



COUNTY OF FAIRFAX

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**FAIRFAX COUNTY COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY STEVE DESCANO
ANNOUNCES NEW DIVERSION PROGRAM**

The deferred disposition program, Taking Root, is a collaboration between the Commonwealth's Attorney Office and OAR.

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA – Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano announced Wednesday an innovative deferred disposition program designed to provide restorative avenues for individuals, reduce crime and recidivism.

The Deferral and Dismissal Pilot Program, called Taking Root, is a robust plan through Opportunities Alternatives Resolutions (OAR) that was made available through a grant from the Vera Institute of Justice. The grant added staff to the OAR team to focus on cases where a defendant has support and rehabilitation needs and are a good fit for the services offered.

"The focus of Taking Root will be to address a subset of cases where the individual has underlying issues that are the root cause of the behavior that led to criminal involvement," Descano said.

Some of the support services include case management, mental health assessments referrals and compliance monitoring, substance abuse assessment referral and compliance monitoring, vocation and educational referrals, job skills training referrals, affordable housing, literacy program referrals, theft intervention education and cognitive behavioral therapy to address decision-making skills.

The Commonwealth's Attorney Office will work with OAR to recommend individuals for the program prior to their first court date through consultation with defense counsel, law enforcement and a review of any prior criminal charges the individual may have had.

If after an initial assessment the individual agrees to the plan, it will be presented to the court for consideration on the next scheduled hearing date. If the court accepts the plan and orders a deferred disposition, OAR will implement the plan and monitor the individual for compliance during a pre-determined amount of time. Once the individual has completed the plan successfully, the CWAO will provide documentation for the next hearing date.

"Through this program, our hope is that we can bring closer the day when the color of skin, a person's zip code and the amount of money in their bank account does not dictate their involvement in the legal system," Descano said.

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