



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Cooley Law School



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CONTACT:

Tyler Lecceadone

SeyferthPR

1-800-435-9539

Lecceadone@seyferthpr.com

**STATE SUPREME COURT, MICHIGAN VETERANS AFFAIRS AGENCY AND WMU-COOLEY
CREATE NEW RESOURCE FOR VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS**

LANSING, Mich. – May 16, 2019 – WMU-Cooley Law School partnered with the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) and the Michigan Supreme Court (MSC) to introduce a new resource available to mentors and mentor coordinators working with veterans assigned to the state’s Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC). “Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan: A Manual for Mentors and Mentor Coordinators” is a compilation of best practices used to address the needs of veterans who are on a journey to recovery from addiction, serious mental illness and/or co-occurring disorders after being confronted with non-violent criminal charges.

Karen McCloskey, health strategy analyst at the MVAA, said one unique aspect of the Veterans Treatment Courts is the veteran mentors.

“These volunteers dedicate their time to help fellow veterans through a difficult period,” said McCloskey. “This manual is intended to help mentors understand their roles within the Veterans Treatment Court to further assist the veteran they are supporting,”

In 2013, the Michigan Legislature created a broad set of standards that allowed local courts to establish VTCs as alternatives for veterans accused of certain crimes. Michigan is a national leader in the number of existing VTCs with 27 across the state.

“After attending many veterans treatment courts graduations across Michigan, I have seen living proof that these programs truly solve problems and save lives,” said Justice Elizabeth T. Clement, who is the MSC liaison to problem-solving courts. “But these successes couldn’t happen without a key element: the veterans who volunteer their time to be paired with vet court participants and help them successfully navigate their way back into civilian society. Their sacrifices for our country and contributions to our courts are deeply valued, and we owe it to them to give them the tools they need to succeed.”

Similar to drug and mental health problem-solving courts, VTCs focus on recovery issues and adherence to law-abiding behavior by offering veterans access to services including mentoring, mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment.

“Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan: A Manual for Mentors and Mentor Coordinators” was developed following multiple interviews with mentor and mentor coordinators across the state of Michigan conducted by WMU-Cooley Law School students. Other resources used in the development of the manual include best practices from the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court, Tulsa Veterans Treatment Court, and Justice for Vets. The manual was edited by the MVAA and WMU-Cooley Associate Dean and retired Brigadier General Michael C. H. McDaniel .

"The success of Veteran's Treatment Courts is due not just to the alternative sentencing and focused resources. In great part, it is due its unique resource - the use of fellow veterans as mentors," said McDaniel. "A veteran that commits a non-violent crime in Michigan will be teamed with a mentor of similar rank, branch of service and, if possible, age. Having a mentor who has already walked the same walk as the veteran builds trust more quickly. The mentor, having shared similar military experience and knowing the same culture, can provide support and advice which is heard and heeded."

MSC provides advice and support to 242 trial courts statewide regarding the adoption of best practices to improve service to the public. In particular, MSC analysts collect data regarding court performance (such as recidivism rates) and use the data to provide guidance on improving outcomes.

Justice Clement added that special thanks also must be given to those who put the manual together: Tracie Lemon; Julie Lawler-Hoyle; John O'Neill; Natalie McPherson; and Jeremy Tatum and Desiree Benedict at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School, who, under the direction of Associate Dean Michael McDaniel, conducted the multiple interviews used to create this important resource to help Michigan's veterans.

More information about the Veterans Treatment Court manual and VTCs is available at courts.mi.gov/vetcourt.

About Western Michigan University Cooley Law School: WMU-Cooley Law School resulted from the 2014 affiliation that combined WMU's status as a nationally-ranked, public, comprehensive research university with the commitment to practical legal education of an independent, non-profit, national law school. WMU-Cooley is accredited by both the American Bar Association and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Since the law school's founding in 1972, WMU-Cooley has provided more than 20,000 graduates with the practical skills necessary for a seamless transition from academia to the real world. WMU-Cooley enrolls classes year-round at its Lansing, Auburn Hills, and Grand Rapids, Michigan campuses, Tampa Bay, Florida campus, and its Kalamazoo location. Western and WMU-Cooley Law School operate as independent institutions with their own governance structure and separate fiduciary responsibilities.

About the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency: Created by Executive Order in 2013, MVAA's mission is to be the central coordinating agency, providing support, care, advocacy and service to veterans and their families. The Agency works with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, state departments, county agencies, and community and veterans service organizations throughout the state. The Agency operates the Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center, a 24/7/365 call center in partnership with Michigan 211. By calling 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838)

veterans, family members and service providers can get information and access a comprehensive network of resources and services. Learn more at MichiganVeterans.com or call 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838).

About the Michigan Supreme Court: Founded in 1836, the Supreme Court is Michigan's court of last resort, consisting of seven justices. Each year, the Supreme Court receives over 2,000 applications for leave to appeal from litigants primarily seeking review of decisions by the Michigan Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court's authority to hear cases is discretionary. The Court grants leave to those cases of greatest complexity and public import, where additional briefing and oral argument are essential to reaching a just outcome. In addition to its judicial duties, the Supreme Court is responsible for the general administrative supervision of all courts in the state, through its State Court Administrative Office. The Supreme Court also establishes rules for practice and procedure in all courts. For more information, visit www.courts.mi.gov.

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