

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT MENTOR HANDBOOK



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Introduction

Dear Mentor,

Welcome to the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) Peer Mentor Program. This handbook was created with the purpose of giving practical guidance to the Mentors that have volunteered their time to the VTC. First and foremost, thank you for signing up to be a part of this mentorship. Your willingness in joining this program will provide valuable help and teachable moments to the mentees assigned to you. Please read through this handbook and familiarize yourself with the material presented as it will assist and empower you to be the best mentor you can be. In this effort we will succeed in getting these justice involved Veterans to graduate from the program and get back to leading productive and successful lives in society.

If you wish to meet with me, you can call me at 513-299-8387 or we can setup an appointment and meet in person. If I do not answer please leave me a message or email me at mensepf@butlercountyohio.org and I will get back to you.

Thank you again for joining this program.

Respectfully,

Peter Mense

Peter F. Mense
Mentor Coordinator
USN VET

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What is Mentoring?

In The Odyssey (written by Homer, a Greek poet), Odysseus (known as Ulysses in the Latin translation) was preparing to fight the Trojan War when he realized he would be leaving behind his only son and heir, Telemachus. Since the child was young and wars typically dragged on for years (the Trojan War lasted 10 years), Ulysses entrusted Telemachus' care and education to Mentor, his wise, trusted friend.

Mentor, according to written lore was the assumed name for Athena, the Greek Goddess of War and over time the word mentor has evolved to mean trusted advisor, friend and teacher. Throughout history, there have been numerous accounts of helpful mentoring relationships: Socrates and Plato, Hayden and Beethoven, Freud and Jung and the list goes on.

Today, mentoring is a process in which an experienced individual helps another person develop his or her goals and skills through a series of time-limited, confidential, one-on-one conversations and other learning activities. Mentors also draw benefits from the mentoring relationship. As a mentor, you will have the opportunity to share your wisdom and experiences, evolve your own thinking, develop a new relationship, and deepen your skills as a mentor.

Why Should I Become a Mentor?

The structure of the program is set in a way to create an effective process to guide the mentee with the assistance of the mentor to bring about desired behavioral changes, evaluate and discuss what brought them to this period of their life and what they as the mentee want to see come to fruition as a result of this mentoring relationship. This relationship will involve a third party, the Mentor Coordinator of the VTC, Peter Mense.

Upon entering this program, there are some questions that you should reflect on prior to making the final commitment:

- What experiences and learning can I bring to the mentoring relationship?
- What are my own expectations for the relationship?
- Are there any obstacles that could impede the relationship's development?

This handbook will assist you in developing skills that will make you the most effective mentor that you can be and will make your mentoring relationship that much more successfully, not just for the mentee, but you as the mentor and help you grow more adept in this role.

A Proactive Approach to Veterans Court

As a Veteran, you should know that the population growth of Veterans has been on a steady rise since October 2001, the date at which we as a nation commenced the War on Terror, sometimes referred to as Gulf War II. Since then, approximately 1.64 million troops were deployed at that time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/IEF). Upon completion of service, not all Veterans come home in one piece, be it mentally, physically or in some cases, both. By being proactive and understanding of these issues, you will be more equipped to understand what faces our Veteran population, especially those whom have ended up in the justice system.

Veterans can and do endure high costs of service to our country. Some of these costs are immediate, for instance death and injury, however, in spite of that there are other costs that may not surface until years later. These issues can be substantial and long lasting, as these issues can range from alcohol and substance abuse to homelessness to strained relationships with friends and loved ones.

Key Components of Veterans Treatment Courts

VTCs 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. VTCs feature the following 10 key operational standards which are adapted from the Ten Key Components.

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

Mentor Component

A crucial component of the VTC program is the Mentor Program. This is where Veteran mentors act as peer support to justice-involved Veteran participants. Research has shown that Veterans are better served by having a support system that includes fellow Veterans who understand and have dealt with combat experience and the different aspects of military service. The mentors participate in a supportive relationship with their assigned Veteran in the hope that it will increase the likelihood that their mentee will remain in treatment, attain and manage sobriety, maintain law-abiding behavior and successfully readjust to civilian life.

The Purpose of the Mentorship Program is to provide guidance and support to their assigned Veterans needing assistance with legal difficulties. Assist Veterans who have been assigned to VTC with getting back to a sense of normalcy in how they are to behave upon reintegration into society. Be there for their assigned Veteran mentee when they ask for your help in attaining their intended goals.

The mentor program consists of mentor coordinators and Veteran mentors. Their roles, responsibilities, requirements and qualifications are discussed in the following section.

The mission of the VTC Mentor Program is to ensure that every participating Veteran has a fellow Veteran to act as first and foremost a mentor and as an ally in their time of stress or personal conflict.

Veteran Mentor Expectations and Responsibilities:

- Be a good listener
 - Build trust with mentee
- Meet regularly
 - Does not have to be in person
 - At least one contact per week during Phase 1 and Phase 2 of treatment
 - Upon entering Phase 3, contact at least once every other week
 - Phase 4, contact as recommended by the mentor, mentee and the treatment team
 - Contact can be made via telephone, FaceTime, Zoom, in person or other electronic means**
- Be encouraging and supportive of your Veteran mentee.
- Tolerant and respectful of individual differences
- Supportive, understanding and helpful to your fellow mentors
 - Find a common ground or interest
- If mentee is in a crisis situation, assist them as best as you can, provide them with information to help them in their time of crisis.
 - Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255
 - 911

- Maintain Self-Care of Yourself:
 - Do not over exert yourself.
 - Ask coordinator for assistance.
- Empower the Mentee to:
 - Tell their story
 - Participate in treatment
 - Connect with available resources

Mentor Training:

- Observe sessions of court, at the discretion of the Judge.
- It is encouraged to complete online training modules available via [Justice for Vets](#) (free):
 - Courses:
 1. Mentoring a Participant with a Substance Use Disorder
<https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/mentoring-a-participant-with-a-substance-use-disorder-j4v>
 2. Mentor Self-Care
<https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/mentor-self-care-j4v>
 3. Suicide Awareness and Prevention
<https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/suicide-awareness-and-prevention-j4v>
 4. Risk Factors for Repeated Justice Involvement
<https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/risk-factors-for-repeated-justice-involvement-j4v>
 5. Empowering Wellness and Recovery
<https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/empowering-wellness-and-recovery-j4v>
 6. A Trauma-Informed Approach
<https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/a-trauma-informed-approach-j4v>

Requirements and Qualification for Veteran Mentors:

- Complete a Mentor Application
- Provide a valid DD214
- Committed to working with the Veteran through graduation (approx. 18-24 months)
- It is encouraged, but not required to attend status reviews, as dictated by the presiding Judge

Recruitment Policy

The Mentor Coordinator assumes the majority of the responsibility for recruitment and coordinating new mentors. Veteran Peer Mentors are strongly encouraged to refer highly respectable and reputable Veterans to the Mentor Program.

Knowledge of a Prospective Mentor's Negative History

Current Veteran mentors with knowledge of any prospective mentor's history or background that may jeopardize the integrity of the Volunteer Mentor Program, the Court, and the Veteran Participants must communicate their knowledge of the situation and bring it to the attention of the Mentor Coordinator.

Screening Policy

Mentors requesting permission to enter the VTC Mentor Program must complete a screening process. The Mentor Coordinator is responsible for the screening process. The decision for a prospective mentor to be accepted or denied is generally left to the sole discretion of the Veteran Mentor Coordinator, with final approval from the Executive Director of the Butler County Veterans Service Commission. Decisions will be based upon the information provided by the prospective Mentor on the application and during an interview. Feedback regarding denials may or may not be given. The right to withhold or give feedback is solely at the discretion of the Executive Director for BCVSC or its appointing authority.

The Veteran mentoring screening procedure will include the following, though not limited to:

1. Completing an application, (including DD214, Member 4 copy)
2. Interview with Butler County Veterans Service Commission
 - i. Will be completed via Phone, WebEx or In-person depending upon the needs and scheduling of both parties.

Assignment Policy

Assignment to a mentee will occur at the beginning of their treatment docket and the mentor will stay with that Veteran for the duration of treatment, unless there are extenuating circumstances, which will be discussed later. The Mentor Coordinator reserves the right to assign Veteran mentors to a Veteran participant as they see fit. Assignments, when possible will be based on the following criteria:

1. Same branch of service, for example, Air Force-to-Air Force, Marine-to-Marine, etc.
2. Same war time era, for example, Vietnam to Vietnam and Iraq to Iraq
3. Specific skill of a volunteer mentor that a participating veteran may need
similar age/ gender/ ethnicity

Veteran's Treatment Court Mentor Creed

"In the long and honored tradition of voluntary military service in Butler County, knowing "all we can do is help", this is my creed:

In the spirit of "leave no one behind", I will constantly encourage my fellow Veteran to refuse to lose, but to choose life, liberty, and service to others.

Should my Veteran relapse, I will encourage them back on the path to recovery.

I will keep the confidences entrusted to me.

I will uphold the honor and dignity of the Court.

I will do my best to inspire my Veteran to the highest and best standards, and return to their rightful place of dignity, honor, and respect in our society."

Mentor Code of Conduct

Upon entering the VTC Mentorship Program, you will be expected to adhere to a Code of Conduct, similar to the Code of Conduct you abided by while in the military. This code will be what you shall abide by while serving as a Veteran mentor to a justice-involved Veteran. Failure to abide by this code will lead to suspension and/or dismissal from the program.

The mission of the VTC is to enhance public safety by preventing recidivism, while assisting participants in taking responsibility for their behavioral health issues. VTC shall use effective, evidence-based interventions and treatments in a holistic, accountability-based, community and Veteran peer supported approach.

Excerpt from Justice For Vets:

In Veterans' treatment court, volunteer Veterans engage, encourage, and empower their fellow Veterans to change their lives, ensuring that together we will "Leave no Veteran behind."

The Purpose of the Mentorship Program is to:

- Provide mentorship and support to Veterans involved in the VTC.
- Assist Veterans who have been assigned to the VTC with getting back to a sense of normalcy.
- Provide peer support and guidance.

Mentor Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Branch of Service: _____ Type of Discharge: _____

Military Occupational Specialty: _____

Dates of Service: _____ Combat Deployments: Yes ____ No ____

Current Occupation: _____

Dates and Times Available: _____

1. How did you learn about the VTC Mentor Program?

Flyer Friend Service Organization Website

Other: _____

2. What does being a mentor mean to you?

3. 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?

4. What are you hoping to take away from volunteering with the VTC mentoring program?

Signature _____ Date _____