



## San Francisco District Attorney's Office

Kamala D. Harris, District Attorney

The District Attorney's Office is committed to improving the quality of life in San Francisco through restorative justice programs such as Community Court. Community Court was established as an active collaboration among City departments, neighborhood residents and merchant associations.

There are now 12 Community Courts. Since taking office in January 2004, DA Harris has opened three new Community Courts in the Sunset, North Beach and Richmond neighborhoods. Other neighborhoods that have Community Courts are:

- Bayview Hunters Point
- Oceanview-Merced-Ingleside (OMI)
- Lefty Gordon Western Addition
- Mission District
- Excelsior District/Ingleside
- South of Market
- Tenderloin
- Polk Street
- Chinatown

Community Courts handle adult offenders charged with misdemeanor crimes, including petty gambling, graffiti, loitering, shoplifting, assault/battery, alcohol beverage control violations, lesser drug violations and other miscellaneous quality of life crimes.

The Courts are organized and staffed by the District Attorney's Office and California Community Dispute Services, in collaboration with the Mayor's Office, the Board of Supervisors, San Francisco Police Department, Sheriff's Department, Pretrial Diversion Program and community-based organizations.

The purpose of Community Courts is to discourage criminal violations that impact our City's neighborhoods. Through the program, a panel of local residents hears each case, makes clear to the offender the neighborhood impact of the crime, and determines a mix of community service, direct restitution and/or fines. In this way, trained neighborhood stakeholders exercise community-based solutions that allow the victim, the offender and representatives of the community to address the harm caused by quality of life offenses.

Community Courts order offenders to pay restitution to victims who have suffered monetary losses or property damage. Offenders are also sanctioned with fines and/or community service that go directly to improving conditions in the impacted neighborhoods. The courts also create an atmosphere of inclusion and responsibility, building community and providing a direct role for residents to oversee the resolution of offenses in their neighborhoods. Offenders are also restored by being made to understand the consequences of their actions and having the opportunity to pay back the community they harmed. Some offenders are also ordered to receive addiction treatment, anger management counseling and other support services to change their behavior.

Each community court establishes a fund of its own through fines from various misdemeanor offenses. Once the fines accumulate in each separate account, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice issues an RFP Request, usually three times a year. Any non-profit organization in any of the communities, can apply to do neighborhood improvements and other activities that fit the criteria of the RFP.

Currently, more than 100 volunteers citywide participate in Community Court panels. From March to August 2005, a total of 1,266 cases were referred to community courts, saving the criminal justice system and the City approximately \$1,200 per case, a total of \$1.5 million for the six-month period.