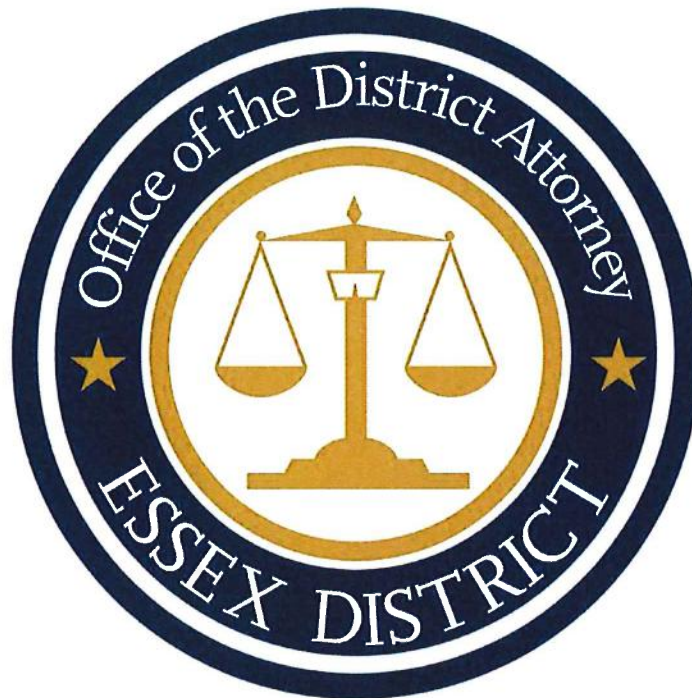


**DISTRICT ATTORNEY JONATHAN W. BLODGETT**

**JUVENILE JUSTICE UNIT**

**2022 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**



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# Juvenile Justice Unit

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The Community Collaborative Initiative meetings, as mandated by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 221 of the Acts of 2004, are regularly held in all school districts in Essex County. These meetings bring together schools, police, probation, and other state agencies to address youth violence and provide appropriate prevention and intervention resources.

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# The Juvenile Diversion Program



The District Attorney's Juvenile Diversion Program is a national model that works with certain first-time juvenile offenders age 12 to 17, and their families, by offering an alternative to the juvenile court system. Started in 1981, the program has effectively addressed juvenile delinquent behavior while allowing participants a second chance. The program provides first-time nonviolent offenders the opportunity to receive services in lieu of being prosecuted through the traditional court process.

A juvenile's participation in the Juvenile Diversion Program is voluntary. If the juvenile chooses not to participate in the program, the case will go forward through the court system.

Cases are referred to the Juvenile Diversion Program before the juvenile is arraigned in court. If a juvenile is appropriate for the program, the Juvenile Justice Coordinator will meet with the juvenile and his or her parents or guardian and execute a signed agreement for their participation in the program.

Once accepted into the program, the juvenile participates in appropriate counseling, education, and community service projects. If a case involves property damage, the juvenile may also be held responsible for restitution.

The juvenile's case is monitored by the District Attorney's Juvenile Justice Staff. The Juvenile Justice Coordinator is responsible for supervising the case and monitoring counseling, community service and restitution.

If the juvenile successfully completes the program, the District Attorney will dismiss the charges, and the juvenile will not have a delinquency record. If the juvenile does not successfully complete the program or voluntarily withdraws from the program, the case will go forward in court for prosecution.

## Major components of the Juvenile Diversion Program

### *Counseling*

The Juvenile Diversion Program is designed to identify and address high-risk behavior and to prevent further involvement of a juvenile in the juvenile justice system.

As part of his or her involvement in the Juvenile Diversion Program, a juvenile is required to participate in a counseling program. The Diversion Program requires a juvenile to receive a counseling evaluation from a licensed professional and attend recommended individual or group counseling. If, for any reason, counseling is not warranted, the juvenile would be required to participate in an education group, which may cover important topics including decision-making, high-risk behavior, and alcohol and substance abuse education. The number of sessions that are required will be determined by the counselor.

A list of counseling agencies that work with the program will be provided to families. However, families may choose an individual counselor by speaking to their primary care physician or health insurance provider.

Once a counselor has been chosen, the family must contact this office within one week with the counselor's name, address, and phone contact information and a referral will be sent to the appropriate agency. A Juvenile Justice Coordinator will also contact the counselor and provide them with information pertinent to the Diversion Program and the program's requirements. A Juvenile Justice Coordinator will maintain contact with the counselor until the juvenile has completed the program.

### ***Community Service***

As part of the Juvenile Diversion Program, juveniles are required to volunteer at a community agency or non-profit organization. Community service can provide juveniles with the opportunity to "give back" to the community.

Community Service has a value to the community and can also provide a juvenile with the understanding that it is important to be an active citizen.

During the intake, the Juvenile Justice Coordinator will discuss any potential volunteer experience and skills to help determine a potential community service site for the juvenile to perform their community service hours.

Juveniles are required to contact the Juvenile Justice Coordinator regarding their chosen community service site.

### ***Restitution***

The Juvenile Diversion Program follows the state guidelines and collects any out-of-pocket expenses and the replacement cost of damaged or stolen property. If this component is applicable, the Juvenile Justice Coordinator will inform the juvenile of how much money they will need to pay for restitution and where to send the bank check or money orders.

### ***Preparing for the future***

All cases entering Juvenile Diversion are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and sometimes require additional components. These additional components or conditions may include online educational programs, enrollment in GED, technical or college programs and access to job and career training.

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