



**Chief Judge-Orleans Parish
Juvenile Court
Ranord J. Darensburg**



**U. S. Representative
LA-2nd District
Troy A. Carter**

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**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CHOOSES NEW ORLEANS
TO ROLL OUT NEW PROGRAM TO LOWER VIOLENT CRIME
AS POSSIBLE CATALYST TO USE ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

New Orleans—The U.S. Department of Justice awarded \$750,000 to the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court under The Second Chance Act Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Program (CSCR).

The Second Chance Act (SCA) authorizes federal grants for vital programs and systems reform aimed at improving the reentry process. First signed into law in 2008, in 2018 the Second Chance Reauthorization Act built on and strengthened the landmark legislation providing funding to state, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for youth and adults leaving detention or incarceration. The U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs (OJP) funds and administers SCA grants. Within OJP, the Bureau of Justice Assistance awards SCA grants serving adults.

Initiated by the Orleans Parish Healing-Centered Cultural Continuum, the Orleans Parish Juvenile Mental Health Court is supported by BJA CSCR grant funding and technical assistance provided by The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center.

A first for Louisiana, the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court was selected as one of eleven grantees in the United States to participate in the first Cohort of the BJA CSCR program out of more than 200 applicants. CSCR provides clinical and recovery support services that establish treatment, suicide prevention, and continuity of recovery in the community for people with mental illnesses, substance use disorders, or co-occurring disorders upon their release from a correctional facility (e.g., jail, prison, juvenile detention). CSCR is an opportunity for the court to try new and innovative approaches and enhance cross-system coordination.

Data from a 2019 study from the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies (IWES), a national nonprofit health organization based in New Orleans, measured the exposure to violence of roughly 1,500 participants aged 11 to 19. IWES found that one in five children witnessed a murder, more than half had someone close to them murdered, one in three were witnesses to domestic violence and four in ten had seen someone shot, stabbed or beaten. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 2015 Behavioral Health Barometer plan, 37,000 youth in Louisiana between the ages of 12-17 (approximately 10% of all youth in this range) experienced at least one major depressive episode in 2014, and 61.7% of these youth, or 22,829 individuals, received no treatment.

Given this access to and provision of care reality, the court will provide need-based and strength-based Bio-Psycho-Social-Cultural assessments informed by the socioecological and sociocultural context, mental health illness diagnoses, greater access to appropriate mental health treatment, culturally-informed cognitive behavioral therapy, individualized life path planning, and credible messenger transformative mentoring. The sum of these resources will promote intergenerational healing, collective efficacy, positive coping mechanisms, substantive referrals and follow-ups for youth in Orleans Parish and reduce recidivism. Chief Judge Ranord J. Darensburg of Orleans Parish Juvenile Court says, “The Orleans Parish Juvenile Mental Health Court will provide improved services to youth offenders who have serious and persistent mental illnesses, including those offenders with co-occurring substance abuse disorders.”

Judge Darensburg went on to say, “Each case in juvenile court must be addressed on multiple fronts: Accountability, Resources, and Supervision. In New Orleans, mental health issues and resources are not currently addressed at the earliest opportunity. Most standardized screen instruments that diagnose behavioral and mental health disorders are not administered until youth are placed in a program, adjudicated and moved into out-of-home living quarters.”

U.S. Congressman Troy Carter supports the new approach to lowering crime. "It's alarming the number of crimes committed in our great city. I'm convinced the strategic plan developed by the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, using the \$750,000 federal grant, will identify and treat mental disorders that often lead to violence. It is only when we get to the root of this problem will our neighbors feel safe in their homes again and to go about their daily lives."

BJA will provide technical assistance and assess the program's progress through 2025. Judge Darenburg will provide progress reports as the program unfolds.

The judge is soliciting professionals certified to work with mental illnesses as well as residents involved in community active programs who are already dealing with emotional wellness to join the Mental Health Team. He says, the "One Village" approach includes defense counselors; court administrators; pretrial service staff; corrections officials; mental health and substance abuse professionals; housing coordinators, crime victims; consumers; families; community crimefighter organizations and law enforcement.

The news conference will be held October 6, 2023, at 11 a.m. at the Orleans Parish Juvenile Justice Center (1100 Milton Street New Orleans) in the lobby outside Juvenile Justices' Courtrooms.

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