

United States District Court Eastern District of Washington
Sobriety Treatment and Education Program
A Collaborative Reentry Court
Addressing Substance Addiction

The Sobriety Treatment and Education Program [STEP] is a reentry program for individuals on federal supervision who have substance addictions.

Mission: The mission of the STEP Program is to identify high-risk, high-need persons¹ under supervision and utilizing a collaborative justice model, conduct a program following evidence based practices to facilitate reentry of the person into the community as a clean and sober, crime-free individual.

Goals: The goals of the STEP program are to reduce recidivism, protect the public and assist the participant to achieve long term sobriety and to become a positive and productive member of society.

History: The program began as a cooperative effort between the United States District Court, the United States Probation/Pretrial Services Office, the United States Attorney's Office, and the Federal Defender's Office. The initial program started in Spokane in June 2007, the seventh such federal reentry program in the United States. Additional programs began in Yakima in January 2009, and in the Tri-Cities in January 2011.

Description of the Program: The STEP Program is voluntary. If the participant satisfies the requirements of the Program that lasts at least 12 months, in most cases the participant's remaining term of supervision is reduced by one year. The participants meet with a STEP Team at least once a month. The program offers a creative blend of treatment, incentives, and sanctions. The Team is made up of a United States District Court/Magistrate Judge, a United States Probation Officer, an Assistant United States Attorney and a representative from the Federal Defenders. Treatment providers act as consultants to the Team.

Participants must work diligently to overcome addiction, to find and maintain employment, to reestablish relationships with family members, to pursue educational opportunities, and to make efforts to improve their overall health and well-being. One participant in recovery observed that "meth used to be the most important thing in my life." Relapses occur and some participants are able to learn from those events and move forward in treatment. Participants who are unable to make the necessary transitions are returned to regular supervision.

¹ Participants in Spokane in December 2010 had an average RPI of 8.47 on a scale of 1-9 and an average criminal history category of slightly above V on a scale of I - VI.

Outcomes: Participants have made dramatic life changes while in recovery by attending community college, living in their own apartments for the first time in years, taking leadership positions in clean and sober living situations, purchasing homes, regaining drivers' licenses, showing pride in their jobs, and setting long term goals related to their families, education and employment.

Forty participants had graduated from the Spokane program as of November 2010. Nine had graduated from Yakima. Preliminary data indicate a recidivism rate for participants significantly below that of individuals with comparable RPI scores. Recidivism is measured as revocation of supervision or return to custody due to new law violations.