

Knox County VETERANS TREATMENT COURT



MENTOR PROGRAM HANDBOOK





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Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize the important efforts and collaboration of the Honorable Robert Russell and Jack O'Connor in creating the first Veterans Treatment Court in Buffalo, New York in 2008, and helping in the formation of our own Knox County VTC. Their support, assistance and guidance was invaluable. We also need to recognize the efforts of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) and its affiliate, *Justice For Vets*, in promoting the creation and training programs for VTC's throughout the U.S.

Locally, our court would not have become a reality without the help, support and participation of the Honorable Chuck Cerny of the Knox County General Sessions Court, Ron Hanaver, Director of the Knox County Recovery and Veterans Treatment Court Director, Edouard Junod, Knox County Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Coordinator, Frank Vollmer & Dean Powell, Senior Mentors Knox County Veterans Treatment Court, Stephen Parella, Knoxville Vet Center Readjustment Counselor/Outreach, TN VA Assistant Commissioner Don Smith, Knox County VSO Thomas Humphries, Bonnie Johnson, TN VA Veterans Benefit Representative

Much of the content of this handbook was adopted from the Buffalo Veterans Court Mentoring Manual and comments by the Honorable Judy Harris Kluger, Chief of Policy and Planning, NY Unified Court System.



Introduction to the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court Program

Based upon the success of the Knox Recovery Court and a pronounced need to address challenges unique to veterans, the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court (KCVTC) Program utilizes the same rigorous protocol of treatment and personal accountability to treat veterans suffering from a substance abuse and/or mental health disorder, while helping ensure public safety.

The Knox County Veterans Treatment Court Program offers coordinated substance abuse and mental health to veterans in the criminal justice system. Each veteran in Veterans Treatment Court is assigned a substance abuse counselor, who is a veteran himself. Veterans participants are provided veteran-specific sessions as well as having access to the sessions provided other recovery court participants.

KCVTC provides these integrated services through partnerships with area organizations devoted to helping veterans. Participants in this program come before the VTC Judge on a regular basis, receive support and guidance from veteran mentors, are supervised by partnering probation officers and receive treatment and support from the providers who provide services to the Veteran Participants. Issues to be addressed include but are not limited to PTSD, MST and substance abuse.

The KCVTC services provided to the veterans in Knox County will allow fewer of these veterans from languishing in our already over-crowded corrections system with a greater goal of breaking the cycle of addiction that landed them in the legal system.

The distinctive elements, and the key to the success of the Veterans Treatment Court model, are the role of the veteran mentors and the collaboration with the US Department of Veterans Affairs, other veteran service agencies and state and community organizations. Veteran mentors, comprised of volunteers and veterans share a vast array of common life experiences with participants. These common experiences allow veteran mentors to: effectively engage participants, act as a resource and guide to navigating the courts and VA system, help participants maintain focus on their treatment, assist in navigating the challenges of adjusting to a healthy and productive civilian lifestyle, and finally successfully graduating from Veterans Treatment Court. The contribution of the mentor to the success of the VTC is immeasurable.



Why Veterans Treatment Courts?

Many of our country's Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans have returned home in hopes of finding comfort and rest among their loved ones and a civilian lifestyle. Unfortunately, they are still finding themselves engaged in a daunting battle against the effects of Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, substance abuse, and depression. Finding themselves entwined in the criminal justice system seems to be increasingly common results.

Today's generation of combat Veterans may get into more trouble than their Vietnam counterparts. Interviews were conducted with men who fought in Vietnam by the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study which revealed an estimate that half of all combat Veterans with PTSD resulting from the war in Vietnam had been arrested one or more times. Many of the combat Veterans from Vietnam experienced only a single deployment, and our Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have been exposed to three (3) or four (4) combat tours. This has led to a dramatic increase in PTSD and substance abuse diagnoses.

So far, 247,243, nearly 30% of the 834,463 Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans treated at the Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals and clinics, have been diagnosed with PTSD, which suggests at least 100,000 of them are suffering from the demons of PTSD and have become ensnared in the criminal justice system

Approximately 50% of homeless Veterans have histories of encounters with the legal system. On average, these Veterans had five prior arrests, and 45% had served two (2) or more state prison sentences. Three (3) out of five (5) had substance dependency problems, almost one (1) in three (3) had serious medical problems.

Some Veterans may face additional obstacles. Female Veterans may have experienced military sexual trauma and the challenges that come from leaving children at home during deployment. Gay and lesbian Veterans may struggle with ongoing stigma and prejudice.

Veterans Treatment Courts

Realizing that Veterans have special needs that were not being adequately served, Knox County created the first Veterans Treatment Court in December 2013. Beginning with, and then adapting, the structures of drug treatment courts and mental health courts, the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court identified some of the specific issues facing Veterans:

- The needs of many Veterans are related to their military service.
- Many Veterans use drugs as a way of numbing or decreasing their stress levels.
- Some illegal drug use may stem from the medicinal effect those drugs had on PTSD symptoms and other conditions while in the field.



Knox County Veterans Treatment Court

Veterans Treatment Courts (known as Veterans Court or Veterans Track in some jurisdictions) address these challenges in a forum that is conducive to Veterans' rehabilitation. Where available, Veterans Treatment Courts work with civilian healthcare providers, local Veterans agencies, Tennessee State Division of Veteran Affairs and the United States Department of Veteran Affairs. They utilize Veteran mentors and mental health specialists to complement probation services; and incorporate a therapeutic approach to afford Veterans opportunities to transition into civilian life and regain stability.



Key Components of Veterans Treatment Courts

Veterans Treatment Courts operate similarly to drug treatment and mental health courts. Drug treatment courts operate within the guidelines of the Ten Key Components of Drug Court, developed by a commission of drug court practitioners in 1995. Veterans Treatment Courts feature the following 10 key operational standards which are adapted from the Ten Key Components.

Veterans Treatment Courts:

1. integrate alcohol, drug treatment and mental health services with justice system case processing
2. use a non-adversarial approach where prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting Veteran participants' due process rights
3. identify eligible participants early and promptly place them in the Veterans Treatment Court program
4. provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, mental health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services
5. monitor abstinence through frequent alcohol and other drug testing
6. respond to Veteran participants' compliance through a coordinated strategy
7. maintain essential, ongoing judicial interaction with each Veteran
8. measure achievement of program goals and gauge program effectiveness through monitoring and ongoing evaluation
9. continue interdisciplinary education and promote effective Veterans Treatment Court planning, implementation and operations
10. forge partnerships among Veterans Treatment Court, Veterans Administration, public agencies and community-based organizations, generate local support and enhance Veterans Treatment Courts effectiveness

Mentor Component

An essential component of the Veterans Treatment Court program is the mentor program where Veteran mentors act as peer support to Veteran participants. Veterans are better served by having a support system that includes Veterans who understand combat experience and the different aspects of military service. Mentors participate in a supportive relationship with participants to increase the likelihood that they will remain in treatment, attain and manage sobriety, maintain law-abiding behavior and successfully readjust to civilian life.

The mentor program consists of mentor coordinators and Veteran mentors. Their roles, responsibilities, requirements and qualifications are discussed in the following sections.



Mentor Coordinators

Role of Mentor Coordinators

Mentor coordinators ensure the efficient and successful operation of the mentor program in a Veterans Treatment Court. Mentor coordinators are volunteers that are responsible for assigning Veteran mentors to participants, supporting Veteran mentors in all aspects of their work and managing mentor training programs and mentor assignments.

Mentor coordinators must be familiar with their local Veterans Treatment Court and Veteran services. Mentor coordinators are not required to be Veterans, though prior military service is preferable.

Mentor coordinators should:

1. Find appropriate mentors for the Veterans Treatment Court program.
 - This may require conducting presentations in the community regarding the Veterans Treatment Court.
 - Mentors cannot be active employees of the Unified Court System, active law enforcement or a member of any other organization that may present a conflict with the mentor program. *Consult with the judge if there are questions about the eligibility of a Veteran mentor.*
2. Match mentors with participants based on shared qualities and backgrounds to the greatest extent possible. Factors to consider may include:
 - branch of service
 - type of service (i.e., combat and location of service)
 - gender
 - general age group
3. Schedule the appropriate number of mentors needed for each court session.
 - Mentors should be present whenever Veterans Treatment Court is in session to provide immediate support for participants appearing in court.
4. Act as a resource for the mentors by:
 - accommodating conflicts in a Veteran mentor's personal schedule
 - collecting and reviewing mentor logs, completed by mentors, to monitor the nature of a participant's progress in the Veterans Treatment Court
 - placing mentors in touch with local Accredited Service Officers who can help appropriate Veterans secure benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - these trained officers can be found in local government offices and in local service organizations, such as The American Legion, The Military Order of the Purple Heart and Vietnam Veterans of American
5. Work with the Veterans Treatment Court staff to resolve issues and motivate participants through challenges.



- In some instances, mentors may bring concerns regarding a participant to the attention of their mentor coordinator. The mentor coordinator is then responsible for contacting the Veterans Treatment Court in a timely manner to ensure that the participant receives appropriate support.
 - If the mentor coordinator determines that mentors are not adequately fulfilling their responsibilities, the coordinator must contact the Veterans Treatment Court staff in a reasonable and timely manner and remove the mentors from the program.
6. Maintain federal confidentiality standards.
 7. Attend clinical and legal training programs supported or provided by the Veterans Treatment Court.
 8. Maintain access to the mentor logbook or case management notes.

Responsibilities of Mentor Coordinators

The following responsibilities should be carried out by mentor coordinators:

- recruit, screen and train new Veteran mentors
- collect and review mentor application forms
- ensure that mentors attend ongoing training programs
- pair mentors with participants
- inform mentors of their schedules
- manage the rotational schedule of mentors in Veterans Treatment Court
- provide mentors with a list of Veteran resources
- collect and review mentor logs (where appropriate)
- be prepared to contact the appropriate authorities if participants require crisis intervention, increased court supervision or immediate emergency care
- remove mentors who fail to adequately meet their responsibilities from the mentor program
- perform any additional duties as directed by the judge of the Veterans Treatment Court or the court staff
- identify appropriate Veterans services in the community
- update the local Veterans resource guide
- maintain confidentiality
- attend appropriate training programs



Requirements and Qualifications for Mentor Coordinators

Mentor Coordinators should:

- be familiar with the Veterans Treatment Court
- have strong leadership and organizational skills
- respect individual differences
- be able to devote time to the Veterans Treatment Court
- have prior military service (preferred, but not required).

Veteran Mentors

Role of Veteran Mentors

Veteran mentors are Veteran volunteers responsible for serving as a supporter, guide and confidant for Veteran participants. Mentors should provide support as participants' progress through the Veterans Treatment Court and should feel comfortable working collaboratively to assist participants, and, where appropriate, their families, in successfully completing the directives of the court.

Veteran Mentors act as coach, guide, role model, advocate, and support for the Veteran participants. Mentors encourage, guide, and support each Veteran participant through the court process. This includes listening to the concerns of each Veteran participant and making general suggestions, assisting with determining needs, and acting as a support.

Veteran mentors should:

- Meet with participants to assist in resolving their issues.
 - Each meeting should build on the participants' previous conversations
 - Meetings should be conducted in person (where possible)
 - Refer participants to appropriate services
 - Facilitate an understanding of courtroom procedures
- Work collaboratively with the other mentors and the mentor coordinator.
- Motivate participants utilizing a strengths-based approach by:
 - providing encouragement to participants by highlighting their strengths, including, talents, skills and knowledge
 - focusing on what has been successful
 - believing that participants have the potential to learn, grow and change



- Maintain federal confidentiality standards.
- Attend clinical and legal training programs supported or provided by the Veterans Treatment Court.
- Mentors should attend an initial training session where topics may include Veterans Treatment Court's policies and procedures, mentoring dos and don'ts, psychopharmacology, mental illness, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury.
- Communicate with their mentor coordinator to resolve any issues regarding time commitments, resistant participants or unmanageable challenges.
 - If a mentor fears for the safety of a participant or is concerned about a participant's behavior, the mentor should report any concerns to their mentor coordinator immediately.
- Update the mentor logbook or case management notes after speaking with a participant.
- Commit to a period of time, usually 5 to 6 months, to mentor in the Veterans Treatment Court.
- Provide a valid military service record (DD214 or DD215) and submit to background verification.

Responsibilities of Veteran Mentors

The following responsibilities should be carried out by Veteran mentors:

- attend relevant training programs
- communicate with the mentor coordinator regarding any issues
- update the mentor logs or case management notes
- maintain confidentiality
- maintain appropriate boundaries with participants
- be respectful and always speak with a positive tone

While meeting with participants, mentors must NOT:

- make clinical recommendations
- give legal advice
- provide psychotherapy
- utilize a stern approach



- inappropriately extend the boundaries of their relationship

Requirements and Qualifications for Veteran Mentors

Mentors should:

- Complete a mentor application form (sample is attached)
- Provide a valid DD214 or DD215 (honorable discharge is preferred)
- Submit to a background check
- Commit to a minimum of one year participation, or until the assigned Veteran graduates
- Have a genuine concern for veterans
- Maintain good standing with the law
- Be a veteran of one of the branches of the US Armed Forces, including the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or their corresponding Reserve and Guard branches
- Adhere to all of the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court policies and procedures
- Complete the required initial training as specified by the KCVTC prior to participation
- Attend any additional trainings as required
- Do not engage in any drug use, alcohol use, sexual activities or any other unlawful activities with the Veteran participant
- Notify the Mentor Coordinator if the Veteran participant becomes suicidal, homicidal, or engages in unlawful activities
- Be respectful of individual differences and maintain appropriate boundaries with participants
- Not be an active employee of the Unified Court System, an active member of law enforcement or a member of any other organization that may present a conflict of interest with the mentor program

Veteran Mentor Desirable Qualities:

- Active listener
- Empathetic
- Encouraging and supportive
- Positive military service
- Tolerant and respectful of individual differences
- Knowledge of community resources and services



Veteran Mentor Recruitment

The KCVTC Mentor and Resource Coordinator assume the majority of the responsibility for recruiting Veteran Mentors. The team, its collaborative partners, and current mentors are strongly encouraged to refer highly respectable and reputable veterans to the Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Program. Additionally, team members and mentors are strongly encouraged to attend and host informational sessions and training for prospective mentors.

Inquiry:

All inquiries about participating as a Veteran Mentor will be directed to the Mentor and Resource Coordinator, who will respond to any prospective mentor inquiries within one week.

Eligibility:

Each Veteran Mentor must meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in the “Veteran Mentor Requirements” section. Extenuating circumstances may be reviewed at the discretion of the KCVTC Mentor and Resource Coordinator.

Knowledge of a Prospective Mentor’s Negative History:

Current Veteran Mentors with knowledge of any prospective mentor’s history or background that may jeopardize the integrity of the program, the KCVTC, or the Veteran participants, must communicate this knowledge and/or concerns to the Mentor and Resource Coordinator, the Program Director, or the Judge.

Screening:

Each prospective Veteran Mentor must complete a screening process. The decision to accept or deny an applicant will be made by the KCVTC Mentor and Resource Coordinator, the KCVTC Coordinator and the Judge. Feedback regarding the prospective mentor’s denial may or may not be given. The right to withhold or give feedback is solely at the discretion of the Mentor and Resource Coordinator, the KCVTC Coordinator, Program Director, and Judge.

The screening process includes the completion and review of the following:

- Volunteer Application Form (*see Appendix*)
- Personal interview
- Background check (*see Appendix*)
- Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Agreement form (*see Appendix*)

Training:

All prospective mentors must complete the required initial training in order to be eligible to begin mentoring. Training will include, but is not limited to:

- Observation of three (3) court sessions
- Discussion of the experience of court observations



- Completing the Veterans Treatment Court Online Training Program on the National Drug Court Online Learning System. <http://drugcourtonline.org/>

Complete all four (4) of the VTC Lessons which include:

- ❖ 01 - Mental Illness, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Substance Abuse
- ❖ 02 - How to Build a Mentoring Program for Your Veterans Treatment Court
- ❖ 03 - Trauma Informed Care - Strategies for the Clinician Working with the Veteran Population
- ❖ 04 - Developing a Veterans Treatment Court

You can print out a certificate for each lesson when completed. Once complete all four lessons please print out a course certificate and email the course certificate to your Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Coordinator

- View and complete PA Veteran Mentor Program was developed by the Administrative Office of PA Courts. <http://paveteranmentor.rmu.edu/>
- Attend Justice For Vets Mentor Boot Camp if training is available.

Unacceptable Behavior:

Unacceptable behaviors will not be tolerated while a Veteran Mentor is participating in the program. Because of the direct impact a mentor has on a Veteran participant, behaviors that are not aligned with the mission, vision, goals, and values of Veterans Treatment Court are unacceptable and prohibited.

Recognition and Awards:

All mentors will be recognized for their role in the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court program. The KCVTC Mentor and Resource Coordinator are responsible for planning and implementing recognition activities at least once per year.



Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Application

Personal Information

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Past Volunteer Experience (include organization/agency, position, and supervisor phone/email)

Agency / Organization	Position/Responsibilities	Dates	Supervisor/Contact Info

A) Why do you want to volunteer with Veterans Treatment Court? _____

B) How would you like to help Veterans Treatment Court? _____

C) What skills and experiences do you bring to the mentoring program that will be helpful to the Veterans in the program and the other mentors? _____



D) What are you hoping to take away from volunteering with the Veterans Treatment Court mentoring program? _____

Mentors will be expected to participate in court observation, attend ongoing training and be supervised by a mentor coordinator.

Please circle the days you are available to mentor: M T W TH F

Time Available: _____

Do you speak a language other than English? O Yes O No

If yes, list languages: _____

Have you previously served as a mentor? O Yes O No

If yes, in what capacity and where? _____

Are you willing to submit to a background investigation? O Yes O No

Are you willing to submit to a drug and alcohol test? O Yes O No

References: Provide the name and phone number or e-mail address of three non-family references.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Military Experience

Branch of Service (check one): ___ Army ___ Navy ___ Marines ___ Air Force ___ Coast Guard
___ Reserve ___ Air National Guard ___ Army National Guard

Dates of Service: From _____ To _____ Type of Discharge: _____

Have you served in a combat zone? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, in what combat zone did you serve? _____

What was your job in the US Armed Forces? _____

What type of training did you receive in the Armed Forces? _____

Criminal History

Have you ever been arrested and/or convicted of a crime? ___ Yes ___ No



Date: _____ Charge: _____

Do you have any pending criminal charges? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, what charge(s)? _____

Send completed application to:
Edouard “Ed” Junod,
KCVTC Mentor & Resource Coordinator
900 East Hill Avenue, Suite 310
Knoxville, TN 37915
Phone: (865) 850-8376
Fax: (865) 865-522-0567
ejunod@tnvhc.org

National Veteran Mentor Corps Oath

I am forever conscious of each Veteran under my charge, and by example will inspire him or her to the highest standard possible.

I will strive to reintegrate my Veteran back into society.

I will live by the credo “leave no Veteran behind” and will give them the support only I, a Veteran can give.

I will never forget that I am responsible to my fellow Veterans, the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court Program and the law.



Frequently Asked Questions

The Office of Policy and Planning serves as the technical assistance arm of the Tennessee Court System for problem-solving courts. The following are frequently asked questions regarding Veteran mentor programs.

Q: How many mentors will I need to start a mentor program?

A: The number of mentors needed in a Veterans Treatment Court will vary based on the court's caseload. To start a mentor program, it is helpful to have a diverse group of mentors available. At a minimum and if possible, include a combat Veteran, a female Veteran and an Accredited Service Officer to navigate the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and assist in processing Veterans' claims.

Q: Where can mentor coordinators solicit Veterans to volunteer in the Veterans Treatment Court?

A: Mentor coordinators should utilize local Veteran groups such as local Vet Centers which are community-based Veteran centers and are operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. They provide counseling services to Veterans and their families, focusing on post-war readjustment to civilian life. Mentor coordinators may also contact the Disabled American Veterans Chapters which are non-profit organizations providing assistance to disabled Veterans. Also, VA Medical Centers have Veterans experienced with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Q: How often are mentors required to meet with participants?

A: Once a week is recommended, but mentors must understand that every participant is different. The goal is to form a supportive relationship with their participant.

Q: Can mentors be effective without much knowledge of the law or courtroom proceedings?



A: Mentors do not need to have legal or criminal justice experience. In fact, mentors must not provide legal advice.

Q: Should mentors use a “tough love” approach?

A: Although a mentor may believe it will better help a participant, this approach is counter-productive to a participant’s recovery. A strengths-based approach that encourages and motivates participants is preferable.

Q: Can attorneys serve as Veteran mentors?

A: Attorneys who appear in Veterans Treatment Court should not become mentors. Attorneys, who do not represent litigants in Veterans Treatment Court, can be mentors, but they must not provide legal advice to participants.

Q: Why can’t Unified Court System employees be mentors?

A: Unified Court System employees must avoid the appearance of impropriety. Court employees face a conflict of interest in serving as impartial mentors.



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