

FISCAL YEAR 2024

October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024



**Downtown Austin
Community Court**

**ANNUAL
REPORT**





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01

LETTER FROM DOWNTOWN AUSTIN COMMUNITY COURT'S PRESIDING JUDGE AND COURT ADMINISTRATOR

As a problem-solving court, and a pillar of Austin's homelessness response system, Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC) prioritized providing essential services rooted in compassion and best practices, while implementing new initiatives, mentoring other communities, and evolving services to meet community needs throughout 2024. As we look to begin DACC's twenty fifth year of providing services to the Austin community, we remain grateful for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the people we serve and make positive contributions to the Austin community overall.

DACC's jurisdiction was expanded citywide for certain cases in January 2024, in an effort to provide more equitable and immediate access to DACC services for Austin residents. We collaborated with Austin Municipal Court (AMC) and the Austin Police Department to ensure a seamless transition and saw a 261% increase in cases filed with our court in FY24. Directing members of our community to DACC to resolve these cases provides opportunities for us to work with them on plans to meet their needs and address the root causes of what brought them into court in the first place. Our staff have risen to the occasion to ensure we provide the same quality of person-centered, trauma-informed services in the court despite the rise in cases, and we're grateful to have brought on a new Court Clerk Lead position through a collaboration with AMC to help operationalize jurisdiction expansion and accommodate the growing workload.

Following direction from [Council Resolution 20230816-016](#), as a complement to our jurisdiction expansion, DACC implemented a Mobile Court Pilot to provide more geographically dispersed options for people to resolve cases and outstanding warrants, while providing onsite connection to a

case manager and social service resources. This program removes barriers to accessing services by meeting people where they are already accessing services throughout the community with trusted partners. In FY24 this program conducted 929 court case checks, docketed 141 court cases, and cleared 93 warrants. DACC looks forward to fully implementing this program in FY25 with new resources allocated through the budget process.

In March 2023, DACC launched a Clinical Diversion Program (CDP) to embed Clinical Case Managers in our courtroom, with goals to enhance connection to social services and improve case completion rates. FY24 was the first full year of this program, serving 305 clients and resolving 493 outstanding cases through completion of case management activities. This innovative program is the culmination of DACC's values to help resolve and prevent future criminal justice involvement, while helping the people we serve access critical services such as substance use treatment, mental health services, and complete other steps critical to end their experience with homelessness. CDP Case Managers are also the social service backbone of Mobile Court, ensuring anyone looking for help resolving a case also has immediate connection to services and resource navigation.

We continue to see upward trends in demands for services, with a 31.2% increase in interactions with people accessing our Walk-in Case Management Program, serving an average of 72 people per day. These services are critical to help individuals obtain



MICHAEL A. COFFEY,
PRESIDING JUDGE



ROBERT KINGHAM,
COURT ADMINISTRATOR

identification and vital documents, and to access resource navigation, basic needs, and a mailing address. This year, we enhanced our Walk-in Case Management Program by creating a Medication Storage Program for prescription medications, including those that need refrigeration, to help ensure our clients have a safe place to store critical medicines without fear of losing them or having them destroyed in the elements outside. Additionally, we've expanded the number of community partners that provide services onsite which include mental health and medical services. With our Medication Storage Program in place, we plan to bring a clinician onsite in FY25 to further enhance connections to critical mental health and pharmacological resources for our clients.

Through DACC's Community Services Program, 1,049 work orders were completed servicing nearly 30 acres in Austin through graffiti abatement, bulk item pick-up, and beautification projects. DACC also received funding from Urban Forest Funding Portal to install a water line at our E. R. Fincher III Garden, which will allow us to enhance the care and cultivation of the garden and provide additional produce to local homeless services organizations. This enhancement at our garden also allows us explore collaboration opportunities in FY25 to support the work of other City departments.

Established as a Mentor Court by the Center for Justice Innovation, and as a Criminal Justice Mental Health Learning Site by The Council of State Governments' Justice Center, DACC is recognized as a national leader in best practices and a resource for other communities seeking to implement similar programs. In 2024, we also shared our innovations around Mobile Court and our CDP program at the 2024 Texas Conference on Ending Homelessness. We're hopeful that sharing our lessons learned will expand the reach of our impact to communities across the country.

We're excited about what the future has to hold, with new resources allocated in FY25 to fully implement our Mobile Court program and new staff and resources allocated for our Homeless Services team to help address the growing need for services and ensure that additional outreach through Mobile Court can connect individuals to a continuum of care through our array of case management programs. Our work continues to be impactful thanks to our collaborative relationships with our community partners and incredible team of dedicated public servants, and we look forward to continuing to transform lives and strengthen our community in the year ahead.

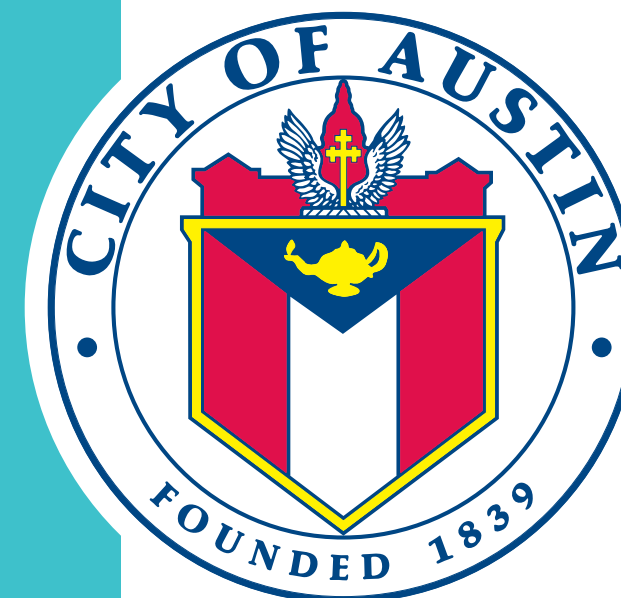
SINCERELY,

**MICHAEL A. COFFEY, PRESIDING JUDGE
and ROBERT KINGHAM, COURT ADMINISTRATOR**

02

DACC UNIT UPDATES

DACC's mission is to empower people to thrive by providing impartial justice and compassionate community-based services. DACC services are supported by work across four units, including Community Services, Court Services, Homeless Services, and Support Services. Established in 1999 as the first community court in Texas and the seventh in the United States, DACC has become a resource for other communities learning best practices for implementing community court models. Updates are provided below regarding data and accomplishments across all DACC units, staff recognition, and annual accomplishments this year related to operational excellence.



DACC



COMMUNITY SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

PARTNERSHIP WITH AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION & IT'S MY PARK DAY

Community Services (CS) Program - Participants fulfill community service hour requirements through public space cleaning, beautification projects, and graffiti abatement, and working at DACC's Edgar Fincher III Program Garden, which donates all food and eggs to local providers who provide meals to individuals experiencing homelessness. The CS program accepts work requests from various City departments including Development Services - Code Compliance, Watershed Protection, Austin Public Health, Austin Resource Recovery, and Parks and Recreation.

Historically, DACC's Community Service crews have assisted Austin Parks Foundation with the two annual It's My Park Day volunteer events, picking up brush and other items as needed. As of late November, our crews have committed to an ongoing partnership to help year-round moving forward. DACC is proud to give back to our parks system.



IT'S MY PARK DAY

DACC's Community Service Crew Leaders have been involved with this effort for many years by mobilizing Community Service crews to pick up and dispose of any trash, tree limbs, brush and any other bulky items the volunteers remove from the parks. This year, DACC was given a list of 9 sites at various parks that had piles of accumulated brush and trash following volunteer clean-up efforts. In two days, DACC's crews removed several tons of trash and debris utilizing DACC's trucks, trailers, and 7 community service participants led by two DACC Crew Leaders, **Samuel Hernandez** and **Andy Schuessler**.



IRRIGATION AT E.R. FINCHER III PROGRAM GARDEN

The E.R. Fincher III Garden, maintained by the Community Services Program, has historically relied on the Urban Forestry Department and Austin Parks and Recreation for irrigation by filling two 1,200-gallon water tanks on site. However, it was never guaranteed and often the Crew Leaders would run out of water, resulting in trees dying and vegetation unable to be harvested and donated to a local homeless services organization. On May 2, 2024, DACC was awarded a \$22,500 grant from the Urban Forest Funding Portal to establish our own water source, enabling Crew Leaders to enhance gardening activities, plant additional fruit trees, and offer future programming and educational opportunities at the Garden. Crew Leaders and community service participants alike, have shared that getting to complete hours at the Garden is more fulfilling and enjoyable than other activities considered community service.

We are very excited to enhance the Garden and provide more opportunities for those that we serve to benefit from the space. DACC leadership would like to thank and recognize Bailey Gray, Business Process Specialist, and Jeremy Myers, Community Services Supervisor, for shepherding us through this grant process and helping bring these additional resources to DACC, to ultimately benefit the community we serve!



COMMUNITY SERVICE DATA

Number of Community Services Requests Completed:

1,045

Acreage of Work Completed:

29.99

Average Number of Days to Complete Service Requests:

6.25

VIOLET KEEPSAFE STORAGE PROGRAM (VKS)

Free storage for individuals experiencing homelessness located downtown with secure bins to store vital documents, family memories, clothing, bedding, and more, in order to reduce property loss, help keep the community clean and reduce discrimination of individuals experiencing homelessness. VKS operates every day, 7:00am-7:00pm (daily closure from 11:00am-1:00pm), and employs people with lived experience to improve service experience and create workforce opportunities.



VKS HIGHLIGHTS

VKS OPERATING HOURS

VKS Operating Hours changed in November 2023 to be open 7:00am-7:00pm, with a daily closure from 11:00am-1:00pm. This closure allows time for routine facility maintenance and cleaning, dedicated lunch breaks for staff, and time for staff meetings and training. This break time is planned around lunches and other resources available by community partners for individuals experiencing homelessness.

VKS IMPROVEMENTS

Upgraded Storage Solutions: DACC is working on a phased in approach to create more dignified and functional storage solutions for Violet KeepSafe Storage participants. Some individuals now have the option to use up to four stackable storage crates, giving more flexibility and easier access to belongings. Based on financial resources, and the desire to phase in this new option, the stackable bins will be limited for the time being. We have received a good response from participants using the new bins, once financial resources are identified to purchase more bins, we'll phase in more of these storage crates. Some portion of the original storage bins will stay as options for participants who prefer that type of storage.

COLLOCATION WITH DAY LABOR PROGRAM

As of January 2024, Economic Development Department's (EDD) Day Labor program has been co-located at the facility that is home to DACC's VKS Program while they work to secure a permanent home. This is an ideal partnership, as it creates easier access to VKS and Day Labor for participants who use both programs. We're grateful for this partnership opportunity with EDD and being able to provide easier access to a valuable program for our VKS participants.



VKS DATA

Number of Interactions with VKS Participants:

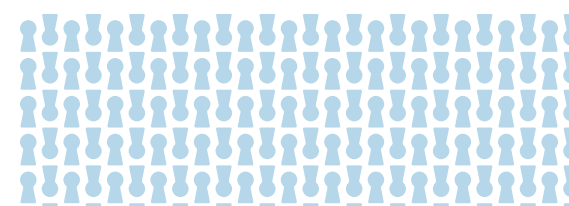
26,870

Average Number of VKS Interactions per day:

58.53

Number of VKS Participants:

630





COMMUNITY SERVICES SUCCESS STORIES

Improved Sidewalk Access:

A 3-1-1 request from a resident in South Austin (78745 area) was shared with DACC's Community Services Program, through a referral from Code Compliance, regarding vegetation overgrowth that impeded the sidewalks for a group of older adults who were wheelchair bound. The caller stated the overgrowth was so tall that people were having to use the street. DACC's CS Program was dispatched and cleaned up a sizable portion of overgrowth to help ensure residents had safe access to the sidewalk.

Shoal Creek Clean-up:

DACC's CS Program helped fulfill a joint request from the Austin Police Department (APD) Downtown Area Command and Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) to assist with clean-up of Shoal Creek near intersection of West 3rd Street. DACC staff was brought in because of the nature of the clean-up, which involved not only graffiti abatement but included a large amount of dispensed drug paraphernalia that needed to be disposed of in specialized collection containers. The clean-up efforts were organized by volunteers with Shoal Creek Conservancy and neighborhood residents. Feedback from neighborhood residents was that APD, DAA and DACC "demonstrated a genuine commitment to improving our neighborhood," and they thanked us for, "helping make a tangible difference in the health and beauty of Shoal Creek."

Partnership with Homeless Strategy Office for Maintenance Around Bridge Shelters:

DACC has an ongoing collaborative relationship with the Homeless Strategy Office (HSO). HSO shared the need for assistance with landscaping and clean-ups around the Northbridge Shelter, which at one time had accumulated trash and debris that needed to be addressed. This included not only the shelter property but the frontage road area as well. DACC's Community Services Crews now service

both Northbridge and Southbridge Shelters monthly, and value the opportunity to help our City partners. Feedback from one of the shelter managers: "Your crew was absolutely amazing this weekend, thanks for getting them out here to help us. The shelter looks great, but the FRONTAGE ROAD looks astonishing. On behalf of Endeavors and the North Bridge Shelter we really appreciate the work you guys put forth."

Violet KeepSafe as a Connection to Other Resources:

A client of VKS has been engaging in services approximately 6 months, coming in regularly and has built rapport with VKS staff. Through these interactions, VKS staff have been able to share guidance and inform the client of other resources available, including referrals to DACC case management, other service providers, and employment resources. Several months into engaging in VKS services, the client was proud to share with VKS staff that they are now employed by Capital Metro as a driver of a Metro Access vehicle. DACC has worked to enhance the ability to connect clients with resources by creating a DACC Case Manager Resource Binder that VKS can refer to in order to locate services most responsive to the needs of individual clients.

COURT SERVICES

DACC is a problem-solving, fine-only court with an emphasis on alternative resolutions and providing an immediate connection to onsite Clinical Case Managers, basic needs, and social service resources. DACC resolves Class C criminal offenses in a defined geographic area, with jurisdiction for certain cases citywide to help ensure equitable access to services.

COURT SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

JURISDICTION EXPANSION

On December 14, 2023, the City Council approved an expansion of DACC's jurisdiction citywide for the offenses listed below. This expansion is a significant milestone for our department, will improve equitable access to services, and will help us have an even greater impact on our community.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Camping in Public | • Sit/Lie Violations | • Littering |
| • Public Intoxication | • Consuming Alcohol in a Public Place | • Simple Assault by Contact |
| • Disorderly Conduct | • Pedestrian in the Roadway | • Misdemeanor Theft C - Less than \$100 |
| • Possession of Drug Paraphernalia | • Human Waste | |

DACC and AMC partnered to update systems and processes needed for a smooth transition, and DACC assisted APD with training materials for the expansion. In FY24, DACC saw a 261% increase in cases filed with our court. DACC helping to resolve these cases provides opportunities for us to work with individuals on plans to meet their needs and address the root causes of what brought them into court in the first place.





MOBILE COURT

Following direction from Council Resolution 20230816-016, as a complement to our jurisdiction expansion, DACC implemented a Mobile Court Pilot to provide more geographically dispersed options for people to resolve cases and outstanding warrants, while providing onsite connection to a case manager and social service resources. This program removes barriers to accessing services by meeting people where they are already accessing services throughout the community with trusted partners.



NEXT STEPS
City Council allocated resources in Fiscal Year 2024-25 to fully implement DACC's Mobile Court program and address the growing demand for DACC's homeless services through additional case managers and corresponding social service funding to ensure provision of wraparound services for clients. Recognizing the community need for access to these resources, DACC is working with the Human Resources Department to ensure hiring processes can move forward expeditiously to onboard new staff.

SERVICES

People served are provided the opportunity to check for any open cases and/or warrants with DACC and AMC, hear about DACC's homeless services with a focus on Walk-in Case Management and Violet KeepSafe Storage, clear warrants and resolve cases through virtual court processes, engage with a Clinical Case Manager and enroll in DACC's Clinical Diversion Program for access to ongoing case management.

- Following the Pilot, DACC Mobile Court services have continued on a limited basis of approximately twice-a-month, with ongoing efforts to engage with stakeholders, evolve service approach, and develop training for partners for how to connect members of the community with DACC to resolve outstanding cases and warrants.
DACC leadership is deeply grateful to all the staff who helped out with this effort, which extends to every staff that worked at Mobile Court, provided onsite support at DACC for Mobile Court efforts, or who took on extra load to help ensure operations could continue while their teammates were helping with Mobile Court. Special recognition goes to Chris Anderson, Court Operations Manager, for developing and overseeing this program, and to Sarah Rodriguez, Business Process Specialist, who came on to help shepherd this process, from operational and onsite support to developing new processes and innovative approaches to data collection that greatly improved Mobile Court throughout the process.



On September 20, 2024, the DACC Advisory Board provided input on potential partnerships and guidance regarding elements of Mobile Court to consider during the implementation process. DACC will also be seeking feedback from the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council, a group of individuals with lived experience with

homelessness, and working proactively with community stakeholders and partners to ensure Mobile Court services are brought to populations and areas throughout the community to remove barriers and provide equitable access to these services.





JURY TRIALS RESUME AT DACC

The Court Services team developed a process for jury trials at One Texas Center, which is in place for the first time since we've transitioned to providing services at this facility. This required collaboration with AMC and developing protocols that work with our location. We successfully summoned potential jurors and have a

process in place that will set us up for success for future jury trial needs. DACC is grateful to the Court Services team for reestablishing these practices.



COURT SERVICES DATA

Number of
Cases Filed:

3,094

Number of Cases Docketed:

7,284

Number of Clinical Diversion
Program (CDP) Clients:

305

Number of Cases Dismissed due
to CDP Participants Completing
Case Management Activities:

493

Number of Court Case Checks
Conducted during Mobile Court:

929

Number of Cases Docketed
during Mobile Court:

141

Number of Warrants Cleared
during Mobile Court

93

COURT SERVICES SUCCESS STORIES

Message Received from a Clinical Diversion Program Client:

"I want to say that I am incredibly grateful for the homelessness intervention provided last year. The effort and dedication of DACC allowed me to get off the street, find a treatment center in my hometown and I have since celebrated over a year of uninterrupted sobriety. I am working now in a pre-apprenticeship program with an interest in a few local trade unions and this is all possible thanks to DACC's Case Management."

Service and Family Connections through Court:

A DACC defendant, a person experiencing homelessness, came through court and during engagement with the court staff it was discovered that the defendant was a missing person from out-of-state (state of Illinois). The defendant was a person experiencing homelessness who had decompensated and was in need of inpatient treatment. With DACC's assistance, the individual reconnected to family and was then admitted to access services in a residential treatment center.

Successfully Resuming Jury Trials:

DACC completed its first jury trial in over five years on March 26, 2024. Typically, DACC has few jury trials as we are a fine-only court and defendants typically represent themselves. COVID-19 also cancelled or delayed jury trials for years. In a trial related to a public intoxication charge, evidence was presented and testimony was heard from witnesses. A verdict of guilty was found and the jury fined the defendant a total of \$50. The post-trial feedback from jurors and the defendant was that DACC court staff was courteous and professional and that the judge was fair while presiding over the trial.

Family Reunification through Mobile Court:

Through a Mobile Court event at Sunrise Church, a client with an outstanding warrant was able to address his case virtually with DACC's judge and prosecutor, agreeing to a deferral to complete community service hours through case management with DACC's Clinical Diversion Program (CDP). Over the course of several months, the client consistently attended meetings with CDP case managers and successfully obtained his birth certificate, Texas ID, and Social Security card. Case managers also assisted the client with accessing SNAP benefits and updating his Coordinated Assessment, resulting in the client successfully satisfying the requirements of his deferral and dismissal of the case. Ultimately, case managers were able to utilize HMIS to discover that the client's sister, whom the client had not seen in over 10 years, was trying to find him and was interested in reuniting with him. Case managers facilitated a call between the client and his sister, during which the sister expressed that she was willing to take the client into her home. DACC connected the client to bus transportation to enable him to return to his hometown, where he is currently living with family.



HOMELESS SERVICES

DACC provides an array of intensive, wraparound, short-term, and outreach homeless services to meet the range of needs of Austin's homeless community. DACC's Homeless Services are an integral part of our community court model and serve as a deflection from criminal justice involvement by meeting people's needs before situations escalate to involve law enforcement.

WALK-IN CASE MANAGEMENT

Provides assistance obtaining identification documents; access to a mailing address, storage for prescription medications and vital documents, and basic needs; and linkages to mental health, physical health, and substance misuse services. On average, over 70 people per day engage with walk-in case management services.

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

Person-centered, trauma-informed, and housing-focused services with low caseloads and wrap around supports. DACC's services have helped connect over 600 people to long-term housing since October 2015.

SOCIAL SERVICE CONTRACTS

DACC procures and manages contracts that directly serve DACC clients as part of wraparound supports that are critical for our community court model. These include, but are not limited to long- and short-term housing solutions, SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) application assistance and representative payee services, and substance misuse, mental health, and peer support services. DACC also manages contracts, such as the Expanded Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (EMCOT), that don't specifically serve DACC clients because it creates efficiencies for other departments at minimal to no cost to DACC.

HOMELESS OUTREACH STREET TEAM (HOST)

HOST includes a DACC Clinical Case Manager, an APD officer, an Austin/Travis County EMS Community Health Paramedic, and multiple staff from Integral Care who provide mental health services and peer support. HOST members work together to conduct proactive outreach to build trust with the homeless community and connect people to services and basic needs. DACC funds Integral Care staff and prioritizes HOST referrals for Intensive Case Management to ensure individuals are connected to ongoing services.

HOMELESS SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

LAUNCH OF MEDICATION STORAGE PROGRAM

DACC has enhanced services available for individuals experiencing homelessness through the creation of a Medication Storage Program for prescription medications, including those that need to be refrigerated. When medications are lost or destroyed due to weather conditions such as rain or heat, it can be challenging, expensive, and time-consuming to have those medications replaced. By providing a secure place for people experiencing homelessness to store prescribed medications, barriers to maintaining access to medical and mental health resources are being addressed. Having reliable access to prescription medications helps individuals experiencing homelessness maintain stability leading to better outcomes, and ultimately reduces impacts on emergency response systems. DACC appreciates **Jennifer Sowinski's** leadership in developing this program to address a critical unmet need for the people we

serve, and to all of her team that made bringing these services online possible!

INCREASED DEMAND FOR WALK-IN CASE MANAGEMENT

FY24 brought a 32% increase in demand for Walk-in Case Management Services, jumping from an average of approximately 54 people seeking services the previous year, to more than 72 people engaging with our walk-in services daily. Recognizing the need for these essential services, the Homeless Services team worked together to ensure coverage and resources were in place to be able to connect people with identification documents, basic needs, and resource navigation as people continue to seek our help to end their experience with homelessness. An additional benefit to this program is searching for open cases and/or warrants with DACC and AMC at check-in, paired with access to DACC's walk-in dockets, allowing individuals to resolve outstanding cases and warrants

while engaging with case managers during the same visit to DACC.

DACC JOINS BEST SINGLE SOURCE PLUS

DACC applied for and has been invited to join Best Single Source Plus (BSS Plus), which is a collaboration of 12 local nonprofit partner agencies dedicated to serving the most vulnerable residents of Austin/Travis County, housing families and individuals who are experiencing homelessness, and preventing homelessness for residents at risk of losing their housing. BSS Plus provides comprehensive case management and direct financial assistance to eligible individuals and families in the Austin/Travis County area. The program's primary purpose is to establish housing stability and to both prevent and end homelessness. Participating in this collaboration will help DACC connect more clients to community resources for Rapid Rehousing.



HOMELESS SERVICES DATA

Number of Walk-In Case Management Interactions:

17,790

Average Number of Walk-In Case Management Interactions per day:

72.03

Number of Clients Connected to Housing:

65



HOMELESS SERVICES SUCCESS STORIES

Helping Lifelong Austinite Reconnect to Housing:

At the start of the year, an individual came to DACC to resolve a Pedestrian in Roadway charge. At the time, they were experiencing homelessness and were unaware of the services DACC offered. Through our Clinical Diversion Program (CDP)—which supports vulnerable individuals addressing citations by offering community service credit for engaging in case management—they were introduced to case management services. A lifelong Austin resident, they had been unsheltered for several years, largely due to living with a debilitating mental illness. One of their primary goals was to secure stable housing in Austin, where they could afford rent using their \$600 monthly Social Security Income. Through collaboration with their Integral Care case worker, we worked to connect them with appropriate resources. DACC was able to place them in transitional housing for six months through our community partner, A New Entry. During that time, they applied for a tiny home at Community First! Village, a housing program for chronically homeless individuals. In August 2024, they moved into their new home at Community First! Village, where they now plan to secure employment on site that will contribute towards their rent. Their journey exemplifies the resilience and dedication needed to overcome significant life challenges, and we're proud to have been part of their success!

Person- and Family-Centered Approach to Services:

An individual engaged with DACC walk-in case management in early May for assistance with rental application and financial assistance. They were being evicted at their apartment and transitioned to the 8th Street Shelter with their daughter. After seeking assistance multiple times for paying off past due rent and delinquent utilities without luck, they ended up finding a residence and DACC paid for the security deposit, and the individual was resourceful in finding a local church to pay their delinquent utility and rental balance. They moved into their new place in August. Throughout this process, multiple DACC case managers assisted the mother, father, and daughter in the family. When they accessed our Walk-in Case Management services, other case managers would provide support by spending time with their daughter while the mother's active case manager worked toward her goal of getting housed.

Multi-Disciplinary Approach to Housing and Services:

Through working with DACC's Rapid Rehousing (RRH) services, an individual demonstrated remarkable progress in their journey towards a healthier and more stable life. After struggling with heroin addiction for many years, this individual took a courageous step forward by initiating mental health services with Integral Care, where they successfully engaged with their methadone clinic. Through consistent effort and determination, this individual has significantly improved their interpersonal relationships and

now enjoys regular, meaningful connections with their family, including their children. With support from DACC, they secured a housing voucher, which has provided them with the long-term stability they need to continue thriving.

Long-Term and Compassionate Services:

One client has a history of many ups and downs since their first check in with DACC's Walk-in Case Management in April of 2021, with some situations escalating due to an untreated mental health diagnosis. Despite the mental health setbacks and various incarcerations, this client was successfully able to enroll in DACC's Rapid Rehousing program, obtain all of their vital documents, secure medical insurance, attend much needed medical appointments and begin their journey to file a Social Security claim. While progress with this client is slow, it remains steady, at a pace that works for and with them. The latest win for this client is being offered a housing interview for Community First! Village. The client is currently incarcerated, but with DACC's case managers continued work with their legal team, there is hope that they will be released to treatment and a housing opportunity.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Responsible for special projects and support for all DACC units, administration for the department, internal and external communications, technology support, community engagement, support for the DACC Advisory Board, and social service contracting.

This unit also facilitates and supports the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council (AHAC), which is a group of approximately 15 people with lived experience who meet biweekly to provide input on policies, programs, and practices impacting people experiencing homelessness.

SUPPORT SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

THE DATA MAXIMIZATION (DATAMAX) PROJECT

DataMax is in progress to create a cohesive, departmentwide data strategy which will include goals set by staff, plus actions, parameters, and

system infrastructure created with input from staff and external stakeholders.

Community Services Unit

Project efforts thus far have included a Microsoft SharePoint revitalization, digitizing forms to enhance data collection for the Community Service Unit, refining our reporting processes pertaining to jurisdiction expansion and performance measures, acquisition of data visualization tools, investigation into alternative ways to collect and increase customer satisfaction data, and procurement of a new data software to enable the Homeless Services Unit to track, input, analyze and report data.

Plans for FY 2025

Immediate next steps are a demographic deep dive and overall data inventory to ascertain which data should be collected that isn't already, without creating administrative burden. Goals for 2025 include creation of a departmental data policy outlining quality standards and processes, implementation of a data-specific training calendar, and incorporating an external data-sharing dashboard to enhance our storytelling capabilities. An ideal future state will have all components in place so data can be processed and analyzed with intention.

NEW HOMELESS SERVICES SOFTWARE

As part of the DataMax project, DACC has procured a new data software tool that will effectively

accommodate the data gathering, usage, and reporting needs of the Homeless Services Unit.

Selection Process

Bonterra, formerly known as Apricot, was selected out of eight software tools. Options were considered if they were already in use by a partner agency or other City department and had a strong online presence showing relevant alignment with the needs of the Unit. An intentional procurement process was utilized in discussions with agencies who used each option as their primary means of collecting, analyzing, and distributing data.

Strengths of Bonterra

- Trusted by multiple community partners
- Social service oriented and scalable
- Can integrate with Tableau, SharePoint, and HMIS
- Offers long-term technical support
- Possesses a vast capability to customize reporting
- User-friendly platform in line with staff desires
- Enhanced ability to capture and share the holistic work performed by the Homeless Services Unit
- Streamlining intake and referral processes

Council Approval Obtained

DACC staff learned that ATCEMS were submitting a contract amendment for City Council approval on August 28th and subsequently DACC was able to join that amendment to access this resource.

NEXT STEPS

As of September 19, 2024, the contract has been signed, funds have been encumbered, and we await next steps to begin the build out and implementation phase which will be followed by data migration from our Court case management platform, eCourt. Thank you to **Bailey Gray**, Business Process Specialist, for all of her work to identify the best option and work collaboratively with ATCEMS to bring this new, much needed resource to DACC!



DACC NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION (NEO)

After months of planning and preparation, led by **Bailey Gray**, Business Process Specialist, DACC officially has a DACC-specific NEO for our new employees. This is intended to supplement the training provided by the City and Austin Municipal Court, to enhance employees' knowledge of the work done across our department, resources available to support staff, and create connections with DACC leadership early on. The first round was a huge success, and in FY25 all current DACC employees, in addition to new employees, will have the opportunity to participate in this training to make sure everyone has access to the same information.



COURT NAVIGATION TRAINING

Mobile Court staff prototyped a newly developed DACC Navigation Training for community partners with Endeavors case managers at the Marshalling Yard Emergency Shelter in partnership with the City of Austin Homelessness Strategy Office. This training equips service providers and advocates, along with their clients and peers, with the knowledge and tools to identify open cases, check case status, attend court, and meet case requirements to resolve cases.

Training goal is to increase capacity, transparency, and empowerment in court processes, helping individuals resolve their cases successfully without disrupting services, stability, or their housing journey, and support case managers in the interim between and after Mobile Court events. DACC is grateful to **Sarah Rodriguez**, Business Process Specialist, for leading this effort and innovating how we share information about our services and processes!

SOCIAL SERVICE SOLICITATIONS CONDUCTED IN FY24

Two solicitations for Permanent Supportive Housing Location and Financial Support Services, and Representative Payee and SOAR Application Assistance Services were conducted to continue current services, in line with the City's procurement practices to conduct competitive solicitations for services. Following successful processes, the City Council approved agreements with community providers to ensure these critical services for DACC clients continue to be available. Solicitations are time intensive processes, and DACC is grateful to **Edna Staniszewski**, Business Process Specialist, for taking the lead on developing these solicitations, with support from **Chris Anderson**, Court Operations Manager, and **Bailey Gray**, Business Process Specialist.

SUPPORT SERVICES DATA

Number of Social Service Contract Payments Processed:

153

Amount of Social Service Contract Payments Processed:

\$6,619,419



SUPPORT SERVICES SUCCESS STORIES

Operational Quality and Efficiency:

In FY24 , DACC identified, and corrected monthly reports related to warrants, worked to develop a pilot for an automated notification letter process in collaboration with AMC, and worked to align court language across DACC and AMC for warrant warning documentation to ensure consistency. DACC is appreciative to **Tammy Taylor**, IT Application Analyst, for continually looking for proactive ways to improve operational practices, and looks forward to continued improvements to be made in FY25.

Paid Internship Support for Data Practices:

DACC provides paid internship opportunities as a result of feedback from DACC's Equity Team. These positions provide workforce development opportunities for interns, while providing support for service and administrative needs for the department. **Fernanda Veloz Salas** served as a Support Services intern, with a focus on data practices. She learned new systems and developed new ways to visualize data, including soliciting feedback from the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council and the DACC Advisory Board. Her efforts will help enhance and advance DACC's broader DataMax efforts and builds in community feedback to help us provide information that effectively shares our story while ensuring transparency with stakeholders.



AHAC HIGHLIGHTS

IN REMEMBRANCE OF SHARAE WALKER

Sharae Walker, who served on AHAC since 2019, passed away in early October. Sharae had a B.S. in Behavioral Science from the University of California, Los Angeles, and worked her entire adult life. She was originally from Los Angeles, and lived in Austin since 1980. AHAC provided Sharae an opportunity to give back, where she aimed to show people that there is always hope through her work with AHAC and through sharing her personal experiences. She appreciated how close knit AHAC Members are as a group, and enjoyed AHAC's work on helping to develop the Violet KeepSafe Storage Program. In her free time, Sharae enjoyed crocheting, reading, and swimming. Sharae's work on AHAC was invaluable, and she is deeply missed.



NEW MEMBERS

After conducting a recruitment process for new AHAC Members, which was co-created and co-conducted with AHAC Members, we have officially welcomed four new AHAC members: Denver G., Michael J., Susie B. and Tracey M. We appreciate our long-serving AHAC Members for their help presenting at information sessions and participating in interview panels and are grateful for the enthusiasm our new members

already brought to AHAC during their first few months of service on AHAC. AHAC will continue to be vital to informing our practices at DACC, and a critical resource for other City departments and community organizations as they seek lived expertise to inform development of policies, programs, and practices impacting individuals experiencing homelessness.

INPUT AND DEVELOPMENTS IN FY24

AHAC also provided input directly to DACC for our social service solicitations, Medication Storage Program, Mobile Court, onsite prescriber services, the Financial Information Form used in our court, and data visualization, collaborated with the Homeless Strategy Office on a variety of topics including Cold Weather Shelter, solicitation input, and resource prioritization. AHAC began quarterly meetings at ECHO to strengthen their collaborative relationship, and ensure they have a voice at the table when issues related to our community Homelessness Response System are being discussed. AHAC worked with an array of other City departments and community organizations, developed AHAC Values and Group Agreements, and are in the process of publishing a "Zine" to bring messages of hope to people in our unhoused community.

AHAC DATA

Hours of Input Gathered from
Austin Homelessness Advisory
Council Members:

615

03

DACC OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

DACC strives to continually evolve to meet community needs, foster a positive working environment for our staff and a welcoming environment for the people we serve, and share best practices with other organizations across the country. Below are highlights of these efforts in FY 2024.

DACC STRATEGIC PLAN

DACC embarked on a departmentwide strategic planning effort at the beginning of FY24 , working collaboratively across the department, to ensure our mission, values, and strategic pillars reflect the incredible services we provide the Austin community, and plan specific goals to further enhance our services, working environment, and approach to serving the Austin community.

New DACC Mission Statement: To empower people to thrive by providing impartial justice and compassionate community-based services.

Mission statements serve as a guiding light for organizations, providing a clear and concise statement of values and goals. It helps align efforts, is inspirational, communicates commitment to the community being served, and helps provide guidance in fulfilling responsibilities effectively. As a result of the strategic planning process, DACC officially has a new mission statement which succinctly and wholly encompasses DACC.

CORE VALUES

- TRUST
- EQUITY
- INTEGRITY
- ACCESSIBLE
- COLLABORATIVE

STRATEGIC PILLARS

- TRAUMA-INFORMED
- PERSON-CENTERED
- INNOVATIVE
- OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

NEXT STEPS

At DACC's Annual Retreat in September, all staff workshopped ideas for how to approach reaching goals aligned with our Core Values and Strategic Pillars, and then helped to prioritize what we should work toward first. DACC will continue this collaborative process and working toward goals in FY 2025.



SHARING BEST PRACTICES

DACC AS A NATIONAL LEADER

MENTOR COURT

The Center for Justice Innovation (CJI), through the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Community Courts Initiative (CCI) Mentor Court program, selected DACC as a mentor court, with CJI citing DACC's excellence and dedication to community justice aligning perfectly with the goals of the CCI program. As a selected mentor court, DACC's invaluable expertise and proven success in community court operations will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of community court programs. As a mentor court, we are providing support to a cohort of community courts over a two-year period that are assigned to DACC. We meet with them monthly to help address challenges, share resources and best practices, and provide guidance, to facilitate relationship-building and peer-to-peer exchanges.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE MENTAL HEALTH LEARNING SITE

DACC was selected as one of ten communities to be an inaugural partner for the Criminal Justice Mental Health Learning Site Program (Program). The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)'s Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program recently launched this Program to help improve outcomes for people with behavioral health needs in the criminal justice system. The Program is built around sharing best practices and successful

strategies to ensure that advancements made by these learning sites can be replicated and scaled across the country. DACC's current model focuses on both deflection and diversion, making DACC an ideal learning site for this Program. DACC is honored and excited to be recognized as a national leader and welcomes the opportunity to continue to share our practices with other communities looking to serve people effectively and compassionately.

CONFERENCES & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

DACC PRESENTED AT THE TEXAS CONFERENCE ON ENDING HOMELESSNESS

Chris Anderson, Court Operations Manager, **Yvonne Mboss**, Clinical Case Manager Supervisor, and **Sarah Rodriguez**, Business Process Specialist led a panel at this conference highlighting DACC's Clinical Diversion Program and Mobile Court Program, sharing lessons learned with the creation and operation of these programs as well as best practices around data. This presentation was well received and provided to a variety of communities across Texas.



ALL RISE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Chris Anderson, Court Operations Manager, **Rachel Butler**, Clinical Case Manager, and **Chad Hejl**, Clinical Case Manager, attended the RISE24 Conference, which is the only national conference for treatment court professionals. Staff coordinated strategically to attend sessions most relevant to DACC's work, and then presented what they learned to their colleagues at DACC's Annual Retreat. DACC is appreciative to Chris, Rachel and Chad for taking this professional development opportunity, and leveraging what they learned by creating learning opportunities for the rest of our team.



Mentor Court Site Visit: DACC is serving as a Mentor Court for three communities including Dane County, WI, Las Vegas, NV, and Paterson, NJ. On September 24, representatives from each of these communities, along with the Center for Justice Innovation who oversees the Mentor Court program, visited DACC to learn about our practices to help inform enhancements in their own programs. DACC values all of our staff that presented and made our guests feel welcome. We heard great feedback about their experience and look forward to continued collaborations with them in the months to come!



DEPARTMENTWIDE EFFORTS

EQUITY TEAM

DACC's Equity Team meets quarterly with DACC's Leadership Team to implement recommendations included in DACC's Equity Assessment process, and to provide

guidance on equity issues for the department as a whole. The Equity Team has directly impacted DACC operations, including the creation of a paid internship program, bringing a prescriber onsite for clients, and contributing to the process to develop opportunities for staff, such as the new stipend available for Court Clerk certifications.

New Members: The Equity Team welcomed Bailey Gray, Eliot Pozehl, and Sarah Rodriguez in March – DACC values our expanded team and continued dedication from our long-serving members. All staff continue to be welcome to propose topics for the Equity Team to discuss.

CELEBRATIONS AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE



DACC's Celebrations and Activities Committee is dedicated to fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. By organizing engaging activities and events, the Committee aims to build a strong foundation for teamwork and camaraderie among staff. These efforts not only celebrate individual and collective achievements but also create opportunities for open communication, trust, and mutual support. Through

this initiative, DACC continues to cultivate a workplace where collaboration thrives, helping staff stay motivated and connected while achieving the court's broader mission. DACC is proud of **Edna Staniszewski**, Business Process Specialist, **Ana George**, Clinical Case Manager, **Jennifer O'Bannon**, Clinical Case Manager and **Joe Chavez**, Crew Leader, for leading this effort and building a culture of support and operational excellence.



NEW COLLABORATIONS

COMMUNITYCARE HEALTH CENTERS

Beginning in November 2023, CommUnityCare began providing services onsite at DACC for clients on a biweekly basis. Access to clinical staff includes a primary care physician, advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), case manager, medical admitting clerk, clinical pharmacist and/or dietician. Onsite services include performing health care screenings and clinical examinations,

in addition to providing all supplies required for clinical interventions performed at DACC. This valued partnership had helped increase access to vital medical care and reduce barriers to accessing services. DACC and CommUnityCare are exploring options to bring these services onsite for clients on a weekly basis in 2025.

MENTAL HEALTH DIVERSION PILOT

The Mental Health Diversion Pilot (Pilot) is a collaboration between City of Austin, led by DACC, Travis County, Central Health, and Integral Care. The Pilot will leverage existing programs and facilities to expand community services to immediately address unmet deflection and diversion needs and provide members of the community experiencing behavioral health crises with access to services.

DACC manages the City's investment through an interlocal agreement with Integral Care to provide services for the Therapeutic Respite Center portion of the Pilot. City funds will be used for services consistent with our current investments, including housing-focused case management, peer support, and operational expenses.

BLACK MEN'S HEALTH CLINIC COLLABORATION

This first-of-its-kind health clinic aims to address the long-time care gap for men of color. The name Black Men's Health Clinic is intended to remind us of the inequities men of color experience and represent the organization's commitment to addressing them. This organization already has

a formalized partnership with CommUnityCare Health Centers, which provides onsite services at DACC. We are working to bring Black Men's Health Clinic onsite at DACC on select days to expand the resources available for our clients.

WORK STUDY PROGRAM & PAID INTERNSHIPS

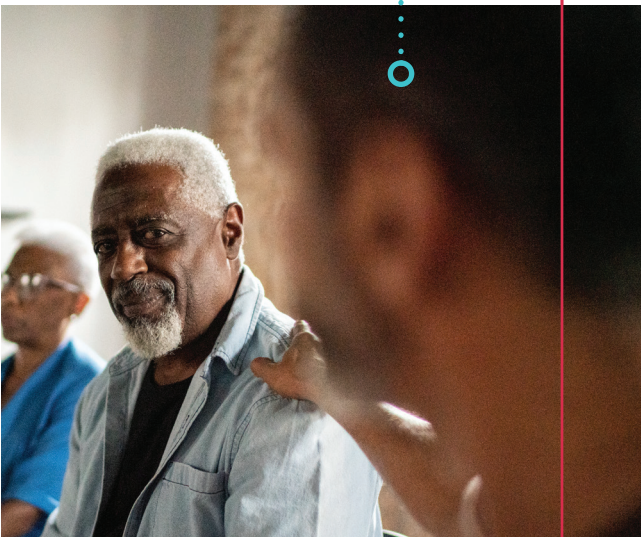
DACC PARTICIPATION IN WORK STUDY PROGRAM

As of July 26, DACC has been approved as a Federal Work Study Site for University of Texas at Austin students. **So Yong Kim**, Clinical Case Manager, **Yvonne Mboss**, Clinical Case Manager, **Jenna Pywell**, Clinical Case Manager, and **Chris Anderson**, Court Operations Manager, represented DACC at the UT Austin Work-Study & Part Time Job Fair in August, and the position was posted on UT's platform, through which DACC received 76 applications. The

top two candidates have been identified following an interview process and are expected to start at the beginning of FY25.

HOW IT WORKS

Students are hired by UT Austin and DACC at the same time; Federal Work Study pays up to \$3,500 per semester for their work and DACC pays the remaining balance. This approach creates great opportunities for students while providing critically needed support for our department. Thank you, **So Yong Kim** for your leadership and bring this support for DACC online and create new opportunities for students!





EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

DACC staff nominate and vote for an employee each quarter for doing a standout job. Here are the winners for FY 2024, including the nomination that was submitted:



Q1:
Mandy Rama
Homeless Services

PRIDE value:
Innovation & Sustainability

Nomination:
Mandy was DACC's first Clinical Diversion Program (CDP) Case Manager and helped pave the trail for CDP with Yvonne. Mandy is kind, fearless, and takes new adventures head on. Mandy is warm and caring with clients while also being honest and realistic. Mandy is a wonderful human being, advocate and coworker.



Q2:
Jeff Sounalath
Homeless Services

PRIDE value:
Responsibility & Accountability

Nomination:
Jeff housed a client who felt her apartment had mold. Jeff assisted the client with advocating for herself with the property. The client had the apartment tested for mold and did find some non-dangerous mold. The client continued to feel uncomfortable living in the apartment and requested to be released from her lease. The property denied the request. This caused the client's mental health to deteriorate. Jeff assisted client with contacting and working with the Office of Civil Rights. This was a lengthy process and required significant clinical intervention in assisting the client through this process. The Office of Civil Rights ruled in the client's favor. She was able to be removed from her lease without penalty and the property was instructed to reimburse her for the mold testing, moving expenses, and furniture. Jeff's work advocating for this client and providing guidance for the client to advocate for herself, resulted in a very positive outcome.



Q3:
Laura Williamson
Support Services

PRIDE value:
Responsibility & Accountability

Nomination:
Laura is a collaborative and approachable team member who fosters a positive working environment and has proven to be an invaluable asset to the Downtown Austin Community Court. Laura's contributions have not only enhanced our operational efficiency but also positively impacted the community we serve. Despite Laura's role being more internally focused, she never loses sight of the ultimate goal: ensuring our clients receive the resources they need.



Q4:
Bailey Gray
Support Services

PRIDE value:
Responsibility & Accountability

Nomination:
Bailey has consistently demonstrated outstanding dedication, professionalism, and leadership in her role at the Downtown Austin Community Court. Bailey's contributions have significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of our court operations. She has a remarkable ability to manage complex tasks while maintaining a high level of accuracy and attention to detail. Her proactive approach to problem-solving has helped streamline processes, benefiting both our team and the clients we serve. In addition to her technical skills, Bailey is an exceptional team player.

She is always willing to go the extra mile to support her colleagues, offering assistance and guidance whenever needed. Her positive attitude and approachable demeanor have made her a vital part of our office culture, fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment. Bailey's commitment to the values of the Downtown Austin Community Court is evident in her work ethic and dedication to our mission. Her efforts directly contribute to the success of our initiatives, and she consistently upholds the highest standards of service to the community.

YEARS OF SERVICE

The following staff received recognition and pins for reaching service milestones in FY24 :

- Kate Ballew**
5 years
- Ony'ea Davenport**
5 years
- Yvonne Mboss**
5 years
- Jenna Pywell**
5 years
- Laura Torres**
5 years
- Laura Williamson**
15 years



ANNUAL RETREAT

DACC held our annual retreat as an important opportunity for us to come together as a team, reflect on our achievements, and plan for the future. The retreat was filled with team-building activities, discussions, and trainings aimed at enhancing our collaboration and effectiveness in the community. DACC is grateful to Chris Anderson for taking the lead on developing a substantive and enjoyable agenda, and for staff who prioritized this day together. This annual retreat isn't specific to only DACC staff, but also includes staff from other departments who contribute to the mission of DACC: APD Court Security, Law Department prosecutors, AMC Human Resources, AMC Financial Services, AMC Information Technology Services, and our contract security team from Starside Security.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

PROCLAMATION TO CELEBRATE DACC'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

DACC's 25th Anniversary was on October 1, 2024, the first day of FY 2025. At the City Council meeting on September 26, 2024, a proclamation celebrating DACC's 25 years of services to Austin was sponsored by Council Member Harper Madison and presented by Council Members Vela and Qadri. As we move into FY 2025 and our 25th year of service, we continue to be motivated by the opportunity to transform lives and strengthen our community.



