



Contact: Diversion Strategies Group, 602-372-7300

Tobacco Education Diversion Program Overview:

Under the umbrella of the Maricopa County Attorney's Office (MCAO) Justice Court Diversion Programs and in partnership with the Arizona Attorney General's Office and the Arizona Department of Health Services, is a specific program for those individuals and/or businesses cited for the sale of tobacco related products to minors. The Tobacco Education Diversion Program began in May 2020. MCAO is committed to the efficient and just resolution of these citations assigned to the various justice courts. Benefits to diverting this specific type of offender include: allows offenders to gain insight into the harm their behavior caused, reduces the offender's contact with the criminal justice system, and holds the offender accountable for criminal conduct through their participation in an educational program.

How the Tobacco Education Diversion Program Works:

- Eligibility: will be determined by the Deputy County Attorney (DCA) for eligible offenses: misdemeanors and citations;
- The DCA is solely responsible for referring offenders to the Tobacco Education Diversion Program;
- Post-file cases only;
- Offenders will be referred to SAGE Counseling Inc., a community-based behavioral health organization;
- The offender has 90 days to complete diversion and will be given instructions on how to contact SAGE Counseling to schedule their class;
- SAGE Counseling must submit documentation to MCAO, supporting successful or unsuccessful completion; and
- If the offender successfully completes the Tobacco Education Diversion Program, the DCA will file a motion to dismiss the charges with prejudice. If the offender fails to successfully complete the Tobacco Education Diversion Program, the DCA will file a motion to reinstate prosecution.

The Education Class:

- The offender will contact SAGE Counseling, complete a brief intake over the telephone, and schedule a one-time, three (3) hour education class;
- Locations and class schedule vary throughout Maricopa County; some classes may be offered virtually;
- Payment is due at the time of service or may be prepaid through SAGE Counseling's client portal; and
- At the end of the class, offenders will receive a certificate of completion and SAGE Counseling will send verification to MCAO.
- Class Goals:
 1. Provide an overview of: youth tobacco use and purchasing practices, the current Arizona and Federal tobacco laws that restrict sales to minors, strategies to avoid sales to minors, how to comply with the law, how to avoid fines, and behavioral change concepts.
 2. Evaluate personal values and living with principles, and how this influences decision making.
 3. Recognize how faulty thinking patterns are related to criminal behaviors.