



**CLARK COUNTY COURTS  
EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT  
LAS VEGAS TOWNSHIP JUSTICE COURT**



REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER  
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COURT INFORMATION

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**JUSTICE COURT DOUBLES EFFORTS TO SIDELINE DUI OFFENDERS  
SECOND DUI COURT SEEKS TO INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY BY BREAKING CYCLE OF ADDICTION**

**AT A GLANCE**

- Second DUI Court aims to expand court-supervised treatment.
- Grant funding provided by the State of Nevada Office of Traffic Safety.
- Court expects to expand program to assist approximately 300 individuals.

LAS VEGAS – A second DUI Court has been added in the Las Vegas Justice Court Township with funding from a grant provided by the State of Nevada’s Office of Traffic Safety. The court, presided over by Judge Nancy Oesterle, joins the other specialty court started in 2003 by Judge Tony Abbatangelo.

The second court was necessary as more offenders have entered the program. There are currently 180 individuals participating in both DUI Courts. Designed as a court-supervised, comprehensive treatment program, the DUI Specialty Court is designed to help first and second DUI offenders obtain treatment for misdemeanor DUI offenses.

Across the state, driving impaired arrests have increased to 18,235, or one arrest for every 94 drivers, according to Chuck Abbott, Director of Nevada’s Office of Traffic Safety. “For some time, we have recognized that improving law enforcement is only the first step in reducing/eliminating the problem of impaired drivers on Nevada’s roadways,” said Abbott. “The fact is DUI courts have proven to be an extremely effective way of solving the cause of the problem.”

The Las Vegas Township Justice Court plans to expand the DUI Courts to approximately 300 participants with the addition of the second court.

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“The Justice Court DUI program provides intensive substance abuse treatment,” said Program Coordinator, Ray Figueroa. “We use a therapeutic court model, which means we monitor participants through House Arrest, breath testing, drug testing, Breath Ignition Interlock Device, and compliance rewards for meeting treatment goals in a timely fashion.”

Judge Oesterle volunteered to preside over the DUI Specialty Court because the program has proven to be effective. “The Court serves an important purpose instead of merely warehousing the “hard-core” alcoholics in jail and then releasing them from custody to re-offend again, we are offering them the hope of a clean and sober lifestyle. The recidivism rate is very low,” stated Oesterle.

The participants are required to pay for the expense of their own treatment plan, which is approximately \$4,500. The program is cost effective for the taxpayers who would otherwise be paying for the incarceration bill.

“I believe it is a win/win situation. The program represents a substantial commitment on behalf of everyone involved, including the Judge. However, we do it because we are committed to saving lives; those of the participants and innocent members of our community,” said Oesterle.

Not everyone qualifies for the Court. A team of individuals screen offenders to determine if they meet the criteria to qualify for the program. The DUI Court Judge, attorneys, treatment providers, representatives from Clark County’s House Arrest unit, and representatives from Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor (SCRAM), along with the program coordinator, Ray Figueroa, meet prior to court to review each participant’s progress before the court appearance.

“Normally, when a defendant is sentenced by a Judge to the DUI Court, there is a six-month suspended jail sentence imposed to ensure compliance within the program,” said Figueroa. This underlying jail sentence provides an incentive to finish the program and to obtain the necessary treatment to avoid further problems with drinking and driving.

As long as the individual remains compliant with all of the Court’s orders, they will not be required to serve any portion of their suspended sentence. All DUI offenders in the program

are placed on House Arrest for the first 90 days of their involvement to assist in their transition into the therapeutic process. The House Arrest ankle bracelets have Global Positioning System (GPS) monitoring and a House Arrest Officer is assigned to supervise the individual during that time frame. Random drug testing and in-home breath testing units monitor individual abstinence from alcohol and give participants an opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to comply with the Judge's orders.

Judge Oesterle begins each DUI Specialty Court hearing with "A thought of the day" which is provided in open court, before all of the participants, by one of the members in the DUI Court program. "It's always from the heart as each person describes how the treatment program has helped them live a clean and sober life," said Judge Oesterle. "Many times, the participants are very emotional and thankful for being allowed into a program that really improves their lives. It motivates the audience to continue with their own treatment program for the opportunity to address their own chronic alcohol problem," said Oesterle.

DUI Court Judges utilize token compliance gifts to reward and motivate participants to complete the program, which usually takes a year to complete. Additionally, participants doing well in treatment require less court appearances as they complete each phase of treatment. However, if a participant refuses to comply or has a relapse, the Judge can impose sanctions such as ordering the offender to return to House Arrest, writing an essay, community service, or requiring additional daily AA meetings. In a small number of cases, the Judge will terminate the individual from the program and impose the suspended jail sentence. Terminations account for roughly 20 percent of the individuals accepted into the program since it started five years ago.

The program's length is determined by the progress made by the individual participants. Once the requirements are met, individuals meet with the presiding Judge and their treatment team to review their progress and schedule a graduation date. A formal graduation ceremony is held during open court to demonstrate to other participants that the program can result in success and it also rewards the individual for successfully completing the program.

"Graduation day is an inspiring day for the individual and to those around them that have worked just as hard to help them finish the program," said Figueroa.