

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

Release Date:
February 13, 2020

Contact: Julie Hodek, Public Information Officer
United States District Court for
the Northern District of Illinois
219 S. Dearborn St., #2548
Chicago, IL 60604
312-435-5693

District Court Honors Graduates of the Judge Rubén Castillo Sentencing Options that Achieve Results (SOAR) Program

Collaborative initiative of U.S. District Court, U.S. Pretrial Services, Federal Defender Program and U.S. Attorney's Office graduates five federal pretrial defendants

Chicago, Ill. – Today the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois honored a new class of graduates of the Judge Rubén Castillo Sentencing Options that Achieve Results (SOAR) Program.

“On behalf of the court, I congratulate SOAR Program graduates for the progress they have made in living productive and meaningful lives that uplift their families and the greater community. I am also so proud to see the SOAR Program flourish and continue to provide a responsible and compassionate alternative to incarceration in our district,” said Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

“The SOAR Program Team is inspired by and proud of this class of SOAR participants. Through hard work and determination, they have made remarkable strides toward becoming healthy, law-abiding, and productive members of the community,” said Circuit Judge Amy J. St. Eve, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

In today’s ceremony, Circuit Judge Amy J. St. Eve and District Judge Mary M. Rowland spoke about each of the five graduates. Rubén Castillo, Chair of Akerman Bench at Akerman, LLP and former Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court Northern District of Illinois, delivered a keynote address to the graduates.

Through treatment, sanction alternatives, and incentives to reinforce positive behavior, the SOAR program provides an alternative to incarceration for federal pretrial defendants.

Participants in the SOAR program meet in bi-monthly court sessions with members of the SOAR Team to discuss each participant's progress in his or her efforts to succeed: sobriety, constructive employment, education, crime-free and productive lifestyle. SOAR provides a higher level of supervision, programming, and judicial oversight for participants through a collaborative team approach, which involves judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, pretrial services officers and treatment providers. Participation in the SOAR program lasts from eighteen to twenty-four months. Successful completion of the program results in the imposition of a non-custodial sentence. The U.S. Attorney's Office may also reduce the felony to a misdemeanor conviction or possibly dismiss the criminal charges.

Established in October 2016, SOAR was created through the collaborative partnership of the United States District Court, the United States Pretrial Services Office, the Federal Defender Program, and the United States Attorney's Office. Members of the SOAR team include U.S. Circuit Judge Amy J. St. Eve; U.S. District Judge Mary M. Rowland; Amanda Garcia, Chief U.S. Pretrial Services; Vicki Kindred Meredith, Deputy Chief U.S. Pretrial Services; Patrick J. May, U.S. Pretrial Services Officer; Carla Tramonte, Pretrial Services Officer; Meghan Morrissey, Executive Assistant United States Attorney; Shoba Pillay, Assistant United States Attorney; Christina Farley Jackson, Deputy Director, Federal Defender Program; and Geoffrey Meyer, Staff Attorney, Federal Defender Program.

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