

Eighth District Awarded Drug Court Grant

Gov. Chet Culver announced today that Iowa has received a two-year U.S. Department of Justice grant for \$475,054 to create a regional adult court in southeast Iowa. The Eighth Judicial District Department of Correctional Services will implement the program.

Based in Fort Madison, the drug court will serve offenders in Lee, Des Moines, and Henry Counties, and, possibly, Van Buren and Washington Counties. The goal is to have the program operating in approximately four months, making it the tenth program in the state but the first to serve southeast Iowa. An adult drug court has existed in Ottumwa since 2006.

Established in the late 1980s, drug courts are strict, judicially monitored substance abuse treatment programs for chemically dependent offenders offered as a diversion from incarceration. They combine intensive correctional supervision, drug treatment and frequent appearances before a judge.

The new drug court team will represent a number of local government offices and agencies. Eighth Judicial District Chief Judge James Q. Blomgren will assign a judge and Lee County Attorney Michael P. Short will appoint a prosecuting attorney to the team. Other members include private substance abuse treatment providers, a defense attorney and a newly funded probation/parole officer position.

“It is essential that we get the right personnel involved in this non-adversarial process. You have to have a different mindset when working as team to help offenders while at the same time holding them accountable, and protecting their rights,” Eighth Judicial District Director Daniel T. Fell said.

In a 2005 report to Congress, drug courts were found to reduce recidivism up to 30 percent. In addition to eliminating future victims of drug-related crimes, drug courts were shown to be cost effective.

“The Eighth District is excited about the opportunity to provide this needed service. I would like to thank Governor Culver and Iowa Senators Tom Harkin and Chuck Grassley for their efforts in securing such important funding for the citizens of southeast Iowa,” Fell said.