

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Veterans Treatment Courts**

1. **Do you have to be a Veteran to participate on the team?** No. You only have to be a Veteran to be a participant or a mentor assigned to those Veterans. But not all Veterans are eligible to be defendants or mentors in the program.
2. **IS VTC a Mental Health Court or a Drug Court?** It is both. Our team treats and monitors whatever the Veterans' needs are, but in a majority of the cases it is both.
3. **Do you have to be close to a VA to conduct this kind of court?** No. We send Veterans to KC, Leavenworth and Topeka VAs. Even before the pandemic, many of our Veterans got their treatment by telemedicine. There also are CBOCs (Community Based Outpatient Clinics) around the state where Veterans go for Medical needs.
4. **Where can I go to get more information about VTCs?** JusticeforVets.org . They have general information, statistics, training, grants, and much more. And as of August 2020, the United States Attorney General, in coordination with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, is required by federal law to "establish and carry out a Veteran Treatment Court Program." See H.R. 886/S.2774 ("The Veteran Treatment Court Coordination Act of 2019"). The purpose of this program is "to ensure the Department of Justice has a single office to coordinate the provision of grants, training, and technical assistance to help State, local, and Tribal governments to develop and maintain veteran treatment programs." The Act mandates that the Attorney General promulgate regulations to carry out the program, which should ultimately provide more information about VTCs.
5. **Are there grants available for this type of Court?** Yes, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) grants are available to establish this kind of Court. And the Act (see answer to Question 4) confirms that grants are to be provided.
6. **How do we find the Veterans in our Court?** We ask everyone booked in our county if they served in the US Military. We then reassign those that might be eligible to apply to one or two courts where we can have team members educate them on the program. Our Computer Department was also helpful to track the number of Veterans with active cases and on probation.
7. **What if the Veterans are not eligible for VA treatment?** We have our County Mental Health Agency as part of the team to treat those. Even non-eligible Veterans can get VA treatment in many cases if it is service related. Veterans additionally can access the VA-affiliated Vet Centers, that also counsel and treat "bad discharge" veterans if diagnosed with combat related PTSD. Counseling extends to those Veterans' families.
8. **Is it a Diversion Program or Probation?** In our Court it is both. Most of our Veterans are in the Diversion Program. We also have a Post Plea track for multiple DUI cases and others that for some reason were not able to get in on Diversion Track.

9. **How long is the program?** We have a 12 month and 18 month track depending on treatment need and severity of crime. Progression also depends upon compliance with conditions. We've had Veterans that were in the program two years because of sanctions.
10. **What kinds of sanctions do you use?** No reward at Court, Essays and Action Plans, More frequent Court Appearances, Community Service, Evaluations for specific programs with the recommendations of Treators, flash incarcerations. If a veteran exhibits a pattern of non-compliance, some VTCs return him or her to an earlier stage of the program.
11. **Can we visit your Court and others?** Absolutely. You and your team can visit our Court anytime. Prior to staffing, we all sign a confidentiality agreement because we discuss patient treatment. Every Court I've ever contacted has let me visit. They don't always let you come back to staffing but most do.
12. **Is there training?** Yes. Justice for Vets came to our State to train us over 3 or 4 days. They then sent us to Tulsa to visit that Court for a day. And as mentioned in answer to Question 4, the purpose of the program created by Congress is "to ensure the Department of Justice has a single office to coordinate the provision of grants, *training*, and technical assistance to help State, local, and Tribal governments to develop and maintain veteran treatment programs." The Act mandates that the U.S. Attorney General promulgate regulations to carry out the program, which should ultimately provide more information about training availability.