

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOMELESS COURT PROGRAM
CASEWORKER INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOMELESS COURT 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.

A case worker is not required to refer a client that s/he does not believe, in her/his professional opinion, is ready for Homeless Court; nor can Homeless Court demand that an application is submitted on behalf of an individual.

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.

Please include the Personal Reference page (pg. 4) even if references are not available. All 5 pages of the application must be included with submission.

(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 to Homeless Court must write a letter of support. The letter of support is an important component of the application because it presents a picture of the client's circumstances. In addition to Homeless Court Staff, this letter of support is reviewed by the City Attorney's Office, prosecutors and public defenders in relevant jurisdictions. The letter of support may also be viewed by the judge and the volunteer attorney who appears with an approved applicant at the Homeless Court Session. Therefore, please include as much information as possible about the client's progress. A mock letter of support is attached hereto. Please do not copy this letter. It is not intended to serve as a template. **Form or generic letters will be returned as inadequate and will render the application ineligible.**

The letter of support must:

- Be **specific**,
- Be written on program **letterhead**,
- Be **signed by the caseworker**,
- **Be dated with the current date**,
- Include information regarding the **program's mission** and **what the program offers its clients**,
- Include the specific **date of program entry**, not just the month entered,
- **Describe the program services** that the client received and **detail what each service entailed**. (Please assume that the reader is not familiar with your organization/program),
- Detail the **specific progress** the client has made within the program,
- If applicable, include information regarding the applicant's **accomplishments made outside of the program**. For example, attending school, having secured housing, family reunification, etc.,
- Include the client's short and long term **goals**,
- Detail **why your client is ready to participate** in the Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program and how this assistance would further her/his personal growth and stability.

If the program's address is different than what is on the letterhead, please indicate the caseworker's direct mailing address in the letter. To ensure compliance with our program requirements, the Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program may request information on the case management organization, including promotional materials, website, and tax ID number at any time.

Submitting the Application

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. Additionally, please do not ask your clients to hand deliver the application and letter of support to the above address, as we do not meet with applicants in the office.

We do not accept inquiries or status checks of any kind from applicants. 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 applicant's name, date of birth, and the date on which the application was submitted.

Once the applicant's citations have been reviewed by the appropriate jurisdiction and approved for resolution, the caseworker will be notified with information about the date, time, and location of the Homeless Court session that the applicant is scheduled 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 and encouraged, but not required, to attend.

[Program Letterhead]

MOCK LETTER OF SUPPORT

September 12, 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:

[Insert length of time of program participation including start date. Indicate whether participation was continuous.]

[Insert program description here including what types of services the program offers, how long an individual is eligible to receive those services, how often the services are offered/accessed, and what it means to be compliant with the program- See below paragraphs as an example. **Please do not copy the paragraphs verbatim as this description should be specific to the client.**]

Our rehabilitation program lasts from 9 months to 3 years, 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 classes, trainings and case management. We offer Parenting Classes, Psychotherapy/Counseling, Anger Management Classes, Job Skills Training, Domestic Violence Classes, Drug/Alcohol Addiction Rehabilitation, Mental Health Treatment, AIDS/HIV Education, and Relapse Prevention Services. We offer these components from 9:00am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. Compliance with the program requires that client be present 5 days per week for a minimum of 25 hours, exhibit a good attitude, respect of program workers and his/her peers, and meet with his/her case manager every week.

To date, Mr. Doe has participated in _____.

[Insert description of each of the specific services provided/received here. Include length of training, frequency of training, and level of client participation.]

[Insert paragraph detailing what the case manager and program have worked on specifically with this individual.]

[Insert paragraph detailing whether the client has been compliant, what s/he has been working on both in the program, outside of the program (e.g. school or certification programs), and personally. Discuss client's personal goals here. Discuss progress client has made.]

[Insert paragraph indicating why the case manager believes this person is ready for Homeless Court and how resolution of the client's outstanding matters could benefit the individual.]

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

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 your letterhead, please indicate your direct mailing address.

LETTER OF SUPPORT CHECKLIST

The case manager should review the letter of support to ensure that it complies with the following guidelines:

- The letter of support is specific to my client's experience within our organization/program
- The letter of support is written on my organization/program letterhead
- The letter of support is written and signed by the case manager on record for the Homeless Court applicant
- I dated the letter of support with the current date
- I included information regarding the program's mission and what the program offers our clients
- I included the specific date that my client entered our program, not just the month entered
- I described the program services that my client received and detailed what each service entailed in a way that a reader unfamiliar with the program/organization would understand
- I detailed the specific progress the client has made within our organization/program
- (If applicable) I included information regarding my client's accomplishments made outside of our organization/program
- I included my client's short and long term goals
- I detailed why my client is ready to participate in the Los Angeles County Homeless Court Program and how this assistance would further my client's personal growth and stability

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's Contact Information:

Name (First, Middle, Last): _____

A.K.A.s: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Caseworker's Contact Information:

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Applicant's Information:

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 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, and contact information for, **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) to homelesscourt@publiccounsel.org, 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 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**. Please refer to the Letter of Support Checklist which can be found in the Homeless Court Caseworker Instructions packet.