



The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i
Circuit Court of the First Circuit

Hawai'i Veterans Treatment Court

Mentor Handbook



LEAVE NO VETERAN BEHIND

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Section 1 Veterans Treatment Court

In recent years we, as a nation, have seen the travesties of war return to our home front. With the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars we have deployed millions of troops and lost far too many men and women. Our veteran population continues to grow which requires our community to achieve a better understanding of what our troops have faced and what they bring home with them. Many of our troops return home with invisible wounds. These wounds run deep in their spirits and filtrate into their daily lives. Unlike the physical wounds so many of them face, their internal wounds go often unseen, unheard, and unnoticed. It is these invisible wounds that lead many of our veterans into the criminal justice system. It is our responsibility to attend to those that have so bravely served our country. As the courts continue to see the increase in veterans in the judicial system, the more the need for specialty services rises. As many states across the nation have begun doing, Hawai'i has developed a treatment court to assist our veterans through the criminal justice system with hopes of giving them their life back that they so rightfully deserve.

1.1 Challenges Our Veterans are Facing

Many overlook the impact that military service has on an individual. Sacrifices are made physically, emotionally, and mentally, having long lasting effects after a veteran returns home. Veterans return home having difficulty engaging with their families, in their communities, overall readjusting to civilian life. Challenges such as homelessness, PTSD, TBI, alcoholism, substance abuse and dependence, and unemployment create barriers. Substance abuse becomes one way to cope with the challenges they face, having an even greater negative impact on one's ability to adjust. Reports indicate that one in five veterans report upon their return home with mental health issues (Bureau of Justice Statistics). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports that up to 75% of our homeless veterans population suffers from substance abuse issues.

1.2 Veterans in the Criminal Justice System

In the State of Hawai'i veterans have served as an integral part in our history. Current statistics indicate that 400 veterans make up our inmate population at the O'ahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC). Beginning in 2012, the State of Hawai'i began tracking veteran probationers making the need for specialized services even more prominent. With the established of the Veterans Treatment Court and the partnership between the VA and the First Judicial Circuit, veterans will be given the opportunity to be linked with appropriate services and a support system they might not otherwise have. Through the mentor program, veterans will be given individualized supports with a mentor to help them navigate the judicial process.

1.3 Veterans Treatment Court 10 Key Components

Key Component #1: Veterans Treatment Court integrates alcohol, drug treatment, and mental health services with justice system case processing.

Hawai'i Veterans Treatment Court promotes sobriety, recovery and stability through a coordinated response to a veteran's dependency on alcohol, drugs, and/or management of their mental illness. Realization of these goals requires a team approach. This approach includes the cooperation and collaboration of the traditional partners found in drug treatment courts and mental health treatment courts with addition of the Veteran Administration Health Care Network, veterans and veterans family support organizations, and veteran volunteer mentors.

Key Component #2: Using a non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights.

To facilitate the veterans' progress in treatment, the prosecutor and defense counsel shed their traditional adversarial courtroom relationship and work together as a team. Once a veteran is accepted into the treatment court program, the team's focus is on the veteran's recovery and law-abiding behavior—not on the merits of the pending case.

Key Component #3: Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the Veterans Treatment Court.

Early identification of veterans entering the criminal justice system is an integral part of the process of placement in the Veterans Treatment Court. Arrest can be a traumatic event in a person's life. It creates an immediate crisis and can compel recognition of inappropriate behavior into the open, making denial by the veteran for the need for treatment difficult.

Key Component #4: Veterans Treatment Court provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, mental health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.

While primarily concerned with criminal activity, AOD use, and mental illness, the Veterans Treatment Court team also consider co-occurring problems such as primary medical problems, transmittable diseases, homelessness; basic educational deficits, unemployment and poor job preparation; spouse and family troubles—especially domestic violence—and the ongoing effects of war time trauma.

Veteran peer mentors are essential to the Veterans Treatment Court team. Ongoing veteran peer mentors interaction with the Veterans Treatment Court participants is essential. This relationship promotes camaraderie as well as vital assistance in navigating the Veterans benefits system. Their active, supportive relationship, maintained throughout treatment, increases the likelihood that a veteran will remain in treatment and improves the chances for sobriety and law-abiding behavior.

Key Component #5: Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.

Frequent court-ordered AOD testing is essential. An accurate testing program is the most objective and efficient way to establish a framework for accountability and to gauge each participant's progress.

Key Component #6: A coordinate strategy governs Veterans Treatment Court responses to participants' compliance.

A veteran's progress through the treatment court experience is measured by his or her compliance with the treatment regimen. Veterans Treatment Court reward cooperation as well as respond to noncompliance. Veterans Treatment Court establishes a coordinated strategy, including a continuum of graduated responses when there is continuing drug use and other noncompliant behavior.

Key Component #7: Ongoing judicial interaction with each Veteran is essential.

The judge is the leader of the Veterans Treatment Court team. This active, supervising relationship, maintained throughout treatment, increases the likelihood that a veteran will remain in treatment and improves the chances for sobriety and law-abiding behavior. Ongoing judicial supervision also communicates to veterans that someone in authority cares about them and is closely watching what they do.

Key Component #8: Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness.

Management and monitoring systems provide timely and accurate information about program progress. Program monitoring provides oversight and periodic measurements of the program's performance against its stated goals and objectives. Information and conclusions developed from periodic monitoring reports, process evaluation activities, and longitudinal evaluation studies may be used to modify program.

Key Component #9: Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective Veterans Treatment Court planning, implementation, and operations.

All Veterans Treatment Court staff should be involved in education and training. Interdisciplinary education exposes criminal justice officials to veteran treatment issues, the Veteran Administration, veteran volunteer mentors, and treatment staff to criminal justice issues. It also develops shared understandings of the values, goals, and operating procedures of both the veteran administration, treatment and the justice system components.

Education and training programs help maintain a high level of professionalism, provide a forum for solidifying relationships among criminal justice officials, the Veteran Administration, veteran volunteer mentors, and treatment personnel, while promoting a spirit of commitment and collaboration.

Key Component #10: Forging partnerships among Veterans Treatment Court, Veterans Administration, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances Veterans Treatment Court effectiveness.

Because of its unique position in the criminal justice system, Veterans Treatment Court is well suited to develop coalitions among private community-based organizations, public criminal justice agencies, the Veteran Administration, veterans and veterans families support organizations, and mental health treatment delivery systems. Forming such coalitions expands the continuum of services available to Veterans Treatment Court and informs the community about Veterans Treatment Court concepts. The Veterans Treatment Court fosters system wide involvement through its commitment to share responsibility and participation of program partners.

Section 2 Veterans Treatment Court Mentoring Program

Mentors serve a variety of roles, including coach, facilitator, advisor, sponsor, and supporter. Mentors listen to the concerns and problems of participants and assist them in finding resolutions. They observe participants and work with them to help set goals and action plans. Mentors provide feedback to participants and highlight their success. Most importantly, mentors act as a support for the veteran participant in a way that only other veterans can.

Veteran Mentors are part of the Court's team and provide advice, personal experiences, recommendations and guidance to veteran's involved with the legal system. Many of our Veteran Mentors are drawn from a number of Veterans Service Organizations and government organizations. Veteran Mentors include but are not limited to those who have served in Vietnam, Desert Storm/Shield, Operation Enduring Freedom and, Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mentors and participants will be paired by (1) the time period they served, (2) their branch of service, and (3) their rank whenever possible. The role of the Mentor will be to be an ally and friend, to provide motivation and assist the veteran through this difficult time by spending one on one time with the veteran. The shared experiences of another veteran will be critical in assisting the participant to regain control of his/her life and successfully connect to and maintain treatment, which will lead to a successful completion in the Veterans Treatment Court. This relationship will help to promote a positive attitude in the veteran while encouraging them to be self-motivated to accomplish their goals knowing that they are not alone and the have someone "in their corner who understands them."

2.1 Mission of the Mentor Program

The mission of the Veterans treatment Court Mentor program is to ensure that each participant in the Veterans Treatment Court is matched with the necessary supports. Through volunteer mentors, the program will be able to provide the opportunity to build valuable relationships to assist the veteran in navigating the system by acting as a friend and ally as they work their way through recovery and reintegration.

2.2 Goals of the Mentoring Program

- ❖ Help our fellow veterans receive the services they need to reach their full potential as productive members of society.
- ❖ Help our fellow veterans navigate the court system, treatment systems, and the VA system.
- ❖ Assess our fellow veteran's needs and help them adjust back to civilian life.
- ❖ Build supportive relationships maintained throughout treatment to increase the likelihood that a veteran will remain in treatment and improve their chances of sobriety and law-abiding behavior.

2.3 Mentor Coordinator

The Mentor Coordinator, with the assistance of the Veterans Treatment Court Supervisor, will screen and interview all potential mentors. The Mentor Coordinator will be responsible for training, along with the Veterans Treatment Court Supervisor, selected candidates in skills to

facilitate a mentoring session and skills specific to the Veterans Treatment Court. The Mentor Coordinator will be responsible for individual and group supervision of the volunteer mentors, as well as scheduling mentors to be present during the Veterans Treatment Court proceedings. The Mentor Coordinator will organize all activities with the Judge and the VTC Supervisor.

2.3.1 Mentor Coordinator Duties and Responsibilities

- ❖ Recruit and train volunteer Veterans Treatment Court mentors
- ❖ Assist in the retention of Veteran Mentors
- ❖ Organize and conduct training for Veteran Mentors
- ❖ Assist in supervision of mentors
- ❖ Assist in developing specialized training projects
- ❖ Perform duties as assigned by the Project Director and the Judge
- ❖ Sustain and evolve the Veteran Mentor Program

2.3.2 Mentor Coordinator Contact Information

***Please see the VTC Supervisor**

2.4 Veteran Mentor Role Description

The role of the Volunteer Veteran Mentor is to act as a coach, a guide, a role model, an advocate, and a support for the individuals he or she is working with. The mentor is intended to encourage, guide, and support the mentee as he or she progresses through the court process. This will include listening to the concerns of the veteran and making general suggestions, assisting the veteran to determine what their needs are, and acting as a support for the veteran at a time when they may feel alone in a way that only another veteran can understand.

2.4.1 Veteran Mentor Role Description

- ❖ Attend court sessions when scheduled by the Mentor Coordinator
- ❖ Participate in and lead mentoring sessions with veterans when assigned by the Judge
- ❖ Be supportive and understanding of the difficulties veterans face
- ❖ Assist the veterans as much as possible to resolve their concerns around the court procedures as well as interactions with the Veteran's Administration system
- ❖ Be supportive and helpful to the other mentors within the program

2.4.2 Veteran Mentor Requirements

- ❖ Be a veteran of one of the branches of the United States Military, including the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or their corresponding Reserve and National Guard branches
- ❖ Adhere to all the Veterans Treatment Court policies and procedures
- ❖ Commit to program participation for a minimum of one year
- ❖ Complete the required training procedures for both the First Circuit and the VA
- ❖ Participate in additional trainings throughout time of service as requested
- ❖ Attend court sessions as scheduled by the VTC Team
- ❖ Complete the screening process including the application and interview

2.4.3 Veteran Mentor Desirable Qualities

- ❖ Active listener
- ❖ Supportive and able to maintain boundaries
- ❖ Positive role model
- ❖ Provides positive encouragement
- ❖ Confident in sharing personal experiences
- ❖ Acts as an advocate in the best interest of their mentee

Section 3 Mentoring Policies and Procedures

3.1 Recruitment Policy

The Mentor Coordinator assumes the majority of the responsibility for recruiting new mentors. Other members of the Veterans Treatment Court as well as current mentors will support the Mentor Coordinator in these activities when necessary, including attending and hosting informational sessions.

3.2 Inquiry Policy

All inquiries around participation in the mentoring program, outside of an informational session or sharing the application and information sheet, are directed to the Mentor Coordinator. It will be the responsibility of the Mentor Coordinator to contact back any prospective mentors **within two weeks of their inquiry.**

3.3 Eligibility Policy

Each mentor must meet the eligibility criteria in order to participate in the program. Extenuating circumstances may be reviewed at the discretion of the Mentor Coordinator.

- ❖ Be a veteran of one of the branches of the United States Military, including the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or their corresponding Reserve and National Guard branches
- ❖ To adhere to all the Veterans Treatment Court policies and procedures
- ❖ To commit to program participation for a minimum of six months
- ❖ To attend court sessions as scheduled
- ❖ To complete the screening process
- ❖ To complete the required training procedures
- ❖ To participate in additional trainings throughout his/her time of service

***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 Volunteer Mentor program, the Court, and the Veteran Participants must communicate their knowledge or concerns to the Volunteer Mentor Coordinator, the Project Director, or the Judge.

3.4 Screening Policy

Each potential mentor must complete the screening procedure. The Mentor Coordinator will be responsible for walking each applicant through the screening process.

This procedure will include:

- ❖ Completing a written application form
- ❖ Completing a personal interview

The decision to accept or reject an applicant will be made by the VTC Supervisor, the Judge and the VJO Coordinator after screening procedure has been made.

3.5 Training Policy

All mentors complete the required initial training procedures. This procedure will include:

- ❖ Observe several court sessions
- ❖ Shadow three mentoring sessions with three different mentors
- ❖ Lead three mentoring sessions while being observed
- ❖ Complete individual supervision with the Mentor Coordinator

It is the responsibility of the Mentor Coordinator to plan, develop, and deliver all training sessions with support from other program staff, current mentors, the Judges and the VTC Supervisor.

3.5.1 Confidential Policy

Mentors training will include a mandatory confidentiality workshop. Instructions on Federal and State confidentiality policy will be reviewed including but not limited to: what information should be kept confidential, who has access to confidential materials, what confidential information can be used for, how it will be kept confidential, and the limits of confidentiality. In addition, guidelines will be reviewed specific to what information should be included and should not be included in the veteran log as well as how information about the mentors will be protected.

3.6 Assignment Policy

The Mentor Coordinator will match mentors and participating veterans. The Mentor Coordinator and mentors may not always be present at each court session. The Mentor Coordinator will be responsible for scheduling mentors to be present at the status review hearings. Whenever possible the Mentor Coordinator will make matches based on the following criteria:

- ❖ Matching branch of service
- ❖ Combat experience
- ❖ Similar age/gender/ethnicity

The Mentor Coordinator will also take into consideration the requests of the mentors and mentees, alike, in making matches.

3.7 Documentation and Record Keeping Policy

During each contact between the mentor and mentee, the mentor will document the interaction in the volunteer veterans mentor log. Documentation of mentoring sessions is both

necessary and mandatory. Mentors will be provided sheets that may be used to document sessions outside of status review hearings which will then be secured in the veteran participant's log at their next hearing. This log will include a cover sheet with basic demographics on the participant thereby eliminating the need to gather the information every time the mentor begins working with the veteran. This log will be kept with the Hawai'i Veterans Treatment Court Supervisor, at the courthouse and brought to every status hearing. These binders are intended to be confidential documentation of the progress, concerns, issues, and challenges to be addressed by the mentor and mentee. A Release of Information signed by the veteran participant will be required for access to the mentor log.

3.7.1 Documentation Process

- ❖ The Veteran Mentor will take the assigned veteran participant's binder with them during any mentoring session that occurs during status review hearings.
- ❖ The Veteran Mentor will document all mentoring sessions in the log. For sessions outside of the review hearing, the mentor will secure their notes until the next court appearance. The mentor will then place all notes in the mentoring log.
- ❖ After the mentoring session has been documented, the Veteran Mentor will put the log back in the appropriate place.
- ❖ The log will be only be accessed by the VTC Supervisor, VTC Senior Probation Officer, and the VTC Mentor Coordinator.
- ❖ When court is not in session, the log will always be kept in a locked and secured place.
- ❖ To preserve confidentiality, the logs will only be available to other VTC team members when the veteran participant has authorized a Release of Information.

3.8 Unacceptable Behavior Policy

It is the policy of the Hawai'i Veterans Treatment Court that unacceptable behaviors will not be tolerated while a mentor is participating in the program. Behaviors that do not match with the mission, vision, goals, or values of the Hawai'i Veterans Treatment Court will be considered unacceptable and are prohibited during court proceedings and mentoring sessions. Any unacceptable behavior, as determined by the Mentor Coordinator, the Judge, or the Court.

3.9 Teambuilding

At least once a year all mentors will be recognized for their role in the Hawai'i Veterans Treatment Court. The Mentor Coordinator is responsible for planning and implementing recognition activities. Possible recognition activities include:

- ❖ An annual recognition event, where mentors are recognized for their length of service to the mentoring program
- ❖ Utilizing outstanding mentors in the recruitment and training of new mentors

3.10 Courtroom Etiquette

- ❖ Wear clothing that would be appropriate for business. (no slippers/shorts/tank tops/offensive attire/hats)
- ❖ Never interrupt anyone who is speaking, including the judge. In court, usually only one person is allowed to speak at a time. (no raising of hands)
- ❖ Keep noise to a minimum when you are in the courtroom. Only talk when it is absolutely necessary, and keep your conversations to a minimum.
- ❖ Turn off electronic devices and cell phones before entering the courtroom.
- ❖ Be polite to the judge and court staff.
- ❖ Rise when the judge enters and leaves the courtroom.
- ❖ Stand when speaking to the VTC Judge.
- ❖ No food in the courtroom. (including chewing gum and tobacco products)
- ❖ No political advertisement.

Keep in mind that Veterans Treatment Court hearings are a very formal court proceeding. We need to continue to hold a high standard of professionalism in The Veterans Treatment Court.

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