

Eleventh Circuit Drug Court – The Beginning

The 11th Circuit Drug Court was organized in the fall of 2003 under the leadership and direction of Circuit Court Judge Al Smith. This program provides an early intervention for treatment and recovery and serves as an alternative to incarceration for the participants. Our goal is twofold - first we hope to improve the quality of life for participants and their families and secondly we hope to reduce recidivism for them as well. Through this program the participants have been given the skills necessary to have a solid foundation in order to build a productive and meaningful life.

In order to refrain from burdening the taxpayers in the various counties, participants must pay their way through this program which offers them the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions.

Within the drug court program we have four very different, distinct phases. Phase I is basically an orientation to treatment which includes an evaluation to determine the appropriate level of care depending on the needs of the individual. Options include Inpatient Treatment, Intensive Outpatient Treatment, or Outpatient Treatment. As you can tell, the focus of this phase is to engage the participants in treatment and to support their efforts to stay clean and sober. This phase normally will last 3-6 months and begins when the participant is ready to begin their journey to recovery.

Phase II includes more education of the disease and hopefully incorporates better decision making. The goals of this phase include demonstrating a commitment to living without alcohol and other drugs and getting involved in an education or employment program. This phase will normally last 12-18 months. As in the previous phase, participants must attend AA/NA meetings, attend drug court bi-monthly before Judge Smith, and complete community service hours.

Lastly, Phase III is more of a transitional phase as the goal focuses on relapse prevention and maintaining a clean and sober life. When participants complete Phase III, a graduation ceremony is planned in their honor and they are promoted publicly by Judge Smith to begin their life in Phase IV. Phase IV is a “non reporting” phase and generally lasts twelve months. During this time the participants are randomly drug tested on a monthly basis and remain under the supervision of the drug court staff. After the completion of Phase IV, a NCIC is completed and the participant may be eligible for expungement by the Drug Court Judge.