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**DISTRICT ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES NEW MISDEMEANOR
DIVERSION PROGRAM FOR QUALIFYING FIRST TIME
OFFENDERS IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM;
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS APPROVES PROVIDER**

Approved By

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District Attorney Dan Dow is pleased to announce implementation of a new diversion program for first time offenders who are suspected of committing low level misdemeanor crimes.

Our county files an average of approximately 12,000 misdemeanor criminal cases each year with the Superior Court. Many of these cases are youthful offenders who have no prior criminal history. Many of the cases are driving without a license; driving on a suspended license; public intoxication; and low dollar value petty theft offenses. In an effort to increase efficiency, reduce recidivism, and to prioritize limited resources on the most serious cases, we have sought innovative methods to address increasing caseloads and to reduce the rate of repeat offenses. The concept of diverting criminal offenders from the criminal justice system into educational or treatment based has proven successful in many California counties.

“Providing first-time offenders an opportunity to protect their clean record by attending a class that is designed to change behavior will provide better outcomes and will make our community safer by reducing the number of repeat offenses among this population,” said District Attorney Dan Dow.

Misdemeanor diversion will allow certain first time criminal offenders to complete a tailored educational program designed to modify behavior instead of having criminal charges filed in court. If the eligible offender successfully completes the program, including payment of restitution and fee, the District Attorney agrees to never file the

charges in court. If an eligible offender declines the program or fails to complete it, the District Attorney will then file the criminal charges with the Superior Court and proceed with prosecution.

At its meeting yesterday, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve a contractual relationship with Pacific Education Services, Inc. (PES) to provide the educational component of the program. PES is a California entity with a proven record of success in 14 California counties that have implemented similar diversion programs including Santa Barbara, Fresno, Riverside, and Orange. The PES curriculum includes classes in Theft & Property Crimes; Driving Offenses; Life Skills; Anger Management; Victim Impact; Drugs and Alcohol; and Young Adult Offenses. Our County's successful "Youthful Offender Diversion" (YAD) diversion program, which for many years has provided a diversion program for alcohol & drug offenders age 18 to 21, will now be included as a component of our new misdemeanor diversion program through PES.

Diversion has been proven to reduce recidivism. The success of Orange County's misdemeanor diversion program was verified statistically when separate and independent studies by both PES and the Orange County District Attorney found that the rate at which first time offenders repeated their criminal behavior dropped from 22% before the PES diversion program, to 6% after implementation of the program. The diversion program will be operative on April 1st, 2015.

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