



**KING COUNTY**

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

**Signature Report**

**June 19, 2018**

**Ordinance 18752**

**Proposed No. 2018-0181.2**

**Sponsors Gossett, Lambert and Kohl-Welles**

1 AN ORDINANCE related to district court; allowing the use  
2 of county funds to provide incentive rewards with a  
3 financial value to participants in the therapeutic courts  
4 housed within district court as the district court budget  
5 permits; and adding a new section to K.C.C. chapter 2.68.

6 **STATEMENT OF FACTS:**

- 7 1. King County district court administers the regional mental health court  
8 and regional veterans court and is in the beginning stages of planning a  
9 community court.
- 10 2. Mental health courts started in 1997 and veterans courts in 2008. Both  
11 courts, a type of problem-solving and therapeutic courts, are being  
12 implemented in jurisdictions throughout the country with over two  
13 hundred fifty mental health courts and approximately two hundred  
14 veterans courts in existence. Community courts started in 1993 and are  
15 being replicated throughout the country with several dozen courts in stages  
16 of planning and implementation.
- 17 3. These specialized, therapeutic courts and associated programs, as  
18 established by King County government and King County courts, are a  
19 proven means to change behavior, reduce recidivism, and increase

20 productivity among program participants, thus saving taxpayer dollars in  
21 the short and long term.

22 4. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse: Treatment for  
23 Criminal Justice Populations Research Guide (September, 2007), a  
24 balance of rewards and sanctions encourages pro-social behavior and  
25 treatment participation. The contingency management approaches,  
26 utilized in treatment courts and evidence-based juvenile justice programs,  
27 require the provision of tangible incentive rewards, such as coffee cards,  
28 movie passes and similar rewards, and intangible incentive rewards such  
29 as praise and encouragement as rewards for constructive activities that are  
30 incompatible with crime and drug use, such as attending treatment,  
31 following program guidelines, attending school and obtaining  
32 employment. As is stated by a lead drug court researcher in the National  
33 Drug Court Institute Benchbook (February, 2011), "failing to reward  
34 accomplishments makes those accomplishments less likely to recur."  
35 According to the National Center for States Courts, veterans treatment  
36 courts "operate similar to other specialized courts:...rewards and sanctions  
37 are appropriately applied." Similarly, according to the MacArthur  
38 Foundation and the Council of State Governments Justice Center, in an  
39 article entitled Mental Health Courts: A Guide to Research-Informed  
40 Policy and Practice, "incentives reward adherence to the treatment plan or  
41 other court conditions, motivate continued engagement, and their use,  
42 paired with sanctions are considered one of the 10 Essential Elements of a

43 Mental Health Courts." According to an evaluation of the District of  
44 Columbia Super Court's East of the River Community Court in 2012, the  
45 program brought down rates of re-offending among misdemeanor  
46 defendants.

47 6. Taxpayers benefit significantly from cost benefits generated by  
48 therapeutic court programs and incentive rewards are an integral  
49 component to success in the programs. Use of incentives and rewards in  
50 evidence-based programs is a best practice. Use of incentives and rewards  
51 contributes to successful program participant outcomes and to the  
52 subsequent reduction in criminal recidivism and related cost savings to  
53 citizens.

54 6. The expenditure of county funds on incentive rewards to support  
55 juvenile court therapeutic programs and adult drug diversion court  
56 therapeutic programs serves a fundamental government purpose. In  
57 addition, incentive rewards are provided in consideration for successful  
58 achievement by program participants, and not with donative intent.

59 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

60 NEW SECTION. SECTION 1. There is hereby added to K.C.C. chapter 2.68 a  
61 new section to read as follows:

62 The district court is hereby authorized to use county funds to pay for incentive  
63 rewards for participants in its therapeutic court programs. The purpose of the incentive  
64 rewards shall be to recognize the achievement of programmatic successes and to  
65 encourage further participation and successful outcomes. The financial value of

66 individual incentive rewards may vary depending on the program and the circumstances  
67 that warrant the incentive. However, no single incentive reward shall exceed twenty-five  
68 dollars, unless approved in advance in writing by the district court chief administrative  
69 officer.  
70

Ordinance 18752 was introduced on 4/2/2018 and passed by the Metropolitan King  
County Council on 6/18/2018, by the following vote:

Yes: 9 - Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Lambert, Mr. Dunn,  
Mr. McDermott, Mr. Dembowski, Mr. Upthegrove, Ms. Kohl-Welles  
and Ms. Balducci  
No: 0  
Excused: 0

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

J. Joseph McDermott, Chair

ATTEST:

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council



APPROVED this 27 day of JUNE, 2018.

Dow Constantine, County Executive

**Attachments:** None