



news

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Larimer County DUI Court celebrates its first graduation *Two participants set to graduate March 16*

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – The Larimer County DUI Court will celebrate its first graduating class on March 16, when two participants will mark their completion of the intensive monitoring and treatment program.

The court, which started in July 2010, is designed to rehabilitate high-risk, high-need repeat DUI offenders. Since its inception, 27 participants have entered the program after screening by the District Attorney’s Office and the DUI Court Team. To date, none have dropped out or been discharged due to noncompliance.

“The DUI Court team continues to be impressed with the commitment and effort shown by the participants,” said Magistrate Matthew R. Zehe, who presides over the Larimer County DUI Court. “It is gratifying for us as a team to see their hard work pay off. We’re confident that our first graduates will continue to apply in the community what they learned and worked toward in the program and that, as a result, they and their families, co-workers, and the larger community will be safer, healthier, and more prosperous.”

The court developed its treatment model with help from the National Center for DWI Courts, which emphasizes rehabilitating offenders through customized treatment programs, intensive supervision and regular in-court review hearings.

On average, participants have four to five prior DUIs upon entering the program. Participants must spend a minimum of 18 months in the program, which includes community service, DUI education, DUI therapy and group and additional therapy based on individual need. Sanctions, including jail time, may be imposed for noncompliance, and incentives such as public transportation vouchers may be awarded as encouragement to continue advancing in the program.

“The most important issue regarding people who commit multiple DUIs is that they have severe addiction issues, which is precisely what we address,” said 8th Judicial District Probation Supervisor Tracy Denmark. “DUI Court is not only about preventing people from continuing to drink and drive, it is about helping people repair the devastation that addiction has caused in their lives.”

Similar to other DUI courts in Colorado, the Larimer County DUI Court is a collaborative effort among state and local agencies including substance abuse treatment providers, law enforcement, the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, the Alternative Sentencing Department, the Probation Department, the Larimer Center for Mental Health, and the Colorado Judicial Branch.

Editor’s note: At least one of the graduates may be available for media interviews following the ceremony Friday. Magistrate Zehe and other members of the DUI Court team also may be available for interviews.