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PRESS RELEASE

Courts Receive $6 Million Federal Award to Expand Connections to Behavioral Health Treatment, Sober Housing and Transportation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

11/16/2020

Massachusetts Court System

Executive Office of the Trial Court

Massachusetts Probation Service

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BOSTON, MA — Trial Court Chief Justice Paula Carey, Trial Court Administrator Jonathan Williams, and Probation Commissioner Edward Dolan today announced that the Trial Court has received its largest federal grant ever – a $6 million award from the Department of Justice to expand court-based connections for individuals at risk of overdose in 12 local courts that serve 62 communities.

The Massachusetts Trial Court is one of 11 states and the only court system to receive one of the $6 million awards based on its submission to the federal COSSAP (Comprehensive Opiate, Stimulant and Substance Abuse Program) funding opportunity. The courts will connect at risk individuals to behavioral health treatment, sober housing, and transportation services.

Project NORTH (Navigation Outreach Recovery Treatment and Hope) will offer enhanced services in courthouses located in 12 communities highly impacted by overdose deaths: Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Pittsfield, Quincy, Springfield, Taunton and Worcester. The courts in these communities serve 2.7 million people in 62 municipalities across nine counties.

“We are very pleased by the confidence this federal award of $6 million demonstrates in the Trial Court’s ability to greatly enhance service delivery and build upon the strong foundation we have established to serve community needs through specialty courts,” said Trial Court Chief Justice Carey.

“This major award will enable us to hire 19 people to positively impact local communities as they expand connections to key services for people at risk of overdose,” said Trial Court Administrator Williams.

“The Probation Service continues to make great strides in connecting people to behavioral health and housing resources that can put them on a positive path to a better life and we are well positioned to invest these significant new resources effectively,” said Probation Commissioner Dolan.

Project NORTH will provide court-based assistance to link court users to treatment and recovery support services, transportation to treatment and court-mandated programming, and up to six months of sober housing for 300 probationers over two years. The need for these services is consistently identified as a top priority at Community Justice Workshops, led by the Trial Court, together with community members and service providers across the state. Judges, probation officers, and clinical staff at specialty courts also underscore these service needs.

Data show that the Project NORTH communities are disproportionately impacted by substance use disorder, when compared with communities statewide. These 12 communities represent 26% of the state population but account for 38% of fatal overdoses, 50% of opioid-related EMS incidents, 46% of admissions for substance use disorder treatment, and 49% of treatment admissions among people who report opioids as their primary drug of choice.

Partners on this initiative include the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Health: Bureau of Substance Addiction Services, Department of Mental Health, and the Massachusetts Alliance for Sober Housing. Project NORTH will be co-directed by Marisa Hebble, Community Justice Project Manager in the Executive Office of the Trial Court, and Michael Coelho, Deputy Commissioner for Programs for the Massachusetts Probation Service.

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Massachusetts Court System (/orgs/massachusetts-court-system)

The Massachusetts court system consists of the Supreme Judicial Court, the Appeals Court, the Executive Office of the Trial Court, the 7 Trial Court departments, the Massachusetts Probation Service, and the Office of Jury Commissioner.

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Executive Office of the Trial Court (/orgs/executive-office-of-the-trial-court)

The Executive Office of the Trial Court facilitates communication and enables joint leadership of the Trial Court by the Chief Justice of the Trial Court and the Court Administrator.

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Massachusetts Probation Service (/orgs/massachusetts-probation-service)

MPS's main goal is to keep communities safe and to provide people on probation with the rehabilitative tools they need to live a productive and law-abiding life.

Effective Monday, July 20, 2020, the Office of the Commissioner of Probation will be open to the public by appointment only. If you wish to make an appointment or speak with someone regarding sealing or expunging a record or have questions for the Records Unit, please call (617) 557-0225.

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