



OFFICE OF THE
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ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

TODD SPITZER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Date: May 11, 2022

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Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer Issues Statement on 16.65% Reduction in Homelessness Since he Took Office in 2019

SANTA ANA, Calif. – Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer issued the following statement about Orange County's 16.65% reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness since he became the District Attorney in 2019:

"Today is an incredible day in Orange County. Homelessness has been reduced by 16.65% across the entire county over the last three years. We have seen a reduction in the number of homeless veterans and transitional youths.

This is not an accident.

The Orange County District Attorney's Office has been a leader in tackling the homelessness issue by offering a number of innovative programs including our FIRST Point pre-filing diversion program, mental health diversion, and collaborative courts including homeless court, veterans court and drug court.

As a County supervisor I made the first countywide homeless shelter in Orange County finally a reality. The Bridges at Kraemer Place in Anaheim, which opened in 2017, humanely shelters those experiencing homelessness and provides services to residents. I also led the efforts to clear the Santa Ana riverbed of homeless encampments in 2018 while providing shelter and food vouchers to former residents. Through my membership on the County's Commission to End Homelessness, I continue that longstanding leadership role to address the very complex and complicated issue of homelessness.

Our comprehensive approach to reducing homelessness is working. The County as a whole is committed to a service first model, where services are offered to those who are experiencing homelessness – and that has resulted in a 16.65% reduction of homeless individuals in just three years.

We cannot incarcerate our way out of homelessness, mental illness or substance abuse.

That is why I created our Mental Health Unit and Recidivism Reduction Unit – to tackle the underlying issues of why people re-offend and help address those issues through court-ordered supportive programs. When people experiencing homelessness are caught up in the criminal justice, we offer programs and services to help people stay out the system and back on a path to be a productive member of society.

Our FIRST Point pre-filing diversion pilot program was launched in April to help reduce recidivism by connecting

individuals who commit low-level crimes with mental health and substance abuse services before criminal charges are filed. This works as an incentive to ensure a criminal proceeding does not inhibit future work and education opportunities.

FIRST Point Diversion Program – which stands for Focused Intervention Route to Services and Treatment - is in partnership with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, the Police Departments of Seal Beach and Irvine, and the County's Health Care Agency and Social Services Agency. FIRST Point is the first of its kind pre-filing diversion program in Orange County.

Through continued innovation like FIRST Point and County partnerships with nearly 40 non-profits who help place people into services and shelters, we are making our communities safer.

There is still much work to do in addressing homelessness, but the numbers speak for themselves: the work we are doing is reducing homelessness in Orange County. And we are going to keep putting in the work."

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