

FAMILY DEPENDENCY DRUG COURT

A MENDOCINO COUNTY PARTNERSHIP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 23, 2011

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Win-Win Program at Risk

Funding Ends Soon for Program that Helps Families & Saves Taxpayers

(Ukiah, CA) – Since 2007, Mendocino County has helped dozens of parents kick the substance abuse habit and reunite with their children. That’s reason enough to cheer. Now, a new study says that the program actually saves taxpayers over \$1 million per year, just in out of home care costs.

“It’s the ultimate win-win,” says Anne Molgaard, Executive Director of FIRST 5 Mendocino.

“Foster care is expensive. Each time a child returns home to stable, loving parents, the taxpayer benefits too.”

Unfortunately, this highly cost-effective program, called Family Dependency Drug Court (FDCC), is scheduled to end in 2012, when a federal grant runs out.

The Board of Supervisors will have a chance to consider new sources of funding on Tuesday, September 27 at its regular 10 AM meeting at 501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah. At this meeting, board members will discuss the program’s cost-effectiveness with the study’s author, Sid Gardner of Children and Family Futures, Inc.

Mr. Gardner’s research shows that in the last three-plus years, the program has helped more than 60 parents recover from drug or alcohol dependency and reunite with their children.

The roughly 100 children involved spent just 310 days on average in foster care, compared to 685 days on average for other foster children. Early departure from foster care has saved taxpayers nearly \$40,000 for each child in the program.

(more)

The partnership is urging the county to secure stable funding for FDDC. “It’s simple math,” says Molgaard. “We’re asking the county to invest smartly now in order to save in the long run, and also continue helping some of the county’s most vulnerable children.”

FDDC is a partnership between county Superior Court and two departments of the county’s Health and Human Services Agency (HHS): the Division of Family and Children’s Services (DFCS) and Alcohol and Other Drug Programs (AODP).

The program was created to insure that as many Mendocino County children as possible grow up in safe, stable homes with their own parents. According to Mendocino Juvenile Court Judge David Nelson, “There are so many positive outcomes that happen when parents get the treatment they need. They themselves get better; families get to be together; and kids get out and stay out of foster care.”

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