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**City of Duluth Communications Office**

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**DATE: 12/23/2009**

**SUBJECT: City implements driving diversion program**

**BY: Pakou Ly**

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## **City implements Driving Diversion Program**

Drivers without a valid license now have help. The Duluth City Attorney's office is taking a proactive approach to improving lives through a new two year pilot program that helps individual's regain a valid driver's license and pay off outstanding fines.

Prosecutors and law enforcement see a pattern where people without a valid driver's license continue to drive in order to get to work or meet the needs of their families. These individuals take the risk of driving and sometimes end up with additional tickets and fines. These fines can add up to thousands of dollars.

The goal of the program is to assist individuals without a valid license to earn back their legal driving status through a supervised payment plan, a life skills course, mandatory financial management, ensures individuals maintain car insurance, and enables people to get a temporary diversion license while enrolled in the program. The pilot program was approved by the legislature in July 2009 and runs till June 30, 2011, at which time the legislature will review the program. The program is administered by Financial Crime Services.

"This is a win-win situation for all citizens if we help people regain their dignity, independence, and the ability to improve their lives. The community benefits by having safe and responsible drivers on the roads," says Duluth City Attorney Gunnar Johnson.

Scott Adkisson, owner of Financial Crime Services (FCS) says the program was developed with support from the legislature and particularly Senator Yvonne Prettner Solon. Adkisson says, "This is a pilot program to support people who cannot get their licenses back due to financial challenges of paying hefty fines associated with a suspended or an invalid license.

The program helps people move on with their lives and be able to support their families.” This is a brand new program in Minnesota and there is no known equivalent in other states.

About 700 people have enrolled among the participating cities of St. Paul, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, and Inver Grove Heights. Duluth has 40-60 people being assessed for the program. Participants enroll through Financial Crime Services and pay a program participation fee of \$300.

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