

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 4, 2018**

**Delaware Community Court initiative awarded \$200,000 federal grant**

The Delaware State Courts were one of five applicants nationwide announced today by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, in partnership with the Center for Court Innovation, as a 2018 Community Court Grant Program winner.

"This is fantastic news," said Chief Justice Leo E. Strine, Jr. "We believe our Community Court initiative will make a real difference in people's lives, giving low-level offenders a second chance by connecting them with employment opportunities and other services they may need to become self-sufficient law-abiding citizens and we are pleased to see that the U.S. Department of Justice and the Center for Court Innovation are supporting us in this effort."

As a selected site, the Delaware Administrative Office of the Courts will receive \$200,000 and technical assistance from the Center for Court Innovation to develop and implement a Community Court that will serve residents in the City of Wilmington. The expectation is that once the program is established in Wilmington, it will expand to other parts of the state. Community Courts respond to lower-level crimes by ordering individuals to pay back the communities they have harmed through community service projects, while simultaneously addressing the underlying issues fueling criminal behavior through drug and alcohol treatment, mental health services, and job training. Nationally, research has shown that the community court model can reduce crime and substance use, increase services to victims, reduce unnecessary use of jail, save money, and improve public confidence in justice.

The Delaware Courts, the Delaware Attorney General's Office, the Delaware Office of Defense Services and a number of community groups are supporting the project. State Prosecutor Sean P. Lugg said, "The proposal provides a vehicle for the Delaware Department of Justice, the Office of Defense Services, the Wilmington Police Department, the Courts, and others to collaborate and provide critical services to those most in need." Brendan O'Neill, Chief Defender for the Office of Defense Services, also expressed enthusiasm about this innovative opportunity saying, "Community Court will be an important resource that will help our clients and their communities."

Wilmington City officials, who participated in an Aug. 24 Community Resource Center Fair at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center that served as a kick-off event for the Community Court effort, applauded today's announcement.

"This grant is wonderful news," said Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki, "as it will allow this innovative and potentially life-altering program to move even closer to reality. Citizens can become involved with the criminal justice system in a variety of ways, and outcomes can be just as varied. But, a Community Court offers the real possibility of finding appropriate alternatives to incarceration, which in the end benefits everyone."

“The news of the Department of Justice's investment further demonstrates the importance of taking a partnership approach to carving out another pathway for people who end up in front of a judge for minor infraction,” said Wilmington City Council President Hanifa Shabazz. “The City Council is proud to be part of this important initiative as it lines up perfectly with our strategic plan and provides our citizens with immediate access to the tools they can apply toward a second chance and redirecting their steps along the path to a better life.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:  
Statewide Problem-Solving Court Coordinator  
Brenda Wise at 302-255-2109 or [Brenda.Wise@state.de.us](mailto:Brenda.Wise@state.de.us)

For more information about the community court model, go to:  
[www.courtinnovation.org/topic/community-court](http://www.courtinnovation.org/topic/community-court) or email [info@courtinnovation.org](mailto:info@courtinnovation.org).