

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Community Court seeks input from Wilmington community
in online survey**

*The online Needs Assessment survey will help organizers better implement and tailor the
Community Court model for Wilmington*

Community Court organizers are asking the Wilmington community to assist them, as they prepare to launch a Wilmington Community Court, by completing a short online “Needs Assessment” survey. The assessment is a multiple-choice 15-question survey that can be accessed on the Community Court’s webpage here <https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/communitycourt.aspx>

The survey is open to not only residents of Wilmington but to all those who have contact with Wilmington, including people who work in the city, own a business in the city or whose children attend school or some other function in the city. Other communities will be surveyed later as the Community Court initiative expands and matures.

The Wilmington Community Court initiative is an innovative effort by the Delaware Judiciary to break the cycle of crime before it starts by focusing on treatment and solving problems while ensuring public safety. Defendants are held accountable for their actions, but rather than using only incarceration or fines, community court looks to address the underlying issues that drive low-level, non-violent criminal behavior like drug addiction, mental health issues or unemployment and connects defendants with needed services.

“The Needs Assessment is an important first step in understanding how the courts can better serve the community,” said Brenda Wise, Statewide Problem-Solving Court Coordinator. The survey questions seek to determine the community’s concerns and priorities in public safety issues, the relationship between the court system and the community, and what kinds of programs the community would like to see established at a community court center.

“We are hoping for an enthusiastic response from the people in Wilmington to this survey so that we can make this new court as strong and as responsive to the needs of the community as it can be right from the start,” said Court of Common Pleas Chief Judge Alex J. Smalls. “This court needs the input and the participation of the community to work and this is the first step on that path.”

“This survey is an opportunity for residents and others who live and work in the city to give their input as this new Community Court is being formed,” said Council President Hanifa Shabazz, who is working with Community Court organizers to get the Needs Assessment survey out to the community. “I think this innovative effort can bring real positive change to our neighborhoods and help people who are struggling get back on a better path. I hope members of our community embrace this change and participate in this survey which is a key part of the formation of this court,” she said.

Conducting a Needs Assessment is a best practice recommendation by the Center for Court Innovation (CCI), the leading organization in community court development nationwide. The Needs Assessment consists of the following 3 components: (1) Community Survey (online and in-person); (2) observation in the community and; (3) focus groups. The survey and other components are part of a 4-month process that will culminate in a final Needs Assessment Report being created and released in late May or early June 2019. Delaware State University was selected to conduct the needs assessment survey by the

Community Court Steering Committee, which includes the presiding judges and court administrators of the Superior Court, Court of Common Pleas, Family Court, and Justice of the Peace Court, as well as the Office of the Governor, Office of the Mayor and Wilmington City Council. The survey questions were developed by DSU and were based on research published by CCI.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:
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