

Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



Guidelines and Program Information
for Veteran Participants

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"There's no quitting, I can't have quit in me. There was never an option to stop and quit."

--Major Lisa Jaster, third woman to graduate from U.S. Army Ranger School

"A passion for life is contagious and uplifting. Passion cuts both ways... I want to create passion in my own life and with those I care for. I want to feel, experience and live every emotion. I will suffer through the bad for the heights of the good."

— Pat Tillman, football star who joined the Army Rangers after 9/11 and was killed in action in Afghanistan

Welcome to the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court

This handbook is designed to:

- ◇ tell you what you need to know about the Veterans Treatment Court
 - ◇ answer any questions you may have
 - ◇ address your concerns
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As a participant in the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court (WCVTC), you must follow the instructions given in court by the Judge and the rules and treatment plan given to you by the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court team, the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and your Treatment Provider. This handbook will explain what is expected of you and will provide general information about the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court program.

Ask your Defense Attorney to explain to you anything in this handbook that you do not understand!

WCVTC would like to thank and acknowledge all the New York State Veteran Treatment Courts who have paved the way for the WCVTC and have assisted in the creation of this participant handbook, in particular, the Veterans Treatment Courts of Buffalo, Monroe County, Queens County, Syracuse, Bronx and Manhattan.

What is a Veterans Treatment Court?

The Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court (WCVTC) is a problem-solving part within the County Court of Westchester County. It is a program for misdemeanor and felony level veteran offenders who face non-violent charges and who also have a chemical dependency issue and/or a mental health or other lifestyle issue as a result of their military service. The goal of the court is to help those that served our nation and honor their service. Instead of jail, the WCVTC will help you enter and stay in a drug treatment or mental health program. The WCVTC program includes regular court appearances, case management and supervision by a judge.

After an assessment by the Problem Solving Unit and the VA, with the veteran's consent and after consultation with defense counsel, the assessment will be shared with the WCVTC team. The team will then determine if the veteran is an appropriate candidate for the WCVTC. Once in the program, a clinical plan will be developed with your consideration and based on your needs. While you are in treatment, the judge will closely monitor your progress.

If you agree to participate, you enter into a written contract with the WCVTC. This contract is between you and the Judge. It explains what is expected of you and what will happen if you do not follow the rules. Before you sign your agreement, you should speak with your defense attorney and have your questions answered. While you are in a treatment program, the judge, prosecutor, your lawyer and the WCVTC team will monitor your progress in treatment. We will be in constant contact with your treatment program team and you must submit to

random and supervised drug and/or alcohol tests. **You must stop using mood altering substances. This includes alcohol.**

The amount of time you spend in WCVTC will depend on the crime you were originally charged with, your criminal history, your plea and your individual progress in treatment. Most people will spend at least one year in the WCVTC.

If the judge says you can no longer participate, or you ask to stop participating, the judge will sentence you to the jail time you and your lawyer agreed to when you pled guilty.

What are Veteran Mentors?

An essential component of the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court program is the mentor program where veteran mentors provide support to veteran participants. Veterans are better served by having a support system that includes veterans who understand combat experience and the different aspects of military service. Mentors participate in a supportive relationship with participants to increase the likelihood that they will remain in treatment, attain and manage sobriety, maintain law-abiding behavior and successfully readjust to civilian life. Veteran mentors, comprised of volunteers from the United States Armed Forces, share a vast array of common life experiences with participants. These common elements allow veteran mentors to: effectively engage participants, act as a resource and friendly face to provide moral support as the participant is navigating the courts, help participants maintain focus on their treatment, assist in navigating the challenges of adjusting to a healthy and productive civilian lifestyle and successfully graduate from Veterans Treatment Court. Their contribution to the Veterans Treatment Courts is immeasurable.



What's in it for me?

Veterans Courts improve outcomes for drug abusing offenders by combining evidence-based substance abuse treatment with behavioral accountability.

The Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court acknowledges progress in the following ways:

- ✓ Recognition by the judge and your peers
- ✓ Certificates of achievement
- ✓ Less frequent appearances in court
- ✓ Less frequent visits to your program
- ✓ Acceleration of phases
- ✓ Early calendar call

If you successfully complete the WCVTC, the Judge will dispose of your case according to your plea agreement. Typical dispositions include dismissal, allowing you to plead guilty to a less serious offense, Probation and Interim Probation Supervision. Review your plea agreement with your defense attorney to determine what will happen in your case.

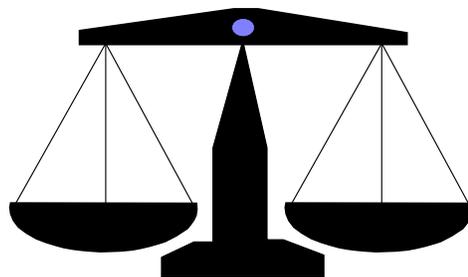
To successfully complete the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court you must:

- ✓ Attend your program regularly
- ✓ Follow all program rules
- ✓ Participate in all required activities
- ✓ Have negative urine tests for one year or more
- ✓ Have a job or enroll in school
- ✓ Give back to your community

What are the rules of the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court?

To remain in the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court you must follow these rules:

- Appear in court as scheduled and stay until the end of the session.
- Arrive on time for all court appearances.
- Arrive on time for all other appointments.
- Stop using and carrying drugs, alcohol and drug paraphernalia.
- Never threaten, harass or use violence against anyone.
- Never leave the treatment program or the court without permission.
- Respect the property of the treatment program and the court.
- Dress appropriately for court and case management visits.
- In court, address the judge as "Your Honor" or "Judge".
- Be honest at all times.
- Live a law-abiding life.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Speak to a veteran mentor.
- Follow the rules of the treatment program.
- Participate in self-help meetings.



Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court

Phases

Long-term goals and short-term goals are addressed as participants progress through the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court program. There are four phases which will be your steps to success.

Using information from your initial interview, a course of treatment will be developed. This is known as your Treatment Plan. You must move through four phases of the WCVTC program.

The phases will differ in length for everyone as they move through the program. You must complete each requirement before you can move to the next phase.

Remember: If you miss appointments, use drugs or alcohol, or ignore other requirements, you could be sanctioned and your time in Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court will be longer.

The team will review your progress with the judge when you are ready to move to the next phase.

Remember that moving to the next Phase will be based on your own progress and your ability to stay focused on what you must do to meet all the rules and expectations.

Veterans Treatment Court – Phase System

- Phase One – Basic Training (Two Months)
 - Court appearances, as scheduled
 - Comply with all treatment recommendations
 - Comply with all supervision
 - Develop a plan
 - Submit to weekly random drug testing, as directed (minimum of two)
 - Address housing
 - Obtain medical assessment
 - Change people, places and things
 - Introduction to Veteran Justice Officer (VJO) and Veteran Mentor

- Phase Two – Mission Oriented (Four months)
 - Court appearances, as scheduled
 - Comply with all treatment recommendations and supervision
 - Continue to address medical needs
 - Continue to change the people, places and things
 - Review case plan
 - Submit to weekly random drug testing, as directed (minimum of two)
 - Focus on peer support groups
 - Continued engagement with VJO and Veteran Mentor

- Phase Three – Active Duty Station (Three months)
 - Court appearances, as scheduled
 - Continue with treatment and supervision
 - Continue addressing changing people, places and things
 - Review case plan
 - Continue random drug testing, as directed
 - Establish and maintain a sober support network
 - Engage in school or job training and or seek employment
 - Continue engagement with the VJO and Veteran Mentor

- Phase Four – Excelling at Mission & Continuum of Operation (Three months)
 - Court appearances, as scheduled
 - Continue court monitoring
 - Continued compliance with treatment and supervision
 - Continue addressing medical needs
 - Continue changing people, places and things
 - Review case plan
 - Maintain housing
 - Random drug testing, as directed
 - Development of continuing care plan
 - Maintaining pro-social activity
 - Maintain sober support network
 - Involvement in job training, parenting/family support, vocational training, education program
 - Remain law abiding
 - Continued engagement with VJO and Veteran Mentor

****A missed screen or relapse will result in the return to the beginning of the Phase you are currently in. You do not start the program over.***

In addition to completing the Phases, Veterans will need to be employed, in school or engaged in some form of positive community involvement in order to be considered for graduation.

Incentives and Sanctions

Below are some of the incentives and sanctions that may be used by the court.

INCENTIVES:

- Recognition and Praise
- Certificates of Achievement/Graduation
- Dismissal/Reduction of Charges
- Early Graduation
- Handshakes/Hugs
- Applause/Special Recognition
- Phase Acceleration
- Acknowledgement of Clean Time
- Sobriety Tokens
- Fewer Court Appearances
- Early Termination of Probation
- Early Calendar Call

SANCTIONS:

- Admonishment
- Program Termination
- Day in Jury Box
- Incarceration
- Essays/Journals
- Return to Earlier Treatment Phase
- Community Service
- More Case Management Sessions
- More Frequent Testing
- Increased Court Appearances and Supervision
- Team Roundtable with Client
- Attend Victim Impact Panel

The Judge Retains Discretion to Depart from this List.

Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court Team Members

The Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court Team understands that addiction is a disease and is dedicated to supporting the recovery of every veteran participant.

The members of the Westchester County Veterans Treatment Court team include:

- Judge
- Your lawyer and other members of the defense bar
- Westchester County District Attorney's Office
- Your case manager/coordinator
- US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Volunteer veteran mentors
- Veterans organizations
- Mental health and treatment providers

The team meets before every court session to assess and monitor the progress of each case. At these meetings, the team members discuss each veteran participant and the Judge decides the appropriate actions to take, including incentives and sanctions.

Important Names and Numbers

My Attorney _____

Phone # _____

My Case Manager/Coordinator _____

Phone # _____

My Treatment Program _____

Counselor's Name _____

Phone # _____

My Sponsor _____

Phone # _____

Veteran Justice Outreach Coordinator, VA _____

Phone # _____

Veteran Peer Mentor _____

Phone # _____

Self-Help Meetings:

Days: _____

Location: _____

You can obtain information, schedules and locations for local self-help groups from your Case Manager/Coordinator and/or your treatment provider.