

Western Massachusetts



Veterans Treatment Court

# OPERATIONS MANUAL

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Western Massachusetts Veterans Treatment Court is to reintegrate court-involved individuals who have served in the nation's armed forces into society as honorable citizens. Admission into the Veterans Treatment Court provides for competent assessment and treatment planning for both substance dependence and mental health disorders. The program includes supervision, monitoring and support to veterans while protecting public safety.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND MEASUREMENTS

Goal	Objective	Measurement
1) Reduce Criminal Recidivism	80% decrease in arrests among all participants	Compare the number of arrests prior to entering the VTC with the number of arrests in the first year of participation in the VTC
2) Stabilize mental health and increase compliance with treatment	80% of participants referred for mental health treatment will attend those services for at least six months	Court clinician and VJO will track compliance with treatment sessions for all referred program participants
3) Decrease substance abuse	50% of participants will have six months of sobriety within one year of entering the VTC	Probation will track the results of all drug tests to determine length of sobriety
4) Increase access to services	100% of participants will be referred to at least one provider for each area of need identified in the service plan	Court clinician and VJO will review service plan for all program participants while in Phase V to evaluate referral process
5) Achieve stable housing	100% of participants will eventually secure stable housing	Probation Officer and VJO will track residence status of all participants after Phase III
6) Improve employment status/employability	30% of participants who were unemployed at entry, will find stable employment	Probation Officer will track employment status of initially unemployed participants after Phase III
7) Improve level of satisfaction with personal and community relationships	75% of participants will self-report improved satisfaction with personal and community relationships	Court clinician will administer a satisfaction scale at entrance to program and periodically thereafter

## **ADJUDICATION PROCESS**

The Western MA Veterans Treatment Court will utilize a voluntary post-adjudication model. All participants will be arraigned on their charges. Participants will plead guilty or admit to sufficient facts (CWOFF). In addition, participants may enter the program after they have stipulated to a violation of probation.

## **TARGET POPULATION**

The target population of the Western MA Veterans Treatment Court is court involved men and women who have served in the United States Armed Services that are experiencing mental health or substance abuse difficulties and/or other co-occurring disorders. The veteran population shall include those who ever served in the United States Armed Forces, to include the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard; Active duty, Reserves, or National Guard

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Eligibility is evaluated by the Veterans Treatment Court Team on a case-by-case basis. To qualify for the Western MA Veterans Treatment Court, the veteran can be from any branch of service and with any discharge status. The veteran must have one year of service or one day of combat. The participant can be charged with a misdemeanor or felony, however, any felony must have district court jurisdiction. All participants must enter the program voluntarily and agree to participate in any and all recommendations of the court team. A veteran is required to have either one year of service or one day of combat to be eligible.

Histories of drug use and/or mental health issues are not disqualifying factors. A veteran may not qualify if they are a registered sex offender or if the current charge is a sex offense, if they have a history of arson. In certain cases, a victim must also support the veteran's participation in the Veterans Treatment Court. If a veteran does not qualify for the Veterans Treatment Court, team members will still provide referrals to VA benefits and services and/or the Western Massachusetts Veteran Justice Partnership. Defense counsel should ensure that the veteran is well advised of the nature, requirements, and policies of the Veterans Treatment Court.

## **IDENTIFYING VETERANS**

The Veterans Administration, Massachusetts Trial Court, prosecutors, defense attorneys, MA Department of Veterans Services, and other stake holders will make best efforts to identify eligible veterans. The following questions will be placed on Probation Intake forms and other relevant documents to identify eligible veterans:

***'Have you ever served in the United States Armed Forces (to include the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard; Active duty, Reserves, or National Guard)?'***

## TRANSPORTATION

The Western MA Veterans Treatment Court services a large geographic region including Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin Counties and the town of Athol. In partnership with Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, Franklin Regional Transit Authority and Soldier On, the Western MA Veterans Treatment Court will work to provide transportation services to participants in need to attend court sessions. However, transportation is not guaranteed. Therefore, the ultimate responsibility of getting to and from the Holyoke District Court is placed upon the participant.

**Pioneer Valley Transit Authority:** <http://www.pyta.com/schedules.php>

**Franklin Regional Transit Authority:** <http://frta.org/getting-around/fares-passes-transfers/>

- Passengers with a valid Dept. of Veteran's Affairs photo ID card, or FRTA Veteran's photo ID card ride for free.

**Soldier On:** <http://www.wesoldieron.org/one-call-one-click-center/>

- Pick up and drop off information must be provided at least 72 hours in advance. Call (866) 406-8449 to coordinate this free service.

## ENTRY PROCESS

<b>Timeline (from point of arrest)</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
Arrest (Immediately)	- Ask defendant about possible veteran status - Inform probation department	- Police Department
Arrest/Initial Surrender Hearing	- Intake completed - District Attorney's Office review* - Verify Veteran/Discharge status - Verify VHA/VBA benefits level	- Probation - ADA - VJO - VJO
Pretrial Phase	- VTC Observation - Clinical Assessment - Development of Service Plan	- Veteran - VJO/Court Clinician - VTC Team
Program Entry	- Veteran pleads guilty, admits to sufficient facts or stipulates to VOP - Veteran reviews and signs probation contract	- Veteran - Veteran and Defense Attorney

\*reviews charges and criminal history for eligibility

## PHASES

The Western MA Veterans Treatment Court is composed of five different phases which will take a minimum of eighteen months to complete. Participants must satisfy a set of pre-determined requirements to advance through the various phases. Graduation from each phase is based on completion of the criteria and a period of sobriety leading up to graduation eligibility.

Phase	Court Appearances	Phase Requirements	Completion Criteria
Phase I - 60 days	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Meet with probation weekly</li> <li>-Meet with mentor weekly</li> <li>-Twice weekly drug/alcohol testing</li> <li>-Monthly home visit</li> <li>-Engage with VJO and therapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Show Up &amp; Be Honest</li> <li>-Follow the orders of the court</li> <li>-Follow the orders of treatment</li> <li>-14 consecutive days of sobriety</li> </ul>
Phase II – 120 days	At least bi-weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Meet with probation weekly</li> <li>-Meet with mentor bi-weekly</li> <li>-Twice weekly drug/alcohol testing</li> <li>-Monthly home visit</li> <li>-Engage with VJO and therapy</li> <li>-Entry into 12-step program as needed begins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Show Up &amp; Be Honest</li> <li>-Follow the orders of the court</li> <li>-Follow the orders of treatment</li> <li>-30 consecutive days of sobriety</li> </ul>
Phase III – 180 days	At least monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Meet with probation bi-weekly</li> <li>-Meet with mentor bi-weekly</li> <li>-Twice weekly drug/alcohol testing</li> <li>-Monthly home visit</li> <li>-Engage with VJO and therapy</li> <li>-Educational/Vocational programming as required begins</li> <li>-Moral Reconciliation Therapy as needed begins</li> <li>-Family legal services and counselling services begins as needed</li> <li>-Relapse prevention planning begins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Show Up &amp; Be Honest</li> <li>-Follow the orders of the court</li> <li>-Follow the orders of treatment</li> <li>- 45 days of sobriety</li> </ul>
Phase IV – 90 days	At least monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Meet with probation bi-weekly</li> <li>-Meet with mentor bi-weekly</li> <li>-Twice weekly drug/alcohol testing</li> <li>-Monthly home visit</li> <li>-Engage with VJO and therapy</li> <li>-Life skills planning begins</li> <li>-Sober lifestyle planning begins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Show Up &amp; Be Honest</li> <li>-Follow the orders of the court</li> <li>-Follow the orders of treatment</li> <li>-60 days of sobriety</li> </ul>
Phase V – 90 days	At least monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Meet with probation monthly</li> <li>-Meet with mentor bi-weekly</li> <li>-Twice weekly drug/alcohol testing</li> <li>-Monthly home visit</li> <li>-Engage with VJO and therapy</li> <li>-Apply all life skills to a new social and sober network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Show Up &amp; Be Honest</li> <li>-Follow the orders of the court</li> <li>-Follow the orders of treatment</li> <li>-90 days of sobriety</li> </ul>

## **INCENTIVES AND SANCTIONS**

The Western MA Veterans Treatment Court will use incentives focused on consistent compliance with the service plan, negative drug screens, periods of sobriety, absence of criminal activity, involvement in the community, improvement in educational/vocational status, stable housing, etc.

Sanctions will be focused on lack of honesty with the court, positive drug screens, missed unexcused appointments or treatment sessions, new criminal activity, failure to comply with the service plan and/or a breach of confidentiality. Examples of sanctions may include community service, public reprimand by the judge, delayed graduation, increased drug testing, and short periods of incarceration with the right to a full violation hearing.

## **TREATMENT PROVIDERS**

The Western MA Veterans Treatment Court will primarily rely on the VA healthcare system. If a person is not eligible to receive services through the VA, they will be referred to community based treatment providers. Each veteran's participation in treatment will be monitored collaboratively by their probation officer, the VJO, and court clinician. A more detailed list of VA and non-VA resources can be found in the Veterans Treatment Court Resource Guide – *The Blue Book*.

Nearby VA facilities include: Leeds, Soldier On, etc.

## **MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

A team of veterans from the Western MA community will form a Mentorship Program associated with the Veterans' Treatment Court. The mentors will go through a training program to become qualified. Each participant in the Western MA Veterans Treatment Court will be assigned a mentor. The participant and mentor will meet according to the Veteran's current phase.

## **PROBATION SUPERVISION PROTOCOL**

The level of supervision and community monitoring will be dependent on the veteran's current phase. Initially, all veterans will meet with their probation officer weekly. Throughout the entire Veterans Treatment Court program the veteran will be expected to complete random urinalysis at least two times per week. Probation staff will also conduct monthly home visits, sometimes in collaboration with local police departments.

## **TESTING PROTOCOL**

Veterans will be required to submit to drug and alcohol testing twice weekly throughout their time in the Veterans Treatment Court. In recognition of the large geographic region, our court services veterans will be assigned to a local district court's probation department for their respective testing. The veteran will report for testing as directed by his/her local district court's probation department. The court will also allow veterans to participate in drug testing at their substance abuse treatment program.



## **PARTICIPANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

**By signing this form I agree that I have received, read and understand the rules of the *Western Massachusetts Veterans Treatment Court*.**

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**PARTICIPANT**

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**DATE**

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**WITNESS**

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**DATE**