

SMART pilot program Q & A

Q. Why did the City Attorney's Office create the SMART pilot program?

A. The SMART pilot program was created to meet the needs of San Diego's growing number of chronic low-level misdemeanor offenders with multiple drug and quality-of-life offenses.

Drug offenses mainly include use and possession of illegal controlled substances. Quality-of-life offenses can include trespass, misappropriation of lost property, illegal lodging, urinating/defecating in public, and encroachment.

The criminal justice system has become a revolving door for too many such individuals. They are cycled through arrest, incarceration and release – often several times a year – with no opportunity to access the social services and individualized coordinated care that could allow them to get their lives on track.

One of the SMART program's objectives is to reduce recidivism through changes in individual behavior.

Q. Who is involved in the SMART program?

A. SMART is a collaborative effort between the San Diego City Attorney's Office, the San Diego Police Department (SDPD), the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, the San Diego County Office of the Public Defender, the County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services Department, Family Health Centers of San Diego (FHCS), and the San Diego Second Chance Program (Second Chance). In addition, the Office of Mayor Kevin Faulconer, the San Diego Housing Commission, and the American Civil Liberties Union have provided support and assistance.

Q. Is SMART a program to combat homelessness?

A. SMART is not a solution to homelessness; many homeless people would not be eligible because they are not criminals and do not have problems with drug use. However, we do anticipate that many SMART participants may have been formerly homeless.

Q. How does SMART work?

A. SMART offers will be made at various times in the criminal justice continuum. If an offer is accepted, that individual will be diverted from jail and prosecution. An enrolled SMART participant will be provided:

- Secure, community-based supportive housing for up to two years or until an individual transitions to their own permanent housing;
- Enrollment in tailored drug treatment programs through FHCS; and
- A case manager to help arrange wrap-around services and other assistance.

Q. Who would be eligible?

A. Eligible offenders are those who are currently facing a drug or quality-of-life offense in addition to having at least two arrests for quality-of-life offenses in the previous six months and at least one drug offense since November 2014.

November 2014 is the date that Proposition 47, which reduced several theft and drug-related offenses from felonies to misdemeanors, took effect.

Q. When can a SMART offer be made?

A. SMART offers can be made:

- During social contact in a non-enforcement capacity, such as by one of FHCS D's outreach workers or by the SDPD's Quality of Life Team or Homeless Outreach Team
- At the point a citation is being given by SDPD
- At the point of arrest by SDPD
- During arraignment by the City Attorney's Office
- At sentencing as an alternative to incarceration
- While a person is serving a custodial sentence

Q. What housing services will be provided by SMART?

A. In addition to a bed, SMART will provide participants with basic needs (including but not limited to furnishings, showers, and laundry facilities), blankets and linens, emergency food, bus passes, and a Housing Navigator to assist in locating appropriate and affordable permanent housing placement. Housing services for SMART will be provided by Second Chance.

Q. Who will provide case management and treatment?

A. All SMART participants will receive case management and treatment provided by FHCS D in accordance with their contract with the County of San Diego's Behavioral Health Services. The program will utilize a harm reduction model that does not require immediate sobriety, but instead employs a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use.

Q. What services are available once the participants are stable?

A. The Housing Navigator will continue to assist all participants in locating appropriate and affordable permanent housing placements. Additionally, participants will have access to the programs at Second Chance, including GED programs, job readiness training, and Dress for Success.

Q. What constitutes successful completion of the SMART program?

A. To successfully complete the SMART program, a participant will have completed the individualized treatment program designed by FHCS D and have exited to permanent housing.