

Vigo County Veterans Treatment Court



Mentor Handbook

MENTOR HANDBOOK

VIGO COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

INTRODUCTION

Veterans face a number of challenges in transitioning to civilian life. Approximately 1.6 million American troops have served in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) and/or in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom). Noteworthy are national reports regarding the number of these returning veterans with Mental Illness, Traumatic Brain Injury and/or Substance Addictions. These conditions may contribute to escalated suicide attempts, arrest, incarceration, divorce, domestic violence, homelessness and despair. Rather than be reactionary to the anticipated increase of veterans appearing in our criminal courts, we have decided to take a pro-active approach by embarking on a plan to develop a specialized treatment court to meet the particularized needs of our veterans. After three years of planning, training and preparation, we have established the Vigo County Veterans Treatment Court, which began operations on July 29, 2016. The planning process included designing how the court would operate, specific training provided by Justice For Vets and the NADP, exploring and obtaining the support needed, and engaging in extensive collaboration with the VA, community health care providers, veterans service organizations, Vigo County Adult Probation, Vigo County Community Corrections, the Prosecutor and Public Defender offices, community based agencies and volunteer veteran mentors.

The Vigo County Veterans Treatment Court seeks to divert eligible veteran-defendants with substance dependency, traumatic brain injury and/or mental illness to a specialized criminal court docket. The court substitutes a treatment/problem solving model for traditional court processing. Veterans are identified through evidence based screening and assessments. The veterans voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan developed for them by a team of court staff, health care professionals, veteran peer mentors, mental health professionals and community resource and education providers. At regular status hearings, treatment plans and other conditions are reviewed for appropriateness, compliance and progress toward graduation. Incentives are offered to reward adherence to court conditions, and sanctions for non-adherence are handed down. Completion of the program is defined according to specific criteria. Many can earn a dismissal of their charges with successful completion, and others can earn lesser or suspended sentences upon completion.

Many Veterans are known to have a warrior's mentality and often do not address their physical and psychological treatment needs. Those who are referred

to the Veterans Court are often homeless, helpless, in despair, and suffering from alcohol or drug addiction. Still other referrals have serious mental illnesses. Their lives have been spiraling out of control. Without the collaboration of the VA Health Care Network, the Veterans Court, volunteer veteran mentors and a coalition of community health care providers, many would continue to have their illnesses untreated and would suffer the consequences of the traditional criminal justice system of jail or prison. This collaboration of unique partners affords the opportunity for these veterans to regain stability in their lives, to have their families strengthened, to have housing for the homeless, and to have employment for the employable. The Veterans Court Team will find them, offer them assistance, assess their needs, manage their care and help them solve their problems.

Assisting the court is a team of volunteer veteran, active duty, and guard/reserve mentors. While in court, a mentor will be assigned to meet with a veteran participant to discuss any ongoing problems or issues of interest. Mentors work with the participants to problem solve existing issues, and bring to the attention of the Team any issues that might need assistance in getting resolved. This relationship promotes and fosters, through encouragement, a “can do” attitude in the veteran that the veteran can accomplish their goals in treatment, that the veterans are not alone and that the mentors have their back. Volunteer veteran mentors demonstrate an unwavering commitment, dedication and sacrifice to leave no veteran behind. They are faithfully present, ready to serve, during the Veteran’s Court sessions.

MENTOR PROCEDURES

An essential part of the Vigo County Veterans Treatment Court (VCVTC) are the volunteer mentors. They are an integral part of the support that encourages, guides and motivates participants to enter and complete timely and appropriate treatment for physical, psychological and substance abuse issues. We believe volunteer mentors will be a valuable asset to the VCVTC, and we have added a Mentor Coordinator. We anticipate that trained and committed volunteer mentors who develop active and supportive relationships with the VCVTC participants will increase the likelihood that the veterans will remain in treatment. Longer treatment tenure has been shown to improve participants’ chances for a full and complete recovery to health, to reduce recidivism, to increase community safety and to reduce costs.

Veteran Mentor Role Description

The role of the VCVTC Veteran Mentor is to act as a coach, guide, role model, advocate, and a support person for the individual veteran participant. Mentors

understand the roles of other support team members and “fill the gap” to help keep the participant moving successfully toward completing the VCVTC program.

Additionally, the mentor will be a primary resource to participants by helping connect them with community based benefits, assistance and support services. The mentor will be a “resource” to the veteran. In that capacity, mentors can help reduce the participant’s stress that can be caused by distractions like housing or family needs, VA benefits, educational assistance, civil legal services, Indiana State Veterans Benefits and the like.

The mentor/participant relationship is intended to encourage, guide, and support the veteran as he/she progresses through the court supervised treatment program. One of the most important skills the mentor will bring to the program is the ability to be a good listener. The fundamental role of the mentor is to listen to the concerns of the veteran and help that person address their needs. Mentors do not lecture participants, imposing their own values/beliefs, but instead work to understand the mentee’s own values/beliefs, encouraging and assisting them to solve their own problems before they become destructive to their treatment program.

The mentor must be ready to offer suggestions and general guidance to the participants for any concerns they may have as they progress through the program. Mentors do not solve problems for participants. Mentors do not act as a counselor. Mentors do not act as legal advisors. Rather, mentors help the VCVTC Team identify resources that might be helpful to the participant. Mentors guide and encourage participants to do the “footwork” to get the help they need to solve their own life’s challenges.

The mentor must be available and ready to support the veteran when he or she may feel alone, frustrated or anxious in a way that only another veteran can appreciate and understand. In doing this, the mentor should maintain close contact with the VCVTC Mentor Coordinator and keep the Coordinator informed of significant issues the mentee may have that could derail their treatment program success.

Finally, a mentor should be protective of sensitive information given to them by the veteran or by the VCVTC Mentor Coordinator, and not reveal any information except as may be required by the court, unless the safety of the participant or another human being may be at risk. In those critical situations, the mentor must make emergency contacts to prevent harm. All mentors will be screened and approved by the VCVTC Coordinator.

VCVTC Mentor Eligibility Requirements

In order to participate as a mentor in the VCVTC program, you must:

1. Be a veteran, guard/reserve or active duty member of one of the branches of the United States Military: Navy, Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, or the corresponding reserve branches. Veterans who have a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge are not normally eligible, but those with exceptional success stories are welcome to apply.
2. Agree to follow and abide by all policies and procedures of the VCVTC and its mentoring program.
3. Commit to the VCVTC Mentoring Program for a minimum period of 1 year.
4. Complete the mentor orientation program and any additional training that may be required by the VCVTC.
5. Not be currently on probation for the conviction of any crime (felony or misdemeanor). Have no felony or misdemeanor convictions within the past three years, and be able to pass a criminal background check.
6. Complete and file the application form with the VCVTC Mentor Coordinator and complete the screening process.
7. Understand and support the Mentee VCVTC participant's requirements, treatment plan and goals, and terms and conditions of probation and assist the mentee in complying to make progress and achieve success.
8. Understand the psychological war wounds from which the Mentee suffers and the manner in which such will present challenges to the Mentee's path to success. Be able and willing to be a guiding influence toward recovery.

VCVTC Mentors Duties and Responsibilities

VCVTC Veteran Mentors shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Attend all court sessions they are scheduled for unless excused by the VCVTC Mentor Coordinator.
2. Participate in and lead mentoring sessions with their assigned veteran as required by the court.

3. Be supportive of the veteran's treatment progress and steer him or her towards program compliance and success.

4. Assist the veteran in identifying obstacles to success in the program and potential solutions to address those issues. The mentor should be familiar with community based resources, included in the mentor handbooks, that may be available to help the veteran address personal and family needs.

5. Be supportive of other mentors in the program.

6. Be honest with the Mentee, VCVTC Team members, and the Court at all times.

7. Mentors shall take immediate action to encourage the participant to contact suicide prevention resources, including if necessary dialing 9-1-1 yourself, if there are any indications of suicidal thoughts, attempts or plans on part of the participant. The mentor shall immediately notify the Court Coordinator and the participant's treatment provider team representative if there are any concerns the mentee may be suicidal

8. Mentors should keep current resource phone numbers on your person at all times and ensure they are updated by frequent contact with the VCVTC Mentor Coordinator and Team.

VCVTC Mentor Coordinator

The VCVTC Mentor Coordinator shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Assume the major responsibility for recruiting qualified veteran mentors.
2. Be responsible for coordinating the mentor orientation program and any specialized training required.
3. Be responsible for recommending matches between mentors and veteran participants.
4. Provide all mentors with current contact information for suicide prevention resources, keep them updated, and maintain frequent contact with mentors to ensure they understand the importance of using these resources in appropriate situations.

5. Attend all court sessions and carry out any other duties assigned by the VCVTC Court Coordinator or Judge.

To apply to become a Mentor for the Vigo County Veterans Treatment Court contact the Mentor Coordinator, Andrew Cowan, at (760) 964-5946 or at [Andrew J Cowan@Yahoo.com](mailto:Andrew_J_Cowan@Yahoo.com).

MENTOR BOOK RESOURCES LIST

1. **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline / Veterans Crisis Line**

1-800-273-8255, Press 1

www.veteranscrisisline.net

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is available.

2. **Mental Health America of Vigo County**

1460 Spruce Street
Terre Haute, IN 47807
O: (812) 232-5681

Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

<http://mhavc.org/outreach/suicide-prevention/>

Liberty Village - Housing for Veterans who are disabled and are homeless. 30-unit complex comprised of one, two and three bedroom apartments for low-income veterans experiencing homelessness.

3. **WorkOne**

Cindy Lydick, Manager
Andrew Cockrell, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program
30 North 8th Street
Terre Haute, Region 7
O: (812) 242-6474

Employment Services for Veterans

The U.S. Department of Labor, Veteran's Employment and Training Services (VETS) offers employment and training services to eligible veterans through a non-competitive Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program. Under this grant program, funds are allocated to State Workforce Agencies in direct proportion to the number of veterans seeking employment within their state. The grants support two principal staff positions: Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER)

4. **Vigo County Veterans Assistance Office**

Karen Barnaby, Service Officer
Vigo County Annex
163 Oak St.
Terre Haute, IN 47807
O: (812) 462-3261

The Vigo County Veteran's Assistance office assists all veterans in finding military records and filing of claims for benefits for pension and service connected disabilities (compensation), and assisting spouses and dependent children of veterans in filing claims for benefits and educational allowances.

There is free van transportation (for veterans) to medical appointments at the Indianapolis VA Hospital. The van to Indianapolis goes on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. There is also a van to the Danville VA Hospital which runs on Monday and Wednesday's only. Call 812-462-3261 for information and to schedule a ride.

They also have various forms for burial benefits, burial markers, GI Bill education benefits, home loans, widow's benefits, property tax exemptions, just to name a few.

5. **Reach Services**

Scott Wynn - Veteran Services Coordinator
1400 Hulman Street
Terre Haute, IN 47803
O: (812) 232-6305 x202
C: (812) 903-9058
scott@ucpww.org (Vet Court Team Member)

Housing:

Emergency Homelessness Shelter: (1) Veteran. This on site shelter is handicap accessible and allows the staff of WVVS to better aid the Veteran in achieving permanent housing.

Veteran Housing. 3 Buildings for low income Vets. 2 bedroom, 2 bathroom, handicap accessible duplexes. 2 more buildings expected in 2016. These apartments are income based and require a minimum and a maximum income; based on HUD guidelines.

Other Services:

Case Management

Document and Service Acquisition

Information Referral

Guidance with the VA system

Financial Aid

Weekly Peer Support Groups (NA/AA, "Vet to Vet")

Grant application assistance

Sustenance and clothing assistance

Assistance with acquisition of Service Dog for Veterans with PTSD

6. Kathy Townsend
Family Assistance Specialist
IN National Guard Family Programs
HRCI Contractor
1405 S. Washington Street
Crawfordsville, IN 47933
317-650-8366 cell
765-362-6505 x 85124 office
765-364-0779 fax
kathleen.j.townsend.ctr@mail.mil

Family Assistance Centers are a one stop shop for questions and information for Service Members, Veterans, and their families. We also provide information and referrals for various military and civilian organizations to Service Members, Veterans, and their families. Although we work for the Indiana National Guard, we do provide service to all branches of military.

7. **Wabash Valley Military Support Organization**

Tammi Mitchell
Outreach Facilitator
Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University
mitch217@purdue.edu
812-686-3081 (cell)

Vet to Vet: Vet to Vet Indiana holds peer support group meetings for veterans suffering from PTSD and other mental stresses. These meetings take place every Tuesday at 7:00pm – 8:00pm at UCP, 1400 Hulman Street in Terre Haute. There is also a meeting every Friday from 6:00 - 7:30 at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 1414 E Wabash Ave in Crawfordsville.

SSVF: Supportive Services for Veterans has collected backpacks to fill with different items to disperse to local veterans and individuals who are homeless and in need. If you or your organization would like to donate items (hygiene, socks, bottled water, and food items) please contact Martina at 317-503-2064.

InteCare: InteCare promotes housing stability among very low-income Veteran families who reside in or are transitioning to permanent housing. For more information about InteCare and their services, please (855) 896-4345 or www.ssvf@intecare.org

8. **Indy Blue Star Mothers – IN14**

Vickie Sullinger, President
(317) 775-4984
indybluestarmothers.com/forveterans/

Service Dogs for Veterans suffering from PTSD. A local trainer assesses the needs of the veteran to insure the dog is trained on all aspects that a service dog can provide to the veteran. Trainers will work with the veteran in their environment to insure success.

9. **Compassion Ministries Food Pantry**

New Life Fellowship Church
Angela Treadway, Director
7849 Wabash Ave.
Terre Haute, IN 47803
(812) 877-9348
NLF@newlifeterrehaute.com

10. **The WILL Center**
One Dreiser Square
Terre Haute, IN 47807

Peter Ciancone
Executive Director
O: (812) 298-9455
C: (812) 240-6056
F: (812) 299-9061
petecinc@thewillcenter.org

The Wabash Independent Living and Learning Center, Inc. was established as a non-profit organization on May 24, 2000 to promote a philosophy of independent living for individuals with disabilities, including a philosophy of consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and systemic advocacy through information & referral, advocacy, peer counseling or support, and independent living skills training.