

# THE 47<sup>th</sup> DISTRICT COURT'S MONTHLY SHOW CAUSE DOCKET PROGRAM

**REGION I  
COLLECTIONS TRAINING  
2008**

## INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of this session is to demonstrate one possible collection program.
- Our presentation outlines the details of the 47<sup>th</sup> District Court's collection program.
- Collection programs can vary in terms of cost. Our program is a low cost program.

## MONTHLY SHOW CAUSE DOCKET PROGRAM RESULTS

- We started in 2003 with 900 cases divided among seven dockets (one per month); to date we have processed 14,067 cases on 61 dockets with the following results:

MONTHLY SHOW CAUSE DOCKET STATISTICS	
2003 - 2007 Totals	\$ 3,001,837.15
2003 - 2007 Monies Waived	\$ 309,917.21
2003 - 2007 Balance	\$ 2,691,919.94
2003 - 2007 Payments	\$ 1,492,279.20
2003 - 2007 Uncollected Balance	\$ 1,199,640.74
Contempt Fees Paid	\$ 311,951.40
2003 - 2007 Grand Total of Monies Paid	\$ 1,804,230.60
Total Number of Cases	14,067

## SHOW CAUSE DOCKET PROGRAM DETAILS

- Not all cases are heard by the Judge.
- 30-33% pay before the show cause date.
- 10% appear on the show cause date.
- 57-60% go to bench warrant status to be paid and closed in future months.
- At this time, 93% of our bench warrant cases from 2003 have been paid and closed out.

## HOW WE MAKE THE PROGRAM WORK

- We made it manageable and simple.
- One docket per month.
- 1-2 hours in duration.
- 150-300 cases per month because we have the resources to do that. If you do not have the resources, start with a smaller amount of cases (25, 50, 75).

## HOW WE MAKE THE PROGRAM WORK (Cont'd.)

- Consistently schedule a monthly docket. It is tempting to skip a month around the holidays, but don't. The show cause date prompts action and 30% of cases pay before the court date. Without the date, you will lose the 30%.

## HOW WE MAKE THE PROGRAM WORK (Cont'd.)

- We know our future show cause dates in advance. We set one year at a time.
- We use the future dates as a payment tool. Pay \$X today, and you have until the next month's show cause date to pay off the balance in full. If paid, you do not need to reappear. If it is not paid and you do not show up, a bench warrant will be issued.

## HOW WE MAKE THE PROGRAM WORK (Cont'd.)

- Voluntary wage assignments work great. We offer to hold it back for a month before we mail to the employer. If they make payments, the employer is not notified. This has been a great tool.
- Most individuals do not want their employers to get involved.

## HOW WE MAKE THE PROGRAM WORK (Cont'd.)

- We try to work with the individuals.
- Late fees may be waived or where there are multiple tickets, will dismiss/close one ticket if other tickets are paid by a certain date.

## MAIN POINTS

- It is easy on the Judge. A maximum of two hours of judicial time per month is all it takes.
- Increases the credibility of the court and judicial system.
- High return on investment in terms of revenue and credibility with funding unit relationships.
- This program closes out cases compared to a notice only program. It prevents a backlog of unpaid receivables.

# SUMMARY

- A monetary sanction is a court order. If it is not paid, the integrity and credibility of the judiciary is called into question. Without compliance, offenders may believe they have beaten the system. The public may view the criminal justice system as ineffective because there was no follow through on the execution of sentences.
- Through this program, the court is taking responsibility for the enforcement of its orders.

# THE SHOW CAUSE DOCKET PROCESS

- The daily "20% Late" report is used to schedule cases for show cause docket (150-300 per month).

RUN DATE: 03/14/07  
 4TH DISTRICT COURT  
 31405 WEST ELEVEN MILE ROAD  
 FARMINGTON HILLS MI 48336  
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20% LATE PENALTY ASSESSMENT REPORT, NON-PROBATION CASES - ALPHABETIC

CASE NO.	TYPE	COUNT	NAME	C/W/F	CHARGE	DISP	DISP	ACTION	DISC	FINE & COSTS	RESTITUTION	PENALTY	BALANCE DUE
						DATE	CODE	DATE					
08484417A	01	1	ADAMS-BRANCH/FARES C		FROM TURN	01/22/07	19	1/16/07	DUE DATE	201.00	.00	40.20	241.20
08484417C	01	1	ADAMS-BRANCH/FARES C		NO FPF INSBN	01/22/07	19	1/16/07	DUE DATE	225.00	.00	45.00	270.00
08484448	0K	1	ALEXANDER/FRERIE/ANN C		HANDICAP FK	12/18/06	23	1/16/07	ADJ TO PAY	25.00	.00	5.00	30.00
08484458	01	1	BA/OMAR/		SPD 21.25 OV	01/16/07	19	1/16/07	INFORMAL HRO	240.00	.00	49.20	289.20
08484484	01	1	CANNON/DIANA/DELOE C		IMP DIS PLAT	01/22/07	19	1/16/07	DUE DATE	235.00	.00	40.20	275.20
08484492	01	1	COFFEY/MICHAEL/AND C		NO FPF INSBN	01/22/07	19	1/16/07	DUE DATE	235.00	.00	40.20	275.20
08484492A	01	1	COFFEY/MICHAEL/AND C		NO FPF INSBN	01/22/07	19	1/16/07	DUE DATE	235.00	.00	40.20	275.20
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08484536	01	1	COFFEY/MICHAEL/AND C		NO FPF INSBN	01/22/07	19	1					

## THE SHOW CAUSE DOCKET PROCESS (Cont'd.)

- Show cause notices are mailed out with this payment flyer.
- Remember, about 30% pay before the show cause date.



## THE SHOW CAUSE DOCKET PROCESS (Cont'd.)

### Show Cause Day

- Set up check-in table outside the courtroom.
- Tickets are pulled upon sign-in and forwarded to courtroom clerk.
- Courtroom clerk prints a grand total financial screen.
- Cases are called in sign-in order.
- Courtroom clerk enters sentence into the computer “real time”.

## THE SHOW CAUSE DOCKET PROCESS (Cont'd.)

- Voluntary wage assignment forms are processed by check-in clerk as directed by the Judge.
- Remaining unpaid cases are processed for bench warrants.
  - Bench warrant printed.
  - Computer is updated.
  - Tickets are filed.

## THE SHOW CAUSE DOCKET PROCESS (Cont'd.)

- 20 bench warrants per day are sent to the Police Department.
- This was a lesson learned the hard way. When we first began the program, we didn't notify the PD in advance of the bench warrants that needed to be processed. As a result, instead of sending over 100 bench warrants at one time, we agreed to send over 20 per day.

## MY OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

- Most individuals leave our court saying “thank you” to the Judge. I believe most people really think they had a fair hearing. The Judge LISTENS to their story and tries to work with them, while at the same time holding them accountable.
- We have judicial involvement and commitment to the program--chances of success are much greater. If you have staff only programs, you will have limited results.

## MY OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM (Cont'd.)

- This program has built tremendous credibility with our City Managers and Council members.
- It's important to track your statistics so you can communicate your success to your funding unit. We wouldn't know that 30% pay beforehand and that 10% show up on the show cause date if we didn't track statistics. Or, that 93% of our 2003 bench warrant cases have been paid and closed.
- For us, we implemented this program at the same time we were having a downturn in traffic cases which usually means a drop off in revenue.
- The Show Cause program not only offset the drop in revenue, but it enabled the funding unit to budget for higher revenue numbers. During tough budget times, our court budget went untouched while other executive branch departments were forced to make changes.

## CONCLUSION

- Even though collection programs vary by cost--no cost, low cost, or significant cost, there is one critical element that must be recognized. That critical element is a court leader's time and commitment. Someone has to be responsible for a collections process. It is in the court and community's best interest for the court to improve this area of court operation.

## CONTACT US

- For questions about the program, call:  
Judge James Brady, or  
Stacy Parke, Deputy Court Administrator  
47<sup>th</sup> District Court  
31605 W. Eleven Mile Road  
Farmington Hills, MI 48336  
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