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For Immediate Release: Dallas County DA John Cruzot Announces Opening of Dallas County Deflection Center

(Dallas, Texas) – Two years since its inception, the Dallas County District Attorney's Office, along with partner agencies Homeward Bound, the Dallas Police Department, Parkland Hospital, and the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority, are proud to announce the opening of the Dallas County Deflection Center.

"This is a huge step in criminal justice reform – reform the community asked for," said Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Cruzot. "This will change the dynamic between police and the homeless, the mentally ill, and those struggling with substance use disorders."

The Dallas County Deflection Center provides an alternative to arrest and incarceration for mentally ill individuals accused of certain non-violent, low-level misdemeanor offenses, such as criminal trespass. The Deflection Center, housed on the Homeward Bound campus, provides an evidence-based and trauma-informed case management plan connecting individuals to a wide range of community-based health and social services.

"This is a great moment in Homeward Bound's 42-year quest to bring healing and hope to people struggling with addiction and mental illness in our community," said Douglas W. Denton, executive director of Homeward Bound Inc., North Texas' largest comprehensive behavioral health treatment services agency.

Making a Real Impact

The Dallas County jail is the second-largest mental health treatment facility in Texas, but a jail stay does nothing to improve the mental health or emotional stability of a person with a mental health or substance use disorder. Even brief periods of incarceration can cause significant life challenges for people with mental illness, jeopardizing employment, housing, and benefits. Research also shows that a person with untreated mental illness is 16 times more likely to be killed during a police encounter than other civilians approached or stopped by law enforcement. Through evidence-based, health-oriented, harm reduction strategies, the Dallas County Deflection Center will work to provide meaningful help for those suffering from mental illness, while reducing the costs associated with repeated jailing of individuals suffering from mental illness.

“It is a privilege and honor to join with so many community partners to keep women and men from entering the criminal justice system, by instead, supporting them on their individual road to recovery and wellness,” said Carol Lucky, CEO of the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority.

The 16-Bed Dallas County Deflection Center will provide:

- 24-48 hour observation and short-term crisis respite beds
- Peer support upon arrival
- Integrated care and individual treatment plans to assist with stabilization
- A comprehensive discharge plan with case management
- A warm handoff to the appropriate level of care, i.e. detox, transitional housing, medical care, outpatient services.

A Coordinated Effort

The Dallas County Deflection Center is the latest visionary project spearheaded by the Dallas County District Attorney’s Office in its ongoing effort to better address people in need of mental health services.

“Just like DIVERT Court, which was groundbreaking at the time and continues to reap benefits for this state, such as closing 11 prisons and idling 4 others, we hope that this is a major step in this community which will provide alternatives to jail for a vulnerable population like the homeless and mentally ill,” said DA Creuzot. “If we can help any other Texas community develop this type of approach, we will be happy to do so.”

The Dallas County Deflection Center is located at 5300 University Hills Blvd., Dallas, Texas. 75241.

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