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PRESS RELEASE

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CARVER COUNTY TO PURSUE FEDERAL DRUG COURT GRANT

Carver County Attorney Mark Metz announces that on April 16, 2019 the Carver County Attorney's Office will submit an application for a federal grant in the amount of \$500,000.00 to implement a drug treatment court in Carver County beginning in 2020. The federal government has made up to \$95 million in grant funds available to local jurisdictions nationwide to implement or augment treatment courts, including adult drug courts, veterans court, co-occurring disorder courts, tribal healing courts, and DWI courts. The grants are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Grant applicants must compete to obtain drug court funds by demonstrating a need for a drug court and showing an effective, evidence-based protocol of intervention and treatment. The federal grant program was created in response to the growing number of drug overdose deaths in the United States each year. According to federal statistics, over 72,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2017, up from 64,000 deaths in 2016. The majority of overdose deaths in 2016 and 2017 were attributed to opioids. In 2018, eight drug overdose deaths occurred in Carver County, up from two in 2017. The Carver County Attorney's Office prosecuted 114 gross misdemeanor and felony drug cases in 2018.

Beginning in 2016, the County Attorney's Office began formulating plans to implement a drug treatment court that would provide intensive treatment services to up to 25 participants. Eligible participants will be substance abuse offenders in Carver County who are non-violent, and rate as high risk and high need on validated risk assessments. Carver County Drug Court will administer evidence-based treatment and services over a 16-month period for each participant that includes frequent court appearances and drug testing. A multidisciplinary team will monitor client progress, consisting of a drug court judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, treatment provider agent, probation officer, court coordinator, and court statistician. Carver County's Drug Court will operate in accordance with best practice standards of the National

Association of Drug Court Professionals and the Minnesota Judicial Council for Treatment Courts. Carver County currently has a successful Veterans Treatment Court that has been operational since 2014 and follows similar protocols.

If Carver County is successful in obtaining the federal grant, the drug court will commence on January 1, 2020. The grant funding will cover a 48-month period.

County Attorney Metz stated, "Drug courts have proven to be an effective and novel approach to address the serious problem of substance abuse and crime. Through a team of court and community professionals, offenders are held accountable through close supervision to ensure public safety while at the same time they receive intensive treatment. Our goal is that drug courts will reduce drug dependency, reduce recidivism, improve public safety and save taxpayer money."

Carver County's Drug Court Staffing Team welcomes comments from the public in formulating its program design. Members of the public should contact Rhonda Betcher at rbetcher@co.carver.mn.us with comments or questions.