Yavapai County Attorney
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

YAVAPAII COUNTY ATTORNEY TO LAUNCH CRIMINAL OFFENDER DIVERSION PROGRAM

Sheila Polk, Yavapai County Attorney, announced the approval today by the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors of the newly developed Criminal Offender Diversion Program. Designed to give low level offenders a second chance while also enhancing the public’s safety, the program is the first of its kind for Yavapai County.

“Experts are recognizing that low-level first-time offenders may not be best served by going through our regular court process,” said Polk. “Our program will use the leverage of the criminal justice system to encourage participation in substance abuse and mental health treatment. The incentive for the offender is dismissal of all charges upon successful completion of the program.”

Planning for the Diversion Program began last year after Polk learned the state had allocated funds for such programs. “We are seeing more offenses driven by illegal drug use,” said Polk. “In addition to treatment, the program will provide each offender with a care manager and wrap-around services to help them overcome obstacles to a healthy and productive life such as life skills, employment or education gaps, housing, and transportation.”

Polk’s office followed a thorough process to solicit public input and find the right partners for the program. “I am excited to announce that our collaborators are a newly formed partnership between the West Yavapai Guidance Clinic and Spectrum Health Care, called Complete Care Partners, LLC. I believe we have put together the best program in the state with two highly respected behavioral health providers who truly care about their clients.”

Tamara Player is the CEO of West Yavapai Guidance Clinic. “The West Yavapai Guidance Clinic has been providing high-quality, client-centered mental health services to residents of Yavapai County for more than fifty years,” said Player. “We are thrilled to partner with the County Attorney on this ground-breaking program and truly believe we can help offenders facing low level crimes turn their lives around.”

Spectrum Healthcare Group has its roots in the Verde Valley for over fifty years and provides whole health services, including same day primary care, behavioral health and psychiatry. “Our team is committed to putting patients first,” said CEO April Rhodes. “We successfully launched mobile crisis teams four years ago to assist patrol officers on scene to divert those in crisis away from jail and into treatment. Participating with the County Attorney to divert low level offenders into services and keep them out of the criminal justice system is the logical next step in our long history of serving our communities.”

Offenders will be carefully screened by the County Attorney for eligibility and suitability for the program. Participants will then be assigned a care manager who will assess the client for needs and set them up with an individualized program. The length of the program will vary from three to six months and, in certain
cases, might be extended to ensure the structure is in place for the participant’s success. Successful participants will see all criminal charges dismissed and a clean slate moving forward.

“Yavapai County is one of the safest regions in the United States,” said Polk. “Studies show that diversionary programs are much less costly than sending a case through the normal court process. This new program will help us keep our streets safe while also giving low level offenders a second chance at a productive life.”