



SPOKANE COUNTY

**VETERANS ENHANCED**  
**TREATMENT COURT**

# **Participant Handbook**

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## I. DESCRIPTION

### ❖ What is Veterans Court?

Spokane County Veterans Court is a collaboration of numerous agencies: the Court, the Veterans Administration (VA), the Public Defender's Office, the Prosecutor's Office, the Probation Department and many other community partners. These agencies, working together, have established a viable option for a select group of offenders whose needs are better met through treatment intervention rather than incarceration.

The **mission** of the Spokane County Veterans Court is to provide an interagency, collaborative, non-adversarial treatment strategy for veterans involved in the criminal justice system while holding them accountable and reintegrating veterans into the community.

The goals of the Spokane County Veterans Court are to:

- Increase community/public safety and awareness.
- Reduce participant contacts with the criminal justice system.
- Reduce costs associated with criminal case processing and re-arrest.
- Introduce participants to an ongoing process of recovery designed to help them become stable, employed and substance-free while continuing mental health care through community/peer counseling groups or the VA

## ❖ **Am I eligible?**

### **Clinical Criteria**

The Veterans Court may accept individuals with a Department of Veterans Affairs diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or Military Sexual Trauma (MST) as a result of their military services. The Veterans Court may also accept individuals who are considered “combat” veterans\* with substance use disorders. Potential candidates with a diagnosis of PTSD, TBI, or MST will be given the highest priority.

\* A “Combat” veteran is defined in the Department of Veterans Affairs VHA Handbook.

## ❖ **How does it work?**

Only those individuals whose cases are Spokane County misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor are eligible for acceptance into the Veterans Court pending a review by the Veterans Court Team. The Team consists of the Judge, Prosecutor, Public Defender, Probation Officer, Veterans Court Coordinator, VA, and SVF representation.

Felony reductions pled in District Court may be referred to the Veterans Court for probation monitoring, **subject to a staffing review by the Team.**

**Exclusions:** *Conviction for sexual or serious violent offenses*

### ❖ **What happens during Veterans Court?**

You must complete all **five phases** in order to graduate from Veterans Court. Your individual program is subject to change by the Veterans Court team consistent with your progress through the phases. To advance to the next phase, you must complete the necessary tasks and assignments given by your treatment provider and the Veterans Court team. The following phase descriptions are not all inclusive. **Each participant's progress through the program is based solely on their individual performance and compliance with the following:**

### ❖ **Phase Outline**

Phase 1 – Orientation and Engagement: 2 Months

1. You will complete court entry survey
2. You will attend court hearings bi-monthly (2x a month) for 2 months.

3. You will comply with getting all necessary evaluations and treatment/counseling services in the community in order to comply with court mandated requirements for this program.
4. You are required to attend all appointments with treatment providers and case managers as scheduled, as well as taking any doctor prescribed medications necessary to ensure your physical and mental health needs.
5. You will be required to write a letter to the courts explaining why you should move to the next phase.
6. You will complete phase upgrade survey.
7. You are required to have 2 Urinalysis a week.
8. You will comply with weekly Mentor Contact requirements.
9. You will attend the Veterans Forum once a month.

#### Phase 2 – Intensive Treatment: 4 Months

1. You will attend court hearings bi-monthly for 4 months.
2. You are required to have 1 UA a week.
3. You will continue to comply with getting all necessary evaluations and treatment/counseling services in the community in order to comply with court-mandated requirements for this program.
4. You will continue to attend all appointments with treatment providers and case managers as scheduled, as well as taking any doctor-prescribed medications necessary to ensure your physical and mental health needs.



5. You will be required to write a letter to the courts explaining why you should move to the next phase.
6. You will complete phase upgrade survey.
7. You will comply with Mentor Contact requirements.
8. You will attend the Veterans Forum once a month.

Phase 3 – Transition/Community Engagement: 4 Months

1. You will attend monthly court hearings for 4 months.
2. You are required to have random UA's.
3. You will continue to comply with getting all necessary evaluations and treatment/counseling services in the community in order to comply with court-mandated requirements for this program.
4. You are to continue to attend all appointments with treatment providers and case managers as scheduled, as well as taking any doctor prescribed medications necessary to ensure your physical and mental health needs.
5. You will be required to write a letter to the courts explaining why you should move to the next phase.
6. You will complete phase upgrade survey.
7. You will comply with Mentor Contact requirements.
8. You will be involved with work/school/volunteer activities or have reasonable cause for dismissal from activities.

Phase 4 – Maintenance/Recovery Aftercare: 2 Months – 1 year

1. You will attend court hearings as needed or as determined by the Veterans Court. The frequency of your attendance at these hearings may be based on your previous success in Phases 1, 2 and 3.
2. You will be clean and sober of drugs and alcohol with random UA's.
3. At this phase, you will have obtained personal and judicial success by maintaining treatment and/or counseling services and not committing any new criminal offences.
4. You will have maintained at least 12 months of continuous medication management and compliance with treatment.
5. You will be involved with work/school/volunteer activities or have reasonable cause for dismissal from activities.
6. You will be required to write a letter to the court describing how the court has helped you.
7. You will complete post graduate survey.
8. Court fees are to be paid off.
9. You have continued to have weekly Mentor contact.

Phase 5 – Graduation!!!

\*\*\* This program will last for approximately (1) year and can be extended in cases of relapse or until satisfactory completion of all requirements have been achieve

## ❖ **What are benefits of Veterans Court?**

There are three primary and several secondary benefits to the Veterans Court.

### **Primary:**

- 1. One month of probation is reduced for every forum attended, with a maximum of 12 forums. Your probation time can be reduced to 12 months.**
- 2. Possibility of reduction and/or dismissal of charges (for those who qualify).**
- 3. Availability of the Veterans Forum resources (see page 13)**

### **Secondary:**

- **Veterans Related Community Resources**
- **Therapeutic Team Approach (incarceration is used as a last resort)**
- **Camaraderie**
- **Therapeutic rather than punitive**
- **Assistance with employment, housing, VA benefits and disability**

## ❖ **What is the Veterans Forum?**

The Spokane Veterans Forum (SVF) is a non-profit, all volunteer program that provides mentoring, educational, therapeutic, and life-

enhancing services at no cost to military veterans referred from any Veterans Enhanced Therapeutic Court (VET Court). VET Court is a therapeutic court program designed to provide a non-adversarial resolution process for veterans who have committed misdemeanor offenses and are either diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) , Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and/or were combat veterans.

The SVF is a separate entity from the VET Court, designed to assemble and focus services in support of the veterans during their court-ordered resolution process. The referred veteran is matched with a mentor, also a veteran, who provides him/her support as he/she participates in the community program.

The SVF matches and trains the volunteer

veteran mentors and reports regularly to the VET Court probation officers regarding individual progress and compliance for the court-ordered treatment reviews. Veterans are required to be in contact with their mentors on a weekly basis at a minimum and to attend the formal SVF meetings held monthly where they will share a meal together, experience fellowship and camaraderie, and attend classes on therapeutic topics and life skills. The probation officers attend the forums to personally interact with the mentor and veteran participants.

SVF also provides services through partnerships with veterans groups, federal, state and local governments, local businesses and non-profits in the Inland Northwest.

❖ **Forum Etiquette**

Your attendance at the forum should be treated

the same as court (See pgs. 23-25) except for eating and drinking which is allowed at the forum. Remember, all forum staff and mentors are there voluntarily and in support of YOUR success. Treat staff, mentors, and the facilities with respect or you will be asked to leave. If asked to leave the forum, you must have the judge's approval before you are allowed to return. You will NOT receive credit for attendance at the forum if you are asked to leave. In order to receive credit for attending the Forum, you must stay the entire time.

## II. Frequently asked questions

❖ **What if I relapse?**

Veteran's court does not allow the use of any alcohol, marijuana, or drugs unless prescribed by a physician. The court also understands that relapse is a part of the recovery process.

Traditional court systems have placed an emphasis on using incarceration as an immediate sanction for relapse. Veterans court uses incarceration as a last resort unless you are dishonest or do not self-report a relapse. Self-reporting a relapse does not mean that you admit to using when questioned; self-reporting is contacting your probation officer before he/she get the information from another source. The severity of a sanction for a relapse all depends on your honesty to the court. If you lie or hide use and are caught, harsher sanctions may be imposed.

### ❖ **Team Response to Violations**

In the event of a violation, a hearing will be held where all pertinent information will be

presented. You will have an opportunity to present your version of the alleged events and the judge will make a determination if the violation did or did not occur and will impose sanctions if deemed necessary.

### ❖ **What sanctions are given?**

If you do not comply with your treatment program, miss mandatory meetings, receive new criminal charges, fail to take biological tests as scheduled, Court hearings, Probation appointments, relapse, or violate any other terms of your individual supervision plan, the judge will sanction your actions. Possible sanctions include:

- Admonishment
- Extended or loss of phase time
- Increased treatment requirements
- GPS/Electronic Home monitoring
- Community Service
- Jail time

### ❖ **How do alcohol / drug screens work?**

If you are in treatment, the agency can require you to test at any time. Your probation officer



can also require you to test at his/her discretion regardless of your charge. Any refusal or missed test will be considered a violation and a letter will be sent to the court for non-compliance. You may be required to submit to any of the following: Urinary Analysis, Blood Analysis, Portable Breath Test, or electronic monitoring.

**While participating in VET court, you may not consume any alcohol, marijuana, or other illegal drugs at any time for any reason. Be very careful not to ingest any other substance containing alcohol, illegal drugs or non-prescribed drugs that may show positive results if tested. If you are unsure if a product will cause you to test positive for substances, it is your responsibility to contact the probation officer for approval.**

**❖ What if I have a serious medical condition?**

In general, if you have a serious medical condition you will not be excluded from VET Court. You must be willing to **fully** disclose your condition and medical care to the treatment providers and VET Court team. If you are taking medication for your condition, you must continue to do so according to your primary care physician's directions. Although we can be flexible and work around your condition, you must be able to engage in and complete treatment and forum attendance. You **must** provide a copy of all prescriptions to your PO and **must** advise the team of any changes in your medications.

### ❖ **Can I use prescription medications?**

As a general rule, VET Court participants are expected to be drug-free. If your doctor prescribes mind-altering medication, it must be reviewed by probation staff and may be monitored for misuse. You will then sign a release of information between the prescribing doctor and Probation in order to verify your prescription.

**❖ What if I need to move, change roommates, or get a new job?**

You must notify your probation officer **before** you move to a new address or change your phone number.

You must notify Probation immediately if you get a new job, quit, get laid off or fired.

After notifying Probation, you should also notify your mentor.

**❖ What if I want to travel outside of Spokane County?**

If you need to travel outside Spokane County, you must first contact your probation officer to request permission to leave. If it is a day trip, your request is usually approved, as long as there is advanced notice. If it is an overnight trip you will need court permission and a trip permit from your PO. You may be required to submit to an alcohol/drug test upon return.

**❖ What if I have contact with Law Enforcement?**

**You must report all police contact to your probation officer within 48 hours of contact.**

Police contact includes any situation in which police officers have asked you for your name. It includes new arrests and citations. It also includes situations in which you may be a witness to an accident or a crime, or occasions in which you have called the police. Police contact also includes instances where the police would want to talk to you, even if you fled the scene or were otherwise unavailable to speak with police.

If you learn that you have a warrant or are the subject of an investigation, or if you are sought as a witness, you must report that to your probation officer.

If you receive a subpoena or a restraining order, or are a party to a lawsuit, you must report that to your probation officer.

### **III. RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **❖ CONFIDENTIALITY**

You are required to sign a release of information which allows probation to give information to the VET Court Team, which includes the Judge, prosecuting attorney, public defender, court coordinator, probation officer, VA staff, Forum staff, and mentor. Your privacy is respected and the Team will make every effort to protect your identity.

Confidentiality is also essential to maintain the integrity of group therapy sessions. Nothing that is discussed within the confines of those meetings will leave those meetings. No information pertaining to another client should be discussed outside of the group. This confidentiality applies to things said in the courtroom as well.

### **❖ FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS**

Unless you can pay off all fines and fees within 30 business days of your arraignment, all court payments are to be paid through PAR Acceptance Corp and. Information regarding

your payments may be obtained from the court clerks.

If your charge involved a property crime, you are required to pay the restitution that is owed to the victims of the crime. The amount of restitution, if any, will be determined at your sentencing. You must make regular payments on your restitution in accordance with the court order.

### ❖ COURT ATTENDANCE

Attendance in court is **ABSOLUTELY** mandatory on the dates you are ordered to appear by the judge. You must arrive at court at least 5 minutes before the docket begins, and remain in the courtroom until after the docket is complete. The only exception to court attendance is if your probation officer has waived your presence and you must have an appropriate reason for this.

**If you are not present in court on the required days, a bench warrant will be issued.** It is then your responsibility to get the warrant quashed or turn yourself in. *If this does not happen, you*

*will be arrested and remain in jail until your next VET Court appearance.*

### ❖ COURTROOM BEHAVIOR

You are expected to maintain appropriate behavior at all times in the courtroom and courthouse. This includes:

- No talking while court is in session
- No eating or drinking in the courtroom
- No smoking in the courthouse
- No chewing gum
- Be on time and do not leave the courtroom during the hearing except to use the restroom
- **Turn off cell phones or they will be confiscated**
- Appropriate dress is necessary; Button up collared shirts are required, if you do not

have one, the court will provide one for you to borrow. Shirt is to be returned to the probation officer after court has adjourned. The following clothing items are not allowed: Sunglasses, hats, provocative clothing, shorts, or any clothing you feel may offend someone else in the court room.

#### **IV. GRADUATION**

You will be eligible for graduation once you have completed all 5 phases as outlined above. The time-frame varies according to your performance and will be determined by the VET Court Team. Your family, friends, employers, counselors and sponsor are welcome to come to court and share in this joyous and life-affirming occasion. There will be a graduation ceremony in which you will receive a certificate demonstrating your completion of VET Court. You and your mentor will also receive recognition after you read your letter at the SVF.



**Notes:**

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**Back ground.....**

**US Army, active duty, M1A1 tank crewman. Reserves, combat engineer and went into the Drill Sergeant**

**school. Participated in Desert Storm with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division.**

**I ride with and have been a longtime member of the Combat Vet Riders, holding officer positions including president.**

### **Experiences.....**

**I had joined the military before graduating high school, I was on a bad path and the recruiter said they would feed me well in the Army, I was hooked. When leaving the military I was disenchanted, wanting to forget and leave that chapter behind. The civilian world was a very different place when I came back to it, people's concerns were trivial, they were consumed with small things while I carried anger, ferocity and demons inside, it was easier to put on camouflage and blend in with the herd than even try to talk to someone. In time I learned that chapter in my life never gets erased, never goes away, the camaraderie, the brotherhood and simple understanding was missing. It was time to come back to where I came from and help others that also feel alone in a world that doesn't get it. We are not alone as we feel, there are many just like us.**

### **Why I became a mentor.....**

**Having been down the same road as so many that are coming back home, I know the hazards, the problems, the feeling of isolation. Having brushes with the law myself, it's very easy to sympathize with the hard adjustment and defiant attitude towards a system that seems uncaring to your situation. It's very easy to find yourself in a hole only to find yourself digging deeper without an end in sight. I know this because I have stood before these very same judges and probation officers without help.**

**Another issue that is heartbreaking is the sheer amount of warriors coming home from battle to lose a war within themselves, self-destructing and becoming a statistic. This is not a fitting end to the lives of those that gave so much for their country. If there was a way to help just one it would be worth it.**

**Hearing about the Vets Court program it was easy to become enthusiastic about being involved. This program has proven to be helpful for so many, the veteran in trouble, the tax payers, the families and especially myself.**

**The mentor's role through the process in my opinion.....**

**Mentors are not cops, judges, juries, probation officers or executioners. The mentor's role is to act as a coach, a cheerleader, a friendly voice of reason, a soft shoulder to talk with, or a firm shoulder when you need that motivation. We extend our hand and will be involved in your lives, to what degree you decide, we can talk every day or once a week, whatever you need from us. We are there to point you in the right directions when the system becomes an overwhelming maze. This is not about you or me, it's about us as a team, battles, working one step at a time to succeed together. We won't do more work than you to get you to success but can promise this, we will not fail you and I can safely speak for the judges, the probation officers and everyone else involved in the program when I say that we all want nothing more than for you to succeed.**

**This becomes bigger than a simple obligation or contract for either of us, this can become a journey where lifelong bonds are formed. Many years from now you can rest assured that someone has your back, you can call on us for anything and we will be there, it's as simple as that.**

**Marshall Cockrill**

## IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Therapeutic Court Coordinator**
  - Hans Horstketter (509) 477-2283
  - Email:  
[HHorstketter@spokanecounty.org](mailto:HHorstketter@spokanecounty.org)
  
- **Probation Officer**
  - Tom Squires (509) 477-6471 Email:  
[tasquires@spokanecounty.org](mailto:tasquires@spokanecounty.org)
  
- **Forum Staff**
  - Mentor Coordinator: Jerry Gutman  
(425) 785-5052 Email:  
[jerrygutman@gmail.com](mailto:jerrygutman@gmail.com)

- **VA Representatives**

- Substance Abuse Director:  
(509) 434-7000 x 6287
- Veterans Justice Outreach  
Coordinator: Doug Fender
- (509) 434-7390

- **Vet Center**

- OEF/OIF Adjustment Coordinator:  
Joe Dumlao (509) 444-8387

- **County Veterans Services**

- Director: Cat Nichols (509) 477-4498  
Email: [CNichols@spokanecounty.org](mailto:CNichols@spokanecounty.org)

- **County Clerk (509) 477-2211**

- **Vet Court Judicial Assistant**

- Kiara Segura (509) 477-2924