

Community Service

The Orange County Community Court uses community service as a way for participants to remain productive while seeking employment or pursuing educational goals.

The court also uses community service as sanction when a participant is non-compliant with program requirements.

Participants in the homeless outreach court perform community service as part of the program; these placements may lead to jobs and other opportunities.

Examples of community service sites include the Salvation Army, the Orange County Food Bank, the Second Harvest Food Bank, and supporting highway beautification for the California Department of Transportation.



The courtroom at the Orange County Community Court.

Community Engagement

The community court engages with stakeholders to identify, prioritize, and solve local problems. The Superior Court's Leadership Academy – which includes representatives from local non-profit, civic and governmental agencies – provides a unique bridge for mutual education, feedback, and engagement with the community. The court also works with the bar and grand jurors associations.

Outcomes*

- Number of social service referrals annually: Over 7,150
- Number of cases successfully completed annually: More than 3,100
- Hours of community service performed annually: Over 16,350 hours
- The Orange County Community Court has an average of 2,850 cases open at any one time

*2015 data

About Mentor Courts

In 2014, the Orange County Community Court was selected by the Center for Court Innovation, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, to serve as one of four exemplary mentors to courts around the nation.

The mentor court initiative promotes the implementation and enhancement of the community court model and the wider application of its core principles in general court calendars. The mentor courts—which were chosen in a peer-reviewed competitive process—host site visits, answer questions over the phone or Internet from practitioners, and participate in conferences and workshops.

For more information about the Orange County Community Court, please contact Paul W. Shapiro, Collaborative Courts Officer, at (657) 622-5820 or pshapiro@occourts.org.

For more information about community courts, please visit www.courtinnovation.org or contact the Center for Court Innovation at info@courtinnovation.org.

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Orange County Community Court



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Community Courts

Community courts are collaborative (or “problem-solving”) courts that attempt to address the underlying issues that lead to criminal behavior and give justice system officials more meaningful options when handling lower-level offenses. They seek to implement new, creative approaches to community engagement; they spread evidence-based practices to link offenders to appropriate interventions; and they encourage the use of judicial monitoring to promote accountability and offer meaningful alternatives to incarceration.

Overview of the Court

Opened in 2008, the Orange County Community Court houses eight problem-solving courts in one location while offering participants and walk-in clients onsite access to a variety of services. Members of the community court team assess offenders and refer them to appropriate court programs and supportive services, including mental health and substance use treatment, transitional housing services, vocational training, and government benefits assistance.

Eligible Offenses

The Community Court hears an array of offenses including both misdemeanors and felonies. Eligible cases typically originate as a referral at arraignment and can come from any courthouse in the county. Eligible offenders may be given the option to have their case heard in the following calendars at community court:

Drug Court serves drug offenders as well as those whose charges arise from problematic substance use. The program includes supervision by probation, individual and group counseling through the Orange County Health Care Agency, and regular court appearances over a period of at least 18 months.

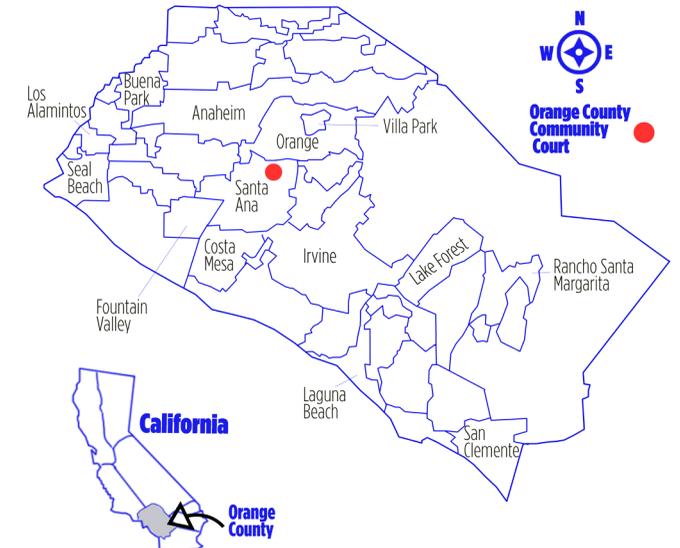
Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Court serves repeat-offense drunk or drugged drivers. The program includes supervision by probation, individual and group counseling through the Orange County Health Care Agency, and regular court appearances over a period of at least 12 months.

Mental Health Courts serve participants who have an eligible mental health diagnosis. Programs include psychiatric services and counseling, substance use treatment, assistance with housing, and other supportive services over a period of at least 18 months. There are four separate mental health calendars at the community court. Risk/need levels and housing status are used to determine appropriate placement in one of the mental health courts.

Veterans Treatment Court serves military veterans involved in the criminal justice system. The court offers treatment for post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, substance use disorder, and suicide prevention.

Homeless Outreach Court serves homeless people who are charged with quality of life infractions such as illegal camping, open container violations, sleeping in a vehicle, drinking in a public place, panhandling, soliciting, trespassing, and other low-level misdemeanors. The program links participants to resources that can help them address issues of mental health, substance use, or other problems that impair their ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

Orange County Community Court Catchment Area



Social Services

The Orange County Community Court links participants to individually tailored community-based services. Participants are screened upon entry into the court to determine their needs.

Through a collaboration among the judge, the offices of the public defender and the district attorney, the probation department, and the Orange County Health Care Agency, a treatment plan is created for each participant.

In most cases, if participants comply with the program requirements, their charges will be dismissed.