
RELAPSE PREVENTION COURT ANNUAL REPORT

March 2025 to March 2026

Relapse Prevention Court (RPC) is a voluntary program approved by the Board of Judges in March 2018 as an initiative to assist individuals with significant drug use histories and risk of relapse upon their release from federal custody.¹ The ongoing oversight by a probation officer who specializes in the field of drug treatment, as well as regular contact with a judicial officer, is intended to provide optimal services and resources for participants in recovery.

From the release of our last report for March 2025 through March 2026, the program has continued with its interdisciplinary team, and participants in various phases and stages of recovery, gathering every other Wednesday.² From March 2025 through the first quarter of 2026, there were twelve active participants. Four individuals graduated from the program and were honored in three graduation ceremonies that were held in April 2025, September 2025, and December 2025. Another graduation was acknowledged and took place in June 2025, but the participant did not want a formal ceremony. Three participants withdrew for various reasons.

This year RPC continued to expand the participant pool to include individuals at a higher risk of relapse, tailored services to meet each participant's needs, expanded services available to participants, including for the first time obtaining approval and receiving vouchers for housing for a participant through the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), and developed staff through national training.

RECOVERY SUPPORT THROUGH TESTING AND TREATMENT

In that the focus of our program is relapse prevention and abstinence from drug use, participants are obligated to submit to random drug testing. Between the twelve participants actively engaged in the program during this period, we administered 140 drug tests. We also screened for alcohol use, which is prohibited in certain cases via special condition based on the participant's history of alcohol use. We administered seven breathalyzer tests; all of those tests

¹ A comprehensive description of RPC, which details the genesis, organization, and administration of the program, is on the Eastern District of Pennsylvania website: <https://www.paed.uscourts.gov/relapse-prevention-court>.

² Team members include the Honorable Jeffrey Schmehl, the Honorable Craig Straw, Senior Probation Officer Katie Quinlin, DOJ Reentry Coordinator Mia Lamb, U.S. Attorneys Gerald Sullivan and Sarah Hansel, FPDs Timothy Wright, Maranna Meehan, Anna Kessler, Supervising U.S. Probation Officer Robert Scales, and Deputy Clerk Donna Croce. We also acknowledge the support and helpful interest from Chief Probation Officer Manuel A. Jimenez and Third Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Theodore McKee.

were negative. 113 of the 140 urine samples collected from March 2025 to the first quarter of 2026 were negative for the use of controlled and prohibited substances. 27 were positive for the presence of illegal substances. It is important to note that the increase in positive urine tests is a result of the program's efforts to expand the participant pool to include individuals that have shorter periods of sobriety or are in active addiction.

Additionally, the number of positive tests does not reflect the total level of use. At times individuals admit to additional usage and that was not captured in the sample collection. During the 2025-2026 period that is the subject of this report, there were ten admissions to drug use. 19 scheduled tests were missed due to a participant's failure to appear for the test. The team responded with court guidance, placement with behavioral health services, various support services to help alleviate daily living hurdles, and the Court imposed stricter conditions of release, including curfews.

Treatment remains a primary focus for participants. Counseling services are delivered to participants through a variety of providers in the community. Providers include: The Northeast Treatment Center (NET), Lehigh Recovery Center, Crossroads Treatment Center, Rehab After Work, PATH, VA, JFK Behavioral Health, Courage Medicine, and the Council for Relationships. Treatment is delivered in accordance with clinical standards, by licensed clinical providers, and at no cost to participants. Access to care and coverage is normally available through Medicaid. However, if an individual does not have Medicaid or other health insurance benefits, the U.S. Probation Office covers the cost of services at approved vendors. Treatment modalities for participants include cognitive behavioral therapy, psychiatric care and, if indicated, medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD). Participants received counseling on an outpatient basis which includes individual or group formats based upon the recommendation of clinical providers. Participants have reported positive results from attending counseling, not only in maintaining sobriety, but also in their lives and relationships.

Throughout the year, we have encouraged the use of peer support through attendance at AA and NA meetings as well as sponsorship. Most participants included peer support/contacting their sponsor in their five step trigger response plans. Notably, all participants included people, places, and things in their recovery plans, which is a strategy used in outpatient therapy, groups, and AA and NA meetings. This strategy is used by participants to avoid and handle triggers associated with people, places, and things to maintain their sobriety.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

RPC has been fortunate to share the resources and community partners that were established through the Supervision to Aid Reentry (STAR) Court. All participants received public benefit screenings upon intake with the DOJ Reentry Coordinator on the team. Additionally, emergency assistance funds are available to participants through the Luongo Fund.³ All participants are screened for benefits eligibility. From March 2025 to March 2026

³ District Court Judge Gerald A. McHugh established a fund (also a 501(c)(3)) initially dedicated to supporting the STAR reentry programs. In 2018, the fund was extended to help support RPC

four participants received money from the Luongo Fund for various purposes such as transportation, food, and SNAP during the government shutdown, totaling \$757.95.

Four participants received resume assistance from law clerk volunteers. One participant received assistance from Temple's Family Law clinic for assistance regarding a child support matter. Three participants received clothing donations from our community partner, Our Closet. Two participants were referred to Temple University's Small Business Development Center for assistance with small business planning. One received help with voter registration. Three participants received legal assistance from the reentry legal clinic and were assisted by a licensed attorney. The matters handled were state court costs and fines, identity theft, and work to restore a participant's driver's license and resolve traffic violations. Four participants were referred to RPC's financial literacy team in partnership with Temple University's Fox School of Business for help repairing/raising credit scores, small business account set up, budgeting, and credit report overview. One participant used the free reentry tax clinic run by community partner Temple University's VITA Clinic. Finally, all participants were provided a 2025 Tax Resource Guide that listed community organizations providing free tax preparation help throughout Philadelphia County. Additional other referrals were made to various partners by our Reentry Coordinator to assist with employment, college enrollment, family support, financial literacy, and housing.

Importantly, an exciting expansion of benefits also occurred during the period of this report. In 2014, the STAR Reentry Court received ten PHA Housing Choice Vouchers to give to qualified participants and graduates over a two-year period. These vouchers subsidize a substantial portion of their rent based on their income. The program has been extremely successful and in 2022, PHA expanded the program and provided STAR Reentry Court with an additional twenty Second Chance Housing Choice Vouchers. The expansion of vouchers to the STAR Reentry Court program has enhanced the lives of participants and their families by providing safe, stable, and affordable housing which otherwise is almost impossible to secure given the challenges participants face when returning home. The Second Chance Housing Choice Voucher program has been exclusive to STAR Reentry Court participants since the program's inception.

In September 2024, DOJ Reentry Coordinator Mia Lamb approached the PHA and proposed expansion of Second Chance Housing Choice Vouchers to RPC participants, given the success of the partnership with STAR Reentry Court, the increase in voucher size in 2022, and the identical need for RPC participants to secure safe, stable, and affordable housing upon returning home from federal incarceration. In February 2026, the PHA approved the proposed expansion of the Second Chance Housing Voucher program to RPC Court and its participants. Ms. Lamb is currently working with the first RPC participant referral for a Second Chance Housing Voucher. The expansion of the voucher program will have a significantly positive

and our district's STRIDES mental health court. The fund is dedicated to Judge McHugh's mentor, former Chief Judge Alfred L. Luongo. The Philadelphia Bar Foundation administers the fund. Money is used to assist participants with emergency expenses, such as housing deposits, education, and other costs that cannot be paid with Second Chance Act funds.

impact on RPC participants and their families by assisting in establishing independent and stable living.

An overview of our community partners and benefits offered to participants is as follows:



FINANCIAL ADVISING ASSISTANCE

*Conducted in partnership with the
Temple University Fox School of Business*

- Assistance with repairing and raising credit scores (one participant)
- Counseling regarding budgeting and credit report overview
- Help with starting small businesses including setting up account (two participants)
- Free reentry tax clinic hosted by Temple University's VITA Clinic (one participant)



BENEFITS SCREENING, RESUME ASSISTANCE & OTHER REENTRY NEEDS

- Reentry Law Clerk Volunteers assisted with resume review (four participants)
- Received emergency funds totaling \$757.95 through Luongo Fund (for transportation, food, SNAP during government shutdown)
- Clothing donations from community partner Our Closet (three participants – two bags each)



LEGAL ASSISTANCE

*Conducted with the assistance of
Volunteer Law Clerks*

- Resolving state court cost and fines
- Identity theft
- Driver's license restoration
- Traffic violations (Three participants total)
- Assistance with voter registration (one participant)



EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

- All participants received a 2025 Tax Resource Guide which lists community organizations providing free tax preparation throughout Philadelphia County

RPC PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

From March 2025 to March 2026, team members attended various training programs. The training programs included:

- *Injustice, Trauma, and Healing*, YSRP
- *Roles and Responsibilities*, All Rise
- *Proposed Cuts to SNAP and Medicaid: What' at Stake for Pennsylvania?*, PA Health Law Project
- *The Future of Reentry Programs and Policy*, CSG Justice Center
- *Medetomidine-An Emerging Adulterant Reshaping Toxicity and Withdrawal Management*

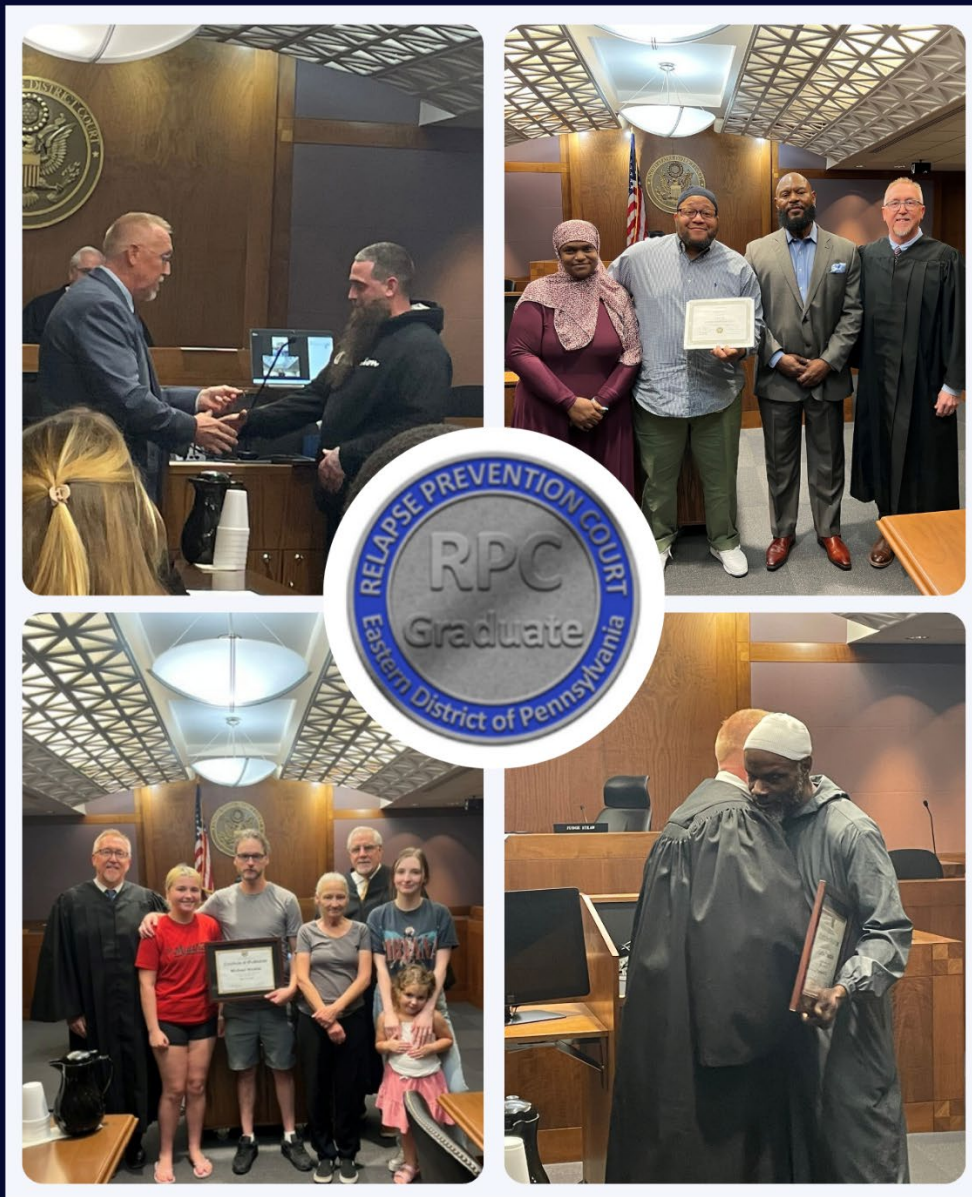
The team remains committed to learning how to better connect with and understand participants while maintaining an effective, scientifically backed approach to care.

RPC is now in its eighth year. Since its approval as a pilot program in 2018, the program has committed itself to providing compassionate, evidence-based services for individuals in initial reentry recovering from substance use disorders. In 2023, the team first began to talk internally about the possible expansion of the participant pool. In 2024, the participant pool was expanded to include the targeted participant group. Some new participants included individuals with less than one month of sobriety and some in active addiction. This philosophy continued into the program for 2025.

While the program did see an increase in positive tests and sanctions, the program was able to provide multiple forms of support through services, community, and resources. RPC is committed to assisting individuals in preventing relapse and does not expect participants to complete the program relapse-free, although many do. The expansion to include higher-risk individuals continues to be the purpose of the RPC program. RPC aims to help individuals through their addiction during a time in life that can be particularly challenging and stressful. RPC believes that the resources, support, and community RPC provides its participants will continue to be beneficial and assist individuals at a higher risk for relapse. The RPC team has continued its training to better assist the participants, has tailored resources and services to serve the participants' specific needs, has worked closely with treatment providers to provide the level of care participants need, and has expanded the resources available to participants to meet their daily needs. RPC remains committed to helping individuals avoid relapse and build a strong supportive community.

We look forward to continuing to support the RPC participants in the future.

March 2025-March 2026



Relapse Prevention Court

cc: All EDPA District Court Judges
All EDPA Magistrate Judges
Manuel Jimenez, Chief, U.S Probation
Jonathan Henshaw, Senior Deputy Chief, U.S. Probation
David Metcalf, U.S. Attorney
Lisa Evans Lewis, Chief, Federal Community Defender Office
Eric Gartner, U.S. Marshal
George Wylesol, Clerk of Court
Kimberly A. Kaleta, Chief, U.S. Pretrial