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| **Belinda Hill****First Assistant**Immediate ReleaseOctober 16, 2014**Harris County District Attorney****DEVON ANDERSON** | K:\HEPOLA_CAMILLE\Pictures\Miscellaneous\GoldBlue.jpg | **Criminal Justice Center****1201 Franklin, Suite 600****Houston, Texas 77002 901****Contact**Jeff McShanCamille Hepola (713) 755-0122 |

***Harris County District Attorney Devon Anderson Announces SAFE COURT***

***Survivors Acquiring Freedom and Empowerment***

Houston – The Harris County District Attorney’s Office has received a SMART Prosecution Grant from the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. The $435,000 award will be used to establish a Prostitution Prevention Program called ***SAFE Court*** (Survivors Acquiring Freedom and Empowerment.)

***SAFE Court*** will target young adults from 17 to 25 who are first time offenders. Some repeat prostitution offenders in that age group will also be eligible.

The high recidivism rate among people convicted of prostitution shows us that incarceration alone has not provided them with the tools needed to “break the cycle”. They often have long histories of abuse, neglect, and addiction**. *SAFE Court*** will address their needs by combining a specialty court therapeutic model with supervised, evidence-based treatment intervention. The goal is to reduce victimization and criminalization of these young adults and to improve public safety and health.

*“****SAFE Court*** *is designed to bridge the gap between the criminal justice system and community organizations that help those engaged in prostitution,”* said Harris County District Attorney Devon Anderson. *”This court will provide these young people life skills needed to transition out of the prostitution lifestyle and to become a contributing member of society.”*

Last year, there were 340 first time offenders, charged with prostitution under the age of 25. Approximately 2000 prostitution cases were filed in the last 4 years involving young adults 17 to 25.

The Honorable Pam Derbyshire in Harris County Court #7 will preside over ***SAFE Court*** and a number of community organizations will help provide support. *“I’m honored and pleased to be a part of this revolutionary program.* ***SAFE Court*** *is aptly named because it can literally save lives, and make our community safer for all. As a former state and federal prosecutor, and a judge of 16 years, I know firsthand that the great majority of men and women charged with prostitution did not chose this lifestyle,”* saidJudge Derbyshire.

***SAFE Court* Supporters Include:**

Judge Pam Derbyshire

Harris County District Attorney Devon Anderson

Harris County Community Supervision

HCDAO Human Trafficking Division

Harris County Office of Court Management

Harris County Juvenile Probation

Children’s Assessment Center

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Sam Houston State University

HCDAO Special Victim’s Bureau

HCDAO Victim Witness Division

Houston Area Women’s Center

The Bridge Over Troubled Waters

Been There Done That

**Note:** Press availability today at 11a.m. at the Criminal Justice Center - Court #7 (9th floor) 1201 Franklin Street Houston TX 77002