A new step for drug court
Transitional housing should boost the success rate of drug court

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Criminal Court Judge Seth Norman never stops thinking of ways to improve Nashville's drug court, and the city is the better for his attention.

The latest innovation in the successful program will come from a $500,000 federal grant. While operational costs for the drug court are included, the grant will also provide funding for a transitional house for those emerging from the program and heading back into society.

The house will provide more supervision than traditional half-way houses use for some court and drug programs. The drug court will start with a house for men of anywhere from eight to 10 beds and eventually add a house for the women in the drug court program.

The transitional housing may boost the drug court's already high success rate. Without strong supervision, some of those in the program stumble when they are released from drug court care. Norman says he has seen the transition from the drug court program to the outside world become a downfall for some. Stricter supervision at that critical juncture could be just the right approach for success.

Norman's drug court already has become a model for the state and the rest of the country for that matter. Nashville's drug court was cited by federal officials as a praise-worthy program. And Tennessee has a court aimed at methamphetamine use to follow in its footsteps.

But it's those caught in the grip of drug addiction and their families who have benefited the most. These are non-violent offenders given an option to clean up their act and abandon drug use if they get in the program. The court in Nashville claims a relapse rate of 25% compared to 67% to 70% nationwide. If the city can improve on that impressive record, it's doing an excellent job for addicts, their families and Nashville.