

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
OF
BUTLER COUNTY



VETERANS TREATMENT COURT
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL
Established January 1, 201
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WHAT IS Veteran Treatment Court?

Butler County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) was started in 2012 to address the growing number of Veterans involved in the criminal justice system. VTC promotes sobriety, recovery, and stability through a coordinated response involving Butler County's Judges, Court Administration, District Attorney, Public Defender, Adult Probation, Butler County Prison, County Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, there are veteran volunteers, some of whom serve on the Treatment Team and others who serve as Mentors. The goal is to give each program participant the best possible chance of getting back on track as a healthy, productive Veteran and citizen.

Just as every Veteran is different, so is every criminal proceeding. There are some individuals who may not be able to participate in this program. Applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. VTC has no additional costs for the County or the program participants. We hope to offer our Veterans access to needed services, an opportunity to address their justice-related issues and a chance to get "squared-away."

VETERAN TREATMENT COURT MISSION STATEMENT

To promote public safety and reduce recidivism in a cost-effective way by providing veteran offenders with intensive court supervision and a comprehensive, Veterans Administration driven treatment program.

WHAT IS A VETERAN MENTOR?

The Veterans peer-to-peer mentoring program is an integral part of VTC. The ability to speak with a fellow Veteran who has "been there" offers VTC participants an informal way to ask questions, solicit feedback and discuss how they are feeling about their situation. Mentors are Court-trained volunteers, who have served in the US Military (including Guard and Reserves), and are assigned by Butler VTC to work with a specific Veteran as he or she progresses through their involvement with the Court. Mentors serve as liaison, advocate and guide to fellow Veterans as they work to address issues related to their criminal case.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT MENTOR PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

VTC Mentors support veterans in readjusting to civilian life, assist veterans in navigating through the court, treatment, and VA systems, and act as a friend and ally through this difficult time.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT MENTOR PROGRAM VISION STATEMENT

The motto of the Mentor Program is that no one is left behind. Mentors are paired with a veteran to provide support as they work through the VTC program. Mentors are present as an ally and friend to assist veterans through this difficult time. The shared experiences of the Mentors and veterans are critical in assisting the veterans regain control of their lives and successfully connect to and maintain treatment, leading to successful completion of the Butler County VTC Program.

GOALS

Goal 1: Improve Public Safety

- Establish frequent and more intensive court supervision
- Require offenders to receive more immediate sanctions when they violate court orders
- Reduce participant contact with the criminal justice system
- Conduct educational/informational meetings with community leaders

Goal 2: Reduce Criminal Recidivism

- Provide treatment based, judicially supervised program to facilitate services through the VA
- Use a holistic approach to support recovery
- Connect offenders with VA programs and ancillary services
- Identify and treat underlying issues including Post Traumatic Stress, mental health, or substance use disorder

Goal 3: Improve Quality of Veterans' Lives

- Increase employment among veterans
- Encourage reintegration into society
- Connect offenders with other members of the veteran community
- Improve familial relationship

Goal 4: Connect Veterans with Pre-Existing Services

- Assess veteran's eligibility for VA benefits and services
- Improve access to VA benefits and services
- Develop relationships with the offender and their veteran mentor and other community members and veterans
- Increase offender's knowledge about what services are available to participants through the VA

Goal 5: Reduce Costs

- Reduce costs associated with incarceration
- Connect offenders with VA services that do not require additional county funding
- Lower costs associated with criminal case processing and re-arrest
- Promote economic self-sufficiency among participants
- Require payment of participant's fines, costs, and restitution

TEN KEY COMPONENTS

Butler VTC has adopted the Ten Key Components designed and utilized by Buffalo New York's VTC. Buffalo implemented the first VTC 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: VTC will integrate substance abuse disorder treatment and mental health services with justice system case processing

VTC promotes sobriety, recovery and stability through a coordinated response to veteran's substance use disorder 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/Veteran's Administration, veterans and veterans 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 veterans' 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 VTC program

Early identification of veterans entering the criminal justice system is an integral part of the process of placement in the VTC 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: VTC provide access to a continuum of substance use disorder, mental health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services

While primarily concerned with criminal activity, substance use disorder and mental illness, the VTC 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 VTC team. Ongoing veteran peer mentors interaction with the VTC 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 VTC responses to participants' compliance

A veteran's progress through the treatment court experience is measured by his or her compliance with the treatment regimen. VTC rewards cooperation and sanctions noncompliance. VTC 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 VTC 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 Veteran's Court planning, implementation, and operations

All VTC 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 Veteran’s Court, Veteran’s Administration, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances Veteran’s Court effectiveness

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

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT UNDERSTANDING OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The VTC Team Members discuss client cases at the weekly VTC Team Meeting that is comprised of a Judge, Assistant District Attorney (ADA), Public Defender (PD), Adult Probation Officer (PO), Veteran Justice Outreach(VJO) Coordinator & Specialist, Veteran Mentor Coordinator, Adult Probation-Specialty Courts Coordinator (SCC), Human Services, Forensic Services Manager and Prison Representative. Each member of the team will play an important role in helping you to succeed.

VTC Judge: The Honorable Timothy McCune, Judge (2012)

The Fiftieth Judicial District of Common Pleas agrees to provide a Judge who will preside over the VTC. The VTC Judge is responsible for adhering to the Butler County Pennsylvania, VTC rules and all revisions to the rules with special consideration being given to the promulgation of any community-based rules deemed necessary for the success of Butler County’s VTC. As a member of the Butler County VTC, the assigned Judge will actively participate in staffing of cases; preside over the court proceedings and monitor application of disciplines, sanctions and incentives while maintaining the integrity of the Court.

Assistant District Attorney (ADA): Robert Zanella (2018)

As a member of the Butler County VTC Team, the assigned Assistant District Attorney (ADA) will review all potential participants for eligibility, actively participate in staffing of cases, and interact in a positive manner to address pleas and application of sanctions and incentives as they apply to the participant. Additionally, prior to a defendant’s plea into the program, the ADA will determine what appropriate misdemeanor or felony offense will reduce upon the defendant’s graduation from VTC. The ADA attends all client staffing and judicial reviews.

Public Defender (PD): Kimberly Hudak (2021)

As a member of the Butler County VTC Team, the assigned Public Defender will complete orientations on all defendants accepted into the program and actively participate in staffing of cases to address pleas and application of sanctions and incentives as they apply to the participant. In addition, will attend Court sessions and ensure the offenders’ legal rights are appropriately protected. The PD attends all client staffing and judicial reviews.

Adult Probation and Parole Officer (PO): Tammy Courson (2014)

As a member of the Butler County VTC Team, the assigned officer will monitor accountability of social activities and home environment of all participants, as well as maintain up to date records on each participant. In addition, provide frequent and random drug testing and make recommendations to the Court as to the appropriate sanctions and incentives. The Officer shall supervise participants in VTC, as well as the graduates of the program. The PO attends all client staffing and judicial reviews.

Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator & Specialist (VJO): Christina Beaver (2016) & Kelly Fulmer (2012)

VA is making a system-wide effort to ensure access to services for the justice-involved Veteran population at risk for homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness, and physical health problems. The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program was created to provide timely access to VA services for eligible justice-involved Veterans to avoid unnecessary criminalization and incarceration of Veteran offenders with mental illness. The VJO attends all client staffing and judicial reviews.

Mentor Coordinator: Steve Todd, Esquire, Col., US Army, Ret. (2012)

Essential to the coordination, maintenance and success of the mentoring program is the Mentor Coordinator. Their role is to recruit, organize and schedule trainings, supervise, and coordinate Mentors within the VTC Program. The Mentor Coordinator will also be responsible for individual and group supervision as well as scheduling mentors to be present during the VTC proceedings. The Mentor Coordinator attends all client staffing and judicial reviews.

Adult Probation Department-Specialty Courts Coordinator (SCC): Holly Hines (2015)

As a member of the Butler County VTC Team, the assigned coordinator is responsible for the administration, management and coordination of problem-solving court services and operations. This includes: overseeing problem-solving court staff activities, ensuring the court's compliance with best practices, developing/editing problem-solving court policies and procedures, managing provider contracts and team member memoranda of understanding, facilitating team meetings and serving as a liaison to local service providers and community groups. Attend weekly staffing and Court sessions to take meeting minutes and complete data entry.

Forensic Services Manager: Tara Hamilton (2017)

The Forensic Services Manager assures the access to a continuum of Behavioral Health related treatment and rehabilitation services. They also assure the use of effective screening and assessment tools to ensure placement of the most appropriate offenders in the treatment court. The Forensic Services Manager recommends and reviews evidence based treatment modalities and attends all client staffing and judicial reviews.

Prison Representative: Justin Baptiste (2015)

The Prison Representative provides for the care, custody and control of all VTC individuals who have been incarcerated due to sanctions or as part of the mandatory restriction in sentencing. The Prison Representative attends all client staffing and judicial reviews.

Peer Support Specialist: Eric Walker, United States Marine Corps (2020)

As a member of the Butler County VTC Team, the assigned specialist is responsible for participating in and leading support sessions with VTC participants assigned by the Judge. They are to be supportive and understanding of the difficulties returning veterans are facing and aid the participants as much as possible to ameliorate their concerns around Court procedures. Specialist may coach veteran participants toward access and navigation of the Butler Veteran Affairs Systems.

NOTE: Each team member will be responsible for dissemination of information to their respective agency with regard to confidentiality laws that apply specifically to the VTC participants. Likewise, the sharing of information between team members is a vital part of working as a team. Team members will also be charged with the education of peer professional on the program community linkage’s which enhance the effectiveness of the program.

In creating this partnership and uniting in a single goal of addressing our community, we pledge to enhance communication between the courts, law enforcement and treatment programs. Through this linkage of services, we expect wider participation and greater effectiveness in addressing clients with substance use disorder and/or mental health issues that are involved in the Criminal Justice System.

Note: These policies and procedures may be amended at any time.

TARGET POPULATION

The Butler County VTC targets high-risk/high-needs non-violent offenders when there is a reasonable assumption that the offender’s criminal activity is connected directly to the ongoing, chronic, and habitual use of substances and/or the ongoing instability of a mental health disorder. Without intervention, it is likely that criteria-eligible offenders will continue to commit crime, re-enter the criminal justice system, and be exposed to long-term incarceration or other negative consequences that often result from traditional, less resource-intensive approach to case disposition.

Typically, individuals enrolled in a Treatment Court will have social histories hallmarked by prior contacts with law enforcement, previous exposure to substance abuse disorder or mental health treatments, and a history of relapse. The Butler County VTC program targets offender who require more intensive focus on treatment, monitoring, and judicial intervention.

Through effective interventions Butler Veteran Affairs and/or through County substance use disorder and mental health treatment, the VTC program strives to transition veterans

participants from addicted and unstable person to productive citizens capable of meeting daily life challenges and stressors.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS

Screening for entrance into the program will be available to those defendants who are detained at the Butler County Prison, currently on pre-trial supervision, currently on probation supervision, and/or are awaiting preliminary hearing before a Magisterial District Justice or awaiting Formal Arraignment for an eligible criminal offense. The following criteria have been established to identify persons who may qualify for admission to the Butler VTC:

- Offender is either a current member in good standing of any branch of the military, including the National Guard or Reserves, or is a former member of any branch of the military, including the National Guard or Reserves who was not dishonorably discharged. Form DD214 must be provided as soon as possible, but in no event longer than thirty (30) days.
- Offender is eligible for benefits through the VA. Assistance with determining eligibility will be provided.
- Offender must have transportation to Butler County and be 18 years of age or older.
- Must meet **one** of the following clinical criteria: PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury), MST (Military Sexual Trauma), Substance Use Disorder, and 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.
- Veterans with co-occurring disorders (mental health and substance use) will be evaluated for VTC if they otherwise meet the eligibility criteria, but may be referred to Drug Treatment Court or Behavioral Health Court if determined more appropriate, or rejected if those issues/disorders would prohibit satisfactory completion of any VTC sentence/program.
- Offender **voluntarily** agrees to participate in and be subject to the rules, regulations and sanctions of VTC.

EXCLUSIONARY FACTORS FOR VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Offenders are considered ineligible if there are any unresolved out of county and/or out of state charges. It is the responsibility of the offender's counsel to resolve any pending out of county and out of state charges or state parole violations before the offender can be accepted into VTC.

Butler County VTC values the opinion of crime victims. Victims of crimes will be consulted for their opinion of diverting offenders into VTC at the discretion of the Butler County District Attorney's Office. Crimes involving physical violence towards another person may prevent admission into VTC if the crime victim does not consent to the offender's participation.

Butler County VTC will review the offenses pertaining to each referral made to the program. Certain offenses are excluded from the program; other offenses are **typically** excluded from the program. The following guidelines are in place with regard to ineligible offenses:

- Murder and Manslaughter **will not** be considered under any circumstances
- All sex offenses under 18 Pa.C.S.A. Chapter 31 **will not** be considered under any circumstances with the following exceptions: Indecent Exposure and Open Lewdness may be considered on an individual basis at the discretion of the District Attorney's Office
- Persons who are classified as "violent offenders" under Federal Guidelines. "Violent Offender" is defined as: a person who is charged with or convicted of an offense during the course of which:
 1. The person carried, possessed, or used a firearm or other dangerous weapon; **OR**
 2. There occurred the use of force against the person of another; **OR**
 3. There occurred the death of, or serious bodily injury to any person without regard to whether any of the circumstances described above was an element of the offense or conduct of which or for which the person was charged or convicted; **OR**
 4. If the offender has one or more convictions of a felony crime of violence involving the use or attempted use of force against a person with the intent to cause death or serious bodily harm **will not be considered.**
- Crimes committed with a firearm **will not** be considered under any circumstances
- Aggravated Assault as defined in 18 Pa.C.S.A. Section 2702(a)(1) or (2)
- Robbery as defined in 18 Pa.C.S.A. Section 3701(a)(1)(i),(ii) or (iii)
- Robbery of Motor Vehicle as defined in 18 Pa.C.S.A. Section 3702
- Kidnapping as defined in 18 Pa.C.S.A. Section 2901
- An attempt, conspiracy, or solicitation to commit murder or any of the above listed offenses
- Other crimes that include a threat and/or violence against another individual not listed as a mandatory exclusion may be considered on an individual case basis at the discretion of the District Attorney's Office

Offenses that are typically excluded from VTC may be referred under the following circumstances with eligibility being at the discretion of the District Attorney's Office:

- An explanation of mitigating circumstances pertaining to the offense itself is provided with the referral
- The victim(s) must consent to the offender entering the program. The District Attorney's Office will ascertain the victim's consent.
- VTC will also consider an offender's prior record when determining eligibility. A record of excluded offenses will not result in immediate dismissal of referral; however, may be considered as an exclusionary factor at the discretion of the District Attorney's Office.

PROCEDURE FOR NEW CHARGES & PROBATION/PAROLE

1. Someone tentatively identifies Defendant as a veteran.
 - a. Referrals may originate from, ***but are not limited to***, the following sources: **Police Officers, Magisterial District Judges, Public Defenders, and Private Attorneys, Probation Officers, District Attorney, Judges, and Self.**
2. Defendant along with their **defense counsel** fills out the VTC Referral form.
 - a. When submitting the VTC Referral, the following documents must be included in the referral packet:
 - Specialty Court Referral
 - Release of Information for the Butler County Specialty Court Team(s)
 - Release of Information for Department of Veterans Affairs
 - The most updated referral packets, policy manuals, handbooks may be obtained by visiting the Butler County Adult Probation website, or by contacting the Specialty Courts Coordinator at (724) 284-5265.
 - Must provide form DD214 within 30 days of VTC Referral.
 - b. Defense Counsel forwards completed VTC Referral to the SCC
3. SCC forwards the VTC Referral to:
 - a. PO for initial eligibility screening, risk needs assessment (LS-CMI), report and entry into the Pennsylvania Problem-Solving Adult & Juvenile Court Information System (PAJCIS)
 - b. VJO for VA Eligibility status and to complete initial eligibility screening, report and entry into PAJCIS.
4. SCC informs ADA that initial screening of referral is complete and ready for review in PAJCIS:
 - a. ADA completes the initial review of charges
 - b. Reviews the PO assessment & report
 - c. Reviews VA eligibility, VA 90 day treatment plan & report
 - d. After review ADA makes a decision of approve or reject
5. If referral is approved by ADA:
 - a. PO schedules defendant to attend and observe one VTC session.
 - b. Judge issues a Scheduling Order requiring defendant to appear on the next or the next several Status Conference dates in Courtroom 4. This is to provide the opportunity for counsel and defendant to reach a plea agreement.
 - c. If referral is rejected by ADA:
 - i. ADA notifies defendant's attorney and includes reason as to why defendant was rejected.
6. ADA or defense counsel notifies SCC that a plea agreement has been reached.

7. Judge schedules defendant and defense counsel to appear at the next VTC session and requests a Mentor from the Mentor Coordinator.
8. Prior to the VTC session, Defendant meets with defense counsel, PO and VA for discussion of the VTC program, the treatment/supervision plan and the plea agreement. The defendant executes the plea agreement, the colloquy and the Participant Contract.
9. Defendant and defense counsel appear at VTC for entry of the plea and formal entry into the VTC program.

All required forms must be submitted to the Specialty Courts Coordinator within 72 hours (3 business days) upon signing. Failure to complete the necessary forms may delay the review and/or acceptance of the referral into the program.

RECONSIDERATION POLICY

*****Reconsideration must be filed within 30 days of initial rejection*****

If a relevant party to the offender's case (attorney, judge, treatment provider, police officer, etc.) feels the VTC Team failed to consider a particularly important factor, he/she may fill out a request for the case to be reconsidered. ***An offender may file for reconsideration one time and must be within 30 days of initial rejection.***

A reconsideration form must be filled out and submitted to the SCC. The request must include supportive reasoning for reconsideration. Supportive reasoning is defined as A reconsideration form must be filled out and submitted to the SCC. The request must include supportive reasoning for reconsideration. Supportive reasoning is defined as mitigating circumstances pertaining to the crime, psychiatric/ psychological reports that may not have been available for the initial consideration, or any other relevant information that can be placed in written format.

Once the request for reconsideration is submitted, the Specialty Courts Coordinator will forward the information to the District Attorney's Office. **The District Attorney's decision will be final.**

PROGRAM LENGTH

The expected length of participation in the VTC Program is 12 months. However, this will depend on the participant's ability to achieve program goals. Some participants will complete the program in 12 months, while others will need more than 18 months. The team reserves the right to review anyone's case that exceeds 24 months and decide if the participant remains appropriate for the program.

ASSESSMENTS AND TREATMENT

All eligible participants will receive substance use disorder and mental health services through the Veterans Affairs (VA) office in Butler, PA if applicable. If an appropriate level

of treatment is not available at the VA, the participant will be required to participate in recommended community-based treatment. A VJO will be assigned to the Butler County VTC Program. Each participant will meet with the VJO for an initial eligibility screening. Once the screening is complete, the participant will be placed into appropriate services. The VTC Team will receive regular updates from the VJO to the participant's progress in treatment. The Butler County VTC team will make a collaborative effort to provide any and all services that are needed for the participant to obtain their treatment goals.

SUPERVISION

VTC requires intensive supervision. In the beginning, participants are required to have at least three (3) contacts a week. The Probation Officer is required to verify employment, attendance of peer support, AA/NA or other self-help program meetings, attendance at counseling, interaction with sponsor, payment of financial obligations, and abstinence of drug use (via drug testing). The initial appointment is somewhat longer than every other appointment because of the completion of required paperwork.

Participants are required to provide proof of employment by providing a written letter of their employer as directed by Probation Officer. Participants must also provide proof of meeting attendance by showing their meeting sheets and proof of payments by showing receipts. Treatment providers will fax general progress forms to verify attendance of counseling. The Probation Officer is also expected to make sure participants follow through with all Court orders or agreements. Referring of participants to outside agencies for support in their recovery is another component included under supervision. Supervision requirements are specific to each phase of the program.

SPECIALTY COURT TEAM

Team Meeting

The VTC Team shall meet once weekly at twelve o'clock noon, prior to Court session or as otherwise scheduled. During these meetings the team will discuss the progress of those participants scheduled to appear in Court that week. Problem areas will be discussed and alterations in case management and treatment plans will also be addressed. Additionally, at this time, sanctions and incentives will be determined. The VTC team will also discuss any problem cases that are not in Court the week of the team meeting. Lastly, the VTC Team will review the pending client list.

New VTC Team Members

All new team members are required to complete the *Butler County VTC New Staff Orientation* form. This includes several trainings on Best Practices of VTC: Team Member Roles, Essential Elements of Adult Drug Courts online training through the National Drug Court Institute (NDCI), etc. Once completed The VTC New Staffing Training Guide will be submitted back to the SCC to log the completed training(s). In addition they must also complete their 6 hours of yearly training in at least one of the following disciplines: Treatment Courts, Recovery/Addiction, Illicit/Prescription Drugs, Alcohol, Ethics, Cultural Diversity, or Ten Key Components of VTC. Training hours will be kept by the SCC.

DATA COLLECTION

The program realizes the need to measure the programs performance outcomes by utilizing the Problem-Solving Adult and Juvenile Court Information System (PAJCIS) to measure and to monitor the success and failures of program initiatives and objectives, and to give insight as to any necessary program modifications and implementations. Currently the program measures: ethnicity, gender, marital status, employment, education, community service, terminations, successful offenders, violations (new arrest and technical), and withdrawals, admissions, urinalysis, officer contacts and field work, risk and needs evaluations, incarceration days saved, and offenders in program phases. The SCC schedules semiannual meetings outside of VTC Team Meetings to review Policies & Procedures and program data.

VTC TEAM-PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between team members and participants will be professional, with all interactions based on adopted county standards of professional conduct. Team members will always maintain professional and objective personal conduct between himself/herself and the participant's family and close associates. VTC Team Members should have a personal concern within the bounds of their professional responsibilities, so as to safeguard the welfare of the participant both during and after enrollment in VTC. VTC Team Members are prohibited from developing personal obligations with participants including: sexual or romantic relationships, employment of clients or engaging in business relationships with clients who are active in VTC. The relationship with participants should never include behaviors on the part of the VTC Team Member which would be abusive or damaging to the participant. VTC Team Members must disclose pre-existing social ties or relationships with a participant prior to the individual's placement into VTC.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS

In order to ensure that each VTC Participant has the optimal opportunity to succeed, each participant's primary focus shall be on his/her recovery. Support, particularly support from other VTC participants, is a vital component of recovery. However, personal relationships that go beyond support of recovery, such as dating and/or sexual relationships, are prohibited. This also includes all other Specialty Court participants. If there is in fact a relationship that's not going to change, specific guidelines will be discussed between the Specialty Court Teams.

In Phase 1 and 2, intimate personal relationships outside of VTC are also strongly discouraged as these relationships are detrimental to recovery. Participants' focus must remain on recovery and healing of oneself.

In Phase 3 and 4, if a participant is stable in his/her recovery, VTC wants to be able to facilitate healthy personal relationships. Therefore, VTC will utilize any and all available services (such as, but not limited to, counseling, health classes), that will help participants maintain healthy personal relationships.

Participants are also ***prohibited*** from the ***lending*** and ***borrowing of money*** to and from other VTC participants.

Inappropriate relationships will result in sanctions as the VTC determines which includes the possibility of termination.

VTC SESSIONS

VTC sessions will be held bi-weekly in open court to monitor the participants' compliance, progress, and participation in the VTC program. The Court will review with the participant his/her progress leading to that week's court appearance. At this time, any alterations to case management and treatment plans will be reviewed with participant. Also, incentives and sanctions will be distributed during VTC sessions.

Court sessions will be held on Wednesdays bi-weekly, at 1:00 p.m., in Courtroom No. 4. In the event Courtroom No. 4 is not available we will hold Court session in an alternate location on the fourth floor, Jury Assembly Room.

VTC PHASES

There are four phases of the VTC Program. Each phase is designed to be completed in a minimum of three months. Within each phase there are various requirements that each participant must complete prior to advancing to the next phase. The Probation Office will make the initial recommendation for the offender to move to the next phase. The VTC Team will make the final decision for advancement.

RECOVERY AND PHASE ADVANCEMENT

VTC Recovery and Phase is intended to be completed by the VTC participants with the aid of their VA counselors, VA Mentors, sponsors or support person and integrated as part of the phase advancement application process for VTC Participants.

The VTC Probation Officer or other designated court-appointed supervision officer will be responsible for collecting the completed assignments, checking them to make sure the veterans put thought and effort into the assignments and keeping copies of the assignments on file. The Team will review the information as part of the process of promoting veterans from phase to phase. The veteran should also keep a copy as a reference to help keep them on track.

Ideally, the veterans would do these assignments with their VA counselors in Phase #1, with their Veteran Mentor or sponsor in Phase #2, and with any person considered to be part of their support team in Phases #3 and #4.

The veterans will add to and fine-tune these assignments every time they phase advance. In addition, each graduate will be required to add to and fine-tune the assignments again prior to concluding their Aftercare Program.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Each Veteran must complete thirty (30) hours of approved community service in each of the four Phases, for a total of 120 hours.

The Adult Probation office has existing community service programs in place. These programs should be used and a report given to the PO, Tammy Courson.

In order to advance to the next Phase the required community service hours must be completed.

Community Giveback Project

The Community Giveback Project (CGP) is a program that requires VTC participants to provide unpaid work that is aimed at giving something back to the local communities and repay the community for the wrongs they have done, in a positive way. The CGP is not merely the completion of community service hours, but rather a project that is chosen by one or more VTC participants to contribute their skills and/or labor to help improve the community.

CGPs must be directed to assisting the **non-profit** community in Butler County, PA. Participants must contact the agency of their choosing to confirm if their services are needed prior to submission of their proposal. All CGPs must be approved by the VTC Team prior to starting. After completion of the CGP, the participant must submit a **CGP Assignment** to their PO. The assignment should include: where they completed their CGP, their contribution to the project, and describe the positives they got out of it as well as the community after completion. The VTC Team will review and approve the assignment.

The CGP must include a **minimum of 30 hours** over the course of the phases of VTC. If a participant is unemployed, and are in Phase II or later, they will be required to complete a minimum of **15 additional hours** towards their project per week until they gain employment or enroll in an education program.

Community service hours imposed as the result of a sanction **cannot** be completed as part of the CGP.

PHASE I Requirements
(Minimum 3 months)

- Actively participate in probation supervision plan as developed by your PO.
- Actively participate in medical 90 day treatment plan and follow treatment recommendations as set up by VJO and Treatment Team.
- Consistently attend established/approved support groups (AA) as directed.
- Attend VTC sessions as directed.
- Attend other VTC classes, appointments or functions as directed. (Employment, housing, finance, driver's license, wellness, etc.)
- Determine amount of fines/costs/restitution with PO.
(If receiving income, establish payment plan and begin making payments.)
- A minimum of two Probation Officer contacts per week is required. Contact method at PO discretion.
- Complete the Workbook Phase I assignments and any additional assignments as directed.
- Complete thirty (30) hours of Community Service.
- Take DD214 and meet with John Cyprian; record DD214.
- Communicate with Mentor as directed.
- Comply with ALL weekly drug testing (minimum of 2).
- Ninety (90) consecutive days of sobriety.

PHASE II Requirements
(Minimum 3 months)

- Actively participate in probation supervision plan as developed by your PO.
- Actively participate in medical 90 day treatment plan and follow treatment recommendations as set up by VJO and Treatment Team.
- Consistently attend established/approved support groups (AA) as directed.
- Attend VTC sessions as directed.
- Attend other VTC classes, appointments or functions as directed. (Employment, housing, finance, driver's license, wellness, etc.)
- Obtain full-time employment, begin full time student status or an approved combination. (If applying for and/or receiving full time disability additional Community Service hours, as determined by the Team, must be completed.)
- Obtain stable housing.
- Meet with PO to determine status of driver's license.
- Continue payment plan of fines/costs/restitution.
- A minimum of one Probation Officer contact per week is required. Contact method at PO discretion.
- Complete the Workbook Phase II assignments and any additional assignments as directed.
- Complete thirty (30) hours of Community Service.
- Maintain contact with Mentor as directed.
- Comply with ALL weekly drug testing (minimum of 2).
- Ninety (90) consecutive days of sobriety.

PHASE III Requirements
(Minimum 3 months)

- Actively participate in probation supervision plan as developed by your PO.
- Actively participate in medical 90 day treatment plan and follow treatment recommendations as set up by VJO and Treatment Team.
- Consistently attend established/approved support groups (AA) as directed.
- Attend VTC sessions as directed.
- Attend other VTC classes, appointments or functions as directed. (Employment, housing, finance, driver's license, wellness, etc.)
- Maintain full-time employment, full time student status or an approved combination. (If applying for and/or receiving full time disability additional Community Service hours, as determined by the Team, must be completed.)
- Maintain stable housing.
- Review status of driver's license with PO.
- Continue payment plan of fines/costs/restitution.
- A minimum of one Probation Officer contact per week is required. Contact method at PO discretion.
- Complete the Workbook Phase III assignments and any additional assignments as directed.
- Complete thirty (30) hours of Community Service.
- Maintain contact with Mentor as directed.
- Comply with ALL weekly drug testing (minimum of 2).
- Ninety (90) consecutive days of sobriety.

PHASE IV Requirements
(Minimum 3 months)

- Actively participate in probation supervision plan as developed by your PO.
- Actively participate in medical 90 day treatment plan and follow treatment recommendations as set up by VJO and Treatment Team.
- Consistently attend established/approved support groups (AA) as directed.
- Attend VTC sessions as directed.
- Attend other VTC classes, appointments or functions as directed. (Employment, housing, finance, driver's license, wellness, etc.)
- Maintain full-time employment, full time student status or an approved combination. (If applying for and/or receiving full time disability additional Community Service hours, as determined by the Team, must be completed.)
- Maintain stable housing.
- Review status of driver's license with PO.
- Continue payment plan of fines/costs/restitution.
- A minimum of one Probation Officer contact per week is required. Contact method at PO discretion.
- Complete the Workbook Phase IV assignments and any additional assignments as directed.
- Complete the Graduation Assignment.
- Complete thirty (30) hours of Community Service.
- Maintain contact with Mentor as directed.
- Comply with ALL weekly drug testing (minimum of 2).
- Ninety (90) consecutive days of sobriety; no new arrests for 90 days.

TERMINATION

Participants who refuse or who are unable to comply with any program goal(s) or who have become a supervision risk will be terminated from the VTC Program.

Termination decisions are based on individual criteria including, but not limited to: Client's failure to response to treatment requirements, attend meetings, seek employment, complete community service, and pay any cost, fines and/or restitution. In addition, the VTC Team may consider the clients' **honesty** while in the program, the number of attempts at treatment, and whether the team has exhausted all options.

If the VTC Team recommends termination the participant shall be given written notice of violation. The court shall schedule a termination hearing.

The court shall put the participant on notice that each probation violation, including missed appointments (up to and including but not only with Probation Officer, VJO Group, VA Treatment services and/or community treatment services), and positive drug tests, may result in jail time. (*further explanation available under Drug Testing heading).

GRADUATION

Participants, who have achieved program goals, paid their restitution in full, remained substance free continuously for the minimum prescribed time and who have been in the program for at least one year are eligible for graduation. This is recognized as a very important event. Graduation ceremonies are only held twice a year. Friends and family are invited to join the VTC Team in congratulating the participants on their success. All participants are required to attend, unless excused from attendance. The VTC Team reserves the right to add or cancel any commencement ceremony based on the amount of participants who are eligible.

INCENTIVES, THERAPEUTIC ADJUSTMENTS AND SANCTIONS

INCENTIVES

Participants who comply with program requirements (supervision, treatment, urinalysis, etc.) will be rewarded through the imposition of incentives. Incentives are including, but are not limited to:

1. Birthday Card
2. Candy
3. Journals
4. Calendars/Planners
5. Toiletries
6. Hand shake from the Judge
7. Verbal Praise from the Judge
8. Later Curfews
9. Travel Privileges

10. Removal from House Arrest
11. Permission to leave court early
12. Inspirational Sayings
13. Round of applause in court
14. Gift cards when moving phases
15. Permission to attend AA/ NA supported outings

THERAPEUTIC ADJUSTMENTS

Therapeutic adjustments (NOT sanctions) are used when a participant is not responding to treatment interventions but is otherwise in compliance with program requirements. Participants are not terminated from the program for substance use if they are otherwise compliant with program requirements. Therapeutic Adjustments may include, but are not limited to:

1. Increased peer support, AA/NA and/or self-help meetings
2. Increase in urine testing and use of alcohol monitoring devices
3. Completion of workbook/assignments
4. Journaling
5. Motivational Interviewing exercises
6. Increased VTC appearances
7. Increased treatment intensity
8. Additional assessments or evaluations
9. Modification of VTC individual treatment plan
10. Residential Treatment

SANCTIONS

Participants who fail to comply with program requirements (supervision, treatment, urinalysis, etc.) will be held accountable through the imposition of sanctions. Sanctions demonstrate that there are immediate consequences to inappropriate behavior and may include, but are not limited to:

1. Verbal Admonishment from the Judge
2. Increased supervision and/or treatment
3. Increased drug testing
4. Community Service: additional hours from the Community Service Bank
5. Electronic Monitoring
6. Incarceration
7. SCRAM
8. Journaling
9. Demotion to previous phase
10. Delay graduation to next phase
11. Court room penalty box
12. Termination from VTC
13. Letters of apology
14. Essays

15. Increased Community Restrictions

*The Butler County VTC will continue to examine the latest research and continue to modify these lists as necessary.

If a participant commits a VTC violation of any kind, the participant may promptly be arrested and a hearing shall be held as soon as the Court becomes available.

Expulsion for VTC may happen at any time, for any violation, after review by the VTC Team. The amount of time for a sanction shall not count towards credit for time served if participant fails to successfully complete VTC.

DRUG TESTING

Purpose: To provide the staff with a consistent policy and procedure for drug testing offenders.

Policy: All offenders under the supervision of Butler County Adult Probation shall be subject to random drug and alcohol testing at a minimum of twice per week during all phases of the program. The probation officers shall comply with the drug testing policy and procedure set forth by the Butler County Adult Probation Office.

Drug and alcohol testing is an important component of the VTC Program. The VTC will utilize rapid urinalysis screens, patches, oral fluid testing and Portable Breath Testing equipment as approved methods of drug and alcohol testing for confirming abstinence from illicit substances. These devices are designed as a preliminary test. VTC utilizes a designated laboratory for confirmation of positive drug and alcohol test results. This confirmation will be at the cost to the VTC participant, if the results are confirmed as positive.

The VTC Program Probation Officer will be primarily responsible for administering the drug tests; however, any treatment provider involved with individual participants may also administer drug testing. All test results shall be reported to the VTC Team for review.

Incentives for consistent drug free samples may be provided. Sanctions will be imposed for positive drug test screens. Any refusal, alteration, or failure to provide a drug test, at the time of request, shall be viewed by the VTC as a **positive test result** and sanctions will be imposed. If a defendant fails to provide a sample, fails to report for testing, provides an adulterated sample, utilizes a device that attempts to falsify a urine, (a prosthesis or device containing urine that does not come from the body of the defendant at the time of testing) sanctions will be imposed. Additionally, a new criminal charge may be filed in regards to attempting to falsify a urine sample and any sample collected will not be considered valid. If the specimen cup falls in the toilet, the specimen will be considered invalid. As designated pursuant to Adult Probation and Parole Services Rules, any attempt to alter/tamper with a urine specimen can be grounds for a violation. If an offender provides urine not produced from their own person and it is determined that the specimen provided is drug free, that offender may be prosecuted for the offense of Furnishing Drug Free Urine, pursuant to 18 Pa.C.S. § 7509. If at any time throughout the collection process it appears that the offender is attempting to conceal any device used to alter/tamper or provide an invalid specimen, the probation department reserves the right to conduct a search of said offender's person pursuant to 42 Pa.C.S. § 9912.

Deviation from Policy

A) Recognizing that the facts and circumstances of each case vary and present differing concerns and issues for consideration, probation officers may, upon showing of cause, deviate from this policy when said deviation can be demonstrated to serve the interests of justice, the Court, and the offender, without jeopardizing the safety of the public.

B) Deviation from this policy shall not be undertaken without prior approval from the Judge or the VTC Team. **Helpful Hints:**

- Adulteration (substitution, interference or dilution)

Red flags: Neon-colored urine; very dark colored urine; clear (like water) urine; odor of bleach and/or chemical smell; urine not recording a temperature; greasy- like film on or bubbles in the urine; urinating over the fingers or dipping the fingers in the urine once in the cup.

- Offenders must remove large bulky coats and sweatshirts.
- Menstrual cycle will not affect the validity of a drug test

The VTC shall require, when applicable random drug testing, which may be nontraditional hours. If a participant commits a probation violation of any kind, the participant may promptly be arrested and a hearing shall be held as soon as the Court becomes available.

Expulsion from VTC may happen at any time by discussion from the VTC Team.

Confirmatory tests may be ordered upon request by the VTC Probation Officer. Alere Toxicology Services, Inc. will be utilized for all confirmatory testing conducted.

VTC POLICY ON MEDICATION, MEDICALLY ASSISTED TREATMENT & OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATIONS

The Butler County Specialty Courts prohibit the use of **any addictive medications** by participants during their involvement with the program. This includes, but is not limited to the use of the following:

- Narcotic pain medications (i.e. Vicodin, Percocet, OxyContin, etc.)
- Muscle relaxers & sleep aids (i.e. Flexeril, Soma, Ambien, etc.)
- Narcotic anxiolytic/benzodiazepine medications (i.e. Xanax, Neurontin, Klonopin, etc.)
- Stimulants (i.e. caffeine pills, Adderall, Dexedrine, etc.)
- Any over-the-counter medication that contains alcohol (i.e. cough medicine)

The use of Buprenorphine related products (i.e. Suboxone, Subutex, Sublocad, and Zubsolv), Methadone, and Medical Marijuana are not prohibited, but will be reviewed on a **case-by-case basis** once a competent physician with expertise in addiction deems a product medically necessary. The Courts Medical Marijuana Policy also includes strict guidelines outlined in the Specialty Courts Policy & Procedure Manuals that must be adhered to at all times. The participant must sign proper releases at the medical provider and medication must be obtained from an approved physician supervised program.

The use of the Naltrexone related products (i.e. Revia and Vivitrol) ***is permitted*** during the course of participation in the Specialty Court Programs. Participants receiving these medications must notify the Specialty Court Probation Officer. The participants must be sure to sign proper releases at the medical provider and medication must be obtained from an approved physician supervised program.

Participants are not to consume any food item containing poppy seeds. Positive drug tests for opiates will always be deemed positive for illegal substances. Consuming diet pills while in VTC is strictly prohibited

Additionally, **NO** participant of the Butler County VTC may take any vitamins, dietary supplements or natural supplements as they may contain substances that would alter the normal color of urine or cause a positive drug test for illegal substances. This includes but is not limited to specific vitamins, multivitamins, dietary supplements or any other natural supplements.

Medical Marijuana Policy

The Butler County Specialty Courts do not prohibit the use of Medical Marijuana for participants. However, the use of Medical Marijuana will be reviewed on a ***case-by-case basis***. Once permitted, guidelines will be strictly enforced. To meet these requirements,

1. A participant must have an enumerated serious medical condition, met specified requirements for certification as well as documentation that they are not requiring treatment for a substance use disorder which contraindicates the use of medical marijuana.
2. The participant that is receiving medical marijuana shall schedule and attend an appointment with the Butler County Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs and comply with the recommendations from that agency.
3. A Release of Information will be signed by the participant to obtain necessary information from the participant's medical provider who certified the participant for medical marijuana. The information must include the medical provider's recommendation.
4. The participant will be subject to reasonable inquiries into whether the use of the participant's marijuana remains lawful including but not limited to providing receipts from the dispensary on a monthly basis and producing the medical marijuana in its original package that has not been used by the participant.
5. The participant is subject to sanction and revocation proceedings, where there is reasonable cause to believe that a participant has possessed or used medical marijuana in a manner that has not been made lawful by the Pennsylvania Medical Marijuana Act.
6. Participants often participate in drug and alcohol treatment that is subsidized by Federal funds. The participant is advised that these funds may be compromised due to federal regulation. If compromised, the participant's treatment requirement is not vacated. The participant will assume all costs associated with any recommended treatment provided no other funding is available.

7. The participant understands that using medical marijuana restricts one's ability to legally operate a motor vehicle.

EMPLOYMENT

Participants are required to obtain/maintain employment throughout their participation in the program, unless determined to be disabled by the Social Security Administration. Those who do not obtain or maintain employment in the recommended timeframe, will be required to complete 24 hours of community service per week.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Butler County VTC's plan for sustainability has a multiple option approach. The Butler County VTC has the county Judges and Commissioner's support for funding of the program due to proven cost savings. The commissioners and the Court have established VTC as a permanent part of the General Fund Budget and established it as a crucial competent of the Court system.

AFTERCARE
BUTLER COUNTY
VERTERANS TREATMENT COURT

Upon successfully completing all four phases of VTC, a participant is eligible to have the terms and conditions of their plea agreement imposed by the Court. Once the participant has been Sentenced they enter the Aftercare portion of the program. Aftercare is the length of probation they were Sentenced to. Once a period of Aftercare is complete, participants shall complete an exit interview.

PARTICIPANT _____ START DATE _____

Requirements:

- Maintain full-time employment/full-time student status or an approved combination/accommodation
- Make regular payments on fines/costs
- Maintain sobriety/clean time
- Continue support groups as directed
- Attendance, as directed, of Alumni Group meetings/events (if any)
- Comply with ALL weekly drug testing (minimum 2 days)
- Meet with Probation Officer at least monthly or more often as directed
- Attend VTC sessions at least quarterly or more often as directed
- Update Probation Officer of any address and/or employment changes or any police/law enforcement contact
- No new arrests
- Other: _____

I, _____, understand that my Aftercare phase will be the length of my Sentenced Probation and that failure to comply with the above requirements may negatively affect my supervision as well as result in a sanction(s), imposition of the previously deferred sentence against me and/or the finding of a violation of probation or parole and the imposition of a sentence up to the maximum penalty allowed at the sole discretion of the presiding judge. My anticipated completion date on docket _____ is _____.

Participant Signature: _____ Date Completed: _____

PO Signature: _____ Date Verified: _____

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Veteran Crisis Line	1-800-273-8255 press 1
CCR Crisis Toll Free	1-800-292-3866
CCR Butler County Main Office	724-431-0095
Adult Probation Office	724-284-5259
VOICe	1-800-400-8551
Butler County Human Services	724-284-5114
Alcoholic Anonymous 24 hours	724-679-5647
Public Defenders Office	724-284-5335
Children and Youth Agency	724-284-5156
Domestic Relations	724-284-5181
Butler County Assistance Office	724-284-8844
Career Link	724-431-4000
Tammy Courson- Probation Officer	724-431-2158
Christie Beaver- Butler VA VJO Coordinator	878-271-6161
Kelly Fulmer- Butler VA VJO Specialist	878-271-6155
Air Ride	1-866-638-0598
Alcohol Highway School	724-287-8952
OVR	724-656-3070
Community Service-Jim Switzer	724-679-7891

SIGNATURE PAGE
VTC Policy & Procedure Manual

By signing this I acknowledge and agree to follow the rules contained in this Veterans Treatment Court Policy & Procedure Manual. If I have any questions I will contact my Probation officer.

Participant Signature

Date

Probation Officer Signature

Date

**Please keep a copy for your records.*