



Brazoria County Veterans Court



Veterans Participant Handbook

Welcome to the Brazoria County Veterans Court. This handbook will provide you with a description of what is expected of you as a Veterans Court participant. Participants are encouraged to share this handbook with family and friends. Three simple rules will insure your success:

1. Show Up

2. Try Hard

3. Be Honest

About the Brazoria County Veterans Court

The Brazoria County Veterans Court is a specialty court designed to serve justice-involved Veterans struggling with addiction/substance abuse issues, mental health issues (such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or traumatic Brain Injury), and reintegration issues. The Court is in a unique position to assist Veterans who have honorably served our country in accessing a support system of government and community-based resources in order to regain stability in their lives. The Veterans Court is offering this opportunity because each Veteran admitted to the program has demonstrated commitment, courage and self-discipline in their role as a member of the United States military. That same kind of commitment will be expected in completing the Veterans Court program.



Deployment to combat or other hazardous zones may have had an impact that makes post-deployment life challenging. There is often a correlation between such deployment and psychological issues that may manifest themselves in behavior that is out of character for those who served. The goal of the Veterans Court is to address these issues so the participant can interrupt or avoid negative behaviors. Furthermore, it is the Court's responsibility to ensure that each participant poses no risk to the community, or to themselves.

Veterans Court is a very structured program that emphasizes accountability and personal responsibility. Each participant will take part in the development of a treatment plan that is designed to help identify the steps necessary to address the risk factors of that individual.

The Court strives to connect veterans to services, intensive treatment, and support while promoting sobriety, recovery, and stability through the coordinated efforts of the Veterans Court partners. Other services could include assistance with education, employment, housing, family counseling and social support.

The Veterans Court also provides participating Veterans the opportunity to benefit from the assistance, support, guidance, and encouragement of a fellow Veteran Mentor while the Veteran is involved in the legal process.

With a focus on resource coordination and guided rehabilitation, Veterans Court not only offers a chance for justice-involved Veterans to conquer problems and to get their lives back on track, but provides the community with an opportunity to give back to the men and women who have offered their lives to protect us, and who often suffer from the devastating emotional wounds of war.

Veterans Court Team

The Veterans Court team is a multi-disciplinary group of people and organizations that meet twice a month to review each Veteran's progress and treatment needs. The team includes the Court and court related offices, VA providers and community partners.

Presiding Judge

Oversees court proceedings and decisions regarding Veterans Court cases and participants.

Senior Veterans Court Officer

Responsible for referring interested Veterans to appropriate parties for case review to determine eligibility for the court.

Assistant District Attorney (ADA)

Prosecutes all Veterans Court cases and works with the team to determine which cases are appropriate for acceptance to the court. The DA will also make an appropriate case offer regarding charges, sentence and conditions as well as monitoring compliance with the court-imposed sentence and all other conditions of the Court.

Defense Counsel

Represents the Veteran in all aspects of their criminal case issues and reviews. If the Veteran already has counsel on a case accepted to Veterans Court, the defense counsel works with the original attorney to transition the Veteran into the Veterans Court program.

Community Supervision Officer

Responsible for supervision of sentence and probation, and monitors compliance with all aspects and conditions of the Veteran's sentence, which may include the following: drug and alcohol testing, field visits, and reporting.

Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist (VJO)

Advocates for and ensures the Veteran is connected with the appropriate mental health and substance abuse treatment at Veterans Affairs and in the community. The VJO will also refer to housing and employment services as needed.

Mentor Coordinator

Responsible for recruiting, training and matching Veterans with a mentor and providing ongoing supervision to all Veteran mentors.

Veteran Mentor

Fellow Veteran who has been specially trained to act as a coach for the Veterans participating in Veterans Court.



OVERVIEW:

The Brazoria County Veterans Court Program is either a pre-plea track or a probation track program for eligible Veterans. Participants in this Program will be evaluated for psychological, chemical dependency and other issues that can be addressed through various types of treatment and supportive services. The Veterans Court Program may also assist participating Veterans with obtaining employment, education, health and housing services. The Veterans Court Program utilizes a non-adversarial approach in which a team that includes the Judge, the Defense Attorney, the Prosecutor, the Senior Veterans Court Officer, the Community supervisions officer, and the Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist (VJO) who will work together with the Veteran to guide him/her toward successfully attaining goals. A treatment plan will be developed by key members of the team and the Veteran will be provided with referrals for services needed to begin implementation of the treatment plan. Veterans will be scheduled for a series of court appearances to monitor and reinforce their progress toward meeting the objectives of their treatment plan. Once the objectives have been successfully met, the Veteran will graduate from the program.

GOALS OF THE VETERANS COURT:

Provide each participant with a judicially-supervised individual treatment program using a variety of methods and treatment options. Promote the achievement of educational, employment, and social goals that promote a healthy and productive lifestyle. Improve the quality of life for veterans, their families and the community.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION :

To be eligible, a Veteran must meet the following requirements:

- Be charged with a criminal offense in Brazoria County;
- Be a US Veteran, on active duty, or in the Reserves, or National Guard or State Guard;
- Be active duty or have an honorable discharge, or general discharge under honorable conditions (if separated or retired.);
- Be a resident of Brazoria County or a county adjoining Brazoria County;
- Suffer from a brain injury, mental illness or mental disorder or be a victim of military sexual trauma that occurred or resulted from military service.

OR

- Be a defendant whose participation in the treatment court program is likely to achieve the objective of ensuring public safety through rehabilitation of the veteran.

All applications are reviewed on a case by case basis and not all criminal charges are eligible for Veterans Court. Many factors, including prior convictions, are considered.

ELGIBILITY EXCLUSIONS:

The following factors will disqualify a Veteran from participation in Veterans Court. If a Veteran:

- has prior convictions, deferred adjudications or pending charges for a sex offense, including those listed in Article 42.12 Sec. 13B(b) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure;
- has pending charges of manufacture or delivery of controlled substances or dangerous drugs or is charged with operating a clandestine lab;
- is not cognitively able to commit or to complete the required treatment;
- has previously graduated from a Veterans Court Program.

PROCESS:

Applications for admission must be submitted to the Veterans Court Coordinator by the defense attorney representing the Veteran. Once a referral is received, the Veterans Court Coordinator will screen the applicant for eligibility, schedule the Veteran for assessment into the Program and staff the case with the Brazoria County District Attorney's Office. If the Veteran meets the Program criteria and is accepted into the Program, their case will be transferred to the Veterans Court Defense Attorney after transfer into the Court.

PROGRAM LENGTH:

The Veterans Court Program is a **minimum** of 14 months . The exact length of time in the program is determined by each participant's needs, progress towards successful implementation of the Veteran's Treatment Plan, nature of the offense, and arrest history.

PROGRESSING THROUGH THE VETERANS COURT PROGRAM:

Veterans Court has four separate phases: Hope, Courage, Strength, and Commitment. You will receive support and encouragement to help you succeed in complying with your program and phase requirements, and all conditions of your probation and individualized service plan. As you demonstrate success in each phase, you will be rewarded with reduced court reviews, less supervision restrictions, and receipt of a token to mark your success in that phase.

GRADUATION:

Veterans who have demonstrated progress and who have successfully completed all phases of the program are eligible to be considered for graduation from Veterans Court. Graduates will be recognized at the annual Veterans Court graduation ceremony, which celebrates each Veteran's success and accomplishments in the program.



Brazoria County Veterans Court Phases

Hope: Orientation and Stabilization (Minimum 90 days)



Phase Requirements

- Attend Veterans Court hearings the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, as scheduled or as directed by the court.
- Attend appointments with your case manager every week.
- Enroll in and attend treatment according to the individual treatment recommendations.
- Develop timeline to begin working on other goals as identified in the treatment plan.
- Comply with random urinalysis and maintain sobriety.
- Create a schedule and maintain a weekly planner.
- Create a personal budget with a savings plan.
- Make minimum payments toward VTC fees (\$10.00 a week for 1st 12 weeks)
- The Veteran must maintain compliance with Court orders and be sanction free for a minimum of 10 days prior to promotion.
- Participate in the Veterans Court mentor program.
- File an application to advance to Courage Level.

Courage: Intensive Treatment (Minimum 90 days)



Phase Requirements

- Attend Veterans Court hearings the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month as scheduled or as directed by the Court.
- Attend appointments with your case manager every 1st and 3rd week of the month.
- Continue attending treatment according to the individual treatment plan.
- Continue to work towards goals established on the treatment plan in accordance with timeline.
- Comply with random drug testing and maintain sobriety.
- Establish pro-social relationships with people who are supportive of recovery.
- Obtain/maintain stable employment that is conducive to a sober lifestyle and/or engage in productive use of time, such as community service or school etc.
- Maintain stable housing arrangements.
- Continue making minimum payments toward Veterans Court fees (\$15.00 a week for 12 weeks)
- Begin working community service hours, if ordered.
- The Veteran must maintain compliance with Court orders and be sanction free for a minimum of 30 days prior to promotion.
- Participate in the Veterans Court mentor program.
- Attend family sessions as determined necessary in your treatment plan.
- Attend self-help recovery groups as directed.
- Accomplish at least one short term goal.
- File application to advance to Strength Level.

Strength: Recovery Skills Development (Minimum of 150 days)

Attend Veterans Court hearings on the 2nd Tuesday of every month, as scheduled or as directed by the Court.

Attend appointments with your case manager every two weeks.

Attend treatment sessions as recommended by treatment provider.

Continue to work towards goals established on the treatment plan according to the timeline.

Comply with random drug testing and maintain sobriety.

Continue with family sessions as determined necessary in your treatment plan.

Obtain/maintain stable employment that is conducive to a sober lifestyle and/or engage in productive use of time, such as community service or school etc.

Maintain stable housing arrangements.

Begin making minimum payments of \$20.00 each week (20 weeks)

Participate in the Veterans Court mentor program.

Attend orientation for Volunteer Military Veteran Peer Network training.

Accumulate at least your budgeted amount in savings.

The Veteran must maintain compliance with Court orders and be sanction free for a minimum of 60 days prior to promotion.

Continue community service if ordered

Attend self-help recovery groups and work with your sponsor as directed.

Accomplish at least one long term goal.

File application to advance to Commitment Level.



Commitment: Practical Application (Minimum 90 days)

Attend Veterans Court hearings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month, as scheduled or as directed by the Court.

Attend appointments with your case manager once a month, as scheduled, or as directed by the Court.

Maintain relationships with people who are supportive of positive goals.

Complete and submit a Veterans Court program graduation request form.

Attend treatment sessions as recommended by treatment provider.

Continue to work toward goals established on the treatment plan according to the timeline.

Comply with random drug testing and maintain sobriety, for at least 90 consecutive days prior to graduation.

Obtain/maintain stable employment that is conducive to a sober lifestyle and/or engage in productive use of time, such as community service or school etc.

Maintain stable housing arrangements.

Pay any remaining balance on Veterans Court fees.

Participate in the Veterans Court mentor program.

Prepare a written sobriety plan to be used after termination of supervision.

Accumulate your budgeted amount in savings.

The Veteran must maintain compliance with Court orders for a minimum of 90 days prior to graduation.

Attend self-help recovery groups and work with your sponsor as directed.

File an application for graduation.



BRAZORIA COUNTY VETERANS COURT PROGRAM

COMMUNITY SUPERVISION ADDENDUM

General Terms

You shall abide by all terms and conditions as set out in the Veterans Court Participant Handbook.

You shall freely cooperate and voluntarily submit to a breath test and/or urinalysis, and/or any other drug test, immediately upon arrest for any offense, or when requested by the Community Supervision Officer, to determine whether or not you are using or are under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance.

You shall report for appointments/office visit with your Case Manager/Community Supervision Officer weekly or bi-weekly as required. You shall attend Veterans Court hearings bi-weekly as required on Tuesdays of each month at 3:30 p.m. or as directed by the Court.

You shall pay a Veterans Court Program fee of \$750.00 as directed by the Judge. Community Supervision fees will begin (or resume) upon discharge from the program.

You shall follow all recommendations of the Veterans Affairs Hospital and/ or other treatment providers including follow-up appointments with the psychiatrist, psychologist, case manager and/or other treatment providers, compliance with medications as prescribed, and participation in any program(s) deemed appropriate and/or prescribed by the Veterans Affairs Hospital and/or other treatment providers, following their rules, regulations and policies.

You shall participate in the Peer Mentor Program of the Gulf Coast Center and follow all policies and recommendation of said program.



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You shall be at your home or domicile by 10:00 p.m. and remain there until 6:00 a.m. except when at work or on a direct route going to or from work.

CONTINUED COMMITMENT

You shall report to your Case Manager/Community Supervision Officer as required by the terms of probation absent the Veterans Court Addendum and participate in Veterans Court activities as specified by your Case Manager/Community Supervision Officer.

The above provisions requiring continued commitment shall remain in full force and effect until further order of the court or until your Community Supervision expires.

The Veterans Court will continue to be a resource for any graduate, as requested by the graduate.

I understand if I voluntarily abscond from the Brazoria County Veterans Court Program and the services that it provides, I hereby forfeit my right/privilege/opportunity to participate in the Brazoria County Veterans Court Program, and I may be removed from the Brazoria County Veterans Court Program without notice to me of any further hearings or proceedings.

Incentives and Sanctions

Your participation in the program will be addressed by the judge with incentives or sanctions depending on your progress. Possible incentives and sanctions are included below.

Incentives

Verbal Praise
Applause
Early Court Release
Drawing for Gift certificates
Recognition in Court
Symbolic Rewards
Posted Accomplishments
Written Commendations
Reduced supervision
Requirements
Travel Privileges
Waiver of Monetary Fees
Advancement to next Phase
Reduced number of Court
Dates
Community Service Credit

Sanctions

Verbal Admonishments
Letters of Apology
Essay Assignments
Daily Activity Logs
Increased Supervision
Requirements
Additional Community
Service
Monetary Fees
Electronic Surveillance
Jail Sanctions
Termination from Program
Additional Court Settings
Additional Monitoring
Required Reading &
Reports

RULES, EXPECTATIONS, AND TIPS

Upon admission to Veterans Court, each Veteran is provided with an individualized service plan, but certain requirements must be followed by all Veterans Court participants, and include the following:

- Demonstrate decorum and respect at all times towards the Court, Veterans Court team members, participants and all fellow Veterans
- Appear in Court dressed appropriately (shirt tail tucked in) and show respect to the Court and staff in all conversations.
- Maintain regular contact with your mentor and/or sponsor.
- Maintain regular contact with your Community Supervision Officer and your treatment providers.
- Comply with all rules and regulations set out in your court order regarding the terms and conditions of probation.



Phase Requirements at a Glance

Phase	Minimum Number of Days	Probation Meetings	Court Required Attendance
Hope	90	1x/week	2x/month
Courage	90	2x/month	2x/month
Strength	150	2x/month	1x/month
Commitment	90	1x/month	2x/month

This chart lists very minimum requirements and is intended to provide a basic overview of the time commitment required in the Veterans Court program.

All phase advancements are subject to judicial discretion.

Veterans Court Team Phone Numbers

Specialty Courts Program Supervisor-Alejandra Pitones	979-864-2132
Veterans Court Coordinator & Sr. Officer- Jennifer Grupe	979-864-1943
Veterans Court Defense Counsel- Terence Norman	281-485-0603
Veterans Court Prosecutor– Samantha Klein	979-864-1417
Mentor Coordinator - Steve Cook	979-215-1365
Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist- Dr. Chad Henderson	713-503-0151
Law Enforcement Representative– Ryan Bradberry	979-248-1422
149th District Court Coordinator- Lateisha Higgins	979-864-1261
Specialty Court Liaison– Patrina Green	979-864-2125
Gulf Coast Center Crisis Hotline-24 Hours	866-729-3848

Confidentiality

Your identity and privacy will be protected consistent with Federal Regulations and State laws. You will be asked to sign a waiver authorizing the transfer of information among all participating agencies. An identification number will be assigned to you that will be used in all research and evaluation activities to insure confidentiality

Important Notes

Mentor's Name: _____

Mentor's Phone Number: _____



A nation calls and young men come
To stand and fight, and unite as one

Soldiers and Sailors off to war, as duty calls
Braving withering fire as their comrades fall

Celebrating victories, and mourning great loss
Freedom is paid at a terrible cost

With heads held high and shoulders proud
Our hero's return to a grateful crowd

To celebrate their safety and battles won
But the fight is not over, for its just begun

The demons within start demanding wars
With devastating effects that leave permanent scars

Shattered lives of men, a devastating blow
Is there a place where broken soldiers go?

By: Michael Anderson

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