



Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan:

A Manual for Mentors & Mentor Coordinators



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This manual was developed to provide guidance to Mentors and Mentor Coordinators in Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan.

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Section I: Introduction

What is a Veterans Treatment Court?

A Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) provides veterans facing non-violent criminal charges an alternative to incarceration by integrating alcohol/drug treatment and mental health services with justice system case processing.¹

Instead of a traditional court system, VTCs use a team-based approach that includes the judge, prosecuting and defense attorneys, probation officer, veteran mentors, treatment providers and others within the justice system, Veterans Administration (VA) and the community. The team works together to support the veteran on their journey to recovery from addiction, serious mental illness and/or co-occurring disorders.

Participants in VTCs are expected to commit fully to the program, which can last for 12-24 months. To graduate from the program, participants will progress through different phases and are expected to follow numerous rules and conditions. This includes attending and participating in substance abuse and/or mental health treatments, attending all required court appearances, random and scheduled drug

testing and others as determined by the courts. The program is not easy, but the goal at the end is for the veteran to get the treatment they need, remain sober and/or stable in their mental illness, and avoid future arrests.

Mentor Component

A key component of the veterans treatment court program is the mentor program where veteran mentors provide peer-to-peer support to veteran participants. Veterans are better served by having a support system that includes someone who understands military experience and the different aspects of military culture. Mentors participate in a supportive relationship with participants to increase the likelihood that they will remain in treatment, attain and maintain sobriety and/or stability in their mental illness, maintain law-abiding behavior and successfully readjust to civilian life.

See [Appendix I](#) for resources and more information on veterans treatment courts.

¹ MCL 600.1201 (1)(a)

Section II: Veteran Mentors

Role of Veteran Mentors

Veteran mentors provide support by engaging, encouraging and empowering the participant as they move through the veterans treatment court program.

Veteran mentors volunteer their time and should be as similar as possible to their assigned participant in terms of age, gender, branch of service, military ranks and period of military service.² Each mentor is assigned a participant and meets with this same participant throughout their time in the program unless a concern arises that requires a change in mentors. Building a consistent relationship allows the participants to trust the mentor.

Mentors act as a coach, a guide, a role model and an advocate for the participant. They listen to the concerns and problems of participants and assist them in finding solutions, not by fixing it themselves. They work together to set goals and action plans. Mentors provide supportive feedback to participants and highlight their successes.

The life and military experiences of a mentor, and the relationship formed with the participant, are as important as the training. As a mentor in Saginaw, Michigan said, “we learned our role by applying life lessons, being able to relate to the veterans from our prior military experience.”

Responsibilities of Veteran Mentors

Veteran mentors should:

- Meet with participants to assist in resolving their issues.
 - Each meeting should build on the participant’s previous conversations.
 - Meetings should be conducted in person (when possible).
 - Refer participants to appropriate services.
 - Facilitate an understanding of courtroom procedures.
- Maintain federal confidentiality standards.³
- Communicate with their mentor coordinator to resolve any issues regarding time commitments, resistant participants, or unmanageable challenges.
 - If a mentor fears for the safety of a participant or is concerned about a participant’s behavior, the mentor should report any concerns to their mentor coordinator immediately and call 9-1-1 if needed.
- Keep a log of participant contact or case management notes if required by the court.
- Attend all court hearings and other meetings as needed.

² MCL 600.1207 (1)(b)

³ 42 CFR Part 2

Requirements and Qualifications for Veteran Mentors

The duties and responsibilities of a mentor will vary by court but, in general, mentors should:

- Be a United States military veteran: Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy or a corresponding branch of the Reserve or National Guard.
- Be in good standing with the law.
- Complete an application, screening and interview process.
- Submit a DD-214 for review and undergo a criminal background check if required by the court.
- Commit to volunteer as a mentor for the duration that their assigned participant is in the program, typically 12-24 months in most courts.
- Complete mentor training and any additional training as requested by the court.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding a participant's case and personal information.
- Have weekly contact with the participant to provide ongoing support and encouragement.
- Be familiar with the warning signs and red flags for suicide or other mental health issues.
 - See [Appendix II](#) for a handout, Talking with a Veteran in Crisis.

Ideally, mentors should also have these desirable qualities:

- Active listener
- Empathetic
- Encouraging and supportive.
- Tolerant and respectful of individual differences.
- Knowledge of VA services and community resources and services.



Judge Michael Servitto with Veterans Treatment Court graduate Jay Slaughter in November 2018.

A New Type of Battle Buddy

Mentors cannot approach their duties nor their participant as if it is a part-time job. Once a mentor is assigned to a participant, the mentor is never off duty; they must think of themselves as a “battle buddy.” Since both the mentor and participant are veterans, they should both understand what this means. This is now a battle for the participant, with substance abuse, PTSD, mental illness or whatever issues landed them in the court system.

Mentor-Participant Boundaries

While mentors are encouraged to form a bond with the participant, there are boundaries to that relationship. A mentor IS NOT the participant's:

- X Counselor
- X Lawyer
- X Doctor
- X Banker
- X Romantic partner

The mentor is meant to be a positive influence on the participant and is expected to act appropriately, including:⁴

- X No drinking with or in sight of the participant.
- X Do not engage in behavior that is socially unacceptable.
- X Avoid discussion of religion and politics.
- X Do not enter into a business or financial arrangement with the participant.
- X Do not gamble with or loan money to the participant.
- X Do not take the participant hunting without permission from the probation officer.
- X Do not make racial, sexual or other inappropriate jokes or comments.
 - Be culturally sensitive.
 - Be respectful and loyal to the court in front of the participant.
 - Stay in control of every situation. Remember that the mentor is the leader and the one who sets examples.
 - Be sympathetic but realistic.
 - Be an advocate for the participant and assist, but within limits. Set boundaries and maintain them.
 - Provide positive, encouraging feedback to the participant.

The Need for Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL requirement to the mentor-participant relationship. The participant must understand that their conversations with their mentor, including informal conversations as well as a mentoring session, are confidential, "secured" communications. Some courts may want the mentor to keep a log of all contacts with the participant. There is an important distinction here: it is the contact itself, not the content of the conversation that is being tracked by the court. For example, "Did you talk with your participant face-to-face?" NOT "what did you talk about?" The same thing applies when in court sessions. If the judge asks the mentor how the participant is doing, the mentor's answer may be more general statements such as, "making progress," "doing well," or "getting the guidance they need."

If needed, the mentor can encourage the participant to make better choices and ask for any assistance they may need from the court team.

Important:

Threats of self-harm, suicide or harm to others are not confidential and must be reported to 911 if needed, and the Court's designee or mentor-coordinator immediately. The Veterans Crisis Line may also be used.



⁴ Examples provided by 17th District Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Coordinator.

Section III: Veteran Mentor Coordinator

Role of the Veteran Mentor Coordinator

Veteran mentor coordinators ensure the efficient and successful operation of the mentor program in a veterans treatment court. Mentor coordinators are volunteers or paid staff members and their main responsibilities are to recruit, screen, train and manage volunteer mentors. Each of the responsibilities is explained in further detail below.

Requirements and Qualifications for Mentor Coordinators

Mentor coordinators should:

- Be familiar with the veterans treatment court.
- Have strong leadership and organizational skills.
- Be tolerant and respectful of individual differences.
- Be able to devote time to the veterans treatment court.

Responsibilities of Veteran Mentor Coordinator

Recruit

Recruiting new mentors is an important and often difficult process. In many courts, the coordinator has the primary responsibility for recruiting mentors, although all members of the VTC team and current mentors are encouraged to refer highly respected and reputable veterans to the mentor program. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to recruitment. Mentor coordinators may need to try a variety of different methods in a variety of different ways.

Coordinators will want to recruit a variety of different volunteers so that they can be matched as closely as possible with the participants that come into the program. This includes having volunteers from a variety of different branches, different service eras (particularly more recent eras), and women veterans.

See the next section for additional resources and information on recruitment.

Screen

The coordinator may also handle the application and screening process of potential mentors with guidance from the court team. Not all veterans will make an appropriate mentor and the screening process is used to assist in determining this at the start. The screening should include an application, personal interview, background check and review of DD-214 before the veteran is accepted into the program.

Many courts require or encourage potential mentors, especially those who may have no knowledge of the court proceedings or of the judicial system, to observe VTC hearings prior to committing to be a mentor. Being a successful mentor requires more than going to court with their participant. There can be significant out-of-court demands on a mentor, for which they must be prepared and trained.

During the screening process, some qualified veterans may want to be involved with the program but are not able to make the time commitment required of a mentor. These veterans may be utilized as volunteers to help recruit and spread the word about the program.

See [Appendix III](#) for a template application that can be adapted as needed by each individual court to assist in screening applicants.

Train

The mentor coordinator may also be responsible for coordinating training for new mentors and providing ongoing training as needed. The training may range from practical on-the-job observation and shadowing to formal classroom or online training sessions. The trainings should include, at a minimum, an overview of the VTC process and team members, confidentiality requirements, suicide prevention and the expectations of the mentor.

See [Appendix III](#) for examples of free, online trainings resources and [Appendix IV](#) for a sample training agenda.

Match

It is the intent of the legislation that the assigned mentor should be as similar to the participant as possible in terms of age, gender, branch of service, military rank and period of military service. The coordinator can use the information provided on the application to make the matches. Each court will need a pool of volunteers to call upon as new participants enter into the program.

Manage

The mentor coordinator may be asked to manage the schedules of the mentors and act as a resource for both mentors and court staff. The management duties may include:

- Provide a schedule for all mentors with court dates, training dates and any other important events. See [Appendix II](#) for a template calendar.
- Act as a resource for the mentors by:
 - Accommodating conflicts in a veteran mentor's personal schedule.
 - Collecting and reviewing mentor logs, completed by mentors, to monitor the nature of a participant's progress in the veterans treatment court if required by the court.
- Placing mentors in touch with local accredited veteran service officers who can help appropriate veterans secure benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. These trained officers can be found in local government offices and in local service organizations such as The American Legion, The Military Order of the Purple Heart and Vietnam Veterans of American. See [Appendix I](#) for a list of Veterans Service Organizations.
- Work with the veterans treatment court staff to resolve issues and motivate participants through challenges.
 - Mentors can bring concerns regarding a participant to the attention of their mentor coordinator. The mentor coordinator is then responsible for contacting the veterans treatment court in a timely manner to ensure that the participant receives appropriate support.
 - If the mentor coordinator determines that a mentor is not adequately fulfilling their responsibilities, the coordinator must contact the court staff in a reasonable and timely manner and remove the mentor from the program.
- Maintain federal confidentiality standards.⁵
- Attend clinical and legal training programs supported or provided by the veterans treatment court.
- When required by the court, maintain access to the mentor logbook or case management notes.
- Recognizing the contributions of the mentors and thanking them for their service.

⁵ 42 CFR Part 2

Recruitment

This section provides examples, trainings and other resources to help build a successful recruitment strategy.

There are a variety of different methods to recruit volunteer mentors, including online and in-person methods. There are also many different resources available online on how to recruit and retain volunteers, some of which are listed at the end of this section. They may not be specific to working with a VTC, but still contain helpful information and ideas that can be utilized in any community.

To get started, here are some basic questions to consider:

1. What methods of recruitment can be used? Options include brochures, websites, emails, in-person briefs, radio spots, newspaper stories and newsletter articles.
2. Where can the recruitment information be shared? What are the local Veterans Service Organizations (see list at end of section)? Where are veterans likely to be found?
3. What are specific ways/places to target specific groups like women and younger veterans?

The Recruitment Message

No matter which recruitment method is used, it must have a compelling message. Explain why becoming a veteran mentor is worthy of someone's time. What is in it for them?

Ask previous mentors what encouraged them to get involved and what they would like to share.

- Make the message short, simple and direct, communicating the need for the volunteer's service and the good he/she can do.
- Stress the needs of the community for the service, but also point out the benefits the volunteer will receive. These include doing good, but there may be skills and valuable experience that the volunteer will gain.
- Always include an "ask" in the messages and materials. Be direct and ask them to volunteer as a mentor in the VTC.
- Use inclusive wording to include both male and female veterans. "Serving Our Sisters and Brothers..." "He or she may be facing...."
- Use inclusive images that include veterans of different age groups, genders and skin colors. Change the images depending on the group of veterans most in need.
- Include where people should go if they want more information. Have a central location, preferably with a website, where someone can go for more information. Post the application, brochure and whatever other materials are created on the website. People will go looking for it and it should be readily available and easy to find.
- Be clear that there is an application process and be up front about what is involved; not everyone will pass the screening process.
- Describe the expected results. People volunteer because they want to make a difference or give back to the community. How does participating in the VTC make a difference?

Focus Areas for Recruitment

As noted above, the law prefers that mentors and participants have the same military occupational

specialty, branch of service, combat era, age and gender. It can be very difficult to find mentors who are a perfect match to their participants for all these criteria.

Using an application form that captures demographic information related to the mentor’s service is a good way to gather enough information to make successful matches and will assist in keeping a record of volunteers. This can capture their branch of service, rank, campaign, time served and combat experience.

Also consider asking successful VTC graduates to stay involved in the VTC. Past participants can make very good mentors after some time away from the program.

Matching Participants with Mentors from the Same Combat Era

Some jurisdictions have encountered difficulty recruiting mentors for specific combat eras. Michigan has a higher percentage of veterans from the World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam era than the national average and a lower percentage of veterans from the Gulf Wars.⁶

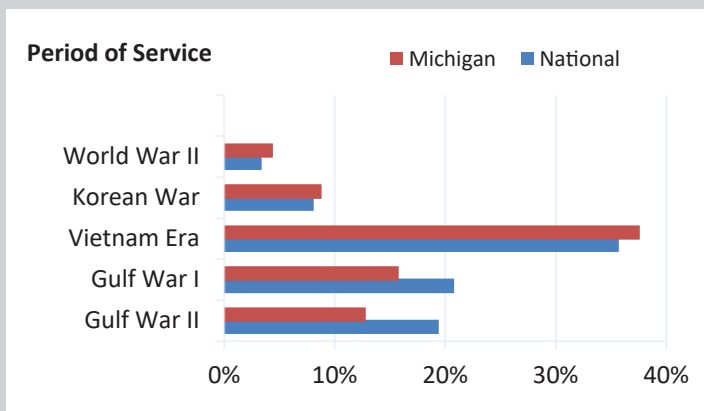


Figure 1: Michigan Veterans by Service Era

Younger Mentors

Mentor coordinators have expressed interest in recruiting veterans from the current wars to serve as mentors because they will have an innate connection to the younger participants. The primary difficulty in recruiting mentors from current wars is that many of them are trying to raise their families, hold down jobs or finish their education, while also reintegrating into civilian life. The demands of daily living may make these younger potential mentors harder to find, but their successful reacclimation makes them that much more valuable. If younger mentors are needed, use more tech savvy or online messaging to find them, with a focus on student veterans and National Guard or Reserve locations.

Female Mentors

With more women entering the military and being deployed overseas, returning female service members will be impacted by the same mental health and substance abuse issues as their male counterparts. Additionally, if a female participant has a history of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and/or a history of physical or sexual abuse in civilian life, placing her with a male mentor could

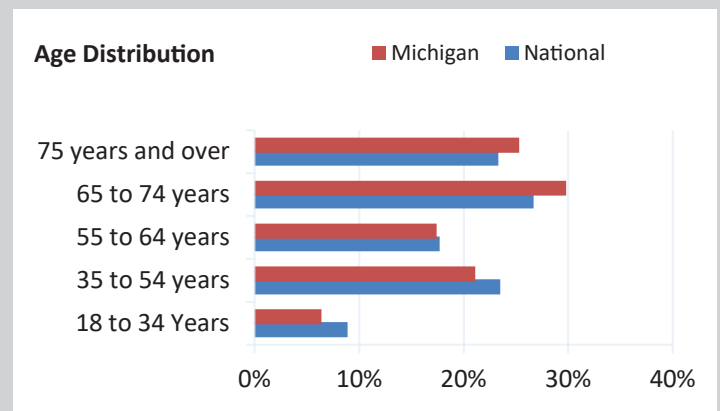


Figure 2: Michigan Veterans by Age

⁶ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Study https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Michigan.pdf (Last visited 22 January 2019)

be detrimental to her successful completion of the VTC program.

Even when the court does not have any current female participants, the mentor coordinator should be actively recruiting female veterans to have a pool of prospective female mentors who are ready to serve.

Spreading the Word In Person

Go where the best candidates are most likely to be found. This means going to places where veterans congregate. Also, look at other organizations that utilize volunteers. If someone is already volunteering, they may be willing to volunteer for the VTC, too.

Activities to assist in recruiting mentors include:

- Have experienced mentors and/or VTC graduates tell their personal stories – What motivated them to get involved? What have they gotten out of it? Why should others join?
- Have probation officers and/or judges share their stories. How have veteran mentors helped in the community? Why do they need more?
- Capture these personal stories in writing to use in recruitment materials, to put on the website or for a local newspaper to write a feature article.
- Contact a local Veterans Service Organizations (see [Appendix I](#) for a list) and ask to speak at one of their meetings.
- Contact the regional coordinator of the Veterans Community Action Team (see [Appendix I](#) for a list) and ask to speak at one of their meetings.
- Share information with local National Guard and Reserve units.
- Contact local corporations that have veteran

resource groups, request that veteran employees volunteer with the VTC.

- Post flyers on community bulletin boards.
- Provide informational classes to local service and civic groups.
- Advertise in local newspapers.
- Continually seek out organizations/groups with veteran affiliations that would allow a VTC team member to discuss the program at a regularly scheduled meeting.
- Advertise VTCs and the need for mentors within the legal community (there is still a low level of awareness of how and where VTCs operate).
- One potential place to recruit mentors, especially younger veterans, is to contact the Student Veterans Organization, veteran network, or veteran resource center at local colleges and universities. The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency website (www.michiganveterans.com) lists the schools in Michigan that have been recognized as Veteran-Friendly Schools. An online search of the school name and “veteran” should provide a link to the school’s veteran website. Most websites include a point of contact for the school. Ask to send out information or present to the student veterans to both share information about the VTCs and to recruit volunteers.

Spreading the Word Online

Online recruitment tools are a valuable alternative and complement to in-person recruitment efforts. Online resources can vary greatly depending on the resources available to the VTC.

Most city, county and township governments have websites. Work with the website administrator to request a dedicated webpage for the VTC where the contact information and specifics

of the court can be posted. Include eligibility criteria, applications and forms for participants and mentors and veteran resources. Request a dedicated webpage for mentors that can list court dates, training dates, resources, etc. Also, be sure to request a direct link on the homepage of the county or township.

Some city, county and township governments also have Facebook or other social media accounts. With the approval of the court administrator, submit information for posting. Some sample posts could be:

- Did you know that <County Name> has a veterans treatment court? This special court for veterans steers them toward treatment, instead of incarceration. Learn more here (link to the webpage).
- Are you a veteran looking to serve fellow veterans? Learn more about become a veteran mentor with the <Court Name> Veterans Treatment Court. Learn more here (link to the webpage).

See [Appendix V](#) for online recruitment examples.

Training and Volunteer Management Resources for Mentor Coordinators

There are several online resources that coordinators may find very useful, especially if they are new to the role:

- PsychArmor Institute has several free online courses for volunteers that work with veterans.

- Volunteer Recruitment and Screening: <https://psycharmor.org/courses/recruiting-screening-engaging-volunteers/>
- Basics of Volunteer Management: <https://psycharmor.org/courses/basics-volunteer-management/>
- The Corporation for National & Community Service and HandsOn Network has a Volunteer Management Guidebook that covers recruitment, scheduling, retention and recognition of volunteers, available at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/pol-website/media/uploaded-files/Volunteer%20Management%20Guidebook.pdf>

In addition, see [Appendix III](#) for training resources that can be used by either coordinators or mentors.

Other Considerations

Transportation

Access to transportation can be difficult for some VTC participants. Lack of public transportation, loss of driving privileges and limited funding to pay for transportation can all be issues. Depending on resources, some courts may be able to provide bus fare or gas cards to offset these expenses for participants. The Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center (800-MICH-VET, or 800-642-4838) may have suggestions for transportation resources in the area. Some Veterans Service Organizations, such as the DAV (Disabled American Veterans), may be able to provide some transportation services for veterans who also have a disability. Depending on the court, a mentor may be able to transport the participant when necessary. This option should only be utilized if the mentor feels comfortable and after all other public transportation options have been exhausted because of liability concerns.⁷

⁷ Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan: A Manual for Judges, page 18: <https://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/admin/op/problem-solving-courts/SiteAnalyticsReports/VTC%20Manual%20for%20Judges.pdf>



Judge Richard Ball presented a challenge coin to Benicio Costello, son of graduate Tony Costello, at the 54B District Veterans Treatment Court Graduation held in February 2019. Also pictured, left to right, Jon Caterino (mentor), Jaimie Costello (Tony's wife), Isabelle Phillips (daughter) and Tony Costello (graduate).

Funding

Some VTC mentoring programs have found it beneficial to create a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in order to facilitate the receipt of public and private grants. It is important to keep in mind that judges and court staff must adhere to ethical canons regarding fundraising. It is recommended to keep the nonprofit organization completely separate from court operations and personnel.⁸

Evaluation

No matter the program, it is always a good idea to assure it is doing well and to see what improvements can be made. One way to do this is through evaluation. Mentor coordinators can request feedback from both mentors and participants. It is important to take their feedback into consideration and discuss any possible changes with the VTC team. See [Appendix II](#) for a template feedback forms for participants and mentors.

Conclusion

No matter the conflict in which a veteran served, they may face a variety of challenges after their time in uniform. Some of those challenges may result in a veteran being involved in the criminal justice system. VTCs are a specialized judicial process that recognizes the unique circumstances of our veterans. The practice and experience of our VTCs has demonstrated that the mentor program greatly assists participants to successfully complete the VTC program. The MVAA is dedicated to assisting veterans wherever needed, including veteran justice. This manual is provided by the MVAA to assist the VTCs and their dedicated staff and volunteers in diverting veterans from the traditional justice system and to give them treatment and tools for rehabilitation and readjustment.

⁸ Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan: A Manual for Judges, page 6: <https://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/admin/op/problem-solving-courts/SiteAnalyticsReports/VTC%20Manual%20for%20Judges.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix I: Resources

Veterans Treatment Court Information

- Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court: Buffalo Veteran Mentor Group
 - <http://buffaloveteranstreatmentcourt.org/>
- Justice for Vets
 - <https://justiceforvets.org/>
- Michigan Courts, Veterans Treatment Courts
 - <http://courts.mi.gov/administration/admin/op/problem-solving-courts/pages/veterans-treatment-court.aspx>
- National Drug Court Resource Center
 - <https://ndcrc.org/>
- Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan: A Manual for Judges
 - <http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/admin/op/problem-solving-courts/SiteAnalyticsReports/VTC%20Manual%20for%20Judges.pdf>
- Veterans Treatment Court Standards, Best Practices, and Promising Practices
 - <https://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/bestpractice/VTC-BPManual.pdf>
- Veterans Justice Outreach Program
 - <https://www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp#contacts>

Veteran & Community Resources

- Michigan 2-1-1
 - <https://www.mi211.org/>
 - A free service that connects Michigan residents with help and answers from thousands of health and human services agencies and resources. Available 24/7.

- Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center
 - 1-800-MICH-VET (1-800-624-4838)
 - <https://www.michiganveterans.com/>
- Veterans Community Action Teams (VCATS)
 - <https://www.michiganveterans.com/p/Veterans-Community-Action-Teams>
- Women Veterans Call Center
 - 855-VAWOMEN (855-829-6636)
 - <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/programoverview/wvcc.asp>

Employment Resources

- Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency – Certified Veteran-Friendly Employers
 - <https://www.michiganveterans.com/p/Certified-Veteran-Friendly-Employers>
- Michigan Works! (For Job Seekers)
 - <http://www.michiganworks.org/>
- Pure Michigan Talent Connect – Veterans
 - <https://www.mitalent.org/veteran>

Veterans Service Organizations

- AmVets of Michigan (American Veterans)
 - <http://www.amvetstmichigan.org/>
 - District Information: <http://www.amvetstmichigan.org/about/commander-update/district-information/>
- County Veterans Affairs Office
 - <https://www.michiganveterans.com/find-benefits-counselor>
- DAV (Disabled American Veterans)
 - <https://www.dav.org/>
 - Find Your Local Office: <https://www.dav.org/veterans/find-your-local-office/>

- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)
 - <https://iava.org/>
- Marine Corps League
 - <http://www.michiganmarines.org/>
 - Find a Detachment: <http://www.michiganmarines.org/find-a-detachment/>
- Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency
 - <https://www.michiganveterans.com/>
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
 - <http://www.purpleheartmi.com/>
- Team Red White and Blue
 - <https://www.teamrwb.org/>
- The American Legion Department of Michigan
 - <https://www.michiganlegion.org/>
 - Zone/District Maps: <https://www.michiganlegion.org/zone-district-maps>
- Veteran Community Action Teams (VCATS)
 - <https://www.michiganveterans.com/p/Veterans-Community-Action-Teams>
- Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
 - <https://www.vfw.org/>
 - Find a Post: <https://www.vfw.org/find-a-post>

Appendix II: Training Resources

Free Online Training Options

PsychArmor Institute

<https://psycharmor.org/>

PsychArmor Institute provides free online education and support to all Americans who work with, live with or care for military service members, veterans and their families. All users need to register to access the trainings, but there is no cost involved. There is an entire section that includes courses for volunteers and nonprofits who support veterans. Some courses that may be helpful to include in the mentor training are:

- Advanced De-escalation Techniques for Volunteers
- Helping Others Hold On (Suicide Prevention)
- Invisible Wounds of War: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, Substance Use Disorder, Depression
- S.A.V.E. (Suicide Prevention)
- Setting Volunteer Boundaries
- Trauma Informed Interactions with Veterans

Treatment Courts Online

<https://treatmentcourts.org/>

Treatment Courts Online was developed by the Center for Court Innovation to share resources with the justice field about treatment courts. Courses are free, but registration is required.

- Confidentiality: 42 CFR and HIPAA
- Mental Illness, Traumatic Brain Injury and Substance Abuse

- The videos in this lesson are designed to teach the neurobiology of trauma, understand post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- Role of the VHA Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist
- Trauma Informed Care – Strategies for the Clinician Working with the Veteran Population
- Veterans Health Administration

Justice for Vets

<https://justiceforvets.org/>

Justice for Vets is a division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and provides training and technical assistance to help communities bring together local, state and federal resources to directly serve veterans involved in the justice system due to mental health disorders, trauma and substance use.

- Volunteer Veteran Mentors: Recruit – Train – Maintain:
<https://justiceforvets.org/resources/veteran-mentors/mentor-bootcamp-training/>

Suicide Prevention

All mentors must know the risk factors for suicide and what to do if someone shares thoughts of suicide with them. There are many different trainings available online and in person.

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention-Talk Saves Lives

- <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/talk-saves-lives-introduction-suicide-prevention/>
- #BeThere for Veterans and Service Members
 - https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/
- Mental Health First Aid Training
 - <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>
- Talking With a Veteran in Crisis (Handout), also included on the next page.
 - <https://www.va.gov/ve/docs/talkingWithVeteranInCrisisHandout.pdf>
- Veterans Crisis Line
 - <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
 - The Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255, Press 1) is a confidential support line available every day, 24/7. The line is available for all veterans, service members and their family and friends.



U.S. Department
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TALKING WITH A VETERAN IN CRISIS

You don't have to be an expert to ask if someone is going through a difficult time or having thoughts of suicide. If you notice changes in a Veteran's behavior or moods and you think they might be in crisis, it's time to respond. The simple act of having a conversation can help save a life.

Here are some ways to approach a conversation with a Veteran who may be suicidal.

First, assess the situation to determine if the Veteran may be in **imminent danger**. Check to see if there are any harmful objects in the area, such as firearms, sharp objects, or lethal drugs. Those at the highest risk for suicide often have a specific suicide plan, the means to carry out the plan, a time set for doing it, and an intention of following through with it.

Asking whether a Veteran is having thoughts of self-harm or suicide may seem extreme, but it is important. Although many people may not show clear signs of intent to harm themselves before doing so, they will likely answer direct questions about their intentions when asked. **Remember, asking if someone is having suicidal thoughts will not give them the idea or increase their risk.**

However, some of those who are at risk may not admit that they plan to attempt suicide. In case the Veteran won't talk about it, be sure to look for warning signs in the box to the right.

Safety Issues:

If you believe a Veteran is at high risk and has already harmed himself or herself, you need to call local emergency services at 911.

- **Never** negotiate with someone who has a gun. Get to safety and **call 911**.
- If the Veteran has taken pills or harmed himself or herself in some way, **call 911**.

Veterans who are in emotional distress and are showing warning signs for suicide can be connected to the 24-hour **Veterans Crisis Line**: Call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, use the **online chat**, or **text to 838255**. Caring, specially trained responders are available to provide free, **confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year**. Responders are available to speak to Veterans and their caregivers, family members, or friends.

Warning Signs of Imminent Suicide Risk

Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities that could lead to death, such as driving fast or running red lights — seemingly without thinking

Showing violent behavior such as punching holes in walls, getting into fights, or engaging in self-destructive violence; feeling rage or uncontrolled anger; or seeking revenge

Giving away prized possessions, putting affairs in order, tying up loose ends, and/or making out a will

Seeking access to firearms, pills, or other means of harming oneself

If you and/or the Veteran are not in imminent danger, start a conversation to help the Veteran open up and to find out how you might be able to help. You can ask questions such as:

- "When did you first start feeling like this?"
- "Did something happen that made you begin to feel this way?"

When responding to answers from a Veteran, remember that simple, encouraging feedback goes a long way in showing support and encouraging help-seeking:

- "You're not alone, even if you feel like you are. I'm here for you, and I want to help you in any way I can."
- "It may not seem possible right now, but the way you're feeling will change."
- "I might not be able to understand exactly what you're going through or how you feel, but I care about you and want to help."

Even for Veterans who do not appear to be suicidal, it is important to direct them to resources to help them face mental health challenges and more.

For more information about the Veterans Crisis Line, visit VeteransCrisisLine.net

For more information about VA's mental health resources, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov

For access to more than 400 stories of strength and recovery from Veterans and their family members, visit MakeTheConnection.net



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



ANSWERING THE CALL

The simple act of talking with a Veteran by phone can help save a life. For a Veteran in crisis — whose emotional struggles and health challenges may lead to thoughts of suicide — these conversations can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved. When talking to a Veteran, listen for signs of distress or other clues that might indicate that they need immediate help.

Determine if the caller is in distress.

1. Remain **calm** and **listen**.

2. **Ask the question:** "Sometimes when people are (upset/angry/in pain/etc.) they think about suicide. Are you thinking about killing yourself or someone else?"

NO
NOT suicidal,
homicidal, or
in crisis

YES
Suicidal, homicidal, or in crisis

3. Route caller to appropriate local resources.

You can find resources in your area, including local Suicide Prevention Coordinators and crisis centers, using our Resource Locator here:
[VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ResourceLocator)

3. Assess whether the Veteran is at **imminent risk**, and determine if he or she has already inflicted self-harm or injured others or has an immediate plan to do so, with access to means.

Signs of Distress:

- Emotional (crying, loud, yelling)
- Making concerning statements like:
 - My family would be better off if I wasn't here.
 - I can't go on like this.
 - No one can help me.

If you are a staff member of a Veterans Service Organization, suicide prevention organization, or another type of support group:

- a. Notify your supervisor (or other staff) of the situation.
- b. Try to obtain the Veteran's phone number, name, and location.
- c. Have your supervisor (or other staff) immediately contact 911 for a safety check.
- d. Remain on the phone with the caller until emergency personnel arrive.

If you work for a support organization or you are a friend, family member, or acquaintance of the Veteran:

- a. Try to find out where the Veteran is located and whether anyone else is nearby.
- b. Verify the Veteran's phone number and, if possible, the last four digits of their Social Security number.
- c. **Explain** that you will conference a Veterans Crisis Line staff member into the call.
- d. **Call 1-800-273-8255, Press 1.**
- e. **Complete a warm transfer:** When the VCL responder answers, identify yourself, explain what is going on, and provide the Veteran's information.
- f. **Inform the Veteran** that you will hang up and he or she is in good hands with the VCL responder.
- g. **Make sure the Veteran is on the call with the VCL responder** before hanging up.
- h. If you work for a VSO, a suicide prevention organization, or similar, notify your supervisor per facility procedure or protocol.

For more information about the Veterans Crisis Line, visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

For more information about VA's mental health resources, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov

For access to more than 400 stories of strength and recovery from Veterans and their family members, visit [MakeTheConnection.net](https://www.maketheconnection.net)

Appendix III: Mentor Coordinator Tools

Mentor Application Template

Michigan Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Application

Thank you for your interest in serving as a mentor for the Veterans Treatment Court in Michigan. Your responses on this form will be used to select you for training and eventual appointment as a volunteer mentor for a participant in the Veterans Treatment Court. Selection will be made based on the needs of the court, so you may not be called for training immediately.

SECTION 1 – Disclosure/Expectations

Volunteer mentors will be expected to work closely and regularly with your assigned participant. There is no specific hour requirement but try for a phone call each week and an in-person meeting once per month. Attending at least on court session each month with your participant is HIGHLY DESIRABLE. Mentors must attend initial training, as well as 1-3 additional short training meetings during the course of the year. Mentors will push information about their participant to the Mentor Coordinator on a regular basis (generally by email). Mentors will undergo a background check and be expected to sign & obey a confidentiality agreement.

SECTION 2 – Demographics/Personal Information

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ M.I.: _____

Best contact phone: _____ Email: _____

Home Address: _____

CIRCLE AS APPLICABLE BELOW (if more than one applies, circle both). These criteria will be used to match you with a participant in the Veterans Treatment Court, so please be sensible in what you circle. These are broad categories used to roughly match similar veterans. You are not required to disclose any information you choose not to, but the more accurately you describe your service and present situation, the more likely we can match you with a veteran who could use your help.

SERVICE	DUTY	GENDER	CAMPAIGN**	RANK	TIME	COMBAT
Army	Active*	Female	Korea	Enlisted	1-4 yrs	Purple Heart
Navy	Reserve	Male	Vietnam	Warrant	5-10 yrs	I fired on the enemy
Air Force	Guard	Other	Cold War	Officer	10+ yrs	I took incoming fire
Marines			Desert Storm			I drew combat pay
Coast Guard			Pre-GWOT '93-00			
			GWOT			

*Active is defined as serving a period of active duty of 180 days or more. It does not include AT or ADT. **Circle for the primary period(s) of your service regardless of campaign medals awarded or not. There are no official campaign medals for Cold War and Pre-GWOT. GWOT includes ICM, ACM, and GWOTEM.

EDUCATION	STATUS	CHILDREN	WORK	AGE	VA HEALTHCARE	Describe MOS/specialty below:
H.S./GED	Single	Yes, young	Hourly	20s	Getting VA Treatment now	(ex. "Infantry", "subs/electronic tech", "helicopter repair")
Associates	Married	Yes, grown	Salaried	30s	Treated at VA	
Bachelors	Divorced	None	Full Time	40s	Have VA ID Card	
Master	Widowed		Part Time	50s		
Doctoral	Engaged		Irregular Shifts	60+		
			Retired			

SECTION 3 – Certifications

I certify that the information on this form is correct and true to the best of my knowledge.

I certify that I will attend required training if selected, and if trained and appointed as a mentor I will make a full and good-faith effort to serve as a mentor for at least 6 months, and preferably for at least the duration of my veteran's time in the Veterans Treatment Court.

Mentor Candidate Signature

____/____/____
Date

Adapted from the Washtenaw County Veterans Treatment Court Volunteer Mentor Candidate Application Form

Mentor Calendar Template – Example

2019							VTC MENTOR CALENDAR							COURT DATES		EXAMPLE	
JANUARY							FEBRUARY							JANUARY		JULY	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	1/11 @ 9:30 am		7/5 @ 9:30 am	
		1	2	3	4	5	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1/25 @ 9:30 am		7/19 @ 9:30 am	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Training, 1/26 @ 2:00 pm			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	17	18	19	20	21	22	23				
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	24	25	26	27	28						
27	28	29	30	31													
MARCH							APRIL							FEBRUARY		AUGUST	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	2/8 @ 9:30 am		8/9 @ 9:30 am	
					1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6	2/22 @ 9:30 am		8/23 @ 9:30 am	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13				
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20				
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27				
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30								
31																	
MAY							JUNE							MARCH		SEPTEMBER	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	3/8 @ 9:30 am		9/13 @ 9:30 am	
			1	2	3	4								3/22 @ 9:30 am		9/27 @ 9:30 am	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Training, 3/13 @ 6 pm		Training, 9/28 @ 9:00 am	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15				
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22				
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29				
							30										
JULY							AUGUST							APRIL		OCTOBER	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	4/12 @ 9:30 am		10/11 @ 9:30 am	
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3	4/26 @ 9:30 am		10/25 @ 9:30 am	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17				
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24				
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	31				
SEPTEMBER							OCTOBER							MAY		NOVEMBER	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	5/10 @ 9:30 am		11/8 @ 9:30 am	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5	5/24 @ 9:30 am		11/15 @ 9:30 am	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12				
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19				
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26				
29	30						27	28	29	30	31						
NOVEMBER							DECEMBER							JUNE		DECEMBER	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	6/14 @ 9:30 am		12/13 @ 9:30 am	
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	6/21 @ 9:30 am		NO COURT on 12/27	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14			Training, 12/4 @ 6 pm	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21				
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28				
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31								

State of Michigan Holidays

CONTACT INFORMATION

Veteran Participant

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Mentor Coordinator

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist

Name:

Phone:

Email:

VETERANS CRISIS LINE

1-800-273-8255 Press 1

Mentor Calendar Template – Blank

2019 VTC MENTOR CALENDAR COURT DATES EXAMPLE

JANUARY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

FEBRUARY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

MARCH

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

APRIL

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 2 3 4 5 6					
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 2 3 4			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 2 3	4 5 6				
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 2 3		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 3 4 5 6 7					
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

OCTOBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 2 3 4 5				
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

NOVEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 2	
3	4 5 6 7 8 9					
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 29	30	

DECEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 25	26	27	28	
29	30	31				

State of Michigan Holidays

JANUARY

JULY

FEBRUARY

AUGUST

MARCH

SEPTEMBER

APRIL

OCTOBER

MAY

NOVEMBER

JUNE

DECEMBER

CONTACT INFORMATION

Veteran Participant

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mentor Coordinator

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

VETERANS CRISIS LINE

1-800-273-8255 Press 1

VTC Participant Feedback Form

VTC Participant Feedback Form

Congratulations on graduating from the veterans treatment court! Please complete this form to provide feedback to the Court. The information you give us will be used to shape the program going forward and your input is important. We appreciate your time and effort. Thank you.

1. What worked well with the program?

2. What DID NOT work with the program?

3. What suggestions do you have to improve the court processes and mentor experience?

4. Are you interested in becoming a mentor? Yes No

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

VTC Mentor Feedback Form

VTC Mentor Feedback Form

Thank you for your time and commitment to the veterans treatment court. Please complete this form to provide feedback to the Court. The information you give us will be used to shape the program going forward and your input is important. Thank you.

1. What worked well with the program?

2. What DID NOT work with the program?

3. What suggestions do you have to improve the court processes and mentor experience?

If you know of any other veterans who may be interested in becoming a mentor, please refer them to your mentor coordinator.

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Appendix IV: Sample Mentor Training Agenda

Sample Agenda: The training will vary by court, but should include elements of the following:⁹

- Explanation of the role of VTCs.
 - The history and purpose of VTCs.
 - The goals and policies.
- The Key Components of Treatment Courts.
 - Define key players and their roles and the mentors' interaction.
- The role of the mentor in the VTC process.
 - Job description.
 - Time and effort expectations.
 - Issues of discretion, confidentiality and legal obligation.
 - Concerns of mentors.
- Suicide Prevention.
- Red flags for serious mental health issues/ suicide risk.

Mentor training may also include any of the following hands-on training:

- Observe sessions of court.
- Shadow other mentoring sessions with different mentors.
- Lead up to three mentoring sessions while being observed by the mentor coordinator or their designee.
- Discuss the experience of leading the three mentoring sessions with the mentor coordinator.

Some courts include role play as part of their training program. These “role plays” can be an integral part of the training because the mentor will get a feel for how the relationship between the mentor and participant may play out by seeing seasoned mentors respond to actual situations they have encountered.

Appendix V: Online Recruitment Examples

Here are just a few examples of webpages for different Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan. Some courts have direct links on the main website and webpages dedicated to the VTC.

Veteran Mentors in 17th District Court, Redford Township
www.17thvetmentorsredford.co

The 17th District Court in Redford Township maintains its own website for mentors, which includes an online application, a recruitment video, data and reports about VTC and information on legal resources for veterans and their families.

Ingham County Veterans Treatment Court
<https://cityofeastlansing.com/1271/Veterans-Treatment-Court>

The Ingham County Veterans Treatment Court includes eligibility criteria, participant applications and forms, mentor applications and forms, and veteran resources.

West Michigan Regional Veterans Treatment Court
<http://www.wmrvtc.com/>

The West Michigan Regional Veterans Treatment Court includes a link to a newspaper article about a recent graduation, links to forms and documents for veteran participants and a link for information on becoming a mentor.

⁹ The proposed topics and methods for mentor training are derived from the Washtenaw County VTC Mentor Training Packet, developed for the Court by Dr. Eric Fretz.

**10th District Veterans Treatment Court,
Calhoun County**

www.calhouncountymi.gov/government/district_court/veterans_treatment_court

The 10th District Veterans Treatment Court in Calhoun County provides eligibility criteria, contact information and links to a Veterans Resource Guide and Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Application.

16th Judicial Circuit Court, Macomb County

<https://circuitcourt.macombgov.org/>

CircuitCourt-Home

<http://vetcourt.macombgov.org/VetsCourt-Home>

The 16th Judicial Circuit Court in Macomb County has a link to each of their specialty courts, including the Veterans Treatment Court, which links to the VTC homepage.



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