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El Paso DWI Drug Court Intervention and Treatment Program

Judge Robert Anchondo started Texas' first DWI Drug Court in 2004. Since that time, Judge Anchondo and his team have never been complacent. They are always asking, "Is there a better way to do this?" The team immediately sought the assistance of the Sheriff's Office and Police Department for surveillance. They also quickly recognized that the region's diverse Hispanic population required a slightly different approach. These are just a few of the examples that demonstrate that Judge Anchondo and his team have not only adhered to recognized drug court principles, they have not shied away from creating new ones.

The team has embraced partnering with local groups in the community. These groups have provided invaluable and unique perspectives. Judge Anchondo has reached out to and received assistance from the University of Texas at El Paso, Texas Tech, and local hospitals. Medical professionals routinely address the participants and provide assistance to team members. Such partnerships have been instrumental in the program's success.

Judge Anchondo frequently gives presentations about drug courts both nationally and internationally. In addition, the team members often give presentations to area high schools and civic organizations. This court sought recognition, for the second time, as an Academy Court. This was done not to tout our good work but to continue our practice of sharing our knowledge with others. By observing what we have done and emulating our methods (and leaving half-measures behind), teams throughout the entire country can seek to emulate the results that this program has been able to achieve.

Just as a person cannot beat alcohol by choosing to only drink on holidays or a drug addict that chooses to only snort cocaine on the weekends, half-measures have consistently been shown to be ineffective. The stakes are too high and, when it comes to sobriety and public safety, there is no ribbon for participation. Addiction is a ruthless foe that must be fought with very specific weapons that must be deployed in a very precise scientifically-determined manner.

Since 1997, drug courts have slowly shifted the public's attitude. They are no longer a new-age soft-on-crime experiment. They are battle-tested and scientifically proven. Time and time again, they have not just proven more effective than jail or regular probation; they have proven *much* more effective. The reason is simple. Drug courts utilize proven methods to achieve their excellent results. Excellent drug courts seek to constantly refine these methods to achieve even better results. With this award, we will better be able to help drug courts become excellent drug courts. Participants deserve nothing less.