

Veterans Treatment Court Program Handbook

Montgomery County Tennessee

www.montgomerycountytvc.org



Mission Statement

The Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court will serve those who willingly sacrificed for our country & find themselves involved in the Criminal Justice System by providing needed treatment & services under judicial supervision in order to restore the veteran to their honored status within our community.

This project is funded by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Welcome to the Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court. This handbook will provide you with a description of what is expected of you as a Veterans Treatment Court participant. This program handbook is a guide to understanding the requirements of participating in the VTC program, specific questions should be directed toward the VTC Staff or Treatment Team. Participants are encouraged to share this handbook with family and friends. Although the program requirements may seem overwhelming at first; once a routine is established, most do very well and see tremendous benefits in their lives. Three simple rules will insure success:

1. Be Honest

2. Show Up

3. Work Hard

Participants of the Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court **MUST** reside in Montgomery County Tennessee.

Veterans Treatment Court Description

The Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court is a voluntary program that includes regular court appearances before the Judge. Treatment includes weekly individual/group counseling, drug & alcohol testing, mental health treatment, and regular attendance at Active Minds Initiative (AMI) Self-Help meetings. You will be provided with referrals for vocational training, education &/or job placement

services. The VTC program is a minimum of 11 months with on-going aftercare services available to all who successfully complete Phase 4. Typical entry into the Veterans Treatment Court will be before your case is settled by judicial procedure. Supervision will include random drug & alcohol testing and unannounced home visits. Your Attorney will look out for your legal interests during your participation in Veterans Treatment Court. Successful completion through Phase 4 of the program **may** result in having the charges dismissed &/or termination of probation, as applicable. Failure or discharge from the program will result in further prosecution of your case.

Supervision

You will be required to appear in court for progress reviews before the VTC Judge or appointed representative. The VTC team will be given a progress report prepared by the Case Manager, with input from other agencies, regarding your performance in the program. If you are doing well, you will be encouraged to continue with the program working positively toward success. If you are not doing well, the Judge will discuss with you identified shortcomings and impose sanction. With repeated violations or failure to progress satisfactorily, the Court may discharge you from the VTC program.

1. Attend all ordered treatment sessions.

This includes individual & group counseling, educational sessions, doctor appointments, AMI Self-Help meetings, and any other treatment requirements.

2. Report to your Case Manager as directed.

You must comply with all conditions of the program as directed by your Case Manager. You must also notify your Case Manager prior to any change in residence. If you are unable to report as directed, contact your Case Manager immediately and provide documentation for your reason of absence.

3. Submit to random drug & alcohol testing.

Sobriety is a primary focus of the VTC program. A lifestyle free of drugs & alcohol is very important in your treatment process. Throughout the course of the VTC Program you will not consume alcohol, drugs, or Non-treatment team approved narcotic medications. You must be prepared to provide a urine sample at each visit with Case Management. If you fail to provide a monitored urine sample, this will be considered a positive drug test. You must notify your treatment team of any prescription or over-the-counter medication or supplements prior to taking them, unless it is a medical emergency. All participants will be required to use a Secure Continuous Alcohol Monitoring (SCRAM) device.

4. Be on time to all appointments including court appearances.

If you are late for a court appearance, case management appointment, or VTC group session you may not be allowed to participate and will be considered non-compliant.

5. Home Visit Checks

Home visit checks are performed to ensure curfew is obeyed, alcohol & drugs are not present in the home, and that participants are living in a healthy environment. You as a participant need to address the Law Enforcement Official directly, "I was asleep" is not an option.

6. Travel Requests

If you need to make traveling arrangements, you will need to submit a travel request to your case manager no later than 2 weeks before your departure date. Requests for Curfew Extensions must be submitted 1 week in advance. Emergency situations will be handled on an individual basis.

Drug Testing

You will be tested for drug & alcohol use at random times throughout the entire treatment process. During Phase I, you may be tested a minimum of once weekly. As you progress through the phases of the program, you may be tested less frequently. The VTC team will have

access to all drug test results, including any failed test, and may order a drug test at any time. Relapse may occur in recovery, the VTC team understands this; however, a positive, altered or missed test may result in a court-imposed sanction. Tampering with any drug test may result in program termination. The VTC team will review your overall performance in the program; repeated offenses may result in progressively severe sanctions or termination from the program.

Treatment Procedures

The VTC team will assess what level of treatment will best meet your needs and recommend either outpatient, intensive outpatient or residential treatment if appropriate. If you are admitted to a residential treatment program, your treatment plan will include the requirements of that program. Upon release from a residential program, you will continue your participation in the program as directed by the Court and treatment team. If you are not admitted into a residential treatment program, you will participate in a multi-component, outpatient program developed with your Case Manager; which includes developing a treatment plan, drug testing, counseling, recovery support services, AMI Self-Help meetings, and working with your mentor. If you are eligible for VA services, you will be required to utilize the VA for your treatment needs. If you elect to not utilize VA services, alternate private services will be paid for out of

pocket by you, the Participant. If you are not eligible for VA services, you will be served by alternate means, provided by the Court.

Counseling

Counseling is comprised of two separate formats: individual & group. As part of your treatment plan, you will be required to participate in both types of counseling if it is appropriate. Together they are designed to develop self-awareness, self-discipline, and coping mechanisms necessary to maintain sobriety and overcome obstacles to personal growth. You may be required to attend additional treatment such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) groups, medical treatment, anger management, parenting, or any other intervention the treatment team recognizes as needed. Your attendance at both individual and group counseling sessions will be reported to the VTC team as part of your progress report. You must have prior permission from your case manager through the treatment team to be excused from any counseling sessions. You are required to attend VTC group session on Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. on your scheduled court date; you may count it towards your weekly requirements. VTC group session starts promptly at 11:00 a.m., if you are late you will not be allowed to attend and therefore reported absent/ noncompliant.

Active Minds Initiative (AMI) Self-Help

You will be required to attend Active Minds Initiative (AMI) Self-Help events. The frequency of required attendance is determined by your progress in the program and your phase level. Attendance is an important part of the process and not to be taken lightly. You must provide proof of attendance to your Case Manager at each Case Management meeting. Failure to document or to provide proof of attendance will lead to Court issued Sanction.

AMI Self-Help events will familiarize you with the philosophy of self-improvement effort and help you to create social bonds with others with similar life experiences. Your Case Manager will provide you with information regarding the type, time, and location of these events. Your Case Manager will also help you discover AMI Self-Help events in your community. It is imperative you work with your Case Manager, Physician, and your helping professionals throughout the course of the VTC Program to determine the best possible AMI Self-Helps for you.

For more information on Active Minds Initiative (AMI) Self-Helps see Page 21 of this Handbook.

Mentor Program

You will be assigned a volunteer veteran mentor from the community to support your efforts to create a better life. You will meet with your mentor, at a minimum, after every court appearance. The mentor is not part of the VTC Treatment Team. What you and your mentor

discuss is confidential unless there is reason to believe that you will cause harm to yourself or others. The mentor is there as moral support and to act as your life-line when you need help. Make sure you know how to contact your mentor at all times.

Court Phases

Veterans Treatment Court is a five-phase, highly-structured program, lasting for a minimum of 11 months. Individual progress will vary. Each phase consists of specified treatment objectives with specific requirements for advancement into the next phase. Requirements for advancement from each phase are described below.

Phase I - Treatment Plan Development

Length: Minimum of 60 days

In Phase I, You will be assigned a Case Manager & Mentor. Your needs will be assessed by the VTC team. Your progress will be closely monitored & reported to the VTC team. Requirements include:

- Participate in assessments in order to determine treatment needs. Course of treatment is individualized according to participant needs.
- Attend inpatient &/or outpatient rehab as directed.
- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team.
- Comply with additional case management requirements.

- Drug test once a week minimum and SCRAM Alcohol monitoring throughout phase. Immediate result drug tests may be used at the treatment team's discretion.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed by medical & mental health professionals.
- Attend a minimum of **Four** AMI Self-Help events per week.
- Report to Case Manager weekly.
- Required to attend VTC group sessions on Tuesday at 11:00 and 12:00 p.m.
- Research and identify a clean & sober hobby.
- Enroll in VA Healthcare System, if qualified.
- Attend weekly court appearances.
- Curfew is 8:00 p.m.

Advancement Criteria:

- No positive drug or alcohol test results (including missed, tampered or diluted tests) for 60 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from court appearances, case management appointments, AMI Self-Help meetings or any other appointment ordered by the court for 60 consecutive days.
- Non-narcotic medication taken as directed.
- Employment or productive use of time such as community service or school attendance. Weekly requirement is 10 hours community service if not engaged in full-time employment or school.
- Documentation of required minimum attendance of Four AMI Self-Help events for a minimum of 60 days.

- Must begin to develop a working relationship with Mentor.
- Complete Alcohol & Drug assessment and begin recommended treatment.
- Submit a written 5-year Plan and Phase II advancement essay.

Phase II - Ongoing Treatment

Length: Minimum of 90 days

In Phase II, Your treatment plan will be updated to identify ongoing treatment goals. Counseling and meetings will focus on areas that are challenging for you and will identify ways of coping with stressful situations. Phase II requirements include:

- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team.
- Comply with additional case management requirements as determined by the treatment team.
- Drug test as directed and SCRAM monitoring throughout the phase. Immediate result drug tests may be used at the treatment team's discretion.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed by medical & mental health professionals.
- Attend a minimum of **Three** AMI Self-Help events per week.
- Report to Case Manager weekly or as instructed.
- Maintain employment or engage in productive use of time such as community service & school attendance. Weekly requirement is 10 hours community service if not engaged in full-time employment or school.

- Formulate personal goals in conjunction with the treatment team such as vocational/educational counseling, psychotherapy, exercise, anger management, parenting skills.
- Obtain or make progress toward obtaining a driver license
- Attend court appearances every other week.
- Curfew is 9:00 p.m.

Phase II Advancement Criteria:

- No positive drug or alcohol test results (including missed, tampered or altered tests) for 90 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from court appearances, case management appointments, AMI Self-Help events or any other appointment ordered by the court for 90 consecutive days.
- Non-narcotic medication taken as directed.
- Employment or productive use of time such as community service or school attendance. Weekly requirement is 10 hours community service if not engaged in full-time employment or school.
- Demonstrate a positive adjustment to ongoing treatment.

Phase III – Stabilization/Mentoring

Length: Minimum of 90 days

Phase III will address ongoing recovery needs. The focus will be on daily living skills. This phase is designed to support you as a productive & responsible member of our community. Phase III requirements include:

- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team.
- Drug & alcohol test as directed. Immediate result drug tests used at the treatment team's discretion.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed by medical & mental health professionals.
- Attend a minimum of **Three** AMI Self-Help events per week.
- Report to Case Manager every other week.
- Maintain full-time employment &/or progress toward an educational goal. Weekly requirement is 10 hours community service if not engaged in full-time employment or school.
- Attend court appearances once every four weeks.
- Curfew is 10:00 p. m.

Phase III Advancement Criteria:

- No positive drug or alcohol test results (including missed, tampered or diluted tests) for 90 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from court appearances, case management appointments, AMI Self-Helps or any other appointment ordered by the court for 90 consecutive days.
- Non-narcotic medication taken as directed.
- Employment or productive use of time such as community service or school attendance. Weekly requirement is 10 hours community service if not engaged in full-time employment or school.

- Documentation of attendance at no fewer than Three AMI Self-Help events per week for a minimum of 90 days.
- Demonstrate a positive adjustment to ongoing treatment.
- Eligible for 30-day early advancement if no phase restarts or sanctions have been imposed.

Phase IV – Achievement/ VTC for Life Transition

Length: Minimum of 120 days

Phase IV will transition from the Veterans Treatment Court structure to a lifestyle more representative of what you will experience following phase IV completion. Phase IV requirements include:

- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed/instructed by the treatment team.
- Attend individual counseling sessions to complete an exit plan.
- Drug & alcohol testing on a random basis.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed by medical & mental health professionals.
- Attend a minimum of **Three** AMI Self-Help events per week.
- Report to case manager once every four weeks until completion ceremony.
- Maintain full-time employment &/or progress toward a vocational/educational goal. Weekly requirement is 10 hours community service if not engaged in full-time employment or school.

- Attend court appearances once every four weeks until completion ceremony.
- Curfew is 12:00 a. m.
- Prepare a VTC for Life transition speech.

Transition to VTC for Life (Phase V) Criteria:

- No positive drug or alcohol test results (including missed, tampered, or altered tests) for 120 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from court appearances, case management appointments, AMI Self-Helps or any other appointment ordered by the court for 120 consecutive days.
- Gainful employment or productive use of time including community service or school attendance. Weekly requirement is 10 hours community service if not engaged in full-time employment or school.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed.
- Maintain consistent attendance at all court appearances & appointments.
- Achievement of stable living arrangements & healthy interpersonal relationships.
- Designate an aftercare plan, which may include AMI Self-Help events, improvement of 5-year-plan, and attendance at a former residential program.
- Fulfillment of goals as stated in the individual treatment plan.

- Proof of attendance at all other events or courses as required by the VTC team.
- *Eligible for early advancement if no phase restarts or sanctions imposed. Must be within 30 days of scheduled transition to VTC for Life. *Participant must complete a minimum of 11 months.

Incentives

If you are in compliance during the program, the Veterans Treatment Court Judge may reward your positive progress with one or more of the following:

- Fun and Sober Events
- Applause/Praise from Judge & team
- Advancement to next phase
- Fewer court appearances
- Called first & leave early
- Adjust curfew
- Favorable resolution of case
- Phase V promotion ceremony

Sanctions and Self-Reporting

If you are not in compliance with VTC standards, the Veterans Treatment Court Judge may impose one or more of the following:

- Admonishment from the Judge
- Increased drug testing

- Increased frequency of court appearances
- Demotion to previous program phase
- Demotion to the beginning of current program phase
- Community Service
- Periods of incarceration
- Termination from VTC Program

All required documentations must be brought to every case management appointment. **For each time the participant does not bring in required documentations, he/she may spend a night in jail.**

Participants that violate the law or the VTC program rules must self-report within 24 hours or face enhanced penalties. Once admitted into VTC, new charges may be subject to recourse in the traditional legal system.

Driving on a Revoked License

If you do not have a valid driver's license, you must provide supporting documentation and be working to obtain one. If you are charged with driving on a revoked license, you will be sanctioned with 10 hours of public service work for each offense.

SCRAM Device Violations

1st offense- Additional 14 days of SCRAM Remote Breath device monitoring, with an additional 10 hours of Public Service to be logged within 2 weeks of sanction.

2nd offense- Serve 1 night in Jail and an additional 14 days of SCRAM Remote Breath monitoring.

3rd offense- Serve 3 nights in jail and placed on the SCRAM Remote Breath Monitor (RB) for a minimum of 60 additional days.

Social Services

Upon your entry into the Veterans Treatment Court program, your treatment team will assess your housing, transportation, family situation & general living needs. When appropriate, the team will refer you to local, state &/or county agencies for additional assistance.

Confidentiality

Your identity & privacy will be protected consistent with Federal Regulations & State laws. You will be asked to sign a waiver authorizing the transfer of information among all participating agencies. What is said in VTC is confidential & can't be used against a participant legally. As a participant in VTC group you agree to keep what is said in group confidential. What is said between the participant & their mentor is confidential.

Phase V: VTC for Life Promotion

Once you have successfully completed the criteria for each Phase, you will advance to the next level & eventually be a candidate for the alumni program known as Veterans Treatment Court for Life. You will submit a transition speech to your Case Manager in which you will discuss your progress toward the goals you initially set, & why you believe you are ready to transition. The final decision regarding advancement from each phase & transition to VTC for Life is determined solely by the Judge, assisted by input from the team. After the transition ceremony, your case will be resolved as agreed upon on your entry into VTC. Your family will be invited to join you as the VTC team and Community congratulate your accomplishment.

Phase V Promotion Ceremony

The promotion ceremony is conducted in the Division I courtroom. Attendance is mandatory and the attire is at a minimum khakis or nice (no holes) jeans and a collared shirt. Notify the VTC staff if there is a problem meeting the minimum dress requirement. The promotion ceremony is a time to celebrate your success and to allow others in earlier stages to become encouraged as well as motivated to succeed.

VTC for Life (Phase V)

Upon successful completion of Phases I through IV of the VTC Program, you will be granted membership in VTC for Life. Membership in the VTC for Life program assures the resources and access to events granted to VTC participants remain available to you for the rest of your days. The Veterans Treatment Court Team and Staff understand that your future can become a difficult journey. This understanding assures that you, as an alumni of our program, retain all of the support we can give to remain successful in accomplishing your life goals. (See Page 22)

Conclusion

The Veterans Treatment Court program is designed to help you live in your community as a productive & responsible citizen. The Judge, & the VTC Team will guide & assist you, but the final responsibility is yours. You must be committed to a better life.



Active Minds Initiative

Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court

As part of the VTC program requirements each participant must document a certain number of self-helps. A self-help is defined as an activity that improves well-being based off of specific needs. This activity must be approved by a case manager and must be able to be documented.

Self-helps vary from person to person. Many factors come into play when determining an appropriate self-help such as: mental and physical needs, work schedule, relationships, interests, and more. For example, some may focus their self-helps on physical needs such as physical therapy, fitness, acupuncture, or other activities that benefit physical well-being. On the other hand, some may need to improve personal relationships. That person would find self-helps such as couples counseling, family development, or activities that help with social skills. As a person grows and changes throughout the program they may find that their needs have changed. In which case they would identify new self-helps with the guidance of their case manager.

“Many factors come into play when determining an appropriate self-help”

“We want to point focus toward the needs of individuals, not the average needs of their peers.”

We understand that we have a diverse group of people involved in the VTC. That is why we want to encourage each one to find what works for them. Welcome to the Active Minds Initiative (AMI). AMI encourages VTC participants to identify, and actively participate in, a self-help activity, build on it, and celebrate the rewards of personal growth. We want to point focus toward the needs of individuals, not the average needs of their peers. AMI will be adjusted constantly throughout the program as the participant's needs change.

Self-Helps that fit the AMI standard answer the following questions:

1. AMI doing something that is positive?
2. AMI doing something that benefits me mentally/physically?
3. AMI involved in an activity that helps me reach my personal goals?
4. AMI involved in an activity that meets VTC requirements?

VTC for LIFE (Phase V)

Phase V Is NOT the end.

VTC for LIFE is an alumni program for graduated participants of the Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court. It serves as a reminder that sobriety and battle buddies last a lifetime. The alumni program is a continuous after care option. Alumni meet for group, special events, and in support of current VTC participants. Members are encouraged to serve as Mentors and help with VTC activities.

Upon final transition to Phase V, participants are immediately inducted into the VTC for Life Alumni. While membership is automatic, participation is optional. It is understood that when people complete the VTC program, they continue on with their own life. Although, should they ever feel the need, the VTC for Life Alumni have their doors open.

Leadership

Be a positive example to your peers as your actions impact the lives of those around you. Do not expect the world to change if you are not willing to do so yourself.

Integrity

Stand strong for your morals and values. Being honest, courteous, and expect the same from the people you surround yourself with.

Fortitude

Do not dwell on your own situation in difficult times. Stand strong because your attitude can be your biggest asset. Push forward, don't quit.

Empowerment

Take ownership of your shortcomings and take pride in your strengths. Accept who you were and who you are and look forward to new possibilities.

Alumni Activities

- Monthly group meetings, exclusive to alumni
- Sponsorship of Phase I participants
- Discussion boards for program development
- Awareness efforts for PTSD/TBI/Sub Abuse
- Support for VTC Phase V transitions and events
- Open invitation to VTC Group and Skills for Life
- Open invitation to visit with case managers