

ENDING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS: THE ROLE OF COURTS, LAWYERS AND ADVOCATES

AGENDA

- 7:30 – 8:30 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast**
- 8:30 – 8:45 a.m. Welcome, Introductions and Framing Questions**
- 8:45 – 9:45 a.m. It Takes a *BIG* Village: The Success behind the VA’s Homeless Veterans Outreach Initiative**

In 2009, President Barack Obama and VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki announced the goal of ending Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. Since 2009, the number of Veterans who are homeless has dropped by 17.2 percent. Together with partners and supporters nationwide, the VA Homeless Veterans Outreach Initiative has facilitated the establishment of a comprehensive, inter-disciplinary and highly effective network of programs addressing the myriad barriers to ending homelessness among veterans. The network includes outreach initiatives, housing, income supports, medical and mental healthcare, education, job training, reentry planning and other critically needed services. The network also includes the Veterans Justice Outreach Program which seeks to prevent the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among veterans. As a result of VA leadership, the legal community across the country has joined together to create not only Veterans Treatment Courts, but a variety of pro bono and specialty programs aimed at addressing the civil and criminal legal issues facing veterans. The panelists will discuss why this comprehensive network has succeeded in ending homelessness among significant numbers of veterans at a time when homelessness among individuals and families continues to increase.

Moderator:

Paul Freese, JD, Vice President, Public Counsel, Los Angeles, CA; Special Advisor on Homeless Veterans, ABA Commission on Homelessness & Poverty

Speakers:

Suzanne Will, JD, Regional Counsel, Department of Veterans Affairs, San Francisco, CA

Joel Rosenthal, MA, MD, PhD, National Training Director, Veterans Justice Programs, VA

9:45 – 10:45 a.m. The Complexity of Persistent Street Homelessness: A Discussion of Local Efforts

The traditional criminal court system is not designed or equipped to properly address persistent social issues like homelessness. Yet, communities frustrated with the issues associated with chronic street homelessness routinely call upon the police and the criminal justice system to intervene. This session will focus on model approaches to not merely addressing street homelessness, but ending it. Panelists will discuss why criminalization efforts aren't effective and how they create more barriers to ending homelessness. Panelists will also discuss the importance of outreach by social workers, special training for law enforcement who interact with homeless people suffering from mental illness and addiction, and model diversion programs. Lastly, panelists will explain why collaboration is a critical component to this structure, and how the courts and legal services can proactively reach out to community based service providers and government agencies to develop a more holistic approach to ending homelessness.

Moderator:

Paul Freese, JD, Vice President, Public Counsel, Los Angeles, CA; Special Advisor, ABA Commission on Homelessness & Poverty

Speakers:

Elaine deColigny, Executive Director, Everyone Home, Alameda County, CA (invited)

Bevan Dufty, Director, HOPE (Housing Opportunity, Partnerships and Engagement), Office of Mayor Edwin M. Lee, San Francisco, CA

Jennifer Friedenbach, Executive Director, Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco, CA

Jeremy Rosen, Policy Director, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, Washington, DC

10:45 – 11:00 a.m. Break

11:00– 12:00 p.m. Courts as a Tool for Engagement? Lessons Learned from Justice Centers, Community Courts and Specialty Dockets

What can (and should) community court programs and specialty dockets do to engage people experiencing homelessness? This session will feature representatives from two community court models – San Francisco's Community Justice Center (CJC) and New York's 20 year old Midtown Community Court. Both programs partner with city agencies and community groups to provide on-site services to address the primary issues affecting court participants—substance abuse, mental health issues and homelessness. The session will also feature a presentation on Ventura's Community Intervention Court:

a program aimed at providing an alternative to traditional court proceedings for defendants who are frequently arrested for offenses in public spaces related to vagrancy. Weekly proceedings strive to interrupt the cycle of chronic homelessness and vagrancy for the individual by connecting them with appropriate and available services.

Moderator:

Julius Lang, JD, Director, Training and Technical Assistance, Center for Court Innovation

Speakers:

Courtney Bryan, JD, Project Director, Midtown Community Court

Allyson West, Coordinator, Community Justice Center, San Francisco, CA

Hon. Colleen Toy White, Community Intervention Court, Ventura, CA

12:00 – 1:15 p.m.

Networking Lunch

Attendees will eat lunch in breakout rooms organized by practice area or subject matter. Teams of judges, lawyers and providers will engage attendees in an interactive dialogue and field questions.

- Alternatives to the Criminalization of Homelessness
- Homeless Veterans, Veterans Treatment Courts, and other Specialty Courts
- Homeless Families and Unaccompanied Youth

1:15– 2:15 p.m.

Deepening Court Involvement: How the Power of Homeless Courts and Treatment Courts Can Address the Root Causes of Homelessness among Individuals, Families and Youth

Homeless Courts and Treatment Courts (Drug, Mental Health and Veterans Treatment Courts) have proven track records when it comes to providing comprehensive and in-depth wrap around services designed to meet the needs of a particular segment of the homeless population—including homeless individuals, families and youth. Through partnerships with community based service providers and government agencies, these courts are able to connect participants with critical services in a cost-effective manner that results in greater stability and less recidivism on the part of the participant. Panelists will discuss the similarities and differences of the various court models, highlighting the effectiveness of collaboration and individualized approaches as well as the key resources needed to run a successful program. Panelists will highlight various models---from special dockets held in the courthouse to model stand-alone specialty courts---and discuss how communities across the country are tweaking the models to meet the needs and budget realities of their jurisdiction. Panelists will explain why homeless, drug, mental health and veterans treatment courts are wise investments, why they work, and what steps

participants can take to create similar programs in their communities to effectively serve homeless individuals, families and youth.

Moderator:

Hon. Gordon Baranco, Superior Court of Alameda County, CA

Speakers:

Kathie Barkow, Consultant, Homeless Caring Court, Alameda County, CA

Renato Izquieta, Supervising Attorney for Special Projects, Legal Aid Society of Orange County, CA

Hon. Wendy Lindley, Orange County Superior Court, CA (retired)

Hon. Stephen Manley, Santa Clara County Superior Court, CA

2:15– 3:15 p.m.

Preventing Homelessness: The Role of Parolee Engagement and Reentry Courts

In the best of times, parolees are challenged to find housing and employment and confront stigma and stereotyping. In an economic climate where cities, counties and state budgets are lean, locating housing and employment opportunities present even more difficult challenges for parolees and reentry populations. Panelists will discuss the VA's highly effective outreach efforts as well as model Reentry Court programs and provide participants with concrete guidance on what the legal community and service providers can do to prevent homelessness for this population that has significant barriers to housing and employment. Panelists will explain how these special Problem-Solving Courts seek to foster a seamless transition for high-risk offenders leaving our nation's jails and prisons and reentering the community by providing the necessary rehabilitation and treatment services, as well as the supervision and monitoring required for a successful transition.

Moderator/Speaker: Hon. Gordon Baranco, Superior Court of Alameda County, CA

Speakers:

Hon. Stephen Manley, Santa Clara County Superior Court, CA

Shirley Poe, Consultant, Alameda County Parolee Reentry Court

Chris Watler, Project Director, Harlem Parole Reentry Court, NY

Joel Rosenthal, MA, MD, PhD, Acting National Director for Veterans Justice Programs, VA

3:15 – 3:30 p.m. Break

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Case Studies and Discussion

A series of case studies will be used to engage the audience in a dialogue to better illustrate what was discussed throughout the day and how various service models can be implemented. This interactive discussion will allow participants to discuss how the case studies would play out in their community given their existing resources and allow panelists to provide tips on how to implement more effective approaches aimed at decriminalizing homelessness and connecting people with appropriate resources. The session will highlight the power of the courts and collaborative partners to better address the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

Moderator:

Paul Freese, JD, Vice President, Public Counsel, Los Angeles, CA; Special Advisor, ABA Commission on Homelessness & Poverty

*NOTE: Most of the speakers from the prior sessions will be on the dais to discuss the case studies and field questions.

4:30 p.m. Concluding Remarks