

Veterans Treatment Court

Serving

Lakewood, University Place, Steilacoom & DuPont



Veteran Mentor Handbook



Introduction

In November of 2014, the Lakewood Municipal Court Judge noticed that the number of active duty military and Veterans coming through the court was a large percentage of each docket. He also realized that the standard approach in dealing with these cases appeared to do little if anything for the overall well-being of these Veterans. Since that time he and the entire Vet Court Team have worked diligently to secure grants for training and observation of other Veteran Treatment Courts in the state to come up with a Veterans Treatment Court in Lakewood that is intended to assist veterans' with addressing their overall well-being while also holding them accountable. The first veteran entered the Veterans Treatment Court in Lakewood on October 11, 2016.

An important part of the Veterans Treatment Court in Lakewood is the mentor program. The Mentor program is a voluntary program where Veteran Mentors donate their time to assist justice involved Veterans with a variety of issues.

- Mentors serve a wide variety of roles including: coach, advisor, supporter, and an advocate.
- Mentors listen to the concerns and problems of their justice involved veterans and assist them in finding solutions.
- Mentors help justice involved veterans identify their values, set goals, develop action plans, and link up with community resources available to veterans.
- Mentors represent a voice of reason and objectivity during times of stress and confusion.
- Mentors serve as a support for the justice involved veteran in a way that only other veterans can. The mentoring program thrives on the premise that behind every successful person, there is one elementary truth: somewhere, somehow, someone cared about that person's growth and development. For a veteran coming through the Veterans Treatment Court today, that person is often his/her mentor.

The two basis goals of the mentor in the Veterans Treatment Court are:

1. Serve as a link to stability for the justice involved veteran. You will be an advocate that applauds good decisions and objectively questions poor decisions made by the justice involved veteran.
2. Link the justice involved veteran to the appropriate community resources that primarily deal with veterans and veteran focused issues.

VETERANS MENTORING PROGRAM

Mission Statement of the Veterans Treatment Court Mentoring Program:

We ensure that every justice involved veteran has someone he or she can rely on. We ensure that every veteran receives the help and resources they need and that no veteran is left behind.

Goals of the Veteran Mentor Program:

1. Help our fellow veterans receive the services they need to reach their full potential as productive members of society.
2. Help our fellow veterans navigate the court system, treatment system, and VA system.
3. Identify our fellow veterans' needs and help them adjust back to civilian life.

By volunteering to serve as a mentor, you're vowing to pursue the mission and goals to the best of your abilities.

Veteran Treatment Court Mentoring Program:

The Lakewood municipal veterans treatment court (Vet Court) is a dedicated collaboration between community partners and resources to create safer communities and reduce recidivism by helping veterans reintegrate back into our community more effectively by connecting them with the services they have earned. Veteran mentors assist justice involved veterans by being a link to personal stability and community resources. Most mentors are veterans, and all mentors are connected to the military in some way. The mentors come from all walks of life and cover a vast age range.

The Role of a Mentor:

The mentor serves more as an advocate for the veteran, as opposed to an overseer. In the course of your work as a mentor, you will be called on to guide your veterans into making better decisions. In that, you will provide your veterans with:

- Advice
- Personal experiences
- Recommendations
- Guidance
- Wisdom

However, there are several extremely important positions you must understand if you are to help your veterans:

- The mentor is not a therapist or a social worker or a Probation Officer.
- The mentor is not an authority.
- The mentor is not a preacher or a church representative.
- The mentor is not an enabler of bad or questionable behavior.
- The mentor does not lend money to a justice involved Veteran.
- The mentor does not do personal favors for the justice involved Veterans or allow the justice involved veteran to do favors for the mentor.
- The mentor should not allow the veteran to move in or live with the mentor.
- The mentor and veteran should not engage in a dating or intimate relationship.

Veteran Mentor Duties and Responsibilities

1. Weekly check-ins with veteran participant to be initiated by the participant either by phone, e-mail or in person contact that is logged by the mentor.
2. Attend court sessions and/or forums when scheduled as feasible.
3. Be supportive and understanding of the difficulties other veterans are facing.
4. Assist veterans on how to access and navigate the veteran's affairs system.
5. Be supportive and helpful to other veteran mentors.

Veteran Mentor Requirements

1. Be a United States military veteran: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard or a corresponding branch of the Reserve or National Guard.
2. Have a genuine concern for veterans in the legal system.
3. Be in good standing with the law
4. Adhere to all veterans' treatment court policies and procedures.

5. Commit to program participation for a minimum of six months.
6. Be agreeable to checking in weekly with the veteran while mentoring.

The Veterans Court Process

The Lakewood Municipal veterans' court recognizes the unique and substantial needs of America's service members. The court identifies eligible veterans, and then diverts them to the specialized veterans' court docket. This is a 4-phased process. To help you understand it, let's follow a hypothetical person through it.

Step I

1. The person is arrested
2. Information gathering shows that he/she is a veteran
3. The veteran is advised of veterans' court option.

Step II

1. The veteran and his/her attorney are offered the option of going through the veterans court program, rather than remaining in main stream (alpha) court.
2. If they accept, then the Judge will order a PSI and the VJO (Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator) will do an assessment if needed for VA treatment.

Step III

The veteran will petition the court for entry into veterans' treatment court. If granted the veteran will enter into an SOC (Stipulated Order of Continuance) that requires the veteran to do certain things. The agreement typically includes monitored weekly probation, and participation in: 1) assigned treatment, 2) weekly relationship with a mentor when available; and, 3) meeting all other requirements of each phase as the veteran phases up in the program.

1. The veteran goes through an intake with probation and meets with probation regularly.
2. The veteran attends a drug and alcohol treatment/ assessment (if applicable).
3. The veteran follows the prescribed course of treatment.

Step IV

1. Upon successfully completing the program, graduation occurs, and some charges may be dismissed or amended. In some cases, the veteran's case will remain open for law abiding behavior for a time period agreed to in the SOC however the veteran will no longer have to appear for veterans' court.

When the conversation and interactions between the veteran mentor and justice involved veterans are on the level of peers rather than from a position of authority, the relationship can grow, thus allowing the justice involved veterans to develop trust in the system, rather than resentment.

This peer-to-peer relationship becomes an opportunity to make a profound impact on the veterans who enter the court under unfortunate circumstances. Based on these observations veteran mentors are an essential part of the justice involved veteran's recovery and reentry into civilian life. This gives them their best chance to succeed in life.

Accountability and Behavior

One of the core elements that resonates throughout the Lakewood veterans' treatment court, is the emphasis placed on personal accountability and the utilization of learned tools. The court provides a safe environment, coupled with a high level of personal accountability for the justice involved veteran, while allowing him/her to remain in the community, rather than in a correctional facility.

As is common among many treatment courts, incentives are offered for compliance and sanctions for non-compliance with the program. Charges may be dismissed upon successful completion of all phases, and justice involved veterans are typically agreeing to things that include: 1) monitored supervised probation while in veterans' court, 2) participation in a mentoring relationship, and 3) meeting all other requirements of each phase as the veteran phases up in the program.

The court can assign additional directives that include treatment plans and/or other therapeutic approaches. Other conditions may include not to drive without license and proof of insurance; not to use, possess, or consume alcohol, marijuana and/or non-prescribed drugs; have no criminal law violations. Additionally, because veterans are held accountable for their actions, they are not immune from prosecution. While under the supervision of the court, they could be charged with additional crimes and/or removed from the veterans' court.

About Treatment

Appropriate treatment needs are determined through assessment. Most of the veterans receive treatment through the VA health care network. There are numerous reasons for this, including availability of resources and coverage. Veterans are also offered treatment through the VA because of the unique care and understanding the facility has for veteran's experiences and needs.

Particular emphasis is placed on behavior modification and the idea of being mindful of the people, places, and things that veterans associate with. Certain people, places, and things can cause a veteran to resort back to negative behaviors. Identifying these triggers is helpful for the veteran to gain self-awareness. Veterans are then expected to use this self-awareness to make positive choices about what and whom they allow into their lives.

The court also encourages family involvement in the lives of these veterans with the understanding that family can often provide support and motivation.

It is the belief of everyone involved with the veterans court that this approach gives each veteran the best chance of completing probation, gaining much needed social and interpersonal skills, and stepping into his/her future with the best chance of success.

Phase Structure of the program:

It is important to understand what is being asked of the veterans participating in our program, therefore we have included the phases they go through while in the program. This gives our mentors an understanding of what is being asked of the veterans in order to progress through the program and ultimately be successful.

PHASE 1- STABILITY AND SOBRIETY: 6 Weeks

- 1) A case management plan will be developed for the participant's case.
- 2) The veteran will attend Veterans Treatment Court as requested (exceptions made on a case by case basis).

- 3) The veteran will comply with getting the necessary evaluations and treatment/counseling services in order to comply with court mandated requirements for this program.
- 4) The veteran is required to attend all appointments with treatment providers and case managers as scheduled.
- 5) The veteran is required to take any prescribed medications as ordered to address your physical and mental health needs.
- 6) The veteran is required to provide a list of all medication, prescribed and non-prescribed to the probation officer, and update the list anytime there is a change.
- 7) The veteran will attend a 12 step recovery support group twice per week. Verification of attendance should be turned in to probation the week before court (if required by SOC).
- 8) The veteran is required to have a minimum of two random urine analysis (UA's) a week.
- 9) The veteran will be required to engage with your mentor and/or the VJO on a weekly basis by phone, email or in person.
- 10) The veteran will comply with home visits as determined by probation.
- 11) The veteran will be required to write a letter to the courts explaining why you should move to the next phase.

PHASING UP:

- 1) All phase requirements plus each veteran's individual requirements are due the week before court.
- 2) The veteran will have a minimum of 15 consecutive days clean and sober.
- 3) The veteran will have 2 consecutive weeks violation free prior to phase up.
- 4) The veteran will be in compliance with all the conditions of Phase 1. Any exceptions must be granted by the Veterans Treatment Court Team.
- 5) The veteran must fill out the application for phase up to be submitted the day of consideration.

PHASE 2- CONTINUED STABILITY AND MENTOR INVOLVMENT: 8 Weeks

- 1) The veteran will attend Veterans Treatment Court as requested (exceptions made on a case by case basis).
- 2) The veteran is required to have a minimum of two random urine analysis (UA's) a week.
- 3) The veteran is required to attend all appointments with treatment providers and case managers as scheduled.
- 4) The veteran will be required to take any prescribed medications as ordered to address your physical and mental health needs.
- 5) The veteran is required to update the list of all medication, prescribed and non-prescribed to the probation officer anytime there is a change of medications.
- 6) The veteran's case management plan will be reviewed and updated as necessary.
- 7) The veteran will attend weekly probation appointments (exceptions made on a case by case basis).
- 8) The veteran will comply with home visits as determined by probation.
- 9) The veteran will attend a 12 step recovery support group twice per week. Verification of attendance should be turned in to probation the week prior to court (if required by SOC).
- 10) The veteran will be required to engage with your mentor and/or the VJO on a weekly basis by phone, email or in person.
- 11) The veteran will be required to write a letter to the court explaining why you should move to the next phase.

PHASING UP:

- 1) All phase requirements plus each veteran's individual requirements are due the week before court.
- 2) The Veteran will be required to have 30 consecutive days clean and sober.
- 3) The Veteran will have 4 consecutive weeks violation free prior to phase up.
- 4) The Veteran will be in compliance with all the conditions of Phase 2. Any exceptions must be granted by the Veterans Treatment Court team.
- 5) The Veteran must fill out the application for phase up to be submitted the day of consideration.

PHASE 3- CONTINUED STABILITY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVMENT: 8 Weeks

- 1) The veteran will attend Veterans Treatment Court as requested (exceptions made on a case by case basis).
- 2) The veteran is required to have a minimum of two random urine analysis (UA's) a week.
- 3) The veteran is required to attend all appointments with treatment providers and case managers as scheduled.
- 4) The veteran will be required to take any prescribed medications as ordered to address your physical and mental health needs.
- 5) The veteran is required to update the list of all medication, prescribed and non-prescribed to the probation officer anytime there is a change of medications.
- 6) The veteran's case management plan will be reviewed and updated as necessary.
- 7) The veteran will attend bi-weekly probation appointments (exceptions made on a case by case basis at probations discretion).
- 8) The veteran will comply with home visits as determined by probation.
- 9) The veteran will work on prosocial activities (i.e. employment search/volunteering [4 hours between court sessions]/vocational training/ education).
- 10) The Veteran will attend a 12 step recovery support group twice per week. Verification of attendance should be turned in to probation the week prior to court (if required by SOC).
- 11) The veteran will be required to engage with your mentor and/or the VJO on a weekly basis by phone, email or in person.
- 12) The veteran will be required to write a letter to the court explaining why you should move to the next phase.

PHASING UP:

- 1) All phase requirements plus each veteran's individual requirements are due the week before court.
- 2) The veteran will be required to have 45 consecutive days clean and sober.
- 3) The veteran will have 5 consecutive weeks violation free prior to phase up.
- 4) The veteran will be in compliance with all the conditions of Phase 3. Any exceptions must be granted by the Veterans Treatment Court Team.
- 5) The veteran must fill out the application for phase up to be submitted the day of consideration.

PHASE 4- MAINTENANCE: 12 Weeks

- 1) The veteran will attend Veterans Treatment Court as requested (exceptions made on a case by case basis).
- 2) The veteran is required to have a minimum of two random urine analysis (UA's) a week.

- 3) The veteran is required to attend all appointments with treatment providers and case managers as scheduled, as well as taking any doctor-prescribed medications necessary to ensure your physical and mental health needs.
- 4) The veteran is required to meet bi-weekly with probation (exceptions at probations discretion).
- 5) The veteran is required to comply with home visits requested by probation.
- 6) The veteran will be involved with work/school/volunteer activities (4 hours) or have reasonable cause for being excused from activities.
- 7) The veteran will attend a 12 step recovery support group twice per week. Verification of attendance should be turned in to probation the week prior to court (if required by SOC).
- 8) The veteran will be required to engage with your mentor and/or the VJO on a weekly basis by phone, email or in person.
- 9) The Veteran will be required to write a letter describing how being involved in this program has helped you.

PHASING UP:

- 1) All phase requirements plus each veteran's individual requirements are due the week before court.
- 2) The veteran will have to have complied with all the conditions of Phase 4.
- 3) The veteran will have a minimum of 90 consecutive days clean and sober.
- 4) The veteran will have 6 consecutive weeks violation free prior to phase up.
- 5) The veteran must fill out the application for phase up to be submitted the day of consideration.

PHASE 5- AFTERCARE: 18 Weeks

- 1) The veteran will attend Veterans Treatment Court as requested (exceptions made on a case by case basis).
- 2) The veteran is required to have a minimum of two random urine analysis (UA's) a week.
- 3) The veteran is required to attend all appointments with treatment providers and case managers as scheduled, as well as taking any doctor-prescribed medications necessary to ensure your physical and mental health needs.
- 4) The veteran is required to meet monthly with probation (exceptions at probations discretion).
- 5) The veteran is required to comply with home visits requested by probation.
- 6) The veteran will be involved with work/school/volunteer activities (4 hours) or have reasonable cause for being excused from activities.
- 7) The veteran will attend a 12 step recovery support group twice per week. Verification of attendance should be turned in to probation the week prior to court (if required by SOC).
- 8) The veteran will be required to engage with your mentor and/or the VJO on a weekly basis by phone, email or in person.
- 9) The veteran will be required to write a letter describing how being involved in this program has helped you (graduation letter).

REQUIREMENTS TO GRADUATE:

- 1) All phase requirements plus each veteran's individual requirements are due the week before court.
- 2) The Veteran must fill out the application for phase up to be submitted the day of consideration.
- 3) The Veteran will have to have complied with all the conditions of Phase 4.
- 4) The Veteran will have to have attended a minimum of 3 veterans' treatment court forums.

- 5) The Veteran will have a minimum of 120 consecutive days clean and sober.
- 6) The Veteran will have 8 consecutive weeks violation free prior to phase up.
- 7) The Veteran will be given an optional exit survey to be completed and submitted on the day of graduation.
- 8) The Veteran will be required to have paid all court costs in full.

This program will last for 1 year, however may be extended in cases of relapse or until satisfactory completion of all requirements have been achieved. It is also possible that an SOC may remain open for the remainder of the jurisdiction prior to being dismissed or amended.

The Mentor Process

As a mentor, you will be assigned to a justice involved veteran by the probation officer and/or mentor coordinator. Your primary objective will be to serve as a role model, a **link** to personal stability, and a connection to community resources the veteran might need. Your activities in pursuit of that objective will be to:

- Initiate conversation
- Build rapport
- Establish and maintain trust
- Ask questions

Over time, you should gently encourage your veteran to discuss any ongoing problems or issues of interest to him/her. The mentor shares his/her perspectives and offers insights. Those insights are not to be confused with directives or orders.

Many justice involved veterans find themselves making decisions based on preconceived ideas or beliefs that are inaccurate. Your role as a mentor includes sharing objective perspectives. When you find yourself unable to help with a situation, seek counsel from the mentor coordinator or a senior mentor.

If any of the problems involve legal questions, the mentor should refer the veteran to the veteran's attorney. The mentors are not lawyers nor are they expected to be experts at the law.

This relationship promotes a "can do" attitude, through encouragement and objectivity. Veterans come to understand that they are not alone and know that the mentor and the court are allies, rather than adversaries. Eventually, veterans become motivated to accomplish their goals, thereby stepping into civilian life with the attitude, wisdom and resources to succeed.

Specific points for Mentors working with Veterans in Veterans Court:

Initial Conversation

Your goal in this conversation is to let the veteran know that you are on his/her side, that you are an advocate, and that you represent safety. Safety is paramount because the relationship will fail if the veteran does not feel safe with you. This conversation should be short, just long enough for you to give the veteran the sense that you are on his/her side. Let the veteran go away and mentally process this unique situation and relationship.

Remember that your conversations with your veteran are purposeful and generally follow the strategy outlined here. Each conversation builds on the previous one, thus it is vital that you keep accurate, up-to-date notes on every communication. It is the veteran's responsibility to contact you weekly and they will be advised it is their responsibility. The weekly communication can be done through talking over the phone, email, texting or in person at a neutral location.

Initial Need - Being Heard

It is highly likely that your veteran will feel as though no one listens to him/her. This is all too common in our culture. Thus, listening is a skill you must seek to improve. The common mistake many people make is to confuse silence with listening. When your veteran talks, focus intensely in what he/she is saying. If you catch your mind going in any other direction, bite the inside of your lip and refocus on what your veteran is saying.

One of the most effective listening strategies is to tell yourself that your veteran is the most interesting, fascinating person you've ever met. Think of this as proactive listening. Tell yourself that he/she is going to tell you something that will change your life, so you need to listen closely for it. Because safety is paramount in your veteran relationship, recognize that if the veteran thinks you are not listening, your relationship will suffer, thus your effectiveness and credibility as a mentor will be damaged.

Many new mentors attempt to illustrate points they seek to make by telling their own stories. Beware of doing that. When you're telling your own stories, your veteran is losing an opportunity to tell his/hers. Simply remember that your relationship is one-sided; it focuses on the veteran, not on you.

Second and Third Conversation

The main objectives of this conversation are: 1) continue to maintain safety, and 2) begin to identify resources the veteran might need.

During this conversation begin to help your veteran make sense of the four things that need to intersect correctly in order for him/her to create a successful civilian life. Those four things are:

- Values
- Fears
- Goals
- Capabilities (skill/talents/education)

It is possible that the best way you can help your veteran is by helping him/her understand his/her values, fears, goals and capabilities. This is especially true for younger vets who have not yet had the opportunities in civilian life to explore and identify these things.

Values

All people tend to make their decisions based on their values. Sometimes those values are misplaced or dysfunctional. Your objective in the second conversation is to begin making note of what your veteran's values are. Questions you might ask to initiate that conversation are:

- What do you like to do?
- How do you have fun?
- Why did you join the military?
- Why did you leave the military?
- What do you like most about civilian life?

You'll find that your veteran's values fall within specific categories:

1. Fun & recreation
2. Education
3. Health & wellness
4. Personal development
5. Romantic relationship
6. Family
7. Personal/social relationships
8. Career
9. Physical environment
10. Money & financial security
11. Faith

Fears

Approximately half the population is motivated to avoid something they fear. For example, many successful people fear poverty, so they do whatever it takes to avoid it. That motivates them to get jobs, save money and invest their money. Fear of rejection is another common one. It causes people to shy away from forming new relationships. Sometimes, the fears are illogical, unreasonable or misplaced. You can bring much needed clarity to your veteran by discussing those fears objectively.

Goals

This is an area of civilian life that most people need help with. Many goals are illogical because the person is not in control of the outcome, or he/she is not prepared to invest the time or effort to achieving the goal. Again, you can bring much needed clarity to your veteran's life by facilitating multiple conversations about his/her goals.

Capabilities

These are the skills, talents and education possessed by your veteran. Those are the internal tools your veteran will use to achieve his/her goals. And, the achievement of the goals will be driven by the veteran's values. The hardest question your veteran might face is if he/she has the capabilities to achieve stated goals. For example, if the goal is to run her own company, but she has never held a job, then there is a capability void.

Rapport Building

People naturally and unconsciously seek to establish rapport with other people. When you know what those natural rapport building processes are, you can be far more effective at building and maintaining a rapport with your veterans.

On the phone. Make sure to let the veteran know that you are following what he/she is saying. That means saying, "Uh huh... OK...I see" and other utterances that give the veteran an indication that you are following along, that you understand and empathize. If you do not do that, you will be putting distance between you and your veteran, thus damaging the safety of the relationship.

Adjust your voice to match the veteran's voice by just a bit. That includes the speed of speech, types of words commonly used and quality of voice.

In Person. The most important rapport-building skill is to match the veteran's facial expressions. You are not to mimic them; simply approximate them. If he raises his eyebrows, you need to raise yours or

tilt your head back a little. If she looks worried or concerned, put that same type of frown onto your own face. In that way, you display to your veteran that you are following along, understand and empathize. And, if you neglect to do that, the veteran will begin to see you as insurmountably different from him/her. When the veteran begins to think that you don't understand him/her, your effectiveness and credibility as a mentor could be destroyed.

Some people are more comfortable leaning back when they engage in conversation, and some are more comfortable leaning forward. Note which is true for your veteran, then match that posture. Leaning forward is an indication that the person has energy connected with that topic. If he leans forward and you lean back, you're creating distance.

By this time, you should be speaking easily with your veteran. Continue to keep track of the value words used by the veteran, and follow the rapport-building skills explained above. Beyond that, allow the veteran to initiate the conversation. That keeps you from sounding like you're preaching or lecturing, and it gives your veteran an opportunity to feel in control.

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR VETERANS COURT?

If you're reading this guidebook, you probably already know many of the facts about the problems veterans face when trying to deal with civilian life. We include some of those facts for you here, simply as a review. This way, you can explain them to other members of your own circle, and in that way more people will come to understand the gravity of the obstacles veterans face.

Issues and Problems Facing Veterans

Men and women in the United States military endure high costs of service. Some of these costs are immediate and obvious, like death or injury. However, other costs may not surface or be fully realized until years later. The impact of military service on veterans can be immense and long-lasting. As a mentor, you will see most or all of these problems at one time or another. So, you should know something about them.

Unemployment

Veterans face higher unemployment rates than their non-veteran counterparts. This is particularly true for veterans of the Gulf War era, from August 1990 forward. Among veterans experiencing unemployment, the hardest hit is the youngest veterans. In 2005, the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculated an unemployment rate of 18.7% for Gulf War era veterans aged eighteen to twenty-four years old. For non-veterans aged eighteen to twenty-four the unemployment rate was only 9.9%.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Alcohol and substance abuse exists across all classes, ages, and races of people in the United States. It is a problem that knows no boundaries and impacts nearly everyone's life in some way. The veteran population is just as susceptible to alcohol and substance abuse as other populations in America. The 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 56.6% of veterans had used alcohol, and 7.5% reported heavy alcohol use in the previous month. Results of the 2003 survey also indicated a higher use of marijuana by veterans than nonveterans in the past month. However, of the 256,000 veterans in need of treatment for illicit drug use in the past year, [only] 20 percent had received treatment.

Strained Relationships

When service members deploy, they leave behind family and friends. Military life and deployment can have a lasting and significant impact not only on service members, but also the people in their lives. Research indicates that the military experience, particularly multiple deployments, places great strain on marriages and other relationships. These strained relationships may have further consequences. For example, in 2006, 20% of service members planned on separating or divorcing.

Homelessness

Homelessness disproportionately affects veterans. It is estimated that 23% of the homeless population in the United States is comprised of veterans. It is also estimated that on any given night anywhere from 154,000 to 200,000 veterans are homeless. In any given year, approximately 400,000 veterans will experience homelessness. Problems like homelessness are often accompanied by other problems. Within the homeless veteran population itself, 45% suffer from mental illness, and half have substance abuse problems.

Mental Health

‘Research indicates that among the most pervasive and potentially disabling consequences of military service is the threat to the psychological health of our nations fighting forces, their families, and their survivors.’ Rates of mental illness are particularly high within the deployed veteran population. The incidence of mental illness in veterans spans all ages and all periods of conflict. Signature injuries of the Iraq and Afghanistan operations are Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). In particular, 17% to 28% of brigade combat teams are at risk for serious symptoms of PTSD.

The Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health (the Task Force) has determined that the current system of care for physiological health is insufficient in meeting the needs of service members and their families.

The military's mental health care system reflects trends in American health care and mental health treatment. These trends demonstrate a shift towards acute, short-term treatment models. It is questionable whether such treatment models promote the military's goal of a healthy and resilient force. The Task Force has identified current barriers to service members accessing mental health treatment, including gaps in insurance coverage and the stigma or perceived stigma associated with treatment. Many veterans are reluctant to seek assistance for their mental health needs. This reluctance may be linked in part to the veterans' warrior mentality. The costs, both human and financial, of failing to address problems related to mental health are expected to increase over time.

Guard and Reserve

These mental health issues are presenting themselves not only in active duty soldiers and Marines, but increasingly among National Guard and Reserve members. The recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have called for a significant number of deployments for National Guard and Reserve troops, who, in the past, were less likely to be deployed. Studies indicate that special considerations are needed for these service members. On the Post Deployment Health Reassessment, 49% of the National Guard and 43% of the Marine Reserve self-reported psychological health concerns.

Women in the military

Female veterans are an area of unique concern. The impact of military service on women may be distinctive, particularly with effects on mental health. Currently, 8% of the 23,442,000 veterans are female. As a sub-population, female veterans face unique issues as a result of their military experience.

Deployed women are currently facing more combat situations than in past wars. Along with this comes a higher likelihood of PTSD, as well as the potential psychological impact of sexual trauma perpetuated by fellow military personnel.

Co-occurring disorders

When left untreated, mental health problems can lead to other serious issues, like substance abuse. Individuals may use drugs and alcohol to self-medicate and to alleviate the symptoms of underlying mental health issues. More than half of individuals with alcohol or substance abuse issues have experienced a mental health disorder at some point in time.

3 Fundamental Elements

The following paragraphs explain the fundamental elements upon which the Lakewood Municipal Veterans Treatment Court is based. You'll see that the Court is actually a community-wide systematic approach to providing help to Veterans.

Fundamental 1: Non-Adversarial Team Approach-

Using a non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participant's due process rights. It is the belief of the court that the veterans approved to enter the veteran's court do not belong incarcerated, that they are better off in their communities and getting help. Further, it's the court's belief that the wider community is better served when the veteran is exposed to a program that is so extensive.

Veterans Court relies on a team approach. Here are the members of the team:

Judge: Ongoing judicial interaction with all veterans is essential. The Judge is the leader of the veterans Court Team. This proactive, supervising relationship is maintained throughout the veteran's participation in the program. In this way, there is a message to the justice involved veteran - someone with authority cares about them and is closely monitoring them.

Probation Office: The probation office monitors progress to ensure compliance with the conditions set by the court. The probation office will provide the veteran with the material to accomplish the task(s) assigned by the court. The probation office will communicate with the veteran participant and other agencies as needed. The probation office acts as a liaison between the mentor and the veteran.

Mentors. Mentors are essential to the veterans' court team. Their ongoing interaction with the veteran is essential. Active support from a veteran mentor throughout the veteran's participation in the program can greatly increase the likelihood that the veteran participant will remain in the program and increase his/her chances for sobriety, law-abiding behavior, and a successful civilian life.

Prosecution and Defense Attorneys. To facilitate the veteran's progress, the prosecutor and defense counsel shed their traditional adversarial courtroom relationship and work together as a team on behalf of the participants.

Once accepted as a veteran in the treatment court program, the team focuses on providing him/her with the skills, tools and processes necessary to succeed in civilian life. The team also provides the veteran with opportunities to prove that he/she is capable of succeeding in civilian life.

Fundamental 2: Early Identification -

Eligible veterans are identified early in the process and placed in the veterans court program as quickly

as possible. An arrest can be a traumatic event in a person's life. It creates an immediate crisis and can compel the veteran to demonstrate inappropriate behavior, thus giving authorities a look at possible bad behavior patterns. It's up to the court to differentiate between: 1) veterans who want to succeed in civilian life but are simply having a tough time, and 2) veterans who, for whatever reason, do not want to succeed in civilian life.

Fundamental 3: Community Resources -

The veteran's court provides access to a comprehensive spectrum of alcohol, drug, mental health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.

Veterans come through the veteran's court because they made questionable decisions that involved some kind of unlawful behavior. However, while the judicial system is primarily concerned with criminal activity, veteran's court becomes the veteran's link to appropriate solutions. Those solutions can address:

- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Mental illness
- Medical problems
- Transmittable diseases
- Homelessness
- Basic educational deficits
- Unemployment and poor job preparation
- Spouse and family troubles especially domestic violence
- The ongoing effects of war time trauma

Since many veteran veterans have several issues and needs, all issues must be adequately addressed. The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans says that veterans need a coordinated effort that provides secure housing and nutritional meals, essential physical health care, substance abuse aftercare, and mental health counseling. Beyond that, they need personal development and empowerment guidance. Finally, they need job assessment, training and placement assistance.

The program is based on the belief that all people need services, support, skills, and spirit to be successful. The court's experience is that when one of these elements is weak or does not exist, bad things can happen. That's when the alcohol, drugs, mental health, and criminal problems become exacerbated. And, it's at that time that the criminal justice system, treatment, veteran's services, and the community come together on behalf of the veteran.

Veteran Mentor Confidentiality Policy:

It is the policy of the Veterans Treatment Court to hold all restricted case information in the strictest confidence. This includes access to all computer databases, such as LESA, DISCIS, LINX, and SCOMIS. All staff members are to use the utmost discretion in preserving the confidential nature of information.

Individual case information is to be obtained for authorization purposes only. Obtaining any case information for personal use is prohibited. This includes looking up any information in any of the computer databases for personal use.

Staff shall not disclose information of a confidential nature. Any violation of the above policy may result in the disciplinary action up to and including discharge. When in doubt be discreet, and talk with your supervisor or Veterans Treatment Court Staff. It is better to err on the side of caution than on the side of carelessness.

I have read and understand the Mentor Handbook and have received a copy of the handbook.

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

Veterans Treatment Court-Phase Up Grid

PHASES	PHASE LENGTH	SOBRIETY REQUIREMENT	SANCTION FREE REQUIREMENT
PHASE 1	6 WEEKS	15 CONSECUTIVE DAYS	2 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS
PHASE 2	8 WEEKS	30 CONSECUTIVE DAYS	4 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS
PHASE 3	8 WEEKS	45 CONSECUTIVE DAYS	5 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS
PHASE 4	12 WEEKS	90 CONSECUTIVE DAYS	6 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS
PHASE 5	18 WEEKS	120 CONSECUTIVE DAYS	8 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS

*****The Veterans treatment court reserves the right to take into considerations any special circumstances in each individual case in order to make a group decision.*****

Veterans Treatment Court-Sanctions Grid

Dishonesty/Disrespect Violations	1st Offense:	2nd Offense:	3rd Offense:	4th Offense:
Late to court (Without extenuating circumstances or without permission)	probation discusses being on time with Veteran	Mentioned by the Judge on the record and asked to explain	Reflective essay on time management/ or 2 hours CSE if phase eligible	extra 4 hours CSE if phase eligible/or 1 day work crew
Community Service Violations	1st Offense:	2nd Offense:	3rd Offense:	4th Offense:
Incomplete volunteer hours	Reflective essay with action plan	1 day of WC	EHM or additional WC days	Phase demotion/ ineligible to phase up until total hours completed
Drug/Alcohol Testing Violations	1st Offense:	2nd Offense:	3rd Offense:	4th Offense:
Missed or failure to show	Reflective essay	CSE if phase eligible or WC	Additional UA per week or EHM	Jail
Diluted (without positive screening)	Discussion with the Judge on the record of concern with diluted UA	reflective essay	CSE if phase eligible or WC	Additional UA per week or EHM
Positive ETG/ETS	Reflective essay (with admission) WC (without admission)	CSE if phase eligible or WC	Additional UA per week or EHM	Jail
Positive for non-prescribed drugs	Reflective essay	CSE if phase eligible or WC	Additional UA per week or EHM	Jail
Law Violations	1st Offense:	2nd Offense:	3rd Offense:	4th Offense:
New Criminal Charges	Reflective essay plan of action on how to avoid future behavior	No phase up until resolution on new charge	Phase demotion or Jail	Removal from program

Electronic Home Monitoring Violations	1st Offense:	2nd Offense:	3rd Offense:	4th Offense:
Confirmed Alcohol Event	Reflective essay	WC	Phase demotion	Jail
Schedule Violations	Reflective essay	CSE if phase eligible or 1 day WC	WC	Phase demotion or jail
Removal of equipment without authorization	Jail (without extenuating circumstance)	Phase demotion	Removal from program	
Supervision Violations	1st Offense:	2nd Offense:	3rd Offense:	4th Offense:
Failure to appear	Reflective essay	CSE if phase eligible or 1 day of WC	Additional UA per week or EHM	Jail
Failure to appear for random UA's	Reflective essay	CSE if phase eligible or 1 day of WC	Additional UA per week or EHM	Jail
Failure to report relapse	Reflective essay + increase in UA's	EHM with alcohol sensor + increase in UA's	WC + additional UA's	Jail
Failure to report new LAB or LE contact	Reflective Essay	CSE if phase eligible or WC	EHM with alcohol sensor	Jail
Treatment Violations	1st Offense:	2nd Offense:	3rd Offense:	4th Offense:
Failure to appear for treatment/Be in compliance	Reflective essay	WC or Additional CSE	New CD assessment/ required revised tx plan/phase demotion	Jail with admonishment or future FTA= removal from program

******The VTC may deviate from specific sanctions listed to accommodate each cases unique circumstances.******