

Capriati story

MIAMI (AP) - Jenifer Capriati will enter a drug-counseling program to settle a misdemeanor marijuana possession charge, authorities said Monday.

If the 18-year-old tennis star completes the program, the charge could be removed from her record after a year, said Assistant State Attorney Peter Paulousky.

"Isn't she a good risk for completion of this program," he said. "If all conditions of the program are successfully concluded, normal routine procedure is for the state to expunge her record against her."

Capriati's attorneys and agent did not immediately return calls for comment.

After her May 16 arrest at a Coral Gables motel, Capriati spent 23 days in a substance abuse program at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach.

Her lawyers unarninously attributed her misfortune to a misplaced sense of comraderie. They said she views her arrest in front of a not of onlookers as a Godsend and that she didn't waiver in her conviction to choose a better set of friends.

One of the people with her when she was forceably arrested was charged with heroin possession and another with possession of crack cocaine and drug paraphernalia. Under the deal Capriati struck with prosecutors, she would attend programs offered by The Advocate, a nonprofit agency used by Dade County courts to dispose of minor criminal cases.

Dade County refers 25,000 to 30,000 such cases a year to The Advocate, said Ruben Valdivia, the agency's supervisor of court services.

Those who enroll "have to take educational courses geared to the offense that they're charged with," Valdivia said.

Capriati was a 13-year-old phenonemon when she joined the professional tennis circuit, She did it all without waisted motion and with a self-assured flare that comes from years of practice.

But Caprioti had struggled with her game recently and had left the professional tour last year after losing in the first round of the U.S. Open.

Her father has said she will return to professional tennis.