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ACCELERATED REHABILITATIVE DISPOSITION (ARD)

After criminal proceedings in a court case have been instituted, the District Attorney's Office of Chester County, upon application from the defendant, may request that the Court of Common Pleas of Chester County consider the case for the Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition (ARD) Program. The primary purpose of the ARD Program is the prompt disposition of charges, eliminating the need for costly and time consuming trials and other court proceedings. The ARD Program is available to certain carefully screened defendants, ordinarily first offenders, who lend themselves to treatment and rehabilitation rather than punishment, and who are unlikely to commit another crime.

The defendant will be considered for participation in the ARD Program, if the defendant has no history of prior delinquency or criminal activity, or has led a law-abiding life for a substantial period of time before the commission of the present crime. The defendant cannot be charged with a crime which involves firearms, drugs, violence, serious injury, offenses against the elderly or children, sexual offenses, or a breach of the public trust. The police officer involved with the case will have the opportunity to offer prior comment on the defendant's admission into the ARD Program. The victim of the crime will also have the opportunity to offer prior comment on the defendant's admission into the ARD Program, including the submission of a written victim impact statement detailing the physical, psychological and economic effects of the crime on the victim and the victim's family. The District Attorney's Office may also determine that there are other circumstances concerning the case or the defendant which disqualify the defendant from participation in the ARD Program. There is no right to participate in the ARD Program and eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis, and is within the discretion of the District Attorney's Office.

Acceptance into and satisfactory completion of the ARD Program offers the defendant an opportunity to earn a clean record and dismissal of the pending charges. However, should the defendant fail to satisfactorily complete the ARD Program, the defendant will be removed from the ARD Program and will be prosecuted as provided by law.