



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Press Conference Thursday, Sept. 1, Highlights Start of County's Misdemeanor Diversion Program

FAYETTEVILLE – Cumberland County, with the support and approval of the Board of Commissioners, is starting a new Misdemeanor Diversion Program (MDP) in September for 16- and 17-year-olds who have no adult criminal record.

A press conference will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 1, in Courtroom 4A of the Cumberland County Courthouse, 117 Dick St. Speakers will include Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Glenn Adams, Fayetteville Police Chief Harold Medlock, Cumberland County Sheriff Earl Butler, District Attorney Billy West and Chief District Court Judge Robert Stiehl.

The diversion program is a collaborative effort between Cumberland County government, law enforcement, the district attorney's office, public defender and court system officials.

North Carolina and New York are the only two states that prosecute all 16- and 17-year-olds charged with criminal offenses in the adult system. Even when charges are dismissed, if the arrest and court records are not expunged, the incident and youth's record of arrest follows him or her into adulthood, creating significant impediments to employment, education and other areas.

Rather than issuing a citation or making an arrest where probable cause exists, law enforcement officers in Cumberland County will issue the youth a referral with instructions to contact the Misdemeanor Diversion Program. The teenager has 90 days to complete the program, which may include community service, classes, mentoring and other requirements. If the teen does not complete the assigned program, law enforcement will be notified and can opt to move forward with criminal court prosecution.

The eligibility requirements are:

- 16 or 17 years old at time of offense
- No adult criminal record (can have a juvenile record)
- Must be a misdemeanor offense. However, sex offenses, firearms offenses and traffic offenses are specifically excluded
- Final discretion on MDP referral remains with law enforcement officers and the District Attorney's Office

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