

LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOMELESS COURT PROGRAM CASEWORKER INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEW REFERRALS

The Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program (Homeless Court) serves individuals who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, by resolving minor traffic and “quality of life” offenses received in Los Angeles County. Homeless Court is a **once-in-a-lifetime** program and therefore, discretion should be used in deciding whether to refer a client to Homeless Court. The client must be **pre-screened** by the caseworker and should only be referred if s/he meets **all** of the following eligibility requirements:

- S/he must have a **history of homelessness** or be at **imminent risk of homelessness**.
- S/he must have completed at least **90 days** of continuous satisfactory participation in a case management program, whether it involves employment, drug/alcohol rehabilitation, mental health treatment, supportive housing, or participation in the General Relief Opportunities for Work (GROW) or CalWORKs Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) programs.
 - If a client comes to your program directly from another program where s/he had maintained progress in good standing, you may document the duration of her/his prior program participation to meet the 90 day program requirement. (For example, if a client completed 60 days at Program A before transferring to Program B, s/he would be eligible for Homeless Court after completing 30 days at Program B.) Please note, the applicant must make an immediate transition from one program to the next in order to count time spent at the initial program.
- S/he must not have received any new tickets or any other criminal charges from the period that begins **six (6) months prior to the application date through the period of time when the City Attorney determines eligibility**.
 - To check that your client has not received any new tickets within the past six months, please visit <http://www.lasuperiorcourt.org/Traffic/> to search for your client’s tickets by driver’s license number and date of birth. Please note, this is not guaranteed to be a complete list of all of your client’s outstanding tickets and warrants.
- S/he must not have any outstanding misdemeanor warrants for non-Homeless Court-eligible offenses.
- S/he may have a felony conviction on her/his record, but may not have any outstanding felony warrants or cases.
- S/he may not be in violation of parole or probation.

* Only infractions and certain low-grade misdemeanors can be resolved through Homeless Court. As a general rule, a Homeless Court eligible offense cannot involve a victim, a weapon, or drug possession or sales (possession of drug paraphernalia or less than an ounce of marijuana *may* qualify). **Homeless Court does not assist with parking tickets, DUIs, or tickets received as a juvenile.**

* The Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program can only resolve tickets received within Los Angeles County.

* The Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program can handle tickets that have gone to collections.

* The Homeless Court process can be lengthy, especially if a client has tickets from more than one city. Participants and caseworkers should expect the process to take a number of months. Los Angeles County Homeless Court and its staff are not able to provide any advice if the participant is due in court on a Homeless Court eligible offense while their Homeless Court application is pending.

* Homeless Court is invested in the success of individuals working towards stability and self-sufficiency, so please only refer clients who qualify for this program based on the above stated criteria. We depend on caseworkers to screen for appropriate and eligible clients. **Homeless Court does not accept self-referrals.** We recognize the benefit that caseworkers bring to the Homeless Court process by their invaluable experience in interfacing with clients and working closely with them. Caseworkers’ experience places them in the best position to determine whether a client is ready to take advantage of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in Homeless Court.

When preparing an application for a client to participate in Homeless Court, the following should be included:

(1) Homeless Court Application Form

This form should be completed by the caseworker managing the client's case. The client must sign and date the application. Please note, **an applicant may only sign and date the application after having completed at least 90 days in the approved program.** Any applications that do not meet this requirement will be found ineligible.

Please print clearly and legibly, and complete all components of the application. **Please make sure the spelling of the client's name (including any AKAs), driver's license/CA ID number, and the client's date of birth are accurate.** If the applicant does not have a driver's license/CA ID, put "none".

List as many unresolved traffic citations, misdemeanors or infractions as the client recalls on the application form. If s/he does not recall all of her/his unresolved tickets or warrants, Homeless Court will obtain the information by running the client's RAP sheets. It is important, however, that the client provides all names under which tickets may have been issued.

Caseworker contact information **must** be provided; **the caseworker listed on the application should be the same one writing the letter of support.** The referring caseworker is the person Homeless Court contacts with questions or if any administrative issues come up. The client is also invited to the Homeless Court session via the caseworker. Therefore, if the client's caseworker changes, it is imperative that Homeless Court be notified of the new caseworker's information. It is also necessary, in the event the client leaves the program for any reason, that the caseworker obtains the client's future contact information and remains in contact with the client to verify her/his continued progress. The Homeless Court may request an updated letter verifying that the client remains in good standing.

(2) Case Manager Certification

The case manager must also complete the certification on pg. 5 of the application. Please note that at least one option must be selected in both questions 1 and 2. Because the ultimate goal of Homeless Court is to reduce an individual's barriers to stability, the ultimate goal for every client should be to obtain and/or maintain housing, employment, or both. Failure to select either one or both of these options, or failure to identify the program type, will result in the application being deemed incomplete and therefore ineligible.

(3) Letter of Support

The caseworker submitting the referral must write a letter of support stating how long the client has been in the program (including a specific start date, not just the month entered) and detailing the progress the client has made. The letter of support must be on the program's **letterhead, signed by the caseworker, and dated with the current date.** If the program's address is different than what is on the letterhead, please indicate the caseworker's direct mailing address in the letter. Please note, if the case management program has not already been reviewed and approved by the Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program, the Homeless Court will request the case manager and/or organization to provide information necessary for such review and approval, including, promotional materials, website, and tax ID number.

Please provide information about the program components in which the client has participated (such as drug/alcohol counseling, vocational training, mental health treatment, etc.). In addition, it is important to provide information about the client's advancements on a personal level towards self-sufficiency.

The letter of support is an important component of the application because it presents the client's circumstances to the City Attorney's Office and provides support for why the client should qualify for Homeless Court. Therefore, include as much information as possible about the client's progress. A sample letter of support is attached hereto.

One copy of the complete application form (5 pages) and **Letter of Support** should be scanned and emailed to homelesscourt@publiccounsel.org. This is the preferred method of submission. If you do not have the technological capability of emailing the application, we will accept a faxed copy of the complete application with a **cover sheet** and **letter of support** to the attention of Homeless Court at the Office of the City Attorney at 213-485-8263. **Do not send more than one application at a time – our fax machine cannot handle it. If you email or fax the application, a hard copy does not also need to be mailed.** If you do not have access to email or fax, please send the application via U.S. Mail to Attn: Homeless Court, Office of the City Attorney, 312 S. Hill Street, 2nd Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90013. Please **do not** submit a copy of your client's social security card or social security number with the application.

We do not accept inquiries or status checks from clients. Status checks must be conducted by the case manager listed on the application via email at homelesscourt@publiccounsel.org. To avoid complication, please contact Homeless Court for status checks rather than send in a second duplicate application for the same individual. In the email subject line please include the client's name, date of birth, and the date on which the application was submitted. **Please instruct your clients NOT to call or come to the Homeless Court office as no information can be shared directly with the client.**

Once the client's citations have been resolved, the caseworker will be notified with information about the date, time, and location of the Homeless Court session that the client is invited to attend. Homeless Court sessions are typically held every other month, at locations throughout the County (location changes from session to session). Caseworkers are invited (but not required) to attend as well.

SAMPLE LETTER OF SUPPORT

March 18, 2011

Office of the City Attorney
Maria Elena Reyes Branch
Attn: Homeless Court
312 S. Hill St., 2nd floor
Los Angeles, CA 90013

To Homeless Court:

This letter is to notify you that John Doe has been continuously enrolled in our treatment program since August 30, 2010.

Our rehabilitation program lasts from four to six months, and is designed to teach individuals how to live without the use of drugs or alcohol, with the goal of gradual reintegration into society. The program includes the following:

Parenting Classes	Drug/Alcohol Addiction Rehabilitation
Psychotherapy/Counseling	Mental Health Treatment
Anger Management Classes	AIDS/HIV Education
Job Skills Training	Relapse Prevention
Domestic Violence Classes	

To date, Mr. Doe has participated in HIV education classes, relapse prevention, and anger management classes. He regularly submits to random urinalysis testing.

Mr. Doe has been in full compliance, and is currently in good standing, with the program. Mr. Doe is currently in the last stages of our program and is seeking employment. He has shown great resolve and motivation in meeting his goals; therefore, we ask that his warrants be recalled and obligations to the court be deemed satisfied.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (323) 777-8888.

Sincerely,

Sally Smith
Sally Smith
Counselor/Case Manager
XYZ Treatment Program

Please **SIGN LETTER** and print on **letterhead**. If your address is not the same as the one on letterhead, please note direct address

LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOMELESS COURT PROGRAM

A project of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office, Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, Los Angeles City Attorney, Los Angeles County District Attorney, Los Angeles County Public Defender, Public Counsel, and advocates for the homeless.

Homeless Court offers individuals who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, and who have connected with case management programs, the opportunity to resolve citations and warrants **received within Los Angeles County** for certain infractions, traffic violations, and non-violent low-grade misdemeanors.

Before Submitting an Application

If you meet **ALL** of these guidelines, you may complete this application and submit it **along with a letter of support** from your case manager. ***Please Note: Homeless Court cannot resolve parking tickets, DUIs, tickets received as a juvenile, or violations involving a victim or weapon.***

Please make sure that you meet **ALL** of Homeless Court's requirements:

- ✓ **You have completed 90 days in a case management program;**
- ✓ **You have not received any new tickets or any other criminal charges from the period that begins six (6) months prior to the application date;**
- ✓ **You may not receive any new tickets or other criminal charges through the period of time when the City Attorney determines eligibility;**
- ✓ **You have no outstanding misdemeanor warrants for non-Homeless Court eligible offenses;**
- ✓ **You do not have any unresolved felony warrants or cases;**
- ✓ **You are not in violation of parole or probation;**
- ✓ **You are not submitting a duplicate application; AND**
- ✓ **You have not participated in Homeless Court previously (it is a once-in-a-lifetime program).**

◆ **Clients may not come to or call the Homeless Court office; all inquiries must originate with the caseworker to avoid delays in processing the application.◆**

Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program Application Form

Applicant Information:

Name (First Middle Last): _____

A.K.A.s: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Age: ___ 18-24 ___ 25-49 ___ 50+

Driver's License/CA ID #: _____ State: _____

Race/Ethnicity*: ___ Hispanic/Latino ___ Black/African American ___ White
 ___ Asian/Pacific Islander ___ Native American

Height/Weight: _____

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female ___ Transgender

Number of Dependents: _____ (Only count children under age 18; **Do not include self**)

Disabled: ___ Yes ___ No

Veteran: ___ Yes ___ No

* This information is sought for statistical purposes and to protect the client by ensuring accurate identification of client information in County databases.

How many unresolved **traffic and/or other infraction/misdemeanor citations/cases** do you have in Los Angeles County? Please list the citation/case #, court code, and the date when the citation was received, if known:

Applicant Contact Information:

Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Caseworker's Contact Information:

Caseworker Name: _____
Organization: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
Email: _____

APPLICANT VERIFICATION

To the best of my knowledge, **I have participated in a qualifying program for at least ninety (90) days, I have been violation-free for the past six (6) months, I do not have any unresolved felony cases or warrants or non-Homeless Court eligible misdemeanor warrants, am not in violation of parole or probation, and I have not previously participated in Homeless Court.**

I authorize Homeless Court to access my criminal record information for purposes of processing my application and collecting statistical information.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

The Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program seeks your permission to include a summary of your case, without revealing your name, in any of its materials, grant applications or reports. You are not required to give such consent to participate in the Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program.

Do you agree to provide such consent? Yes No

**HOMELESS COURT APPLICANT'S AUTHORIZATION FOR
EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

I, _____, hereby authorize the exchange of information regarding my criminal record and case management program compliance between:

CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:

and

LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOMELESS COURT PROGRAM PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

Los Angeles County Homeless Court Office
Offices of the City Attorneys in Los Angeles County
Office of the Los Angeles County District Attorney
Office of the Los Angeles County Public Defender

This information is needed for verification of participation in a case management program and qualification of application for resolution of citations and warrants for certain infractions and misdemeanors through the Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program.

This form was completed in its entirety and read by me (or to me) prior to signing.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

PERSONAL REFERENCES OF HOMELESS COURT APPLICANT

The purpose of this request is to have alternate contact information for you in the event that we are unable to reach you through the caseworker listed or your personal contact information. This information may also be used to track the success of participants in the Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program. Because persons in case management programs often change residences after completion of their program, we are requesting the names of several close friends, or relatives, who can assist us in contacting you in the event that you move from the address given on your Homeless Court application. Being able to keep in touch with you on a regular basis (every six months or so) after your successful participation in Homeless Court allows us to gauge the overall success of this program.

Please give the name of **at least one** personal reference.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>
1. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

CASE MANAGER CERTIFICATION

I, _____, am the case manager identified above and hereby certify that:

1. The Applicant is participating in a case management program linked to: (**check all that apply**)

Rehabilitation Employment Mental Health Other: _____

2. This case managed program will assist the Applicant in ultimately obtaining and/or maintaining the following: (check all that apply)

Permanent Housing Employment

Please note: You MUST select at least one applicable check box in questions 1 and 2 above for the application to be deemed complete.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Submitting the Application

The completed application and letter of support should be submitted by the caseworker by email (scanned), U.S. mail, or fax (**with cover sheet**) to:

Attn: Homeless Court
Office of the City Attorney
312 S. Hill Street, 2nd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90013
Fax: 213-485-8263

The case manager should request receipt confirmation of the application immediately by emailing homelesscourt@publiccounsel.org.

Please ensure that this application includes:

- 1) **Applicant's Authorization for Exchange of Information**
- 2) **Personal References**
- 3) **Case Manager's Certification Page**
- 4) **Case Manager's Letter of Support**

A letter of support from the caseworker on **program letterhead is required**; this **must be written by the caseworker listed above**. The letter of support must include the following information:

- Length of time in the program;
- Program components in which applicant has participated (such as drug/alcohol rehabilitation, vocational/job skills training, mental health counseling, etc.);
- Advancements made on a personal level towards self-sufficiency; AND
- Caseworker's signature.