



# ARIZONA PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

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## Media Advisory

### STATEWIDE PROSECUTORS SEEK EXPANDED CAPACITY FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Phoenix, AZ—The heroin epidemic is an equal opportunity evil and is clawing its way into a neighborhood near you. In a call to action, the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council (APAAC) adopted a policy statement underscoring their ongoing commitment to prevention and treatment for all abused substances from alcohol to opiates and everything in between. A healthy investment in prevention education and treatment programs is vital to reducing the costs to our communities and protecting crime victims.

“Education and services are part of the equation to reducing the negative societal impacts of drug abuse. APAAC seeks to raise awareness and marshal the resources to fight the use and abuse of all mind-altering substances,” said Sheila Polk, chair of the organization that represents the 800+ prosecutors across the state.

Proven prevention education is essential to curbing substance use; treatment capacity, especially in conjunction with court-ordered treatment, must be made available in a timely and accessible manner to reduce the burdens on social institutions, including the criminal justice system. In this call to action, APAAC expresses support for criminal justice intervention options, such as residential treatment and wrap-around services, as tools to enhance long-term recovery and avoid criminal behavior.

Coincidentally, APAAC adopted the policy at the start of Red Ribbon Week, a national alcohol, tobacco, drug, and violence prevention and awareness campaign. On Thursday, October 22, 2015, at the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family event “Addiction: The Elephant in the Room,” Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery detailed the efforts of his office in this regard after receiving the community action key from recovering addict and advocate Jeff Taylor of the Salvation Army. That event was also attended by Yavapai County Attorney and APAAC Chair Sheila Polk, and Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles. Ms. Polk, through the Yavapai County's MATFORCE, is a long-time supporter and advocate of prevention and treatment programs.

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*“Empowering Arizona's prosecutors to administer justice and contribute to public safety through training and advocacy.”*

The full text of the APAAC policy reads as follows:

APAAC, as Arizona's prosecutor coordinator, recognizes that often criminal behaviors arise as the result of substance abuse and behavioral health challenges. We acknowledge that early interventions, along with appropriate prevention and treatment measures and educational programs, can and do reduce the burden on the criminal justice system. In those cases that result in a chargeable crime by a drug-involved individual, APAAC supports intervention options directed to changing those behaviors, such as residential treatment, therapeutic community treatment, wrap-around services, and court supervised drug monitoring.

It is crucial that prevention and treatment capacity, whether community or government based, is at a level appropriate to enable implementation of prison alternatives and available in both the urban and rural areas. Assessing and identifying offenders that can substantially benefit and have the capability to turn away from crime will positively impact the community and reduce incarceration. Where appropriate, victims should be involved in the process.

APAAC is committed to deferred prosecution and incarceration alternatives with treatment options, and has been a supporter of the annual Arizona Problem Solving Courts Conference held each spring in Prescott, Arizona.

References:

<http://www.apaac.az.gov/prosecution-statistics/topics/section/35>;

<http://www.apaac.az.gov/prosecution-statistics/topics/category/146-deferred-prosecution-guidelines>;

[www.azsentencing.org](http://www.azsentencing.org)

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