



Orange County Veterans Treatment Court

Community Court
Superior Court of California
909 N. Main Street
Santa Ana, CA 92701

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Orange County Veterans Treatment Court is to provide an inter-agency, collaborative, non-adversarial therapeutic justice program for Veterans in the criminal justice system who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Military Sexual Trauma (MST), substance abuse, or other psychological symptoms as a result of having served in a combat theater.

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BACKGROUND

Veterans have been served by the various Collaborative Court programs which follow evidence based practices for 16 years

- Drug Court
- Homeless Outreach Court
- Mental Health Court
- DUI Court

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Veterans Treatment Court opened on November 18, 2008

- authorized by CA Penal Code 1170.9
- response to increased numbers of Veterans involved with the criminal justice system
- response to increased number of combat Veteran suicides
- opportunity to have a different approach and outcome than after the Vietnam War
- include Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist
- link with all with VA Services

motto: **No Veteran Goes Unserved**

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Veterans Treatment Court Ten Key Components

- Key Component #1: Veterans Treatment Courts integrate alcohol, drug treatment, and mental health services with justice system case processing.
- Key Component #2: Using a nonadversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights.

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- Key Component #3: Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the Veterans Treatment Court program.
- Key Component #4: Veterans Treatment Court provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, mental health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.
- Key Component #5: Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.

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- Key Component #6: A coordinated strategy governs Veterans Treatment Court responses to participants; compliance.
- Key Component #7: Ongoing judicial interaction with each Veteran is essential.
- Key Component #8: Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness.

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- Key Component #9: Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective Veterans Treatment Court planning, implementation, and operations.
- Key Component #10: Forging partnerships among Veterans Treatment Courts, Veterans Administration, public agencies, and community –based organizations generates local support and enhances Veteran Treatment Court effectiveness.

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Justice For Vets

- In 2009, the National Association of Drug court Professionals launched Justice for Vets: The National Clearinghouse for Veterans Treatment Courts. Justice For Vets is exclusively committed to ensuring that veterans involved in the criminal justice system have access to Veterans Treatment Courts and the benefits, services and treatment they have earned.

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■ Since Justice For Vets was launched the number of operational Veterans Treatment Courts has grown to over 80. Justice for Vets activities include advocating for federal Veterans Treatment Court funding, assisting with state legislation, training and technical assistance, public awareness, and building coalitions within the criminal justice, business, and Veterans Service Organization communities.

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VA Justice Outreach Initiative

Each VA medical center has a facility-based Veterans Justice Outreach Social Worker, who is responsible for:

- outreach, assessment, and case management for justice-involved Veterans
- liaison with local justice system partners
- training of local law enforcement agencies to enhance knowledge and skills for dealing with justice-involved Veterans

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Veterans Treatment Court *a multi-agency collaboration*

- the Superior Court
- the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- the Public Defender
- the District Attorney
- the Probation Department
- the Health Care Agency
- and many other community partners and Veterans support groups

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Goals of the Veterans Treatment Court

- introduce participants to an ongoing process of recovery designed to help them become healthy, mentally and physically stable, substance abuse free, employed or in school, and reaching their personal goals
- protect the public
- reduce recidivism
- reduce the costs associated with criminal case processing and re-arrest

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Admission Criteria

- cases may be either felonies or misdemeanors
- cases involving violence may be considered
- the team evaluates each prospective participant for past criminal history; substance abuse issues; and PTSD, TBI, MST, or other mental health issues

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Admission Criteria, continued

- prospective participants must be willing, and must be committed to treatment
- participants will be accepted if the team believes the Veteran would benefit from the program, and that the public would be protected by the Veteran's participation in the program

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Length of Treatment

- Participants are not eligible to graduate unless they have completed a *minimum* of 18 months in the Veterans Treatment Court.

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Program Phases at a Glance

- *phase 1* - Treatment Plan Development: a minimum of 120 days
- *phase 2* - Ongoing Treatment: a minimum of 90 days
- *phase 3* - Stabilizing: a minimum of 150 days
- *phase 4* - Transition to Graduation: a minimum of 6 months

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Program Requirements

- report to VA Justice Outreach Social Worker and Probation Officer, as directed
- submit to substance abuse testing, as directed
- comply with treatment plan, including all medications
- attend all court appearances and appointments, as directed
- participate in clean & sober recreation and fellowship
- be employed or pursuing vocational/educational goals
- complete volunteer service hours

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Demographics

- ages range from 20 to 62
- combat eras include the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf wars, and the present conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq
- military branches include Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard
- charges include felony assault, domestic violence, receiving stolen property, possession of narcotics, driving under the influence, reckless driving, trespass, felony evading arrest, resisting arrest
- diagnoses include Depression, Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Military Sexual Trauma (MST), and Substance Abuse

Combat Veterans Court Outcomes

- active participants – 37
- retention rate – 77%
- number of graduates – 51
- participants attending school – 15
- participants currently employed – 10
- instances of recidivism – 4

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Combat Veterans Court Team

- District Attorney, Trish Shute – (714) 569-2210
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- Probation Officer, Robert Eitner – (714) 569-2000
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- Public Defender, Terri Bianchi - (714) 568-4860
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- VA Justice Outreach, Julie Tomlinson, LCSW
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- Collaborative Court Coordinator, Kim Parsons
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