

# REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF QUEENS: ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING

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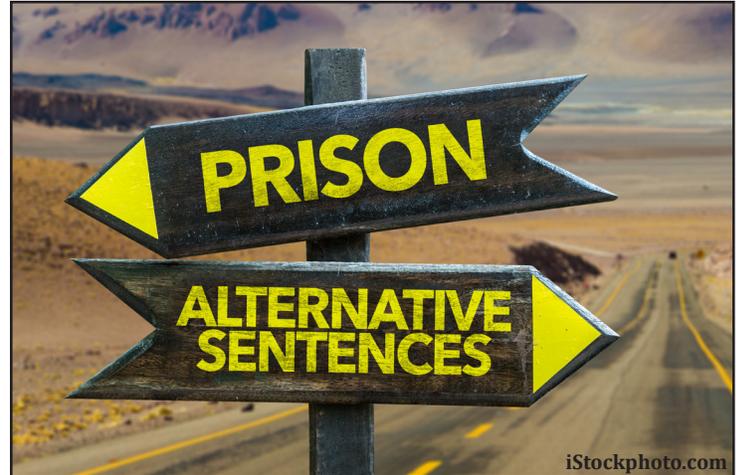
On June 1st, District Attorney Richard A. Brown will retire due to health reasons after 28 years as District Attorney. The process of determining his successor is underway. Whoever the people choose to replace him will inherit an office that, with all due respect to our colleagues, is the best in the state. While I will not endorse or oppose any candidate, I will not remain silent if the record of our office is misstated or distorted during this campaign either out of ignorance or malice or both. On behalf of the men and women of this office, I will submit reports to the people of Queens informing them, and perhaps educating some of the candidates along the way, about what their District Attorney has done to protect all the people of Queens. The first report will focus on alternative sentencing.

To hear some of the candidates running for Queens District Attorney, you would have to be forgiven for thinking that the Queens DA's Office was stuck in the 1970's, with no programs for defendants, no treatment programs, no alternative sentencing options and no specialized courts. YOU would have to be forgiven, but the candidates should not be. Anyone campaigning to run an office of 700 people (330 of them attorneys) that processes more than 50,000 arrests a year, should at least know something about the place before they start "redesigning it on day one."

After stating which crimes they won't prosecute and which defendants they won't jail, the candidates clamor for alternatives to incarceration, as if none exist in Queens. They are either terribly misinformed, or deliberately misrepresenting the facts.

The Queens District Attorney's Office, under Judge Brown, has been an innovator in treatment programs, alternative sentencing and specialized courts for more than a quarter century. One could say that he has been a "progressive" in this area long before that term was popular.

We have had a dedicated Director of Alternative Sentencing for almost 20 years, a non-attorney, clinical professional, who coordinates the office's alternative sentencing initiatives and specialized courts. We employ 20



full-time dedicated alternative sentencing professionals who work with him. Other offices have since followed our lead and established a similar position.

Queens County has had a Drug Treatment Court for 20 years. We were the first county to establish a Veterans Treatment Court and a Human Trafficking Court. We have a Misdemeanor Treatment Court, a Misdemeanor Mental Health Court, and both a misdemeanor and felony Youth Part.

We operate a Queens DWI Treatment Court -- the first of its kind in New York City. We have placed more than 4,000 defendants on alcohol monitoring devices and have a successful completion rate of 91%.

We were the first office in the city to collaborate with Mothers Against Drunk Driving to establish Victim Impact Panels, where defendants charged with DWI hear from families and victims of drunk driving. The program is now in all five counties. We do all the monitoring for the entire City of New York for the Ignition Interlock Device Program to reduce drunk driving.

We have had a Domestic Violence Bureau since 2000. We were one of the first counties in the state to establish a Family Justice Center - a walk-in, integrated service center for victims of family violence. We co-operate the Child Advocacy Center, where crimes against children are investigated and young victims and their families can receive counseling and services.

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We have pre-arraignment diversion programs for defendants charged with marijuana, shoplifting and vehicular crimes, where defendants charged with those crimes perform community service or attend counseling and have their cases dismissed prior to arraignment. We run a very robust Community Service Program where thousands of people perform community service in lieu of criminal convictions.

The Queens Court Academy, a program of which we are very proud, is an alternative school that helps young offenders charged with crimes to continue their education in a supervised and supportive environment. This high school, located within our office, is the only one of its kind and is overseen and operated in partnership with our office and the NYC Department of Education. Since the program's inception 330 students have been enrolled in the program, with 49 students achieving their high school equivalency diplomas.

We are also a partner on the Queens Reentry Task Force in an effort to reduce recidivism by coordinating services for individuals transitioning from incarceration back into the community.

Our Queens Treatment Intervention Program (QTIP) was established in 2018 in response to the ongoing opioid crisis. QTIP is a collaborative program with Samaritan Daytop Village that focuses on misdemeanor non-violent individuals who are addicted to opioids, with the goal of preventing fatal overdoses. Defendants are directed for a clinical assessment to determine if further treatment services are warranted. If the defendant is determined to be in compliance, the cases result in an ACD (dismissal). The program has been highly successful since its inception – with more than 240 individuals evaluated and 88% qualifying for treatment services.

We also have a Youth Enrichment Program, and various community advisory councils -African-American, Asian, Business, Jewish, e.g., - that meet regularly to discuss issues of importance to them. Our Star Track Program, started in 1993, sends ADAs, along with members of the defense bar, to visit schools in Far Rockaway to talk to 4th-12th grade classes to encourage them to make correct choices in life.

Our Crime Victims Advocacy Program is one of the best in the city, giving assistance and advice to victims of crime in Queens County.

All in all, our office sponsors, or is part of, more than

30 alternative sentencing programs. We put thousands of people in these programs every year, and we have been expanding them since Judge Brown became District Attorney. Our goal is to seek the best outcome for the defendant and the public. If we can put an individual into a program that will resolve the issues that caused him or her to commit a crime, we are more than happy to do it. And we do it every day.

These programs have been developed over the years with the experience of both success and failure. Running a district attorney's office is not about snappy slogans and the latest fad. It is hard work. It is risky work. It is not about releasing career criminals from jail solely for the purpose of further reducing the population in a city that has already slashed those in custody by more than 42% over just the last 10 years. It is about doing what is right, it is about doing justice for all. In some instances justice for a defendant and society is an alternative sentencing program, in other situations incarceration is what justice requires. The people of Queens have had, and deserve to continue to have, a District Attorney that knows when to pick one over the other. Victims are entitled to justice too, yet "victim" is a word that is missing from much of the current campaign rhetoric. The people deserve a DA that never forgets victims. We do what is right because that is what Judge Brown has taught us – all could learn from him – including those who seek to replace him.

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Queens County