the Proposition 36 law remain. A person requesting drug treatment probation is still entitled to receive it.

Beginning today, Monday, July 25, cases previously assigned to the Proposition 36 Court will be assigned to Courtrooms 11 or 12, depending on the violation. New protocols have been established to meet the challenge.

The Quick Start Assessment Center program is closely associated with the Proposition 36 Court. It is located in the Hall of Justice and conducts immediate mental health and substance abuse assessments for the court.

The rapid assessments provide judges with valuable information to assist in making decisions regarding court orders, sanctions or incentives, and allow cases to progress more quickly. The on-site location is also a convenience to defendants.

At the time of its inception, Quick Start was staffed by several clinicians from the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department. Although it was originally funded by set-aside Proposition 36 monies, operations have been reduced over the last two years as those funds were eliminated.

Upon closing, the Center clinicians will be reassigned to Behavioral Health offices to help satisfy an increase in workload resulting from a demand for Proposition 36 services.

Regarding the closure of Quick Start, Patrick Zarate Division Manager for Ventura County Alcohol and Drug Programs stated, "While we value the positives of having a central assessment site, our priority has to be to those who present for treatment. Staff re-assigned to treatment programs from the dedicated Proposition 36 Court and Quick Start will help us meet the demand for care."

The Quick Start Assessment Center is a collaborative effort between the Ventura Superior Court and Ventura County Behavioral Health Department. It is a past recipient of the Justice Achievement Award from the National Association of Court Management for exemplary accomplishment in enhancing the administration of justice. The Center has been in operation since October 24, 2005.

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