

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
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District Court Honors First Class of Graduates of 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 its first class of graduates of the Sentencing Options that Achieve Results (SOAR) program.

“Our court is proud that this innovative and compassionate program keeps non-violent offenders out of prison but still holds them accountable while keeping our community safe and saving tax payer dollars,” said Chief Judge Rubén Castillo.

“We are so proud of the incredible progress our first graduating class has made in living healthy, productive, and law-abiding lives,” said U.S. District Judge Amy St. Eve and member of the SOAR Team.

In today’s ceremony, U.S. District Judge Amy St. Eve and U.S. Magistrate Judge Mary Rowland spoke about each of the five graduates. Alex Kotlowitz; Chicago-based journalist, author, and filmmaker, best known for national bestseller “There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America;” offered keynote remarks 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. District Judge Amy St. Eve; U.S. Magistrate Judge Mary Rowland; Ann Marie Carey, Chief U.S. Pretrial Services; Vicki Kindred Meredith, Deputy Chief U.S. Pretrial Services; Carrie J. Holberg, Senior Officer U.S. Pretrial Services; Shoba Pillay, Assistant United States Attorney; Meghan Stack, Assistant United States Attorney; Robert Seeder, Chief Trial Attorney, Federal Defender Program; and Christina Farley Jackson, Staff Attorney, Federal Defender Program.

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