



**C.A.R.E.**

*Creating Avenues for  
Restoration & Empowerment*

**Diversions Program  
for Ages 18-26**

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Funding Awarded from U.S. Department of Justice to Implement a Community Court diversionary program called **C.A.R.E. (Creating Avenues for Restoration & Empowerment)** to serve offenders aged 18-26**

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**Nashville, TN, October 4, 2018 — The Tennessee Supreme Court Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) on behalf of the General Sessions Music City Community Court** was one of five applicants nationwide selected by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, in partnership with the Center for Court Innovation, as a 2018 Community Court Grant Program winner.

As a selected site, the **AOC in partnership with the General Sessions Music City Community Court** will receive \$ 200,000.00 and technical assistance from the Center for Court Innovation to implement a community court that will serve offenders aged 18-26, named **C.A.R.E. (Creating Avenues for Restoration & Empowerment)**. Community courts respond to lower level crimes by ordering individuals to pay back the communities they've harmed through visible community service projects, while simultaneously addressing the underlying issues fueling criminal behavior, such as drug and alcohol treatment, mental health services, and job training. Nationally, research has shown that the community court model can reduce crime and substance use, increase services to victims, reduce unnecessary use of jail, save money, and improve public confidence in justice.

The AOC, together with the Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission and the Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance, have been developing and promoting expungement legal clinics over the past three years, using the model developed by Judge Rachel L. Bell and her team. "While the Access to Justice Initiative generally focuses on civil legal issues, we recognize that many times those issues may be related to a criminal matter," said **Gail Ashworth, Chairperson of the ATJ Commission**. "We are excited about working with the **General Sessions Music City Community Court** to launch the **C.A.R.E.** diversionary program, and the opportunity to expand our support of access to the judicial system for all Tennesseans."

**C.A.R.E.** will be the first of its kind in Nashville, TN and will help provide those aged 18-26 with individualized justice, case management, restoration / rehabilitation

along with community healing and restitution. **General Sessions Music City Community Court, Presiding Judge Rachel L. Bell** shared, “The Restorative Justice concept that we would like to focus on will emphasize the ways that crime harms relationships in the community and brings together the people most impacted by the crime to resolve it. It will be based on a model similar to Cook County’s new Restorative Justice Community Court in Illinois. The **C.A.R.E.** model will ensure that offenders take accountability for their actions and then work to repair the harm through restitution when needed, community service, letters of apology, and peace circles. It is exciting to have the full support of the Nashville Public Defender and District Attorney General. I am very certain with the **C.A.R.E.** diversionary program in place this will lead to a healthier community, a brighter future for young offenders and lesser crime here in Davidson County, Nashville, TN.”

“One of the core values of the Nashville Defender’s Office is to support restorative justice efforts in the Davidson County Community. It is time that we create innovative options that provide opportunities to end the cycle of incarceration and increase avenues for restoration and rehabilitation. We support the mission of the **C.A.R.E.** court mission to divert young adults from the jail population and give them the tools to succeed in the community”, said **Martasha L. Johnson, Nashville Public Defender.**

“Our goal here is to make sure these individuals truly understand the impact their crimes have had on victims and the community as a whole. This program offers alternatives to individuals who are truly remorseful and desire a second chance to serve the community in a positive manner”, said **Glenn Funk, Nashville District Attorney General.**

The Tennessee Supreme Court declared access to justice its number one strategic priority in 2008 and created the Access to Justice Commission in 2009. The Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission provides collaborative leadership to create solutions and resources that address and eliminate barriers to justice for all. For more information, go to <http://www.tncourts.gov/programs/access-justice>.

***The General Sessions Music City Community Court was started in 2012 and since its inception, the court has piloted several community initiatives focused on preventative and diversionary justice focused on the concept, that “Justice does not stop at the courthouse steps” and charged to do all it can to help break the playground (school) to prison pipeline and restore/rehabilitate lives.***

For more information about the General Sessions Music City Community Court go to Judge <https://gscourt.nashville.gov/about-us/judges/division-viii-judge-rachel-l-bell/>.

For more information about the community court model, go to: [www.courtinnovation.org/topic/community-court](http://www.courtinnovation.org/topic/community-court).

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