

RE: DACC Additional Funding Requests

The Downtown Austin Community Court Advisory Committee has asked for substantial additional annual funding for the DACC to begin as soon as possible. After a great deal of discussion and review, it is our finding that the City could reallocate much of the funds already being spent on the clients of the Community Court in a more prudent, cost effective and humane manner.

Currently, the Court has 245 individuals that we consider frequent offenders of our Quality of Life ordinances.¹ The measure used to define a frequent offender is 25 or more cases with at least one case in the past two years. Our findings have shown these individuals to be without a home, without an income and in generally poor mental and physical health; they are our most vulnerable citizens.

Community Court was created in 1999 to offer these individuals an alternative to a life of homelessness spent in and out of courts, jails, emergency departments and mental health facilities; to offer them some hope; to offer them our care. To date, the court has not had the resources to effectively address the variety of criminogenic circumstances that bring them into the criminal justice system.

Moreover, the revolving door created by the inability to effectively address their circumstances has led to extraordinary costs to the court, the police, and the jail; costs that are incurred year after year.

Here are some costs associated with "The 245" in 2009²:

- 24,315 docketed cases at DACC³⁴ = \$624,000
- 1409 Jail bookings⁵ = \$246,575
- 11,734 Jail Days⁶ = \$258,030
- 3,595 Field Release and Arrests⁷ = \$59,785
- **Totaling \$1,188,390 = \$4,850 per individual**

About 65 percent of the 245 frequent offenders have been screened at some point by ATCIC. Of those screened, 79 percent received a mental health diagnosis, with 77 percent indicating BiPolar I or II, Major Depression, or Schizophrenia/Schizoaffective Disorder. Except for one, all of the mentally ill are homeless.

Of the 245 frequent offenders, **76 individuals have had cases for the life of court (over ten years)**. Of these individuals:

- all are homeless or believed to be homeless
- 86% have a felony criminal record
- 66% have at least one conviction for possession of a controlled substance
- 40% have at least one conviction for theft/larceny/burglary
- 20% have at least one conviction for assault

Clearly, this revolving door of inhumanely allowing these individuals to go on without homes, jobs or health care must stop. The Community Court is in a unique position to help these individuals and reduce the long term costs associated with not effectively intervening if they are given the tools, funds and means to do so.

¹ Number of individuals with 25+ cases = 245; 15+ cases = 471; 10+ cases = 700.

² This does not include any related health care costs or Municipal Court costs

³ Representing 52% of the Court's annual budget for staff time. This does not include any rehab.

⁴ Frequent offenders had 52% of all docketed cases in 2009 (24,315 of 46,681)

⁵ Cost of \$175 per booking per Travis County

⁶ Cost of \$45 per day per Travis County

⁷ Cost of \$16.63 weighted average per APD

By The Numbers:

245 Frequent Offenders have 25+ cases for the life of the Court

- 52% of all docketed cases in 2009
- \$1.18M in 2009
- 95%+ are homeless
- 77% of those screened have serious mental illness

76 Frequent Offenders have cases since 1999

- All are homeless
- 86% have a felony conviction
- 3,400 jail bookings since 1999
- 50,000 nights in jail since 1999
- \$4.02 million spent just on court and jail since 1999
- \$52,906 per offender spent since 1999