



San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott

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The S.M.A.R.T. Program Celebrates One-Year Anniversary *Innovative Program Helps Substance Abusers Get Off the Street and onto a Path to Success*

S.M.A.R.T., the innovative program that gets substance abusers off the streets and onto a track for success, celebrates its first anniversary today.

The S.M.A.R.T. Program was launched by the San Diego City Attorney's Office on December 1, 2016, as a compassionate solution to the increase in drug and street crimes that followed passage of Proposition 47. That 2014 ballot measure reduced many drug and theft charges from felonies to misdemeanors, and transformed the criminal justice system into a revolving door for low-level offenders with addiction problems.

The S.M.A.R.T. (San Diego Misdemeanant At-Risk Track) Program provides participants with case managers, tailored drug treatment programs, counseling, bridge housing, and wrap-around services that allow them to succeed on their own once they leave the program. Participation is voluntary. The S.M.A.R.T. Program prioritizes chronic offenders with acute drug addictions and complex social service needs.

“Though just one year old, the S.M.A.R.T. Program has already filled a critical void in our region’s approach to addressing homelessness,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“Graduates say that the program turned their lives around by giving them the tools and confidence they need to rejoin society. If you truly care about our homeless citizens as human beings, it is impossible not to share in their excitement and hope that hundreds more can follow in their footsteps.”**

Here are some highlights from the S.M.A.R.T. Program’s first year of operation:

- Last December, the initial class of participants entered what was then a pilot program with a maximum occupancy of 10 individuals. (Approximately 90 referrals have been rejected due to limited capacity.) Five of the current participants have been in the program for more than 180 days. Current participants have a combined total of more than 1,500 days in treatment.
- In June, the S.M.A.R.T. Program received a \$3 million grant from the Board of State and Community Corrections, which allocates state funds for local drug-treatment programs. San Diego’s application for these “Prop. 47 funds” ranked first in California, ahead of 57 other proposals, primarily due to the program’s ability to divert people from the court system into a comprehensive treatment and housing program that addresses their underlying needs.
- In July, the City Attorney’s Office, with strong support from the Mayor and City Council, purchased a \$6.5 million, 84-bed motel that will expand the program to serve approximately 70 people under one roof, providing them with a one-stop shop for social services, case management, medical care, and housing navigation.

- The program's first graduation ceremony was held in October. Family and friends cheered the three individuals, each of whom had decades-long drug histories and years on the street, but who had completed an extensive treatment program and gotten their lives back on track. The graduates praised not only the program but also the San Diego Police Department officers who cited them and encouraged their participation.

This month, the City Council will vote on a Conditional Use Permit that would allow the S.M.A.R.T. Program to operate from the former motel. The new S.M.A.R.T. House will be renovated, gated, and have around-the-clock staffing and security. Information about that project is attached.

The S.M.A.R.T. Program is a collaboration between the San Diego City Attorney's Office, the San Diego Police Department, the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, the San Diego County Office of the Public Defender, the County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services Department, and Family Health Centers of San Diego, with support and assistance from Mayor Kevin Faulconer, and the American Civil Liberties Union. Chief Deputy City Attorney Lara Easton spearheads the effort. The San Diego County District Attorney's Office is now working on a similar program with regional impact.

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