



Cambria County VETERANS COURT

Participant Manual 2012

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DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this manual is intended solely for the use of the Cambria County Veterans Court program and its participants. All information contained herein is subject to modification as directed by the Honorable President and/ or Presiding Veterans Court Judge of Cambria County.

This manual is not intended to answer every question about the Veterans Court program. It is, however, a valuable source of information and we hope participants will use it.

This manual is not designed to provide or give legal advice. Any questions regarding the status of outstanding criminal case(s), Pre-trial, Probation, Parole, or/and Veterans Benefits information, should be reviewed with the appropriate authority – be it an Attorney, Federal, State, or County Probation Officer, or other authority.

Information about this program, as well as forms and applications, can also be found on the Cambria County website under the Office of the District Attorney link. Please go to the following web address for more information: <http://www.cambriacountypa.gov/district-attorney.aspx>

WELCOME to the Cambria County Veterans Court Program!

Purpose of the Veterans Court Program

The Cambria County Veterans Court Program is specifically designed for veterans involved in the Criminal Justice System. The intention is to place veterans, as related to individually developed treatment plans, into an intensive drug, alcohol, and/or mental health treatment program coupled with court intervention as an alternative to incarceration to help veterans return to a productive and healthy lifestyle.

There are a lot of people supporting veterans– the Treatment Team, Mentors, as well as other participants in the program. We look forward to working with them as they work towards successful completion of Veterans Court and take steps towards a clean, sober, and healthy life.

Many veterans are known to have a warrior’s mentality and often do not address treatment needs for physical and psychological health care. Sometimes those referred to the Veterans Court are homeless, helpless, in despair, suffering from alcohol or drug addiction, or suffering from serious mental illnesses. Their lives may have been spiraling out of control.

Eligibility applies to any veteran who has honorably served in the United States Armed Forces.

The goal of the Cambria County Veterans Court Program is to assist as many veterans as possible to reduce incarceration, recidivism, and promote positive contribution to society. It is a way the community acknowledges the sacrifices and contributions veterans have made and it is another way the many supporters of veterans in the community are working hard to help veterans rehabilitate and improve their health and well-being.

Without the intercession of the team of veteran organizations and community health care providers, many veterans 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 veterans to regain stability in their life, to have their families strengthened, to have housing for the homeless, and to have employment for the employable.

Assisting the court is a team of volunteer veteran Mentors. The pool of veteran Mentors includes those who have served on several fronts, including Vietnam and Desert Shield, among other conflicts. While in court, a mentor will be assigned to meet with participants individually and discuss any ongoing problems, or issues of interest. The mentor will work with participants to bring any issues to the attention of the court that the court can assist in resolving. This relationship promotes and fosters through encouragement a “can do” attitude that participants can accomplish their goals in treatment, and they’re not expected to navigate the process alone.

The volunteer veteran Mentors do not waiver in their commitment, time, or dedication, despite the fact they are not monetarily compensated for their time or expertise. Faithfully they are present, ready to serve at every Veterans Court session - without reservation. We as a program are appreciative and proud of their commitment and eagerness to serve.

Basic Program Rules

1. SHOW UP.

Be on time for treatment, groups, other meetings and Veterans Court sessions.

2. BE HONEST.

We can work through almost any problem together if you are truthful with us. Of all the rules, this is often the most difficult. The program staff and the Court expect you to be honest in all areas of your life. DO NOT attempt to falsify records, conceal alcohol or other drug use, or tamper with or dilute your urine tests. Eventually, you will get caught.

It will be necessary to make life adjustments in order to be fully engaged in recovery. This program is about accountability, personal responsibility, and healing. Sobriety does not come easily for anyone.

Eligibility

Screening for entrance into the program will be available to those defendants who are: detained at the Cambria County Prison; currently on pre-trial supervision; currently on probation supervision, and/ or awaiting preliminary hearing before a Cambria County Court of Common Pleas for an eligible criminal offense.

Informed consent will be obtained for evaluation and consideration by the Court Team and again at the point of acceptance into Veterans Court.

An individual meeting the following criteria may apply for admission into the Veterans Court program:

1. Veteran of or currently serving in the United States Armed Forces
2. Resident of Cambria County or a surrounding county upon approval of the court
3. Charged with or facing revocation/ probation violation of either certain felonies or any misdemeanor offenses
4. Meets one of the following clinical criteria through diagnosis or through referral from the VA by working toward a diagnosis:
 - a. PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)
 - b. TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury)
 - c. MST (Military Sexual Trauma)
 - d. Drug/Alcohol Addiction
 - e. Other Axis I diagnoses that include but are not limited to: Major Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, or a psychological and/or substance abuse problem(s) requiring treatment/support
5. The Offender voluntarily agrees to participate in, and be subject to rules, all guidelines of supervision, regulations, and sanctions of the Veterans Court program.

Disqualifying factors may include but are not limited to:

1. The type of discharge from Armed Forces
2. The sentencing requirements based on the prior record score and seriousness of the offense
3. Whether the individual is in need of treatment
4. Charges include a violent felony, a Megan's Law/ Walsh Act offense, and/or a firearm charge or felony drug delivery.

Referral Sources

Referrals to the Veterans Court program may originate from, but are not limited to, the following sources:

- Police Officers
- Self-referrals
- Magisterial District Judges
- Public/Private Defense Attorneys
- District Attorneys
- Probation Officers
- Judges
- Family members
- Veterans Administration
- Jail staff
- Veteran's Service Organizations

Program Overview

There are two (2) potential tracks in the Veterans Court Programming:

Diversionsary Track

Cambria County's Veterans Court will accept defendants who would otherwise be ARD eligible. Those individuals will participate in the Veterans Court Diversionsary Track.

Incentive Track

A defendant who is charged with a felony or misdemeanor but has a low prior record score and no prior felony convictions will be considered for the Incentive Track where the felony will be reduced to a misdemeanor upon successful completion of the program and consent of the District Attorney. A guilty plea to the felony is required; however, the charge will be amended prior to sentencing.

Each participant is required to complete all recommended treatment, comply with substance abuse advisor recommended treatments, attend the Court sessions as directed, refrain from criminal activity, complete a community service project, if required by the court, and comply with all conditions of supervision.

The purpose of the community service project is to allow individuals, as a veteran, to identify an area or cause in the community through which they illustrate their commitment to improving their current situation. Potential candidates will be asked to begin thinking about their project when they appear in Veterans Court to become a participant. Once accepted, program participants can initially expect weekly contact with the Veterans Court Judge, and frequent contact from their probation officer, treatment providers, Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator, and the Veterans Court team. Level of contact will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the court, initially to meet with the court on a biweekly basis, then less frequently as the veteran progresses through treatment.

For participants whose cases are either predisposition or ARD, sentencing will be deferred pending completion of the Veterans Court program. Upon successful completion of the Veterans Court program, including payments of fines, costs, and restitution, the participant's charges may be reduced, dismissed, or the District Attorney's Office will seek to expunge the pertinent charges as previously agreed, subject to Court approval. For participants who are post-sentence/probation violation, successful completion of Veterans Court may result in the reduction or termination of any remaining supervision; however these records cannot be expunged.

Accepted participants will also be expected to participate in and complete numerous pro-social, treatment-oriented activities based on an individualized treatment plan. Typically, these may include but are not limited to:

- Meetings with Veteran Mentors

- AA/NA Meetings (or approved alternatives)
- Group and individual therapy
- Medication management/psychiatrist appointments
- Regular appointments with a Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJOC)
- Weekly court appearances
- Community service
- Probation appointments
- Random drug testing.

As each participant requires a different level of intervention based on need and progress, the participants' specific needs may require the participant to be involved in other related activities.

Participants can expect to receive incentives for positive progress in the Veterans Court program. Incentives may be given for program completion benchmarks, such as but not limited to:

- Completion of treatment
- Maintaining sobriety
- Completion of the community service project.

Incentives will be determined by the Veterans Court Team and specific rewards will depend on available resources.

A participant can expect to receive a sanction if they violate the Veterans Court Program rules or fail to achieve certain Track requirements. Typical violations that may be sanctioned include:

- Missed appointments
- Failed or adulterated drug tests
- New arrests/charges
- Lack of participation in treatment.

Sanctions will be imposed relative to the violation, and progressive in nature. Sanctions may include:

- Essays
- Loss of incentives
- Demotion in phase
- Curfew restrictions
- Incarceration
- Fines
- Electronic Monitoring
- Termination from the Veterans Court Program.

The Veterans Court Team reserves the right to impose these and/or other incentives or/and sanctions as appropriate to each particular participant and circumstance of violation.

How Veterans Court Works

The Veterans Court is handled on a specialized criminal court docket involving veterans charged with criminal offense(s), by diverting eligible veteran-defendants with substance dependency and/or mental illness. The court substitutes a treatment problem solving model for traditional court processing. Veterans are identified through specialized screening and assessments, and voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan that a team of court staff, veteran health care professionals, veteran peer mentors, AOD health care professionals and mental health professionals develop. At regular status hearings treatment plans and other conditions are periodically reviewed for appropriateness, incentives are offered to reward adherence to court conditions, and sanctions for non-adherence are handed down. Completion of program is defined according to specific criteria. Upon admission to Veterans Court, the court staff and mentors assist the veteran with an array of stabilization and other services, such as emergency financial assistance, mental health/trauma counseling, employment and skills training assistance, temporary housing, advocacy, and other referral services.

Track 1: Diversionary Track

The goal of the Diversionary Track is to have the defendant adhere to any and all conditions set forth by the court in a diversionary manner with the understanding that if the candidate meets all conditions and successfully completes the requirements, the charges will be dropped and no criminal conviction will be sought by the Commonwealth. Preference should be given to first time offenders.

1. Candidate must meet the eligibility requirements (be a veteran with an enumerated diagnosis of PTSD, alcohol or drug addiction or abuse, mental health issues, etc.)
2. Candidate is charged with one of the enumerated offenses deemed eligible for Veterans Court Diversionary Track (see list of [eligible offenses](#) and [disqualifying offenses](#))
3. The District Attorney approves/recommends the case for Veterans Court Diversionary Track consideration
4. The Court allows input from the victim and/or prosecuting police officer prior to accepting the case in the Veterans Court Diversionary Track program should they wish to be heard or should they object to the District Attorney's approval/recommendation of the case for consideration in the Veterans Court Diversionary Track program
5. The Veterans Court judge approves the candidate for participation in the Veterans Court Diversionary Track program
6. The defendant will waive Rule 600 rights to a speedy trial and file timely signed continuance forms each term of court as his/her diversionary track requirements are being met and signs necessary releases to allow the Court to track progress
7. Should the candidate fail to complete the requirements of the diversionary track program, he/she will be removed from the Veterans Court Diversionary Track program and face the charges. The case will be added back to the pre-trial conference list for the next term of court and proceed through the system.

Diversionary Track Disqualifying Offenses:

Convictions that would automatically disqualify the defendant from participation:

- Murder
- Voluntary Manslaughter
- Aggravated Assault
- Assault by Prisoner
- Kidnapping
- Rape
- Burglary graded as F1 or F2
- Robbery graded as F1 or F2
- Arson

- Statutory Sexual Assault
- Involuntary Deviate Sexual Intercourse
- Sexual Assault
- Indecent Assault (M1 or higher)
- Incest
- Any Megan's Law/Adam Walsh Act violation graded as an M1 or higher
- Some Firearm offenses
- Drug Delivery
- Aggravated Assault while DUI
- Homicide by Vehicle DUI related

Diversionsary Track Eligible Offenses:

Candidates may be eligible if charged with the following offenses and he/she has no prior convictions of any of the enumerated offenses listed above within 10 years from the date of the incident:

- DUI 1st offenses
- DUI 2nd offenses at the discretion of the court with input from DA/prosecuting officer
- Possession
- Drug Paraphernalia
- Simple Assault – (domestic violence) at the discretion of the court with the input and/ or consent of the victim
- Simple Assault – (non-domestic violence) at the discretion of the court with input from the DA/prosecuting officer/victim
- Recklessly Endangering Another Person
- Possession with Intent to Deliver – at the discretion of the court with input from the DA/prosecuting officer if no delivery charged in connection with the act
- Misdemeanors not listed above as automatically disqualified, at the discretion of the court with input from the DA/prosecuting officer/victim
- Felonies not listed above as automatically disqualified, at the discretion of the court with the consent of the DA

Track 2: Incentive Track

The goal of the incentive track is to give a defendant the chance to work toward a better resolution of the charges if he/she adheres to any and all conditions set forth by the court and successfully completes the Veterans Court Incentive Track program. This track is designed for the defendant to enter a guilty plea approved by the DA and defendant then defer sentencing (with signed waivers of timeliness by defendant) in order for the defendant to complete the Veterans Court Incentive Track program. Upon successful completion, the defendant may be afforded the opportunity to withdraw his/her guilty plea and enter a plea to lesser charges if the parties and court consent. The Veterans Court Incentive Track program is designed to meet the needs of eligible veterans who have prior criminal records or more serious charges that are better suited for the incentive track program rather than the diversionsary track program.

1. Candidate must meet the eligibility requirements (be a veteran with an enumerated diagnosis of PTSD, alcohol or drug addiction or abuse, mental health issues, etc...)
2. Candidate is charged with one of the enumerated offenses deemed eligible for Veterans Court Incentive Track (see list of [eligible offenses](#) and [disqualifying offenses](#))
3. The District Attorney approves/recommends the case for Veterans Court Incentive Track consideration
4. The Court allows input from the victim and/or prosecuting police officer prior to accepting the case in the Veterans Court Incentive Track should they wish to be heard or should they object to the District Attorney's approval/recommendation of the case for consideration in the Veterans Court Incentive Track program
5. The Veterans Court judge approves the candidate for participation in the Veterans Court Incentive Track program

6. The defendant will waive Rule 600 rights and file timely signed continuance forms each term of court as his incentive track requirements are being met and signs necessary releases to allow the Court to track progress
7. Should the candidate fail to complete the requirements of the incentive track program, he/she will be removed from the Veterans Court Incentive Track program and proceed to sentencing pursuant to the guilty plea previously entered. Should the defendant be permitted to withdraw his guilty plea pursuant to the applicable provisions of the rules of criminal procedure as decided by the court, the case will be added back to the pre-trial conference list for the next term of court and proceed through the system.

Incentive Track Disqualifying Offenses:

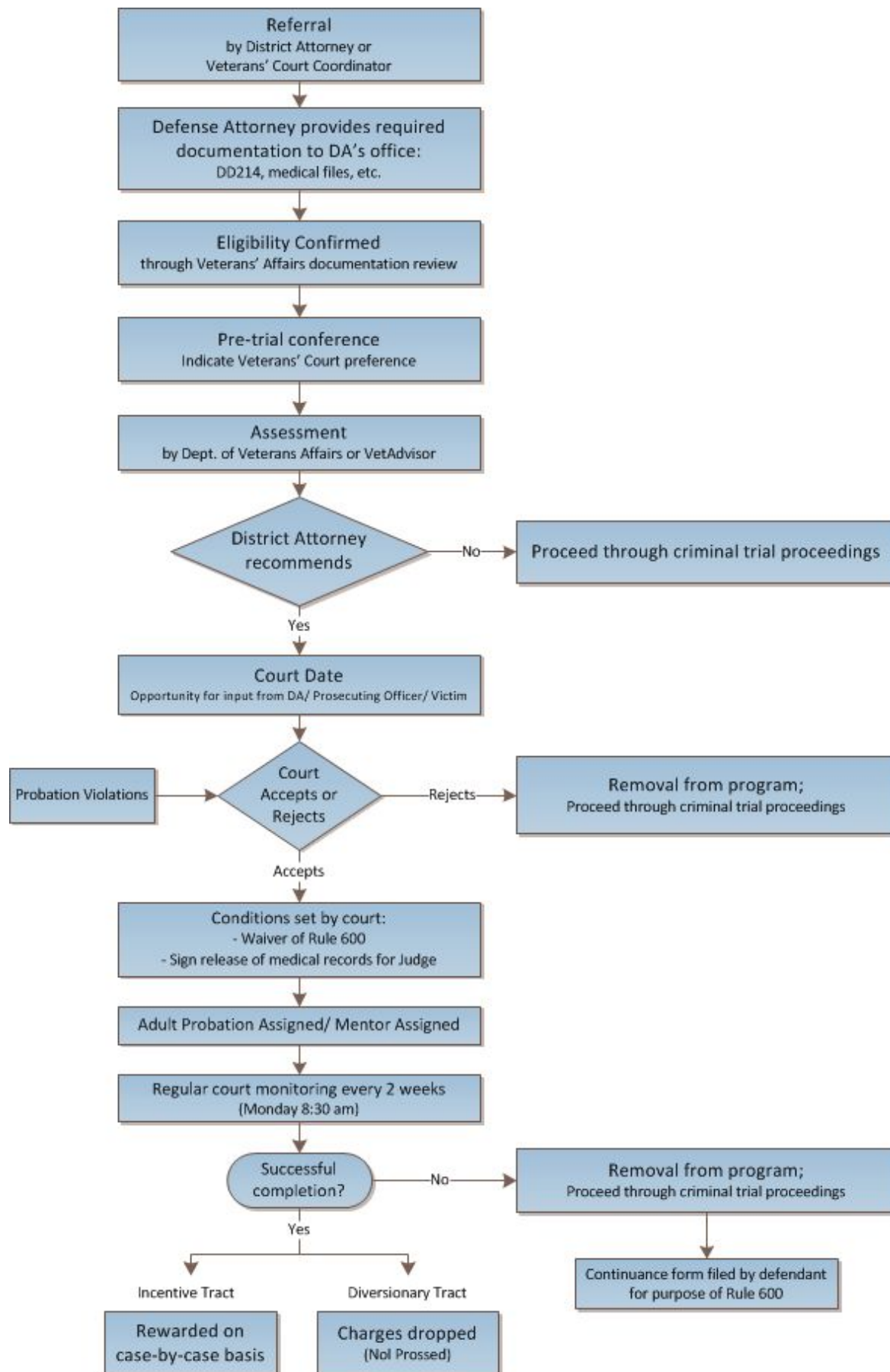
Convictions that would automatically disqualify the defendant from participation:

- Murder
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- Assault by Prisoner
- Kidnapping
- Rape
- Burglary graded as F1 or F2
- Robbery graded as F1 or F2
- Arson
- Statutory Sexual Assault
- Involuntary Deviate Sexual Intercourse
- Sexual Assault
- Indecent Assault (M1 or higher)
- Incest
- Any Megan's Law/Adam Walsh Act violation graded as an M1 or higher
- Firearm offenses
- Drug Delivery
- Aggravated Assault while DUI
- Homicide by Vehicle DUI related

Incentive Track Eligible Offenses:

The candidate may be eligible at the discretion of the court if charged with the following offenses and he/she has no prior convictions for any of the disqualifying offenses listed above within 10 years of the date of the incident charged:

- DUI 2nd offenses at the discretion of the court with input from DA/prosecuting officer
- DUI 3rd offenses at the discretion of the court with DA consent
- Possession
- Drug Paraphernalia
- Simple Assault – (domestic violence) at the discretion of the court with the input and/ or consent of the victim
- Simple Assault – (non-domestic violence) at the discretion of the court with input from the DA/prosecuting officer/victim
- Recklessly Endangering Another Person
- Possession with Intent to Deliver – at the discretion of the court with consent of the DA/prosecuting officer if no delivery charged in connection with the act
- Misdemeanors not listed above as automatically disqualified, at the discretion of the court with input from the DA/prosecuting officer/victim
- Felonies not listed above as automatically disqualified, at the discretion of the court with the consent of the DA.



The Veterans Court Mentoring Program

Description and Purpose:

The Cambria County Veterans Court Program is specifically designed for veterans involved in the Criminal Justice System. The intention is to place these individuals into an intensive drug, alcohol, and/or mental health treatment program coupled with court intervention as an alternative to incarceration to help them return to a productive lifestyle.

The key component of any successful Veterans Court is a Veterans Mentor Program. In this program, a trained veteran Mentor is paired with a veteran participant to provide support as he/she navigates through the court and treatment. Ideally, Mentors/Participants will be paired by service whenever possible.

The Mentor is present as an ally and friend to assist the veteran through this difficult time. Our belief is that the shared experiences of another veteran will be critical in assisting the participant in regaining control of his/her life and successfully connecting to – and maintaining – treatment, which will lead to successful completion of the Veterans Court program.

The Mentor is a RESOURCE not a COUNSELOR.

The Mentoring Program offers support and encouragement for veterans in the court system by spending one-on-one time with the veteran participant on a regular basis to provide an opportunity to discuss concerns and receive feedback and support from another veteran. The Mentor will have a resource book at his/her disposal to refer veterans to a wide range of available services both within the veteran system and in the community at large. These include, but are not limited to: benefits, housing, spiritual needs, social/recreational needs, and employment.

Mentor Coordinator Role:

Essential to the coordination, maintenance, and success of the mentoring program is the Mentor Coordinator. The Mentor Coordinator role is to recruit, organize, and schedule trainings, supervise, and coordinate Mentors within the Veterans Court Program.

Veterans Court Mentor Coordinator: Tom Caulfield, Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA, Regional Coordinator

Phone: 814-255-7209

Email: caulfieldt@vlpwpa.org

The positions of Mentor and Mentor Coordinator are both strictly volunteer and are unpaid. Expenses related to the Veterans Court may be paid as authorized by the President Judge.

The Veterans Court Team

The Cambria County Veterans Court Team consists of members of several different disciplines that collectively meet weekly to review participant progress and program concern. These disciplines include:

- Veterans Court Judge
- Assistant District Attorney
- Defense Counsel
- Mental Health/D&A Clinician(s)
- Probation Officer
- Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJO)
- Veterans Mentor Coordinator

Each member is responsible to provide the necessary knowledge and guidance to the Veterans Court Team to adequately promote participant progress and sound program policy.

Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJO)

The VJO assigned to the Court uses a standard laptop encrypted and connected to the VA network. The VJO assists the Veterans Court program in many ways, but primarily does the following:

- Obtains and checks on presence of VA Releases of Information (ROI) between court and VA Medical Centers
- Facilitates VA linkages for services
- Verifies and makes appointments for SATS and Mental Health Clinics offered by the VA
- Coordinates VA Treatment Status Report provision to Court
- Provides the Judge with accurate VA treatment status updates
- Checks on and assists with VA eligibility for services
- Treatment Case Management, Crisis Management and support for the veteran at the Court visit.

Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator: Bonnie Clark, LCSW

Direct Line: 814-943-8164 extension 4201

Toll Free: 877-626-2500

Email: bonnie.clark@va.gov

Assessment/ Evaluation Process

VA/ VJO	No cost
3wire	Cost

Veterans Court - TEN KEY COMPONENTS

Cambria County's Veterans Court has adopted the Ten Key Components designed and utilized by Buffalo New York's Veterans Court. Buffalo implemented the first Veterans Court and is a model by which most, if not all, others, are designed. Buffalo used "slight modifications [of] the essential tenements of the ten key components as described in the U.S. Department of Justice Publication entitled "Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components", (Jan.1997)" in order to develop what is listed below.

Key Component #1:

Veterans Court integrates alcohol, drug treatment, and mental health services with justice system case processing.

Veterans Court promotes sobriety, recovery and stability through a coordinated response to Veterans dependency on alcohol, drugs, and/or management of any mental health issues. 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 the addition of the Veteran Justice Organization/Veterans Administration, veterans and veteran 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 veteran's 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 underlying case.

Key Component #3:

Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the Veterans Court program.

Early identification of veterans entering the criminal justice system is an integral part of the process of placement in the Veterans Court program. 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 of the need for treatment difficult.

Key Component #4:

Veterans Court provides access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, mental health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.

While primarily concerned with criminal activity, alcohol and drug use, and mental illness, the Veterans 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. 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 drug 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 coordinated strategy governs Veterans Court responses to participants' compliance.**

A Veterans progress through the treatment court experience is measured by his or her compliance with the treatment regimen. Veterans Court rewards cooperation and sanctions noncompliance. Veterans Court establishes a coordinated strategy, including a continuum of graduated responses, to 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 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 Court planning, implementation, and operations.**

All Veterans Court staff should be involved in education and training. Interdisciplinary education exposes criminal justice officials to veteran treatment issues, and 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, Veteran Administration, veteran volunteer mentors, and treatment personnel, and promote a spirit of commitment and collaboration.

Key Component #10:

Forging partnerships among Veterans Court, Veteran Administration, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances Veterans Court effectiveness.

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

Other General Information on Veterans Courts

<http://www.nadcp.org/JusticeForVets>

Confidentiality

The identity and privacy of participants will be protected consistent with Federal Regulations and State laws (i.e., 42CFR, Part 2, HIPAA). In response to these regulations, policies and procedures have been developed which guard your confidentiality. You will be asked to sign a waiver authorizing the transfer of information among all participating agencies.

You will also be asked to sign a release of information waiver authorizing information regarding your case be gathered for research purposes for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Veterans Court. A random identification number will be assigned to you by the Veterans Court Coordinator. This number will be used in all research and evaluation activities to safeguard your identity.

No information disclosed during treatment court proceedings shall be the basis for prosecution of new crimes and you shall not be required to testify to any information discussed or disclosed during Veterans Court sessions.

Veterans Court Team Meetings

These meetings are mandatory for the Treatment Team and are closed to Alumni and other Veterans Court participants. Team members will discuss your case during this meeting to make sure that you are making progress in fulfilling the requirements of the Veterans Court Program. Team meetings are held immediately prior to court, unless otherwise specified.

Probation Supervision

While a participant in the Veterans Court, you will be supervised by a Veterans Court Probation Officer. This Officer will verify your address and conduct a home investigation to ensure that you have a stable place of residence.

Each participant is required to sign the Conditions of Supervision and the Veterans Court Program.

Your Probation Officer will use drug-screening tests for other drug and/or alcohol detection when it is deemed necessary. This testing will occur in addition to the mandatory drug and alcohol monitoring during Phase I. You will be subject to intensive supervision by the Adult Probation Officer.

You may be required to attend Alcoholics Anonymous or 12-Step meetings. If this is required for your case, you must sign and submit a record of your attendance at these meetings to your Probation Officer. Additionally, in all cases, your Probation Officer may perform field and/or phone curfew checks and will enforce sanctions during your supervision when necessary and dependent upon your supervision guidelines.

You will submit to urine tests and continue contact at the Adult Probation Office during Phase II. The Veterans Court Probation Officer, working together with the Treatment Team and Veterans Administration, will refer participants to educational and vocational programs. Urine screening tests will continue during Phases II and III.

To avoid jeopardizing treatment, if you have a violation that involves new criminal charges, you must immediately notify a Veterans Court Probation Officer who will in turn report to the Treatment Team as soon as possible.

Policy on Narcotic Medications

Applicants seeking entry into the Cambria County Veterans Court program are expected to consult with their treating physician or/and psychiatrist to seek non-addictive medications whenever feasible for treatment of conditions such as pain or/and anxiety. It is recognized that some veterans will have chronic pain or/and anxiety that does not respond to non-addictive medications, therefore making it necessary for the veteran to continue taking narcotics. In such cases, the veteran will be required to alert the prescribing physician about any substance use or/and abuse history. It is also required that if there are concerns about abusing medications the veteran will seek a Pain Clinic referral through the VA to explore other options besides narcotic medications. Veterans who are prescribed narcotic medications are prohibited from obtaining prescriptions for these medications from providers outside of the VA.

Some other expectations of the program include:

- Abstaining from the consumption of alcoholic beverages, the use of illegal drugs, or any other mood-altering substances is recommended
- Enrollment in an appropriate treatment program.
- The Veterans Court operates on an abstinence basis. Any prescription medication taken must be authorized by a medical doctor and reviewed with the Treatment Provider and your Probation Officer.
- Active involvement in treatment and striving to make personal progress while you are in the Veterans Court program.
- It is expected that you will make treatment of primary importance. Missing treatment, or any court- related activity without permission, will be considered a sanctionable act.
- You will be expected to submit to alcohol and/or other drug screening tests on a regular basis. Missing these screenings will be considered sanctionable act. Failure to give a urine sample is also a sanctionable act.
- Your basic progress in treatment is communicated to members of the Treatment Team after the appropriate releases of information/confidentiality forms are signed.

Frequently Asked Questions

How often must I attend the Veterans Court sessions?

When you begin the Veterans Court Program, you will be required to attend Veterans Court sessions every other Monday at 8:30 a.m. in Court room 1. **Court begins promptly at 8:30 a.m. Lateness will not be tolerated.** Your Probation Officer will provide you with a schedule of the Veterans Court sessions.

The location of the specific courtroom may change, but Veterans Court will usually be held in the Cambria County Courthouse, Courtroom One (1), second (2nd) floor. If the location or time of the session changes, you will be notified immediately. Please contact your Probation Officer if you still have questions regarding when and where to appear for Veterans Court sessions.

During these sessions, the Veterans Court Judge reviews participants' cases in the presence of the Treatment Team and other participants in the Veterans Court. It is during these sessions that incentives and sanctions will be given to participants based on positive progress of actions or the negative consequences of them. These court appearances provide a mechanism for continued interaction between you and the Veterans Court Judge as your case continues through the criminal justice system.

Anyone outside of the Treatment Team, Judge, and other Veterans Court Participants wishing to attend a court session may do so.

Is there an Administrative Fee for the Vet Court program?

Yes. The administrative fee for the Cambria County Vet Court program is \$200.00 plus court filing costs, as well as monthly supervision fees at the discretion of the judge.

If I cannot get treatment through the VA Medical Centers, do not have insurance, or my insurance will not cover treatment for drug and/or alcohol addiction, what can I do?

As a last resort, if you are a Cambria County resident, have no insurance, cannot pay for treatment, or are a low-income individual, you **may** qualify for funding for treatment through the Cambria County Drug and Alcohol.

Do I still need to attend treatment if I find employment?

Yes. Treatment is the first priority throughout the program.

What should I do if I relapse?

Inform your counselor, Probation Officer, or a representative from the VA Medical Center or Veteran Mentor as soon as possible if you feel that you are struggling with your sobriety in order to prevent a relapse. However, if a relapse does occur, contact one of the individuals **immediately** and be accountable for your actions. You must always remember that the Treatment Team exists to help and assist with your recovery. It is ultimately the Judge's decision regarding any imposition of sanctions; however, treatment options are always considered in lieu of incarceration when you are honest and take responsibility for your actions.

The worst action you can take is to ignore the requirements of the Veterans Court. Severe penalties will be imposed if this occurs.

Who will track the AA or 12-Step meetings?

Each Veterans Court participant is responsible to know when he/she began his/her AA or 12-step meetings and when you will be finished. However, the Veterans Court Probation Officer will verify that you are completing your meetings. Each participant will be supplied with an attendance sheet to document his/her meetings. These sheets must be turned-in to the Probation Officer on a weekly basis.

Who tracks the Phases?

The Veterans Court Team will ultimately determine when you have completed a Phase of the Veterans Court program.

If I am currently taking a medication such as Naltrexone, Antabuse, Methadone, Buprenorphine, may I still apply for the Veterans Court?

Yes.

Must I live in Cambria County to be a participant in the DUI Court Program?

The program is designed to provide services to veterans of Cambria County, as well as its surrounding counties at the discretion of the court, therefore residency in Cambria County is a consideration and residents will be given priority in program admission. However, your status as a veteran, your charges, and your diagnosis matter more as the criteria for admission into the program than anything else.

What, in general, may I do while I am on Electronic Monitoring?

While you are on Electronic Monitoring, you may do the minimum of: working, job searching, attending drug & alcohol counseling, going to 12-Step meetings, and to doctor's appointments. If you go searching for a job, you must have the business sign a sheet/note with the date & time on it that you were there.

12-Step Meetings

When do I start the 12-Step meetings?

You may be required to start attending 12-Step meetings once you are sentenced to the Veterans Court Program.

How do I prove that I went to a 12-Step meeting?

If required by the court to attend 12-step meetings, you are also required to fill-out a 12-Step meeting attendance sheet for each meeting you attend. Again, if you are required to attend these meetings, you MUST fill out this sheet every day or for every meeting you attend and show it to your Probation Officer on at least a weekly basis.

Cambria County VA Medical Center Contact Information

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE DIAL 911

General Contact Information:

Bonnie Clark, LCSW

Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJOC)

Department of Veterans Affairs/ James E. Van Zandt

VA Medical Center

2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd

Altoona, PA 16602

Direct Line: **814-943-8164 extension 4201**

Toll Free: **877-626-2500**

Cambria County Departmental Contact Information

Department	Phone Number	Ask to Speak with the...
Cambria County Adult Probation Department	Ebensburg: 814-472-4410 Johnstown: 814-536-4343	Veterans Court Adult Probation Officer
Office of the District Attorney, Cambria County, Kelly Callihan	814-472-1680	Veterans Court Coordinator
Office of the Public Defender, Cambria County, Ryan Gleason	Ebensburg: 814-472-1425 Johnstown: 814-535-4697	Veterans Court Treatment Team Public Defender
Cambria County Behavioral Health Hotline	877-268-9463	Crisis Worker

Conclusion

We hope this manual has been helpful and has answered many questions about the program. Any additional questions or concerns about the Veterans Court program may be directed to the Veterans Court Coordinator, Mentor, and/or other members of the Veterans Court Team.

Best wishes with your progress, and thank you for your service to our country.