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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK ANNOUNCES A NEW RE-ENTRY COURT FOR INDIVIDUALS ON SUPERVISED RELEASE**

A two-year pilot program for a re-entry court aimed at reducing recidivism for individuals on supervised release was approved by the Southern District of New York Board of Judges on October 24, 2018. The Court will hold its first session at the end of January. The new court, called the Re-entry through Intensive Supervision and Employment (RISE) Court, is a voluntary program dedicated to encouraging employment and assisting in the successful re-entry of certain at-risk individuals on supervised release.

Judge Denny Chin of the Second Circuit will preside over the first RISE Court. Judge Chin will meet every two weeks with a group of individuals on supervised release who volunteer to participate in the RISE Court. These sessions will serve to connect the participants with support services and encourage them to seek and maintain employment. During each session, Judge Chin will speak with the participants about their progress and give or impose any appropriate rewards or sanctions.

Judge Chin said of the RISE Court: “We know that obtaining and maintaining employment is an essential part of re-entering society after a term of imprisonment. We hope to help our participants develop meaningful ties to the community.” The RISE Court is patterned on the highly successful reentry court in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, which has been in operation for eleven years.

The RISE Court will target participants in their first year of supervised release who have an elevated risk of recidivism. In addition to increased access to resources and support, a key incentive to join the Court is that, if successfully completed, Judge Chin will recommend a full 12-month reduction on a participant’s term of supervised release. To successfully complete the program, participants must earn 52 credits. Judge Ronnie Abrams, who has been involved in the Court’s creation, emphasized: “we believe the Court will offer enormous benefits to supervisees, but it is an entirely voluntary program and participants may choose to leave at any point.” The RISE Court has the support of both the United States Attorney’s Office and the Federal Defenders Office and both offices will play a role in the Court.

The Court will draw on outside volunteer resources to provide participants with additional support. Judge Paul Engelmayer, who has spearheaded this civil legal assistance component, said: “Civil legal issues, such as a suspended driver’s license or custody or child support issues, often serve as impediments to employment. Connecting participants with high-quality pro bono legal assistance will make it easier for them to obtain employment that is meaningful to them.”

The SDNY has partnered with professors at Columbia Law School and the City University of New York to design an equal selection process to measure recidivism and employment metrics. Professor Justin McCrary of Columbia Law School, who is leading the academic efforts to design and evaluate the Court, said: “This is an unprecedented opportunity to thoughtfully design a re-entry program and to capture valuable information from its operation that will inform academic and practical approaches to such courts in the future.” Judge Denise Cote, who helped inaugurate the Court, said: “Being able to study the impact of this program on recidivism from the outset will allow us to quickly ascertain its success and areas in which improvement is needed. If successful, it will also be well poised to serve as a model for other Districts interested in reducing recidivism.”

Michael Fitzpatrick, the SDNY’s Chief Probation Officer, explained: “The RISE Court builds on work that the SDNY Probation Department has been doing for two years to reduce unemployment among the supervised release population. The RISE Court is a way for the SDNY to more deeply engage with its supervised release population and to provide resources and support that will help reduce recidivism. By reducing recidivism, we will keep families together, and we will keep our communities safer.”