



PRESS RELEASE

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Macomb County Prosecutor uses high tech approach to reduce recidivism

Mount Clemens, MI - The Macomb County Prosecutor's Office reported to the Macomb County Board of Commissioners in July, an initiative in district courts aimed at reducing the number of repeat offenders. In an effort to address the root causes of criminal behavior and promote long-term rehabilitation, the office has implemented mandatory educational courses in certain misdemeanor cases as a requirement for plea deals.

Recognizing the crucial role education plays in breaking the cycle of crime, the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office offers a curriculum that addresses various aspects of personal growth for qualifying, low level crimes. These courses include Alcohol and Substance Abuse I & II, Victim Impact Panel, Impaired Driving I & II, Traffic Safety, Financial Crimes, Shoplifting, Theft and much more. The cost ranges from \$35-\$130, which the defendant pays. If the defendant is indigent and cannot pay, the required course is provided for free. The office will also accept any comparable online or in person alternative.

The Macomb County Prosecutor's Office began this program in 2022 with two entered participants and both completed their requirements. So far in 2023, there were 53 participants with 47 successful completions. None of the participants have re-offended, but it is too early to judge the success of the effort.

Other Michigan prosecutors using this approach include Eaton County, Alpena County, and Hillsdale County. The Macomb County Prosecutor's Office implemented it on the largest scale in Michigan. Prosecutors in other states have also implemented mandatory education courses.

Most Michigan Prosecutors do not yet require online education to be completed before a criminal charge is reduced. The Macomb County Prosecutor's Office aims to provide individuals with the necessary tools and knowledge to make positive life choices and contribute meaningfully to society. This innovative approach acknowledges that criminal behavior often stems from a lack of resources, opportunities, or essential skills. By addressing these underlying factors, the Prosecutor's Office hopes to make a lasting impact on reducing recidivism and fostering community safety.

According to a Kentucky study, the two-year recidivism rate after an online diversion program for misdemeanor offenders was only 25.7% and the three year recidivism rate was 31.6%, both are much lower than the reincarceration rates of offenders jailed in Kentucky.

"Our goal is not only to hold individuals accountable for their actions, but also to provide them with the opportunity to transform their lives. By making educational courses a requirement for eligible defendants, we offer individuals the chance to acquire valuable skills and knowledge to potentially make a lasting change. This approach benefits the individuals and contributes to the safety of our community as a whole," said Macomb County Prosecutor Peter J. Lucido.

The implementation of mandatory educational courses represents a step forward in the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office's commitment to promoting rehabilitation, reducing recidivism, and creating a safer community for all. By addressing the root causes of criminal behavior and equipping individuals with the tools for personal and professional growth, we believe we can make a lasting and positive impact on the lives of those involved in the justice system.

This is not the only improvement Prosecutor Lucido has made since January 2021. In 2023, the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office won seven Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties for enhancing services for Macomb County residents. In addition to successfully prosecuting crimes throughout the county, other progress includes:

- **Child support collections increased.** Prosecutor Lucido's office increased focus to collect child support from parents who owe \$5,000 or more. Thanks to support from the County Commission and County Executive, the office collected over \$100,000 so far this year for the direct benefit of Macomb County children.
- **Mental health assessments sought as a condition of bond in gun crime cases.** With this first-in-Michigan policy to seek mental health assessments as part of bond in *all* gun crime cases, Prosecutor Lucido recognizes that some defendants struggle with mental health issues, which might be addressed through early identification and provision of appropriate services before defendants get an opportunity to commit another crime with a gun.
- **School threats are taken seriously.** Prosecutor Lucido has authorized several school threat cases. "We promise to prosecute every one of these threats," said Lucido.
- **Conviction Integrity Unit exoneration.** This unit investigates claims of innocence to determine whether there is clear and convincing new evidence that the convicted defendant was not the person who committed the offense and to review claims of factual innocence based on new evidence. Thanks to support for this unit from the County Commission and County Executive, a person was exonerated this year.
- **Major Crimes Unit launched:** Prosecutor Lucido organized the top-ranked assistant prosecutors to focus on major crimes, and train more APAs to handle these types of cases.

- **Warrant Appeals Unit launched:** Victims and law enforcement officials are now given the right to have a second set of eyes to review cases where charges are denied, the first known unit of its kind in the state.
- **Digital Evidence Management platform implemented.** With more than 400,000 pieces of digital evidence in the system, the volume of digital evidence is higher than it's ever been, and keeps increasing. Police agencies now upload digital evidence, the Prosecutor's Office reviews it, and defense lawyers can directly download the evidence.
- **More interns equals more justice.** Prosecutor Lucido hosted over 200 law school and college interns, so far! Michigan Court Rules allow law students this exciting opportunity to handle court hearings under supervision, which helps the office move cases forward more quickly.
- **Paperless crime victim rights.** Prosecutor Lucido implemented the county's first paperless system for crime victims to request rights and notification. Crime victims may now request victim information via text message, or entirely online via the Prosecutor's Office Website.
- **Providing police training.** Prosecutor Lucido regularly sends assistant prosecutors to every police agency in Macomb County to provide training, including updates on recent court cases.

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