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DA'S OFFICE PARTNERS WITH LOWER PROVIDENCE POLICE IN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM FOR LOW-LEVEL DRUG OFFENDERS

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (March 2, 2017) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Lower Providence Police Chief Stanley M. Turtle announce the launch of the Drug Education and Abuse Prevention program (D.E.A.P.), a pilot program for 18 to 26 year olds arrested on minor drug possession charges.

The opt-in, voluntary program is for non-violent offenders that uses a combination of carrot and stick strategies to deter defendants from escalated drug use and the more serious arrests that often accompany that drug addiction. Eligible offenders are those who are charged with possession of a small amount of illegal drugs and who have not previously been arrested or whose prior convictions are for underage drinking, minor drug cases or minor theft cases.

Included in the program are four elements: an introductory meeting with police representative Lt. Mike Jackson, Deputy District Attorney Samantha Cauffman and Magisterial District Judge Cathleen Rebar; a drug and alcohol assessment and a presentation on drug use and addiction from professionals in the addiction field and former addicts; a presentation on the medical consequences of drug use by the Montgomery County Coroner's Office; and several hours of observation at the Montgomery County Drug Court. In addition, participants must be drug-free and arrest-free during the program and for six months following the completion of all elements. They will be subject to random drug testing while in the D.E.A.P. program.

“The drug epidemic we are facing is widespread across Montgomery County and overdose deaths are growing. We cannot simply arrest our way out of this epidemic. Fighting it requires innovative approaches on multiple fronts to try to stem the progression from low-level drug use to heroin use and a potential overdose down the road,” said DA Steele. “Our hope is that this program will save young people from going down that path and protect their futures.”

During participation in the program, the criminal case will be suspended. Participants will not be arrested, which means they will not be processed or fingerprinted so no criminal record will be created should they complete the program. If they wash out or drop out of the program, they will be arrested and prosecuted on the original charges.

“Our hope is to provide at-risk young adults with the knowledge and desire to avoid future drug use or drug addiction,” said Chief Turtle.

It is estimated that approximately 10 criminal cases a month will qualify for the D.E.A.P. program. If this pilot program proves successful in Lower Providence, we will look for partners in other jurisdictions to roll it out in other areas of Montgomery County.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele