



TIMOTHY J. CRUZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PLYMOUTH DISTRICT

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

MAIN OFFICE:
166 MAIN STREET
BROCKTON, MA 02301
TEL: (508) 584-8120

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CONTACT: NATHAN LEDERMAN
(508) 584-8120

**PCDAO AWARDED \$1.6 MILLION GRANT TO EXPAND PLYMOUTH
COUNTY COMFORT DOGS PROGRAM WITH SUBSTANCE USE
PREVENTION FOCUS**

BROCKTON – The Plymouth County District Attorney’s Office was recently awarded \$1.6 million to further bolster the successful Plymouth County Comfort Dogs Program.

District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz developed the Plymouth County Comfort Dogs Program in 2021 to support and assist those in the community impacted by traumatic events, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and substance misuse. There are currently 22 trauma- and crisis-trained dogs and handlers in the program, with most of the comfort dog handlers embedded with departments through their roles as School Resource and Community Resource Officers.

The grant, received through the United States Department of Justice’s 2024 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Site-Based Program (COSSUP), will allow the Plymouth County District Attorney’s Office (PCDAO) to deploy five additional dogs throughout the county. The PCDAO will partner with High Point Treatment Center to increase substance use education and prevention programs for students in grades K-12 in the county. The grant will also make it possible to deploy the comfort dogs program to various events during National Prescription Drug Take Back Days.

“It is exciting and impressive to see how our comfort dogs program has taken flight over the past three years,” DA Cruz said. “I am grateful to the Department of Justice for seeing the value in our program and providing us with grant funding to continue to grow and expand our community outreach to support and help those in crisis throughout our county.”

The grant will allow for continuation of the work of Dr. Leslie Sattler with Bridgewater State University, who has been conducting research on the positive correlation between the Plymouth County Comfort Dogs Program and the community. This grant contains a special focus to study the well-being of youth with Adverse Childhood Experiences. With the swift success of our comfort dogs program, requests for

a comfort dog response in schools, at service provider agencies, and throughout the community have skyrocketed. With the program's current capacity limited, this grant will allow for handlers to maximize and prioritize outreach specifically focused on substance use prevention efforts.

In addition to the National Prescription Drug Take Back Days, PCDAO will coordinate with local law enforcement to offer other Drug Take Back events at police stations around the county, and will offer overtime funding to decrease the burden on police departments.

The funding allocated in this grant will also allow our office to utilize the Boys & Girls Club of Marshfield as a pilot program to structure and conduct after school programming with our comfort dogs. Additionally, PCDAO will expand our educational reach to higher education by working with Bridgewater State University to conduct on-campus programming.