

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
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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 7 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.

“It is a joyous day for our Court and for the community as we congratulate this class of graduates of the SOAR Program. Today I congratulate you on your hard work toward living productive, law-abiding lives. I wish you success and happiness in the future. I am also grateful to our dedicated SOAR Program. Because of their diligence, our district can provide this compassionate alternative to incarceration,” said Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

“On behalf of the SOAR Program Team, I am extremely proud of this class of SOAR participants. Despite many challenges, this group of graduates has been steadfast in working toward their individual goals and becoming healthy, law-abiding, and productive members of our community,” said District Judge Mary M. Rowland.

In today's ceremony, District Judges Jorge L. Alonso and Mary M. Rowland and Magistrate Judge Beth W. Jantz spoke about each of the graduates. Willette Benford, Director of Re-Entry for the City of Chicago, delivered the 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 Jorge Alonso, U.S. District Judge; Mary Rowland, U.S. District Judge; Beth Jantz, U.S. Magistrate Judge; Meghan Morrissey, Executive Assistant United States Attorney; Charles "Chip" Mulaney, Assistant United States Attorney; David Rojas, Assistant United States Attorney; Christina Farley Jackson, Deputy Director, Federal Defender Program; Geoffrey Meyer, Appellate Chief, Federal Defender Program; Patrick May, Supervisory Pretrial Services Officer; Jeff Arias, Pretrial Services Officer Specialist; Kara Murphy, Law Clerk to U.S. District Judge Mary M. Rowland; and A.J. Squillante, Courtroom Deputy to U.S. Magistrate Judge Jantz.

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