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# Mentor Program

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The Montgomery County  
Veterans Treatment Court  
Mentor Handbook

## Engage. Encourage. Empower

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## **Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) Team:**

**Judge:** Kenneth R. Goble, Jr.

**District Attorney:** Adrienne Welchance

**Public Defender: James Bagby**

**Probation Officer:** **Johnny Clark**

## **Law Enforcement: Michael Ulray**

VTC Director: Edward Moss

Evaluator: Gene Lewis

Actor Liaison: Richard Me

e Outreach Specialist Case Stacey Parsons

Case Manager: Katie Kastle

C M L B

Case Manager: John Ballance

## **Case Manager: Joshua Forbes**

## **Team Captain: Jerry Walker**

## **Veterans Mentor Coordinator: Mary Ross**

**Court Liaison:** Tiffany

Anderson

**Mary Ross**  
*VTC Mentor Coordinator*  
931-624-0772  
Mddross2@msn.com

**Edward Moss**  
*Director*  
931-245-3180  
[elmoss@mcgtn.net](mailto:elmoss@mcgtn.net)

**Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) Mentors:**

**Current Mentors (11):**

Camp, Chelsea

Ellery, Edwards

Jemison, Dwight

Kean, Will

Patrick, Kevin

Ross, Mary

Schuler, John

Spencer, Isaiah

Williams, Yolanda

Schmidt, Jennifer

Napolitan, Dominic

Schroeder, Scott

Note: All VTC Mentors are Honorably Discharged Veterans of our Armed Services.

## **Section I. The Purpose of Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC's):**

Most of our Veterans return home strengthened by their military service, but many are struggling with trauma, mental illness (such as PTSD), and substance use and/or abuse disorders. These issues can be exacerbated by the loss of structure and camaraderie found in the military. Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs) provide treatment, accountability, and mentoring. They help connect justice-involved Veterans with the benefits they've earned. VTCs save the lives, families, and futures of our Veterans while also saving taxpayer dollars.

A key finding of a RAND 2008 study identified that nearly 20% of Soldiers involved in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have a current mental health condition. Nearly 20% of service members reported having experienced a probable Traumatic Brain Injury. Some Veterans may face additional obstacles due to military service such as sexual trauma, challenges that come from leaving children at home during deployment, and gay and lesbian stigma and prejudice.

Even today, many Veterans return from military service and find themselves facing unique personal challenges, including mental health problems or substance abuse, which they would not have faced if not for their military service. Criminal behavior, mental health problems and substance abuse often stem directly from service in combat zones and may be amplified by re-entry into home life.

Realizing that veterans have special needs that were not being adequately served, Buffalo City Court created the first Veterans Treatment Court in 2008. Beginning with, and then adapting, the structures of drug treatment courts and mental health courts, the Buffalo, New York Veterans Treatment Court identified some of the specific issues facing veterans:

- The needs of many Veterans are related to their military service.
- Many Veterans use drugs and alcohol as a way of numbing or decreasing their stress levels.
- Some illegal drug use may stem from the medicinal effect those drugs had on PTSD symptoms and other conditions while on active duty.

Veterans Treatment Courts address these challenges in a forum that is conducive to veterans' rehabilitation. Where available, Veterans Treatment Courts work with civilian healthcare providers, local veteran agencies and the United States Department of Veteran Affairs. They utilize Veteran Mentors and Mental Health Specialists to complement probation services and incorporate a therapeutic approach to afford Veterans opportunities to transition into civilian life and regain stability.

## **Section II. Key Components of Veterans Treatment Courts:**

Veterans Treatment Courts operate similarly to drug treatment and mental health courts. Drug treatment courts operate within the guidelines of the Ten Key Components of Drug Court,

developed by a commission of drug court practitioners in 1995. Veterans Treatment Courts feature the following 10 key operational standards which are adapted from the Ten Key Components.

Veterans Treatment Courts:

- Integrate alcohol, drug treatment and mental health services with justice system case processing.
- Use a non-adversarial approach where prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting veteran participants' due process rights.
- Identify eligible participants early and promptly place them in the Veterans Treatment Court program.
- Provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, mental health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.
- Monitor abstinence through frequent alcohol and other drug testing.
- Respond to Veteran participants' compliance through a coordinated strategy.
- Maintain essential, ongoing judicial interaction with each veteran.
- Measure achievement of program goals and gauge program effectiveness through monitoring and ongoing evaluation.
- Continue interdisciplinary education and promote effective Veterans Treatment Court planning, implementation and operations.
- Forge partnerships among Veterans Treatment Court, Veterans Administration, public agencies and community-based organizations, generate local support and enhance Veterans Treatment Courts effectiveness.

### **Section III. Mentor Component:**

An essential component of the Veterans Treatment Court program is the mentor program where veteran mentors act as peer 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. The Mentor component is not a formal structure of the Court. It is a separate entity which the Court allows to be part of its' Veterans Treatment Court Program. The component has an identified leader that serves in the position of liaison between the mentor component and the VTC Program.

The mentor component maintains its' integrity by ensuring there is never the practice, impression or perception that it or its individual volunteers have any influence on legal proceedings or outcomes regarding individual mentees.

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. The roles, responsibilities, requirements and qualifications are discussed in the following sections.

Veteran Mentors are Veteran volunteers responsible for serving as a supporter, guide and confidant for Veteran participants. The role of the mentor is to Engage. Encourage. Empower.

- Mentors engage with their assigned participants by being available, dependable, and actively listening, as well as questioning.
- Encourage the participants to participate in court, treatment and positive social activities.
- Empower the participants to connect with resources within the community and connect with positive activities. The mentor also Empowers the court to better understand veterans.

Successful Veteran Mentors are:

- Always empathetic, non-judgmental, positive and optimistic.
- Have realistic goals and expectations.
- Are always working to build rapport.
- Practice Active Listening skills.
- Respect the trust participants place in them.
- Have a solid understanding of boundaries.

When meeting with participants, mentors must **NOT**:

- Make clinical recommendations.
- Give legal advice.
- Provide psychotherapy.
- Utilize a stern approach.
- Inappropriately extend the boundaries of their relationship.
- Offer or give monetary gifts.
- Post bond for mentee.

#### **Section IV. Requirements and Qualifications to Become a VTC Mentor:**

The unique Tennessee Veterans Treatment Court System requires distinctive veterans (Mentor) to fill the gap between the court and the Justice involved Veteran (JIV). The Mentor is the one who is qualified, willing, and available to fill this need. The Mentor provides experience, wisdom, and knowledge, so JIV can again become a healthy and viable contributor to his or her community. Requirements for a Mentors are:

- Be a Veteran of Military Service.
- Provide a valid DD214 or DD215 (an honorable discharge is preferred).

- Be a volunteer, there are no “paid” mentors.
- Have a valid driver’s license and reliable transportation.
- Have and maintain an easy to reach phone.
- Have access to and the ability to operate a computer or an e-mail capable device.
- Be willing to commit to a minimum of 12 months.
- Have time available to perform the duties of a mentor and attend training as well as the court sessions.
- Be of good reputation in the community.
- Be respectful of individual differences and maintain appropriate boundaries with participants.
- Not be an active employee of law enforcement or a member of any other organization that may present a conflict of interest with the mentor program.

#### **Section V. Process for becoming a Veteran Mentor:**

- Complete a Mentor Candidate Application Form (**See Appendix B, Blank Mentor Application Form**). If the Mentor Candidate is a graduate of the VTC program, there is a one year waiting period before they can apply to become a mentor.
- Present a copy of DD214 or DD215
- Submit to a background check.
- All mentor candidates will be screened and approved by the VTC Coordinator with the help of the VTC Team.

#### **Initial Candidate Mentor Training:**

- All mentor candidates who have applied and met all other requirements will be required to go through an orientation. The orientation will be conducted by the Mentor Coordinator or other experienced mentors.
- The mentor candidates will be required to complete the online training provided by Justice for Vets during the first 90 days. A copy of the online Transcript page will be provided to the Mentor Coordinator to be kept on file.
- Mentor candidates will be on a 90-day probation period to ensure that Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Program is a good fit for all concerned. At the end of the probationary period, an informal evaluation will be held with the Mentor Coordinator.

## **Section VI. The Role and Responsibility of the Mentor Coordinator:**

Mentor Coordinator ensures the efficient and successful operation of the mentor program in Veterans Treatment Court. Mentor Coordinators are volunteers that are responsible for assigning Mentors to participants, supporting Mentors in all aspects of their work and managing mentor training programs.

Mentor Coordinators will be familiar with their local Veterans Treatment Court and veteran services. They will actively recruit appropriate mentors for the VTC Mentor Program. This may require conducting presentations in the community regarding the Veterans Treatment Court.

The Coordinator will match mentors with participants based on shared qualities and backgrounds to the greatest extent possible. She/he will ensure that the mentors are not overwhelmed with participants and will assist as needed. Factors to consider may include branch of service, type of service (i.e., combat and location of service) gender and general age group.

The Mentor Coordinator will keep the mentors informed of Court schedules. Mentors should be present whenever Veterans Treatment Court is in session to provide immediate support for participants appearing in court.

The Mentor Coordinator acts as a resource for the mentors by assisting when there are conflicts in a Veteran Mentor's personal schedule. The Coordinator will also:

- Establish a training program that will provide all Candidate Mentors and current Mentors a complete understanding of their responsibilities as a VTC Mentor.
- Ensure that all Candidate Mentors and current Mentors review the online free courses provided at [www.justiceforvets.org](http://www.justiceforvets.org). In addition, oversee the training of all Mentor Candidates.
- Review participant records to ensure only public knowledge is being used to document the Veteran's progress.
- Select an ad hoc committee to review and update the Mentor Handbook and other documents to ensure accuracy on an annual basis.
- Establishing a common-sense approach to how the Mentors conduct daily business, recruit and train prospective candidates
- Work with the Veterans Treatment Court staff to resolve issues and motivate participants through challenges.
- Mentors may bring concerns regarding a participant to the attention of their Mentor Coordinator. The Mentor Coordinator is then responsible for contacting the Veterans Treatment Court in a timely manner to ensure that the participant receives appropriate support.
- If the Mentor Coordinator determines that a Mentor is not adequately fulfilling their responsibilities, the Mentor Coordinator will contact the VTC Team in a reasonable and timely manner. The mentor in question may be removed from the program.
- Attend clinical and legal training programs supported or provided by the Veterans Treatment Court.

## **Section VII. The requirements and skills needed to become the Mentor Coordinator:**

- Have been an active Mentor for a period of no less than one-year.
- Have the time to attend meetings with Court staff and others as they arrive.
- Commit to a one-year term and may be re-elected to serve one additional year.
- Unless there is an extreme shortage of Mentors, the Coordinator will not act as a Mentor.

## **Section VIII. How the Mentor Coordinator is Selected?**

The Mentor Coordinator will be selected from the current active mentors. The election of the Mentor Coordinator should take place in June of each year.

The Mentor Coordinator is elected for a one-year term and maybe re-elected to one addition term. There must be a majority vote from all active mentors for a Coordinator to be selected.

What happens if the Coordinator must leave before her/his term ends?

A volunteer will need to assume the duties and responsibilities until a special election can be conducted in the same manner as the regular election is conducted. This process will be used to fill the remaining time left in the replaced Coordinator's term.

What happens if the Coordinator must be removed for misconduct?

Misconduct by the Mentor Coordinator or any mentor is serious. Actions to be taken will be determined on a case by case bases. If the Coordinator is relieved of duty, a special election of a new Mentor Coordinator will be needed.

## **Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Application**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 1: \_\_\_\_\_  Home  Work  Cell

Phone 2: \_\_\_\_\_  Home  Work  Cell

Branch of Military Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Service: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Discharge: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Employer (NA if unemployed/retired): \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the days you are available to mentor: M T W TH F

Time available: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you speak a language(s) other than English?  Yes  No

If yes, list languages: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you previously served as a mentor?  Yes  No

If yes, in what capacity and where? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to submit to a background investigation?  Yes  No

Are you willing to submit to a drug and alcohol test?  Yes  No

How did you learn about the Mentor Program?

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What does being a mentor mean to you?

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What skills and experiences do you bring to the mentoring program that will be helpful to the veterans in the program and the other mentors?

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What are you hoping to take away from volunteering with the Veterans Treatment Court mentoring program?

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\*\*Mentors will be expected to participate in Court observations, attend ongoing training and be supervised by a mentor coordinator.



[Justiceforvets.org/mentorcorps/professionaldevelopment](http://Justiceforvets.org/mentorcorps/professionaldevelopment)

Mentoring has been proven to improve veterans treatment court outcomes. To achieve this success, it is critical that all mentors, as well as court team members, are trained on the core components of effective mentoring.

Justice For Vets has mentoring resources available to all members of the veterans treatment court team.

- [Mentor Corps](#)
- [Mentor Registration](#)
- [Mentor Q&A Forum](#)
- [Professional Development](#)

## ONLINE MENTOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*New Courses Available!*

[Online professional development](#) is now available to all volunteer veteran mentors, mentor coordinators and veterans treatment court staff.

These free modules were developed in partnership with [Psycharmor Institute](#) and are designed to provide you with critical fundamentals necessary to be an effective mentor or incorporate mentoring in your veterans treatment court program.

[ENROLL](#)

### INSTRUCTIONS

- **Click ENROLL**

You will be directed to the PsychArmor website.

- **Complete short registration form**

*If you already have a PsychArmor account you can use your current username and password to join the group.*

- **Access Courses**

Select 'My Learning' from the top banner, then select 'My Dashboard'. All available mentor courses will be listed.

## AVAILABLE COURSES

### **What is a Veterans Treatment Court?**

Justice For Vets is dedicated to transforming the way the justice system identifies, assesses and treats veterans who are involved in the justice system due to mental health disorders, trauma, and substance use. In this course, veteran mentors will learn about the veterans treatment court program, the VTC team composition and the phases associated with the VTC program.

Duration: 13m 48s

### **\*NEW\* Mentoring a Participant with a Substance Use Disorder**

The military culture has a history of embracing the use of alcohol as a community-based way to relax, celebrate, mourn and enjoy leave. Despite the fact that all service branches have drastically tried to shift this culture in recent years, for some service members abuse and dependence issues have resulted. In this course, we talk about alcohol and other substance use disorders, what treatment looks like, and how a mentor can use this knowledge when mentoring someone who has been clinically diagnosed with one.

Duration: 7m 35s

### **\*NEW\* Risk Factors for Repeated Justice Involvement**

In this course, mentees will learn about some of the most significant risk factors for criminal justice involvement, actions they may be able to take to help reduce their mentee's likelihood of further criminal involvement, as well as the typical level of risk and need that we see in participants in our treatment courts today.

Duration: 13m 01s

### **Role of a Veteran Mentor**

"Leave no Veteran behind." That is the motto each veteran mentor exemplifies. In this course, Justice For Vets Division Director Scott Tirocchi discusses the mission of the mentor program, how mentors are recruited and trained and provides insight on successful mentorship within the veterans treatment court.

Duration: 10m 24s

### **Communications Skills**

Within the veteran's treatment court program, communication is key, especially for veteran mentors. In this course, mentors will learn how to communicate effectively with multiple people, including program participants, court officials, community resources and mentors.

Duration: 9m 34s

### **\*NEW\* Mentor Self Care**

Working with a mentee can be especially rewarding and at times, somewhat challenging. Adopting effective skills that a mentor can use which promote self-care for the purpose of reducing stress/anxiety and possible secondary traumatic stress are discussed in greater detail during this course.

Duration: 10m 4s

### **\*NEW\* Empowering Your Mentee Into Wellness**

In this course, mentors focus on the principle of Empowerment and discuss ways this principle can be applied in a practical manner that will influence positive change in their mentee's lifestyle and propel them a direction of long term personal wellness.

Duration: 10m 49s

### **Boundaries and Confidentiality**

Maintaining professional boundaries and confidentiality within the veterans treatment court is critical both to the mentee's successful completion of the program and to the mentor's personal well-being. In this course, you'll learn how to establish boundaries with your mentee and maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality.

Duration: 10m 24s

### **\*NEW\* Suicide Awareness and Prevention**

All veterans treatment court team members - regardless of role or duty, should be apprised of the fundamental concepts related to suicide prevention and awareness; it is everyone's responsibility. This course discusses actions that a mentor may need to take in response to a mentee in crisis.

Duration: 9m 48s

### **\*NEW\* A Trauma Informed Approach**

In this course you will learn how common trauma exposure is in our society as well as the rationale for having a trauma informed approach when rapport building with your mentee. Practical techniques that you can apply in your interactions with your mentee, who may also be a trauma survivor are discussed.

Duration: 7m 26s

## Web sites

1. Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court

<https://www.montgomerycountyvtc.org/>

2. Justice for Vets [www.JusticeForVets.org](http://www.JusticeForVets.org)

There is a tab at the top for MENTORS, go ahead and create an account, enroll and complete the training offered. They are relatively short and easy.

3. Veterans Network of Care

<https://mcgtn.org/vso/montgomery-county-network-care>

4. Montgomery County Veterans Coalition

[www.vetcoalition.org](http://www.vetcoalition.org)

5. Breathe & Relax, T2 mobile apps t2health.dcoe.mil

Download from Google play or Apple Store

6. inTransition – Connecting. Coaching. Empowering

[pdhealth.mil/resource-center/intransition](http://pdhealth.mil/resource-center/intransition)

7. Help for Our Heroes, Transformations Treatment Center

[www.transformationsTreatment.Center](http://www.transformationsTreatment.Center)

[www.HelpForOurHeroes.com](http://www.HelpForOurHeroes.com)

8. Make the Connection, US Department of VA

[www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)