

BUTLER COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

MENTOR PROGRAM HANDBOOK

November 2019
Revised August 26, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Butler County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) 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.

A key component of any successful VTC is the 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. Mentors are not part of the VTC treatment team and report to the Mentor Coordinator.

Normally, each participant in the Butler County VTC program is assigned a Mentor when they become a participant in the court. However, a Mentor may not be assigned if the participant expressly states they do not want a Mentor or if the treatment team determines that a Mentor is not necessary. Mentors have been selected to demonstrate that the adjustments in becoming law-abiding civilians, after military service, are possible. Mentors can relate and assist the veteran with difficulties well after their transition journey begins. Having a stable living situation and having control over one's life significantly reduce the odds of severe violence and most other infractions of the law.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Mentor is to act as a coach, guide, role model, advocate, and support for the veteran participants. The Mentor encourages, guides, and supports the veteran participant as they progress through the court process. This includes:

- Observing and listening to the problems and concerns
- Making general suggestions
- Assisting the veteran to determine their needs, set goals and action plans
- Acting as a support for the veteran, especially during anxiety provoking times
- Providing feedback to participants and highlight their successes

While meeting with participants, Mentors **must never**:

- Make clinical recommendations
- Give legal advice
- Provide psychotherapy
- Utilize stern approach
- Inappropriately extend the boundaries of their relationship
- Promise better outcomes than can be reasonably expected
- Push their values, beliefs or lifestyle on the participant
- Exploit the participant or the relationship for agency or personal advantage

Mentor Duties and Responsibilities

Mentors should:

- Attend training and court sessions as scheduled
- Participate in organized sessions with veterans as assigned by the Mentor Coordinator
- Discuss any ongoing problems facing the veteran participant, and act as an advocate and ally in supporting and understanding of these issues
- Inform the participant that you are obliged to information that the participant is planning to commit a crime or harm themselves or others
- Meet with their assigned participant in person at court sessions
- Each meeting should build on participant's previous conversations

- Assist the participants as much as possible to facilitate and resolve concerns about the court and court room procedures
- Assist the participants on how to access and navigate the Veterans Affairs system and other support systems ensuring that every participating veteran receives the services they require and to which they are entitled
- Be supportive and work respectfully and professionally with other Mentors
- Maintain confidentiality and appropriate boundaries with participants
- Encourage participants by highlighting their strengths including talents, skills and knowledge
- Focus on what has been successful
- Encourage participants to believe they have the potential to learn, grow, change and overcome their difficulties

Veteran Mentor Requirements

1. Be an honorably discharged United States military veteran: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or a corresponding branch of the Reserve or National Guard. Submit a valid DD214 or DD215
2. Have a genuine concern for veterans in the legal system. Be respectful of individual differences and maintain appropriate boundaries with participants.
3. Be in good standing with the law
4. Adhere to all Butler County VTC Policies and Procedures and the Mentor Handbook
5. Complete Mentor application forms.
6. Commit to program participation for the duration of your assigned veteran's enrollment
7. Complete any required initial and ongoing training procedures
8. Not be an active employee of the court system, law enforcement, or member of any organization that may be deemed to present a conflict of interest with the Mentor program.
9. Have at least weekly contact, preferably at court sessions, with your assigned Veteran.

Veteran Mentor Desirable Qualities

1. Be an active listener
2. Be empathetic
3. Be encouraging and supportive
4. Be tolerant and respectful of individual differences
5. Be somewhat knowledgeable of Veterans Affairs services
6. Be somewhat knowledgeable of community resources and services.

Screening Policy

Each prospective Mentor must complete a screening process. The decision to accept or deny an applicant will be made by the Mentor Coordinator. Feedback regarding a prospective Mentor's denial may or may not be provided. The right to withhold or give feedback is solely at the discretion of the Mentor Coordinator. The Mentor screening procedure will include, but not limited to, completion of a personal interview and local criminal background check.

Training

Training is crucial and necessary for Mentors and initial training is especially crucial for prospective Mentors. All Mentors are expected to attend various training sessions arranged by the Mentor coordinator

Assignments

The Mentor Coordinator will assign a Mentor to a Veteran. As appropriate, the Mentor Coordinator may consult the VTC treatment team concerning the assignment of, or need to assign, a Mentor. Additionally, the Mentor Coordinator will may take into consideration the request of the Mentor or veteran participant.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an essential piece of successful mentoring. Veteran participants must know that their testimony and their sessions with a Mentor are confidential communications. Mentors will only disclose information that the participant is planning to commit a crime or take action to harm themselves or others.

In the event that a veteran participant discloses information that the participant is planning to commit a crime or take action to harm themselves or others, the Mentor will strongly encourage the veteran to disclose the same information to the Court. If the participant does not want to disclose the information to the Court, the Mentor is required to disclose the information to the Mentor Coordinator immediately.

Unacceptable Behavior

Unacceptable behaviors will not be tolerated while a Mentor is participating in the program. There is zero tolerance rule in effect at all times. Behaviors that are not aligned with the mission, vision, goals, and values of the Butler County VTC are unacceptable and prohibited during court proceedings and mentoring sessions. This policy also governs interactions that a Mentor and participating veteran may have outside the Court. Any unacceptable behavior by a Mentor will result in termination from the Mentor Program. The determination of unacceptable behavior is at the sole discretion of the Mentor Coordinator.

Resources

There is a long list of agencies that may provide specific assistance to your veteran. Recognize that the Butler County Veterans Affairs office, located on the first floor of the Courthouse, may be the primary source of information and assistance. Available assistance may be provided by Federal, State, County and local governmental, and non-governmental agencies.

Christina Beaver and Kelly Fulmer who are the Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator and Specialist are the main resource to connect your Veteran to the VA Healthcare System. Their contact information is below:

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