

Press Release

The United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts approved the start of a Court Assisted Recovery Effort (C.A.R.E.). C.A.R.E. will begin on Wednesday May 3, 2006. The approval of this pilot experimental program marks an unusual effort by the Court to actively oversee defendants under the supervision of the Probation Office. The program is one of the first of its kind in a federal court in the United States. C.A.R.E aims to decrease recidivism and help persons convicted of crimes by combating drug addiction through a unique partnership among the various participants in the criminal justice system.

In the federal system, the Probation Office supervises every defendant upon his or her release from prison. Typically a defendant comes before a judge only when there is a request to return the defendant to jail. Many of these defendants are addicted to illegal drugs which often contributes to recidivism. Addressing the treatment of these persons on supervision and the many supervision violations they commit presents an ongoing challenge for the Probation Office and drain on its resources as well as requiring a large number of revocation hearings in court.

C.A.R.E represents a significant change from present practices. Defendants participating in the voluntary program must appear every week before a judge to review their activities as well as participate in intensive substance abuse treatment and supervision. C.A.R.E. blends treatment and sanction alternatives to address offender behavior, rehabilitation, and the safety of our communities. The C.A.R.E program expects and encourages defendants to take responsibility for their addiction and their lives. The weekly court appearances enable the Court to address, promptly, relapses or other early signs of problems with individualized sanctions geared to promote recovery and law abiding behavior. For successful defendants the court appearances provide positive reinforcement and an opportunity to earn advancement through the program culminating in graduation.

The goal of the C.A.R.E program is to reduce the number of revocation hearings in Court, improve compliance with conditions of release by these defendants, decrease recidivism and use treatment resources more efficiently. By providing more judicial supervision and earlier intervention, C.A.R.E. offers the Probation Office an additional effective program that may lead to better results and a smaller number of hearings.

C.A.R.E is the result of a cooperative effort by the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts and the U.S. Probation Office to address the problems posed by the many drug addicted defendants under supervision and being released from prison. The unique program has drawn the support of prosecutors and defense attorneys. Both the United States Attorneys Office and the Federal Public Defender's Office supported the creation of the program. Each of those offices has also assigned a lawyer to appear at the weekly court sessions.

Fur further information about C.A.R.E contact United States Magistrate Judge Leo T. Sorokin (617-748-4231).