

## VETERANS TREATMENT COURT DOCKET

Veterans Treatment Court is a collaborative process that includes the prosecutor, defense counsel, Judge, the Department of Veteran Affairs and other community based support organizations. The goal of Veterans Treatment Court is to rehabilitate and restore veterans as active, contributing members of their community.

The Veterans Treatment Court program focuses on veterans who are currently in, or entering, the Criminal Justice System with a misdemeanour or felony arrest. The Court creates and supervises treatment plans to address the underlying causes of the veterans presenting behaviour patterns and substance abuse issues. Issues commonly addressed by the treatment programs include:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Anger issues
- Domestic Violence
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug Abuse
- Behavioural Health Disorders

By focusing on the root problems that contribute to involvement with the criminal justice system and providing specific rehabilitation programs, the Veterans Treatment Court provides an opportunity for the veteran to return to the community in a more advantageous and beneficial manner.

### **Eligibility**

Each Veterans Treatment Court is going to be operated differently depending on the needs of the individual jurisdiction. Each Veterans Treatment Court establishes its own eligibility rules but, a veteran may request to be placed in the Veterans Treatment Court program. The prosecutor, defense counsel and the Judge must all agree that Veterans Treatment Court is the appropriate forum for the management of the case. The veteran remains eligible for Veterans Treatment Court by making satisfactory progress in their court ordered treatment program and by complying with the other Veterans Treatment Court requirements. It is important to remember, no veteran has a “right” to have their case assigned to Veterans Treatment Court. Once in Veterans Treatment Court, the veteran must continuously “earn” the privilege of remaining in Veterans Treatment Court by complying with all the Court’s requirements.

## **Process**

Eligible veterans may participate in the court by voluntarily requesting their case be transferred to Veterans Treatment Court which meets as a separate court docket. The prosecutor and the defense counsel evaluate each case and must agree that the case is appropriate for Veterans Treatment Court. The case is then presented to the Judge for final approval. The Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) specialist then verifies the veteran's eligibility for veteran's benefits and conducts an initial assessment of the veteran's treatment requirements. The veteran, if eligible for VA benefits, is then directed to the local VA medical facility for a more in-depth assessment. It is from this assessment the parties agree upon a treatment plan for presentation to the Judge. Upon approval of the plan by the Judge, the veteran begins the treatment programs called for in the plan.

Progress in the treatment program is closely monitored by the Court. Each veteran will be assigned to a VJO, and a Court Appointed Case Manager.

Mentors who have served in the Military are also available to offer assistance and support for each veteran.

## **Phases**

There are three phases in the program. As the veteran progresses in the program, he/she will be moved up a phase.

Phase I weekly court visits

Phase II bi-weekly court visits

Phase III monthly court visits

Non-compliance with the treatment program can lead to interventions which may include, community service, increased treatment modalities, additional service referrals as individually identified, reprimand by the Judge and brief incarceration. In cases of continuous non-compliance, a veteran may be removed from Veterans Treatment Court. The favourable terms of any plea agreement may be revoked and a sentence imposed.

Upon successful completion of the Veteran Court program, diversion eligible veterans may have their cases dismissed. Veterans on probation may have their probation successfully terminated.

Veterans in Veterans Treatment Court can expect to be subjected to more frequent reviews by the court to monitor the veteran's progress in their treatment programs. Veterans making satisfactory progress will be recognized by the Court and offered words of encouragement. Veterans not making satisfactory may expect words of encouragement of an entirely different nature and interventions may be imposed.

Successful completion of the Veterans Treatment Court program will be marked by “graduation” from the program within twelve months.