



SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT AND REENTRY

15<sup>TH</sup>

ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION

13 MARCH 2025



# Our Mission

The mission of STAR is to increase community safety by providing a Court team approach that provides accountability, treatment, recovery services and other resources to individuals on community supervision to assist them in changing their behaviors so that they live sober, law-abiding and productive lives.

Our program has three goals:

## 01

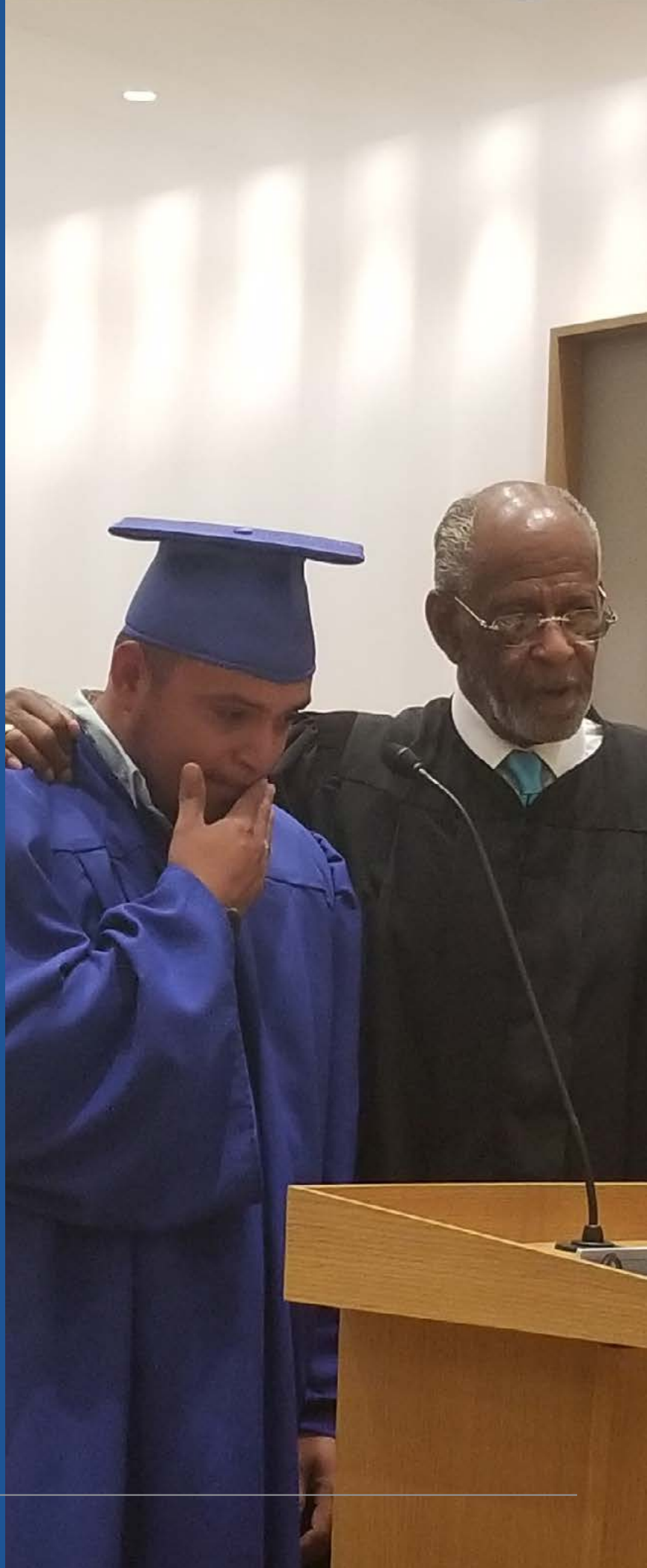
Address substance abuse, mental health and recidivism issues with high-risk offenders who are unable to succeed on general supervision.

## 02

For participants to live a sober, crime-free and productive lifestyle, which includes stable housing, employment and healthy coping skills  
— during and after supervision.

## 03

To transform offenders' lives which will allow them to rebuild relationships with their family and friends resulting in them fully re-integrating into the community.





# Our Story

Under the leadership of our former Chief Judge Audrey B. Collins, who is now an associate justice of the California Court of Appeals. We launched STAR - an acronym for Substance Abuse Treatment And Reentry in January 2010. STAR's mission is to try and change the way we interact with and treat criminal defendants. Our focus is on persons who are essentially career criminals who have spent more than half of their adult lives in and out of prison. Historically, what we have done to address this population is to arrest people for their drug-related offense. Prosecute and incarcerate them for X number of years. And then release them and then repeat. Nothing changes other than they've added a new felony conviction to their resume. Perhaps making them even less employable than before. So, why should we be surprised when they re-offend? What we don't do is effect any meaningful change.

While it was vitally important to gain the buy-in of the Chief Judge, the U.S. Attorney, the Federal Public Defender and the Chief of Probation; we still had to staff the program. The idea that a system could be designed in which the staff were individuals who already played integral and sometimes opposing roles in the criminal justice system was the brainchild of Kristie Rzonca, who together with her colleague Amy Young, first suggested that the Central District of California could follow the example of state court drug programs. This required the heads of each agency to provide staff for the program. One of the earliest members of the STAR team was Deputy Federal Public Defender Raul Ayala. Kristie, Amy and Raul were pioneers who embraced the idea that we can do a better job of addressing the root causes of criminality. They felt we could change behavior, which seemingly was unaffected by incarceration. They are special individuals. Two prosecutors come to mind who defied stereotyping and who took the effort to really get to know our participants, and with their patience and humanity were able to break down the barriers of trust inherent in the relationships between lifelong criminals and lifelong prosecutors. They are Steve Wolfe and Amanda Bettinelli. I learned so much from those two. That is not to say that learning how it should be done is the same as being able to replicate it. I could not.



Amy Young & Kristie Rzonca



STAR AUSAs Amanda Bettinelli & Steve Wolfe, Grad Casey Wheat & DFPD Raul Ayala



STAR-Los Angeles Team and May 7, 2015 STAR Graduates



Former Chief Judge Audrey B. Collins

*As time passed, more and more judges came on board and started using STAR as an alternative to incarceration for violations of supervised release.*

The judges came to accept that the main driver for violations of supervision is the same factor which provided the motivation to commit crimes in the first place: drug addiction.



Hon. Dolly M. Gee, Chief Judge & Grad Ramon Garcia  
September 21, 2023



Hon. George H. King,  
Hon. Otis D. Wright II  
& Grad Jessica Russ  
January 13, 2014



Hon. George H. Wu  
& Grad Yvonne Garcia  
September 21, 2017



Hon. Dale S. Fischer & STAR  
Grad Emmanuel Wright  
September 21, 2017



Hon. Virginia A. Phillips &  
STAR Grad Hector Ruiz  
November 4, 2019



Hon. Otis D. Wright II,  
Hon. Virginia A. Phillips  
& Grad Anna Serventi  
November 4, 2019



Hon. Dale S. Fischer  
& Grad Albert Bui  
September 21, 2017

**What we are trying to do in STAR is simple: Disrupt and hopefully end the recurring vicious cycle of drug-related incarceration.**

One of the first things that we try to do is get a grip on the addiction. Unless they are clean and sober, our participants have no chance of succeeding. Most of the drug court programs in this country—including STAR—use evidence-based methodology consisting of immersion in a 12-step program, and weekly meetings with the court team comprised of prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, drug counselors and the supervising bench officer. This is coupled with life skills training, Moral Reconation Therapy, individual and group therapy, cognitive behavior therapy and mental health counseling – all of which are designed to correct criminal thinking and provide tools to remain sober.

**Our participants come to understand we are there to support their efforts to change their lives and have no interest in seeing them fail – which we view as our failure as well.**

They understand that we recognize that relapse is a part of recovery. And while we are not pleased about relapse, we understand it and will take steps to intensify their treatment. What we will not condone, however, is the commission of a new crime. That will likely result in termination from the program and return to prison.

**Our objective is to permanently remove our participants from the criminal justice system and return them to their families-- and the community, sober, crime free with steady employment.**

We've actually turned many lives around by focusing on the causes of their criminality, encouraging participants to rid themselves of old associates and replace those old associates with new ones. They learn to embrace their sobriety and their freedom. We all look forward to the day when this more enlightened approach becomes the norm. Of course, the success of such a program is heavily dependent on dedicated professionals willing to try something different. Professionals who won't accept as a reason for resisting change "well that's the way we've always done it." The STAR team recognizes that the way we've always done it has produced woefully sorry results. Our dedicated team members have been successful in resurrecting hopeless futures, reuniting families, stopping the revolving door and saving lives. They are to be congratulated.



**STAR Grad Angel Gonzalez & Family**  
November 10, 2011



**STAR Grad George Armstrong**  
June 7, 2018



**STAR-LA Grad Donald Bennett & Family**  
November 10, 2011



**Hon. Kiya Kato, Grad William Campbell,  
Hon. Sheri Pym, Grad Jennifer Rosales**  
October 23, 2018



**STAR Grad Darren Ellis & Family**  
June 7, 2018



**STAR Grad Wilnor Menjivar & Family**  
June 7, 2018



## REPORT FROM STAR-LOS ANGELES 2020-2024



STAR-Los Angeles team is proud to be in its 15th year of serving the Central District of California, Western Division. STAR-Los Angeles program continues under the direction of founding judicial officer Hon. Otis D. Wright II and Hon. Rozella A. Oliver. During the past four years, we have had much to celebrate. We held five formal graduation ceremonies, in which we joyously celebrated the hard work and accomplishments of the 35 participants that successfully completed the program. Moreover, in our ongoing effort to provide our program participants with support and resources needed to create positive and life-long changes in their lives, we added a number of new and innovative components to our core program including:

- Addition of social workers to each STAR team
- Engaged in team trainings focused on trauma informed care and resilience
- Added a Peer Recovery Coach to assist the participants and work with the team

## TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE TRAINING March 13, 2024

In our ongoing effort to utilize restorative justice and evidence-based practices to assist our participants with their goal of making positive changes in their lives, on March 13, 2024, the STAR team in conjunction with the Federal Judicial Center held a training on trauma-informed care. The training was held at the 9th Circuit Courthouse and all STAR and CASA team members were invited to participate. The training was facilitated by Christina Ruffino of the Federal Judicial Center and led by USC Professors of Social Work, Dr. Rick Ornelas, DBH, MSW and Dr. Rosemary Alamo, DBH, MSW, LCSW, PPSC.



## STAR-LA PEER SUPPORT GROUP 2020-Present

STAR-LA continues to hold its monthly peer-support group meeting. The meetings are facilitated by Recovery Coach Gary Meeks and retired U.S. Probation Officer and FPD investigator Steve Wells. The meetings are an opportunity for participants, alumni and observers to share connect and support each other.



## NEW STAR SUPPORT COMPONENT Social Work Support, 2019-Present

Beginning in 2019, social work staff from the Federal Public Defender's Office have been assigned to work with participants in all three STAR courts. The social workers provide a holistic advocacy approach by connecting the participants to services that address barriers that may hinder their path to successfully completing the program. The social workers focus on the participants underlying issues and connects them to the appropriate community resource such as addiction recovery programs, mental health treatment, educational and job training programs. The team's social worker encourages the participants to be truthful with the with the team when they relapse. Though the social worker cannot give legal advice, they do discuss and explore with the participants the long-term benefits of sobriety and a healthy lifestyle.



FPD social workers Raquel Chavez, De Anna Dove & fmr. FPD social worker Agustina Sepulveda. Ms. Dove is assigned to STAR-LA. Ms. Chavez is assigned to STAR-RV. Ms. Sepulveda was assigned to STAR-SA.

## STAR YOUNG LEADERS WORKSHOP May 2024

STAR is always looking for ways to break the debilitating grip of intergenerational cycles of trauma and harm that plague so many of our participants and their families. The STAR team understands the importance of early interventions in the lives of young adults and how that can make an enormous difference in their lives. In May, 2024, we held our inaugural Young Leaders Workshop hosted by Judge Wright. Judge Wright led a discussion about the importance of education and making good choices with ten young adult children of STAR graduates and current participants.



# Our Team

In 2023 and 2024, STAR-Los Angeles said goodbye to two much beloved team members, AUSA Amanda Bettinelli and Supervising DFPD Raul Ayala. Both Amanda and Raul brought a wealth of knowledge, passion and dedication to their work on STAR. We are forever grateful to both of them.

In 2024, we passed the torch and welcomed several new team members, including AUSA Laura Alexander, USPPO Susie Rodriguez, USPPO Tech Shane “Chip” Williams and mental health specialists Tina Posey and Lance Daur.

In July and August 2024, the STAR team held two joyous birthday celebrations to mark a milestone birthday in honor of Judge Wright. The first was a bowling party with STAR team members, current participants and graduates. We even had a few participants attend the event that did not successfully complete the program. All of the STAR participant at the event expressed their gratitude to Judge Wright for his unwavering support and commitment to their journeys.



The second event was a dinner held in Judge Wright’s honor. Attendees included his wife, daughter and other family members, as well as STAR team members from all three STAR courts.



## STAR-LOS ANGELES TEAM

### United States District Court

Hon. Otis D. Wright II, U.S. District Judge  
Hon. Rozella A. Oliver, U.S. Magistrate Judge  
Sheila English, Courtroom Deputy

### United States Probation & Pretrial Services Agency

Kristie Rzonca, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer  
Susie Rodriguez, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer  
Shane Williams, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Tech  
Regina Brown, USPPO Administrative Assistant

### United States Attorney's Office

Laura Alexander, Assistant U.S. Attorney  
Timothy Searight, Assistant U.S. Attorney

### Federal Public Defender's Office

Neha Christerna, Collaborative Courts Chief  
Deb Gonzalez, Deputy Federal Public Defender  
De Anna Dove, MSW, Social Support Unit  
Joyce Delaney, Collaborative Courts Paralegal

### Treatment Providers

Lance Daur, DTR Mental Health Specialist  
Tina Posey, LMFT



STAR-LA team members with graduates from the October 24, 2024 ceremony held in the Ceremonial Courtroom at First Street Courthouse.

## Welcome to the Team



From left Tina Posey, LMFT. Ms. Posey works with STAR Los Angeles and Riverside clients. Lance Daur works with the STAR-Los Angeles and Santa Ana participants.

### Laura Alexander Assistant U.S. Attorney



Ms. Alexander is an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Los Angeles. She clerked for the Honorable Fernando Olguin, U.S. District Judge. Laura graduated from UCLA Law in 2016, and from Boston University in 2012. She joined the STAR-Los Angeles team in 2024

### Susie Rodriguez U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer



Ms. Rodriguez interned with U.S. Probation Agency from September 2017 to July 2018. She was hired as U.S. Probation Officer on July 23, 2018. Susie received her bachelor’s degree in public administration from Cal State Dominguez Hills in May 2014 and her master’s degree in Public Administration from Cal State Fullerton in May 2022. She joined the STAR-Los Angeles team in 2024.

### Shane “Chip” Williams U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Tech



In 2020, Mr. Williams graduated from California State University Northridge with a B.A. in Sociology, with a specialization in Africana Studies. He was first introduced to the STAR team in 2013 and officially joined the team in 2023. Currently, Shane is working as a Probation Officer Technician in the Central District of California.



## STAR-LA | COURT COLLABORATIONS

### Special Guest Speaker Series March & October 2022



On March 24, 2022, STAR-LA was honored to have then-Chief Judge Phillip S. Gutierrez share his personal journey and life experiences growing up in East LA and attending college at the University of Notre Dame. A journey that eventually led him to an appointment on the federal bench.

**Hon. Phillip S. Gutierrez**, U.S. District Court Judge, ret.

On October 23, 2022, STAR-LA was honored to have Kiry Gray -then District Court Executive/Clerk of the Court hold a summit with the STAR-LA women participants aimed at self-empowerment. Ms. Gray shared her personal journey and offered insights on how the women could move beyond past experiences and trauma to find self-acceptance, gratitude and resilience.



**Kiry Gray**, former CDCA Court Executive & Clerk of Court

### Court Collaborations: SDCA Reentry Panel Discussion February 2024

STAR-LA team members were invited to speak at the Southern District of California's Annual Court Conference to discuss creating a reentry program in their district. The STAR program graduate Ian MacNeill shared his journey to sobriety during the event.



From left: Hon. Otis D. Wright II, Ian MacNeill (STAR grad), USPPO Kristie Rzonca & Supervising DFPD Raul Ayala

### All-Rise Conference Panel Discussion May 2024

Judge Wright led a panel discussion of STAR graduates at the All-Rise national drug court conference in Anaheim in May 2022. The discussion centered on reentry recidivism and recovery "the big three R" for our STAR population. Each graduate shared their heartfelt experiences and left the conference attendees in awe.



From left: Hon. Otis D. Wright, II, DFPD Raul Ayala, STAR Grad Shane Williams, Joyce Delaney, STAR Grad Ian MacNeill, STAR grads Lizzette Rivera, Marcus Vera, USPPO Kristie Rzonca & AUSA Laura Alexander

## STAR-LA | COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

### Community Service: LA Regional Food Bank 2021-Present

STAR-LA continues to blend restorative justice practices into its core mission. One of the weekly goals that we set for our participants is to find opportunities to help others in their communities. In addition, in 2021, during the height of the covid pandemic, STAR-LA began volunteering at the L.A. Regional Food Bank. On the last Thursday of each month, STAR team members and participants help assemble and pack on average 1,200 boxes of food to be distributed to needy residents in LA County.



### Employer Appreciation Luncheon May 4, 2023



STAR-Los Angeles held its inaugural employer appreciation luncheon on May 1, 2022. The event served as a heartfelt acknowledgment of the invaluable contributions made by each of the employers to the development and success of our participants, fostering a spirit of collaboration and gratitude.

### Los Angeles Public Library Orientation & Training July & December 2024

On July 11, 2024, librarians Amanda Mellow, Linda Rudell-Betts, Karen Pickard-Four and Jacqueline Welsh from the Los Angeles Public Library conducted an engaging presentation for the STAR-LA participants focused on the myriad of resources available through the library, with a special emphasis on their initiatives designed to assist the reentry population. In addition to showcasing these valuable resources, the librarians provided onsite library enrollment for each participant, ensuring they could easily access library services. To their further delight, each participant received a backpack filled with useful items, including iPads, tablet accessories, books, journals, and other supplies.

In December, the librarians returned to offer a follow-up presentation focused on financial literacy. This session aimed to equip the STAR participants with essential financial skills and knowledge underscoring the library's commitment to empowering the reentry community.



# STAR-LOS ANGELES | TEAM PROFILES

## KRISTIE RZONCA, STAR-LA USPPD

January 2010-Present

Written by STAR DFPD Deborah Gonzalez



Kristie Rzonca is a founding member of STAR and the glue that holds it all together. She joined the U.S. Probation Office 24 years ago. As a Drug Specialist Probation Officer for her first nine years in Probation, Kristie

participated in many revocation hearings spurred on by addiction and thought there had to be a better way of handling cases involving defendants that were living with an entrenched drug addiction and/or mental health issues. Kristie and a colleague at Probation first met with Judge Wright in 2008. Out of that meeting, came the idea of creating a drug reentry program in the federal system in the CDCA. Since that meeting more than fifteen years ago -- Kristie has been directly involved in helping STAR participants change their lives. Kristie knows that collaborative court programs work because they meet individuals where they are. She is a proponent of connecting STAR participants to wrap-around substance use disorder and mental health services to help them build a sustainable support system that people take with them into the world after graduating from the program and finishing their terms of supervised release. Kristie's favorite part of STAR is when the lightbulb goes on in someone's mind and she or he opens up to take directions and put in the hard work required for change. As Kristie says, "You have to chase your sobriety the way you used to chase that dope!"

Kristie's other full-time job is being a hockey mom to a high schooler and a middle schooler. She also loves to garden and cook. Kristie is set to retire at the end of 2025. The STAR team thanks Kristie for her tremendous contributions to the program and for the immeasurable role she has played in bettering the lives of not only every participant who has graduated from STAR since its inception but also the lives of their family members and their community members.

## RAUL AYALA, SUPERVISING DFPD

January 2010-December 2024

Written by STAR AUSA Timothy J. Searight



With the STAR program now approaching 15 years, and well-established as a model for programs around the nation, much of its endurance and quality can be traced to a longtime member of the STAR program, former Supervising Deputy Federal Public Defender Raul Ayala.

All of the STAR team members bring a sense of collegiality and a commitment to bettering the lives of the participants. It is not enough, of course, to have good intentions for the STAR participants. What Raul Ayala has brought, more than any other team member, is a focus on using well-established research and on-going training to help the team understand and address the needs of the STAR participants. Raul Ayala constantly brings us all back to the need to use the science and research of addiction and recovery in our guidance and direction in the deployment of resources.

Raul Ayala has been the driving force in the provision of social workers, mental health specialists, trauma informed counseling and employment mentoring, all of which have not only helped the participants, but also helped the STAR program gain a reputation for professionalism and sophistication. At heart, it is this professionalism and developed skill that has caused so many agencies and courts to admire and emulate STAR. Raul Ayala's focus on evidence-based practices and his careful cultivation of resources in service to those practices has shown us all, across the nation, the way forward.

## GARY MEEKS, 2020 STAR GRADUATE

STAR Recovery Coach & Peer Mentor, 2024-Present



Giving back in my role as the STAR Recovery Coach gives me the opportunity to help the current participants in the program. I successfully completed STAR in 2020. Even after I graduated, I stayed connected to STAR. I continued to participate in the monthly community service at the LA Food Bank. and attend other STAR events. When Judge Wright and Kristie asked me to become a mentor to new or struggling participants I jumped at the opportunity to be of service to my STAR peers and the team. This new role was important to me because I struggled with accountability in the past. Being placed in this position of trust with the team helped me stay grateful, connected and focused on my own recovery.

Having STAR participants contact me with questions and seek me out when they run into issues while programming in STAR is also a reminder of how far I've come in my recovery. I give the participants the truth from my experience with the STAR team and my own struggles with recovery. I urge them to do an honest program without taking shortcuts. I facilitate the monthly peer group meetings; I lead a weekly recovery group, and I meet with all incoming STAR-LA participants. I let the new participants know that I am there to help guide them through the tough early stages of the program. I've heard so many times in AA meetings 'that in order to keep it, you have to give it away'. To me that means being of service and giving back. By being put in this position of trust by the team helps me be a part of something greater than myself.

I can speak from my own experience that staying connected to STAR has made the promise of the Big Book come alive in my life. ***It has become a fact in my life that one alcoholic or addict helping another keeps them both clean and sober.*** I'm betting my life that it's true.



## REPORT FROM RIVERSIDE | 2020-2024

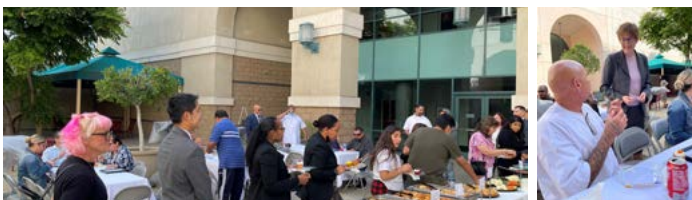
We are proud to report that the STAR-Riverside program is in its 8th year serving the Central District of California, Eastern Division. In the past four years, we have had much to celebrate, including holding two formal graduation ceremonies in 2022 and 2023. Graduating from STAR is a significant milestone in the lives of our participants. The STAR graduation ceremonies serve as an important benchmark for the continued growth and success of the program. For some of our participants successfully completing STAR and donning the blue graduation cap and gown on graduation day are the first times in their lives that they have graduated "from anything." The ceremony gives the graduates a great sense of pride and inspires our current participants to envision a new way of life for themselves. On May 3, 2022, we held our third formal graduation ceremony for ten STAR-Riverside participants. The mood was joyous as we celebrated the hard work and accomplishments of those participants -- most of whom participated in STAR and successfully completed the program during the tough years at height of the Covid pandemic. We were delighted to have then Chief Judge Philip S. Gutierrez give opening remarks at the ceremony and Hon. Otis D. Wright II, and former- Clerk of Court Kiry Gray in attendance.



On October 24, 2023, STAR-Riverside program held its fourth formal graduation ceremony for five participants that had successfully completed the program. We were honored to have former-District Court Executive/Clerk of Court Kiry Gray attend in person and then-Chief Judge Gutierrez make opening remarks. During the ceremony, the team honored both former STAR USPPPO Richard An and Kiry Gray with "You Make A Difference" Certificates of Appreciation for their steadfast and unwavering support of STAR.



Following each graduation ceremony, the STAR-Riverside team hosts an outdoor reception where the participants and their family and friends are able to connect with team members, judicial officers, and court staff.



**HON. KENLY KIYA KATO**  
United States District Judge

On Nov. 7, 2023 the U.S. Senate confirmed President Joe Biden's nomination of Magistrate Judge Kenly Kiya Kato to serve as a federal district judge for the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

In addition to her civil and criminal docket, Kato is a member of the court's CASA (Conviction and Sentence Alternatives Program) and STAR (Substance Abuse Treatment and Reentry Program) teams. CASA and STAR are collaborative courts where teams composed of judicial officers, pretrial and probation officers, federal prosecutors and federal public defenders work together to address the underlying issues and needs of individuals charged with federal crimes. Both STAR & CASA offer a pathway for program participants to attain rehabilitation and become contributing members of the community and are models for criminal justice reform.

She presides over matters in Riverside in the Court's Eastern Division.

## STAR-RIVERSIDE HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS



In December 2023 and 2024, the STAR-Riverside team hosted Holiday gatherings for the participants and their families. The team was honored to have CSO Lafayette Boyd as a guest speaker. On both occasions, Mr. Boyd shared an inspiring message of hope, resilience, and the importance of pursuing positive change in one's life. His message of optimism left a lasting impact on the team and participants.



STAR-Riverside team members and participants enjoying a holiday meal, December 17, 2024.

## STAR-RIVERSIDE REPORT | 2020-2024

We are also happy to report that we remain in contact with a significant number of our program graduates. Moreover, we have had several graduates come to STAR to speak and share their experiences before, during and after STAR with our current participants.

To date, STAR-Riverside has successfully graduated 18 participants.

## Our Team

The STAR-Riverside team is under the direction of U.S. District Judge Kenly Kiya Kato and U.S. Magistrate Judges Sheri Pym and David T. Bristow. Both Judge Kato and Judge Pym have been with the STAR-Riverside program since its launch in 2017.

In 2024, the STAR-Riverside team said a heartfelt goodbye to longtime team member USPPO Richard. Mr. An is now in a supervisory role at Probation/Pretrial. The team welcomed in several new team members, including U.S. Magistrate Judge David T. Bristow, USPPO Krystal Ward and mental health provider Tina Posey, LMFT.



From left: Joyce Delaney, Abigail Evans, Neha Christerna, Tina Posey, Judge Bristow, Judge Pym, Judge Kato, Krystal Ward & Raquel Chavez

### STAR-RIVERSIDE TEAM

#### *United States District Court*

Hon. Kenly Kiya Kato, U.S. District Judge

Hon. Sheri Pym, U.S. Magistrate Judge

Hon. David T. Bristow, U.S. Magistrate Judge

Dominic Estrada, Deputy in Charge

Kimberly Carter, Courtroom Deputy

Noe Ponce, Courtroom Deputy

#### *United States Probation & Pretrial Services Agency*

Krystal Ward, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer

Elizabeth Munoz, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer

Kris Chandler, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer

Leslie Anaya, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer

Sallie Mondragon, USPPO Administrative Assistant

#### *United States Attorney's Office*

Abigail W. Evans, Assistant U.S. Attorney

Cory Burleson, Assistant U.S. Attorney

#### *Federal Public Defender's Office*

Neha Christerna, Collaborative Courts Chief

Deputy Federal Public Defender

Raquel Chavez, Social Worker

Joyce Delaney, Collaborative Courts Paralegal

#### *Treatment Providers*

Tina Posey, LMFT

## WELCOME TO THE TEAM

### Hon. David T. Bristow

U.S. Magistrate Judge



Judge Bristow was sworn in on November 22, 2023. He presides over matters in Riverside in the Court's Eastern Division. This is Judge Bristow's second appointment as a magistrate judge for the Court. Throughout his career,

Judge Bristow has demonstrated a commitment to pro bono and public service. Judge Bristow was previously a member of the Court's CASA (Conviction and Sentence Alternatives Program). He joined the STAR team in 2024.

### Krystal Ward

U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer



Krystal Ward is a Special Offender Specialist from the Riverside office. She has worked in the Southern District of California and Central District of California for a total of 16 combined years. Ms. Ward joined the STAR Team in 2024. Ms. Ward also serves as the assigned USPPO for the CDCA's Conviction and Sentence Alternatives (CASA) program.

## STAR-RIVERSIDE LENDS A HELPING HAND

Each month STAR-Riverside team members and participants serve as volunteers at the Feeding America Food Banks in Riverside and San Bernardino. Our team helps to organize and prep boxes of food to be distributed to needy families throughout the Inland Empire. We are proud of our ongoing partnership with Feed America and our participants have expressed their gratitude for being able to "give back" to their communities



STAR-Riverside team members and participants volunteering at the Feeding America | San Bernardino site.

For more information about the Feeding America program, visit their website at: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/>



## REPORT FROM SANTA ANA | 2023-2024

### A Message from Hon. Fred W. Slaughter STAR-Santa Ana Judicial Officer

I am so honored to be a part of the STAR program for the Central District of California, Santa Ana Division, that was launched in January 2023. Through our outstanding STAR team, many lives are being positively impacted, including those of the participants, their families and friends, and the community as a whole. The STAR program has helped so many people with controlled substance and mental health issues, achieve employment, and reach their goals. Our first formal graduation ceremony occurred in June 2024, with many more to come.

The STAR-Santa Ana team's regular meetings are supplemented by beneficial programming such as hiking at Santiago Oaks Park and holiday celebrations. I want to personally thank all participants and their loved ones, team members, and court staff for truly making a difference.



From left: Lance Daur, Rob Keenan, Neha Christerna, Judge Audero, Teddy Cha, Vanessa Singh, Athena Vo, Melissa Kunig & Judge Slaughter

It was with a heavy heart that we said goodbye to former team members Collaborative Courts Supervising DFPD, Raul Ayala and FPD Social Worker Agustina Sepulveda. The team sends a special thanks for their invaluable contributions to the program.



Supervising DFPD Raul Ayala, ret.



Agustina Sepulveda, former FPD  
Social Worker

## WELCOME TO THE TEAM

### Theodore "Teddy" Cha U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer



Teddy Cha is a Special Offender Specialist from the Santa Ana Divisional office. He has worked as a U.S. Probation Officer since 2017. Mr. Cha has been a part of the STAR-Santa Ana Team since its launch in 2023. Mr. Cha also serves as the assigned USPPO for the CDCA's Conviction and Sentence Alternatives (CASA) program.

## Our Team



Hon. Fred W. Slaughter  
U.S. District Judge

Judge Fred W. Slaughter was sworn in as a United States District Court Judge on April 20, 2022. Prior to this appointment, Judge Slaughter served as an Orange County Superior Court Judge from January 2014 to April 2022, where he presided over criminal, civil, and juvenile cases, and also served as a supervising judge. From 2002 to 2014, Judge

Slaughter served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the three districts: the Central District of California, the District of Arizona, and the District of Oregon. From 2000 to 2002, Judge Slaughter was a Deputy City Attorney for Los Angeles. Judge Slaughter has presided over the STAR Program in Santa Ana since its inception in January 2023, and he has presided over the CASA Program in Santa Ana since 2022



Hon. Maria A. Audero  
U.S. Magistrate Judge

Judge Maria A. Audero was appointed U.S. Magistrate Judge on June 11, 2018 and sits in Los Angeles. Prior to her appointment, she practiced employment law and co-chaired the Employment Law Department of Paul Hastings LLP in Los Angeles, and was appointed by Gov. Edmund G. Brown as Commissioner of the California Fair Political Practices

Commission. Judge Audero joined the Santa Ana STAR team in November 2023 and finds this program to be among the most rewarding and fulfilling parts of her judgeship.

## STAR-SANTA ANA TEAM

### *United States District Court*

Hon. Fred W. Slaughter, U.S. District Judge  
Hon. Maria A. Audero, U.S. Magistrate Judge  
Melissa Kunig, Courtroom Deputy

### *United States Probation & Pretrial Services Agency*

Theodore Cha, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer  
Kassandra Kessler, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer  
Vanessa Singh, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officer  
Athena Vo, U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Technician

### *United States Attorney's Office*

Rob Keenan, Assistant U.S. Attorney

### *Federal Public Defender's Office*

Neha Christerna, Collaborative Courts Chief  
Deputy Federal Public Defender  
Joyce Delaney, Collaborative Courts Paralegal

### *Treatment Providers*

Lance Daur, DTR Therapist

To date, STAR-Santa Ana has successfully graduated 6 participants. Please send your STAR-Santa Ana referrals to Teddy Cha at:  
[Theodore\\_Cha@cacp.uscourts.gov](mailto:Theodore_Cha@cacp.uscourts.gov)

## STAR-SANTA ANA FIRST GRADUATION CEREMONY

JUNE 5, 2024

On June 5, 2024, the STAR-Santa Ana program held its first formal graduation ceremony. The ceremony was led by U.S. Magistrate Judge and STAR team member Hon. Maria A. Audero. We were honored to have STAR founder Hon. Otis D. Wright II, give opening remarks. The four participants that graduated that day: Sheila Lee Cundall, Hung T. Nguyen, Alex Payan and Madeline Scardina were encouraged to share their personal journeys of resilience and triumph over their substance use and mental health issues that had plagued each of them for much of their lives. They did not disappoint. As graduate Sheila Lee Cundall shared in her speech:

"Before STAR, I was dealing with a lot of chaos. Everything in my life was negative. I was in and out of prison. There were suicide attempts. My best friend of 25 years died. It was really rough. So, for me to stand here today is a miracle. I have 322 days clean. I've learned to take responsibility for my actions. I thought I could skate through [STAR] without making any real changes. As an addict/alcoholic, I didn't want to give up my ways of going through life "self-medicating" for five decades. I tried to evade drug detection, which is impossible and difficult to sustain. It was a relief when Judge Carter sent me to rehab, I was looking at real prison time. I finally surrendered. That was 322 days ago. It's an honor to be a pioneer as one of the first graduates of this program."



STAR-Santa Ana 2024 graduates from left: Alex Payan, Hung T. Nguyen, Sheila Cundall & Madeline Scardina



## STAR-SANTA ANA PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

On December 6, 2022, just prior to the launch of the STAR-Santa Ana program, STAR team members from Los Angeles and Riverside gathered for a 2-day training to discuss collaborative court best practices, participant case studies and a module on trauma and resilience. The training was held at the Santa Ana Courthouse and facilitated by FJC's Christina Ruffino.



## STAR SANTA ANA LAUNCH

WE BELIEVE IN 2ND CHANCES!

Wed. 1/11/23 at 3PM

Santa Ana U.S. Courthouse  
411 W. 4th St., Courtroom 10D

- MEET THE STAR TEAM
- GET MORE INFO ABOUT STAR

On January 11, 2023, STAR team members from Santa Ana, Los Angeles and Riverside met with prospective STARSA participants to provide the candidates with information about the program and answer questions. We are proud to report that three of the candidates--Alex Payan, Sheila Cundall and Madeline Scardina successfully graduated from the program in June 2024.

## STAR-SANTA ANA TEAM AND PARTICIPANT HIKES

STAR-Santa Ana team and participants hiking a trail at Santiago Oaks Park.



STAR-Santa Ana team and participants celebrating at their 2nd annual Holiday Potluck.



# ALL-STARS | GRADUATE PROFILES

## AMANDA BOKOBZHA 2024 STAR-LA Graduate



My journey with STAR began in April of 2022. Just two months prior, I had returned home from prison, and not long after, I overdosed on fentanyl. At the time, my probation officer suggested I give STAR a try, but I was torn—one foot in, one foot out. During my interview with Judge Wright, he asked me point-blank, “You want to die, don’t you?” And the truth was, I did. I was a coward, running from life, hoping I could get high without facing the consequences.

For the first year, I didn’t take STAR seriously enough. When I made bad choices, I tried to hide them and if I couldn’t, I’d play the victim and attempt to manipulate people into believing my lies. It’s a pattern I had engaged in my whole life, one that pushed people away and left me with nothing. Even rehab programs, courts, sponsors—they all grew tired of my excuses and eventually gave up on me.

But STAR didn’t. The STAR team saw something in me that I couldn’t see in myself. They believed in me when I didn’t know how to believe in myself. With their patience, guidance, and support, I’ve done something I never thought possible: I’ve been sober for 18 months. Not just sober, but truly in recovery.

For the first time in 34 years, I can say I’m proud of who I am today. I have integrity. I am reliable. I am capable. I didn’t do this alone—I know that. Addiction is not just about the substance; it’s about the behaviors, the patterns that shape who we are. And those behaviors have consequences. But with STAR’s constant guidance and accountability, I’ve made it this far.



## SAULINA EADY 2023 STAR-LA Graduate



Life is all about the choices you make, and my story is no different. In hindsight, I’ve realized that my childhood environment had a profound effect on how I learned to perceive the world. Growing up, I wanted to make good choices but there was something about my environment and my lack of life tools that often led me to engage in risky behavior instead. My life took a not-so-positive path. I eventually landed in jail and was on my way to prison. During my incarceration, I had a lot of time to detox, clear my mind, and begin to process how such a promising child could end up like I did as an adult. I could no longer use drugs and the fast life to numb my shame, guilt, and anger. I had to finally face myself and peel back the layers of who I had become. I realized that I had hit rock bottom and I desperately wanted to change that narrative about myself. I slowly began to piece together a daily program for myself. I took advantage of all of the resources I had access to, willing myself to try everything even if I didn’t feel like it. Through that process, I learned to take advice and embrace opportunities. I incorporated what made sense for me into my plan to get my life back on track.

When I got to the halfway house, I threw away my “keep silent” attitude and began asking for help. When one resource didn’t work, I asked for a referral to another and then another. I kept doing this until I was introduced to STAR. This is where things got interesting.

STAR brought everything I was beginning to learn about myself into focus. It gave me the final nudge I needed to make the big and little improvements in my life. My children’s custody situation was the biggest problem I wanted to fix. STAR supported me. I never thought I could have a job with benefits and an opportunity to move up the ladder. STAR believed in me and I am now a proud LA County employee. The STAR team walked me through my journeys, helping me align myself with values I can be proud of.

STAR also inspired me to help others. I don’t focus my energy on self-destruction anymore. Instead, I make myself available to people who have walked in similar shoes as me. I tell them about resources I know of. I encourage them to adapt and learn like I did. I tell them to never take “no” as a final answer. Even if we don’t get the response we want, we can never let that two-letter word take us away from our bottom line: SUCCESS!

## SARAH ("PINKY") BALDWIN

2023 STAR-RV Graduate



To be honest, I am very nervous talking about myself. However, when my therapist asked me to write this, I felt obligated to share how the STAR Program helped me change my life.

Before STAR, I was in the CASA program. I was doing well for a while. However, as I got close to graduation, I began feeling scared and overwhelmed. It felt like I was faking it, and I would let everyone down. So, I did what I always did. I ran. I relapsed and went back to living on the street. I stayed in abandoned buildings hiding from the world. I was in big trouble and I didn't know what to do. However, something amazing happened during that time. I began getting phone calls from the CASA Team. Instead of being angry, they called to see if I was okay. That shocked me. When I got in the STAR Program, that experience helped me realize the STAR Team cared about me as a person.

My experience in STAR was amazing. My life has changed entirely. I have gone from living on the streets to living in a beautiful sober-living home. I used to feel a sense of alienation. Now, I am surrounded by supportive, likeminded women. I have been able to make amends to family members. We are rebuilding our relationships. This is so important because I thought I would never be able speak to them again. In recovery, I have done other things I am proud of. I have been volunteering at a homeless outreach program each week because I have a special place in my heart for the homeless. I have worked hard to obtain things that other people take for granted like owning my own vehicle. I have a bank account and I learned how to pay bills. These simple tasks used to frighten me!

The thing I am most proud about is pursuing my education. It has always been my dream to get a college degree. Since being clean, I work toward that dream every day. I remember doing my check-in with STAR and saying, "I am now a college student!" It sounded so unreal. Yet, STAR helped me make it real. It is hard work, but I will not give up working toward my dream. I will get a degree in social work and continue helping the homeless. I want to thank the entire STAR Team for helping me believe I could achieve this dream. On November 22, 2023, I celebrated two years of clean time.



## ALEX PAYAN

2024 STAR-SA Graduate



When I first started the STAR program, my life was a total disaster. I felt hopeless and defeated. My relationships were broken. I was unemployed. I had a severe addiction and just got released from jail.

As I entered orientation for STAR, I didn't have a clue of what to expect or what was expected of me. But just being around these individuals gave me a sense of hope. Seeing and hearing life challenging struggles and testimonies from my STAR peers gave me such motivation and kept me moving forward. The process wasn't easy but it wasn't impossible either. Not only my group members but the team were such a help in my recovery. I got in trouble for a few setbacks but then I also got positive feedback. I really needed that challenge. Instead of giving up, I stayed. I had a lot of irrational thoughts during that that time.

Thank God I stuck around for the long ride. As weeks, months kept flying by, I worked on changing my relationships and making them healthier. I worked on my mental health with Lance (the SA team therapist). I set healthy goals for myself. I stopped doing drugs because doing drugs did not fit into my healthy lifestyle. I started attending 3-4 NA meetings a week, which at first I didn't enjoy doing but adapted very quickly. Of course, in general the process like I said wasn't easy but for me it such a humbling experience and for the newcomers and future STAR newbies if made it to the finish line a guy, who was in and out of prison being in the streets I know you can make it as well. Just trust in yourself and the process.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the whole STAR program Thank you all for your help in my times of need and for believing in me.





## STEVE MARTIN

### 2023 STAR-RV Graduate



I joined the STAR program in July 2022. I was very hesitant about joining the program. But in the end, being in the program turned out to be a blessing for me. Even though I had a few bumps along the way during my time in the program, the Team never gave up on me. They always lifted me and were very supportive. At different points while I was in STAR, I was spiraling out of control. I struggled a lot during that time in my life. I realized that the team really cared about me. And their caring, made me want to do better. I wanted to be better for my family, for myself and make the team proud of me.

I have come a long way since completing STAR two years ago. I am proud to say that I have been officially off "paper" (court ordered supervision) for the first time in my life in almost 20+ years. I have abstained from drinking alcohol for more than two years. My family is proud of me. And I am proud of myself. I continue to be self-employed, and I am in the process of launching my nonprofit "Getting It Done Without a Gun." The nonprofit is a youth intervention program that I hope to run with several friends. We know what's it like to be out there in the streets. And our mission is to talk to the kids wherever they are -- be in youth authority, at school, in the churches. I hope to recruit women mentors as well to talk to the young women in our communities. We know and understand that early interventions with young people work the best.

I think being in the STAR program really helped me understand what it takes to be sober, responsible and live a different kind of life. I'm still the same person, but I just think differently now. There were times when I thought I wouldn't make it to the finish line. I'm not going to lie. STAR can be overwhelming at times -- but some people -- like me need that structure. It helped me to be more disciplined and become a better listener. I learned to be humble and not react first.

Overall, STAR is a great program, and I would recommend it to anybody that is serious about changing their lives and getting themselves together. It truly worked for me.



## RAYMOND BENAVIDES

### 2022 STAR-LA Graduate



I learned that I had to surrender to be there for my daughter.

I had to surrender to STAR to get help with my addiction.

It's hard to believe I'm the man that spent eight and a half years in prison. I'm a different man now. I'm a devoted father to my young daughter. I'm a dedicated employee; I work for Amazon. And I'm a proud STAR graduate.

My life has changed tremendously in the past three years since I was in STAR. My early life didn't start out great. I went to Artesia high school and got kicked out in the first month. I went to continuation school. I completed 10th grade; then I left. Mom and Dad split up a year before. My dad died at 38 from drug addiction. He didn't know how to be a dad. My grandmother was an alcoholic. After I got out of prison, I violated my supervision. I was referred to STAR by Judge Fischer and my DFPD Kim Savo. I did 15 days in custody. While I was in custody, I received a photo of my newborn daughter from my girlfriend. Seeing the picture of my little girl changed me. I got out of custody and went into treatment at Phoenix House. I learned there that drug addiction is a disease. And, that it can be treated. I completed the program because I was open and willing to change. I met with the therapist once a week. We talked about my childhood stuff. I learned a lot about myself. The therapist and I dug deeper and all that stuff from my childhood came up. We talked about everything.

On my journey to recovery, I had some big wake up calls that made we want to change. The first was when we learned that my mom had a brain tumor. She wanted me to do better. She needed me to do better. The second wakeup call was when we learned that my daughter might have a tumor. I knew that I had to grow up. I had to be someone that my family could count on. It drove me to be more productive and to focus on my sobriety. Also, being a father to my daughter motivated to want to do better. I missed a lot with my other kids, I was not as close to them because I was not there. I was locked up. With her, I get to be there with her and be present as a father.

I still stay connected to STAR even now that I've graduated because it keeps me grounded and accountable. And that works for me. I still attend NA meetings; STAR court meetings and help at the Food Bank. I'm now the one telling newcomers to trust the process and to trust STAR.

## KEY PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- 100% Voluntary Program
- Identify High-Risk and High-Need Individuals
- Provide Individualized Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Treatment
- Utilize Collaborative Team Approach
- Active Judicial Interaction and Interventions
- Use of Graduated Sanctions and Incentives
- Monthly Peer Support Group
- Random Testing
- Self-Help Meetings and Fellowship
- Monthly Community Service Projects

## KEY PROGRAM STATS

**Total Active Participants 44**

*\*12+ pending approval*

**Total No. Graduates 137**

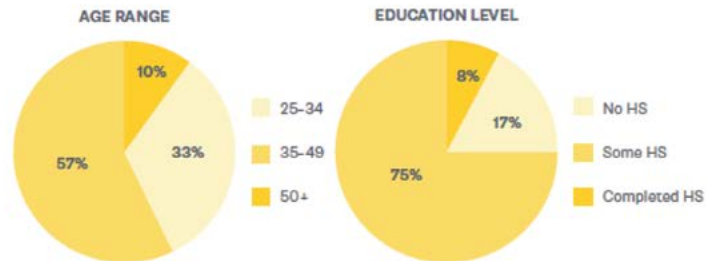
**Total No. Participants 376**

*\*Less than 10 grads w/fed charges after graduating*

## PARTICIPANT KEY CHARACTERISTICS

### GENERAL BACKGROUND:

- Limited or no work experience
- Unhealthy peer associations
- Unsuitable housing options
- Strained family relationships
- Difficulty in parental role



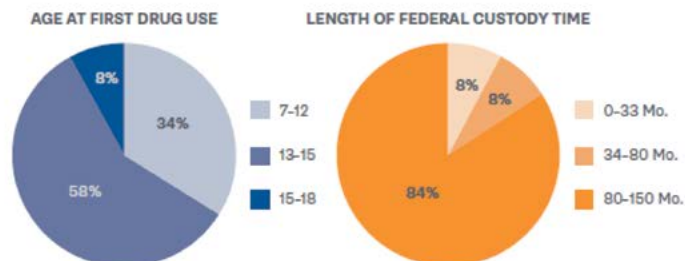
### CRIMINAL BACKGROUND:

- Most present with significant criminal history – Categories IV, V & VIs
- 87% with gang ties or affiliations
- Average 10+ years in custody, not including juvenile convictions



### SUBSTANCE ABUSE HISTORY:

- Significant and documented SA Hx
- Most have no prior SA Tx
- Prone to relapse
- Primary DOCs: meth, cocaine, heroin and alcohol
- In "violation" status with the court prior to joining STAR
- Average of 3 or more positive, missed, diluted UA tests





## 18TH STAR GRADUATION

### NOVEMBER 5, 2020



In a triumph of spirit, nine participants completed the STAR-LA program in 2020 at the onset of the covid pandemic. To celebrate, STAR held its first ever, socially distanced, outdoor graduation ceremony at Peck Park in San Pedro. Amidst the gloom and isolation that had marked so much of the year, the occasion felt even more special as we relished this bright, joyous occasion.



Graduates from left: Jose Banuelos, Gary Meeks, Derrick Combs, Malissa Santory, Adomella Adeyemi, Carlos Alvarez (not pictured), Sean Scully (not pictured) and Mark Wagner (not pictured).

## 19TH STAR GRADUATION

### NOVEMBER 18, 2021



Graduates from left: Shawn Lee, Jason Aguilera, Candice Salcido, Jermaine Purvis, Bobby Flores, Michael Chong (not pictured).



## 20TH STAR GRADUATION

APRIL 7, 2022



Graduates from left:

Raymond Benavidez, Justin Jackson, Marcus Vera, James Johnson, Rudy Carranza & Ian MacNeil

## 21TH STAR GRADUATION

3RD STAR-RIVERSIDE GRADUATION

MAY 3, 2022



Chief Judge Phillip S. Gutierrez, ret., delivering opening remarks.

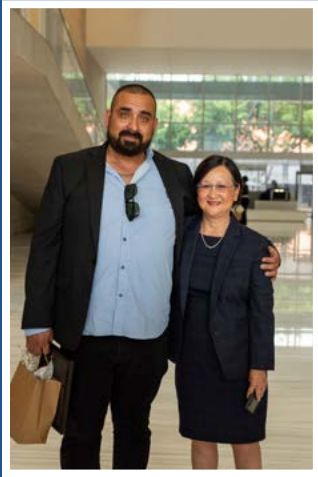


Graduates from left: Cesario Acevedo, Christopher Barera, Daniel Bustos, Pedro Torres, Jayro Diego, Anna Quezada, Steve Rankin Donta Warren & Jeffrey Dawson



## 22ND STAR GRADUATION

SEPTEMBER 21, 2023



Graduates: John Clement, Saulina Eady, Shane Escamilla, Ramon Garcia, Joseph Parker, Jay Flatt & Daisy Samaniego

## 23RD STAR GRADUATION

4TH STAR-RIVERSIDE GRADUATION

OCTOBER 24, 2023



STAR-Riverside team members with graduates Garrett Saunders, Steve Marthin & Raymond Lopez.



STAR team members with STAR-Riverside graduate Sarah Baldwin.



## 24TH STAR GRADUATION

### 1ST STAR-SANTA ANA GRADUATION

JUNE 5, 2024



STAR-Santa Ana team members with graduates Alex Payan, Hung T. Nguyen, Sheila Cundall & Madline Scardina



Graduates: Sheila Lee Cundall, Hung T. Nguyen, Alex Payan & Madeline Scardina

## 25TH STAR GRADUATION

### OCTOBER 24, 2024



Graduates: Elizabeth Black, Amanda Bokbza, Christine Grayson, Mark Keith, Glenn Little, Lissette Rivera & Amanuel Yonas





## Special Thanks to Our **ALL-STAR** Community of Supporters

### CDCA FEDERAL COURT FAMILY

Hon. Audrey B. Collins, ret.  
 Hon. Dolly M. Gee, Chief Judge  
 Hon. Phillip S. Gutierrez, ret.  
 Hon. Virginia A. Phillips, Former Chief Judge  
 Hon. André Birotte Jr.  
 Michelle A. Carey, Former Chief USPPPO, ret.  
 Kiry K. Gray, Clerk of Court, ret.  
 Sean K. Kennedy, Former FPD  
 George Cardona, Former USAO

Attorney Admissions Fund Board  
 CDCA Space & Facilities Staff, CDCA IT and AV Staff  
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 Courtroom Deputies & Clerks: Sheila English, Kimberly Carter, Melissa Kunig, Rachel Maurice, Noe Ponce, Dominic Estrada, Oscar Velasco  
 United States Probation & Pretrial Services Agency  
 United States Attorney's Office  
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### STAR PARTICIPANT EMPLOYERS

99 Cents Only Stores  
 Amazon Industries  
 CalTrans: California Department of Transportation  
 Carrara Treatment  
 Chrysalis | Changing Lives Through Jobs  
 DoorDash  
 Exodus Mental Health Recovery Inc.  
 Goodwill Industries International, Inc.  
 Homeboys Industries  
 In-Home Healthcare Services (IHSS) Program  
 Laborers Local Union 300 - LiUNA!  
 Los Angeles General Medical Center  
 Lineage Logistics  
 Los Angeles Metro Bus  
 Nationwide Environmental Services  
 Schneider National Trucking  
 Subway  
 Superior Grocers Market  
 U-Haul: Moving Truck Rental  
 United Postal Services  
 Urban Alchemy/CCM  
 Walmart  
 Worldwide Produce  
 Yoshinoya  
 The Midnight Mission

### STAR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Alcoholism Center for Women  
 American Recovery Center  
 Baby2Baby  
 Behavioral Health Services (BHS)  
 Changing Spirits Recovery Center  
 Lola and Dave Culotti\*  
 Detection and Treatment Resources (DTR)  
 LA Department of Mental Health  
 Department of Vocational Rehabilitation  
 Emerging Leaders Academy  
 Exodus Mental Health Service Center  
 Fred Brown Recovery Center  
 Goodwill Industries  
 Harbor Interfaith Services  
 Healthcare 360  
 Homeboys Industries  
 HOPICS  
 House of Uhuru  
 Little House Recovery  
 Los Angeles Regional Foodbank  
 Los Angeles Public Library  
 Pacifica House Residential Treatment Center  
 Redgate Residential Treatment Center  
 Re-Ignite Vocational Training  
 San Pedro Recovery Alliance  
 Tarzana Residential Treatment Center  
 Volunteers of America Los Angeles  
 WorkSource Centers

# Congratulations to STAR on 15 Years of Service to the CDCA!

On behalf of the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office, I am honored to congratulate and acknowledge the outstanding work of our STAR Program as we celebrate the program's 15th anniversary. It doesn't seem possible that the STAR Program has been active for 15 years. Looking at where the program is today, it's astounding to recall that at the beginning it was considered a new frontier in the federal judiciary. It was the first of its kind and our team, led by our visionary leader, Judge Otis D. Wright, laid the firm foundation for this program, which has become the marquee example for others to emulate.

Some people you meet have a way of inspiring you, making you want to be a better person because they allow you to see the better version of yourself through their eyes- Judge Wright that inspiration has been and is you for so many graduates. Thank you and the team sincerely for your time, your commitment, and your outpouring of care! Congratulations on 15 years of excellent service to our court and we look forward to many many more.

**-Natasha Alexander Mingo**

Chief United States Probation &  
Pretrial Services Officer

The Federal Public Defender's Office is thrilled that the STAR program is celebrating 15 solid years. We are honored to be working in collaboration with the United States Attorney's Office and United States Probation Office. We extend a special thank you to the Honorable Judge Wright, Judge Oliver, Judge Kato, Judge Pym, Judge Bristow, Judge Slaughter, Judge Adero and Chief Judge Gee for their unwavering commitment to the success of the STAR program in Los Angeles, Riverside, and Santa Ana. The Federal Public Defender's Office remains dedicated to help STAR participants change their lives for many more decades to come.

**-Neha Christerna**

Collaborative Courts Chief  
Federal Public Defender's Office

STAR has provided an opportunity to prosecutors to observe the lives of defendants after they have served their debt to society, and as they transition to being productive members of their families and communities. It has proven to be an effective way to reduce recidivism and make prosecutors better at their jobs. Congratulations to STAR, the STAR Team, and thank you for 15 years of making better, safer communities.

**-Timothy Searight**

Assistant U.S. Attorney  
United States Attorney's Office





SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT AND REENTRY

# 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

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## CONTACT US



Please send STAR-Los Angeles referrals to:  
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Please send STAR-Riverside referrals to:  
Krystal Ward, United States Probation & Pretrial Services Officer  
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Please send STAR-Santa Ana referrals to:  
Teddy Cha, United States Probation & Pretrial Services Officer  
[Theodore\\_Cha@cacp.uscourts.gov](mailto:Theodore_Cha@cacp.uscourts.gov)