



CITY OF SPOKANE

VETERANS ENHANCED

TREATMENT COURT

Participant Handbook

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I. DESCRIPTION

❖ What is Veterans Court?

City of Spokane's Veteran's Court is a collaboration of numerous agencies: the Court, the Department of Veterans Affairs (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 City of Spokane Veteran's 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 City of Spokane Veteran's 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 Veterans Administration.

❖ **Am I eligible?**

Clinical Criteria

Pending criminal case in Spokane Municipal Court.

A current member of the United States Armed Forces, **OR** a former member who is eligible for benefits through the VA.

Any veteran with a VA diagnosis of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) or MST (Military Sexual Trauma) as a result of their military service or veterans with substance use disorders.

Veterans convicted of serious violent offenses or sex offenses as defined in the Revised Code of Washington §9.94A.030 are not eligible to participate.

❖ **How does it work?**

Only those individuals whose cases are City of Spokane misdemeanors or gross misdemeanors 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 and Veteran's Administration staff.

❖ **What happens during Veteran's Court?**

You must complete all **five phases** in order to graduate from Veteran's Court. Your individual program is subject to change by the Veteran's 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 Veteran's 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. The following timeframes are an approximation of the program:**

❖ **Phase Outline**

Phase 1 – Orientation and Engagement: 2 Months

1. You will complete court entry survey
2. You will attend court hearings twice per 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. Alcohol/drug screening twice weekly, if ordered by the Court.
8. You will comply with weekly Mentor Contact requirements.
9. You will attend the Veteran's Forum once a month for the first six months.

Phase 2 – Intensive Treatment: 4 Months

1. You will attend court hearings twice per month for 4 months.
2. Weekly alcohol/drug screenings, if ordered by the Court.
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 Veteran's Forum once a month for the first six months.

Phase 3 – Transition/Community Engagement: 4 Months

1. You will attend court hearings twice per month for 4 months.
2. Random UA's, if ordered by the Court.
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 twice per month. 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, if ordered by the Court.
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, if prescribed.

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 imposed fees are to be paid off.

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 achieved.

❖ **What are benefits of Veteran's Court?**

There are three primary and several secondary benefits to the Veteran's Court.

Primary:

1. Probation will be reduced 1 month for every forum attended. You must attend the first 6 forums, but no more than 12.
2. Possibility of reduction and/or dismissal of charges (for those who qualify)
3. Availability of the Veteran's Forum resources. (See Page 12)

Secondary:

1. Veteran's Related Community Resources
2. Therapeutic Team Approach
(incarceration is used as a last resort)
3. Therapeutic focus rather than punitive
4. Assistance with employment, housing, VA benefits and disability

❖ What is the Veterans Forum?

The Spokane Veterans Forum (SVF) is an independent program that provides mentoring, educational, therapeutic and life enhancing services to military veterans referred from any Veterans Enhanced Therapeutic Court (VET). 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 them support as they participate 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.

II. Frequently asked questions

❖ **What if I relapse?**

Veteran's court may prohibit the use of alcohol or drugs (including THC) 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. Veteran's 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 they 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 are the incentives?**

- Verbal Praise
- Presence Waived
- Early release from court hearings
- Reduction of time on probation
- Graduation Certificate
-

❖ **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
- Increased testing 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 their 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, if ordered by the Court, you may not consume any alcohol, marijuana or 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 physicians' 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 disclosed to 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 if 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 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**

If you are able to pay off all fines and fees within 30 days of case disposition, payment will be made to Municipal Court. With the exception of SOC fees, payments will be made 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.

If you have any questions about fines or fees contact your probation officer.

❖ **COURT ATTENDANCE**

Attendance in court is 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 may be issued. It is then your responsibility to get the warrant quashed or turn yourself in.

❖ **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 including e-cigarettes in the courthouse
- No chewing gum
- Be on time and do not leave during the hearing except to use the restroom
- **Turn off beepers and cell phones or they will be confiscated**
- Appropriate dress is required. The following clothing items 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 and “challenge coin” demonstrating your completion of VET Court.

6/03/2013

Notes:

