

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Montgomery County Public Defender, District Attorney and Community Leaders Collaborate to Provide Youth/Law Enforcement Forums

Montgomery County Joins a Growing Movement to Implement Forums Designed to Improve Youth and Police Officer Interactions and Reduce Juvenile Arrests

Norristown, PA, Feb. 24 – On March 16, 2016, the Montgomery County Public Defender and District Attorney will host a Youth/Law Enforcement Forum at the Montgomery County Community College, Pottstown Campus. The Public Defender and District Attorney launched this initiative in 2015, to convene a county-wide disproportionate minority contact (DMC) working group to facilitate forums and hold regular meetings to discuss youth and law enforcement concerns in jurisdictions around the county. The Montgomery County DMC Working Group includes 35 community leaders, police officers, educators and justice stakeholders who have been specially trained to deliver a Youth/Law Enforcement curriculum aimed at breaking down stereotypes, building better relationships and reducing the number of street encounters that result in altercations and juvenile arrests.

According to the Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Report for Montgomery County, 2,985 juvenile arrests were made in 2014, and 2,714 juvenile arrests in 2015. Many arrests involved charges stemming from clashes due to poor communication and distrust between officers and young people. Youth/Law Enforcement Forums are designed to reduce the risk of injuries to youth and officers and decrease the number of juvenile arrests resulting from street encounters that escalate into verbal or physical altercations. The forums bring youth and law enforcement officers together for a day of open and honest dialog about stereotypes, perceptions, personal experiences and problems in the street, including panel discussions, role playing, small group discussions, lunch for officers and youth together, and presentations on adolescent brain development as it affects youth interactions with officers.

The Pennsylvania DMC Youth/Law Enforcement Forum Corporation provided a 2-day intensive training for facilitators in August 2015. The Corporation, formed in Philadelphia in 2010, developed the Pennsylvania DMC Youth/Law Enforcement Curriculum®, has trained more than 2,000 officers, and has expanded forums to additional jurisdictions in Pennsylvania and across the United States. Montgomery County is the fifth county in Pennsylvania to implement this model. Last year, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) awarded the Public Defender a two-year grant to launch this initiative which is expected to continue indefinitely through the Working Group members even after the grant period ends in December. The upcoming event in Pottstown will be the third forum provided through the PCCD grant.

For more information on the Working Group and upcoming forums, contact Leane Renée, Public Defender Policy Director, 610.278.3328, or LRenee@montcopa.org. Additional information on the Montgomery County DMC Working Group, the Corporation and the Forum Curriculum® is available on the web at <http://padmc.org/>.

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