

VETERAN MENTOR HANDBOOK



7TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF DOUGLAS COUNTY

UPDATED NOVEMBER 2025

VTC TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

The VTC team is an interdisciplinary and interagency group, brought together for the purpose of supporting justice involved veterans as they seek recovery

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Overview of the Veterans Treatment Court

The Douglas County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) was founded in 2025. Our goal is to promote public safety by helping veterans face challenges in their lives. We do that by supporting veterans in accessing mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and other services in our community.

VTC is a collaborative effort between the Eastern KS VA Health System, Seventh Judicial District of Kansas, Contracted Defense Counsel, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Lawrence Police Department, Bert Nash CMHC, the KU School of Law's Veterans Legal Services Clinic, and DCCCA.

VTC is a voluntary program. Participants enter a plea agreement in their case and complete the five milestones of VTC over 15-18 months before graduation from the program. The VTC judge may then dismiss the charges in the participant's case.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Seventh Judicial District of Kansas VTC (VTC) is to empower United States Veterans in building meaningful, productive, and law-abiding lives by connecting them with resources and treatment options to reach their full potential as members of our community.

CHANGES IN THE VTC TEAM

The VTC Team has the same members week to week. If someone leaves the team, or a new person joins, we will tell all participants, mentors, and VTC team members as soon as possible. The VTC Program Coordinator will give you a new phone list with the updates.

UPDATES TO THE VETERAN MENTOR HANDBOOK

The rules and policies in this handbook, and other VTC documents, may change over time. Changes will be reviewed by the VTC team before being added to this handbook. If any changes are made that impact mentors and participants, all mentors will be given an updated copy with an explanation of the changes. Any concerns related to changes or VTC policies can be directed to the VTC Program Coordinator.

The Mentor Component

Mentors are an essential part of the Douglas County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) Program. You are part of the support team that guides participants to enter and complete

timely and appropriate treatment for physical, psychological and substance abuse conditions.

The mentorship relationship promotes and fosters the belief that the veteran participant can accomplish his or her goals in treatment, and that the veteran participant is not alone. The mentor is asked to be present and ready to serve during Veterans Treatment Court session when possible. Mentors are welcome at any court hearing; however, they are not required to attend every court session of their participant. The mentor is encouraged to be in court at time of phase up, hearings, or graduation.

Veteran Mentors may share a vast array of common life experiences with participants. These common experiences allow Veteran Mentors to effectively engage participants, as a resource and guide to navigating the courts, help participants maintain focus on their treatment, assist participants in navigating the challenges of adjusting to a healthy and productive civilian lifestyle and help veteran participants to graduate from Veterans Treatment Court.

The mentor component is not a formal structure of the court. It is a separate entity which the court allows to be part of its VTC program. The component has an identified leader, Mentor Coordinator, who serves in the position as liaison between the mentor component and the VTC Program. The mentor component maintains its integrity by ensuring there is never the practice, impression, or perception that it or its individual volunteers have any influence on legal proceedings or outcomes regarding individual mentees.

THE COURT COORDINATOR'S ROLE

Many Veterans Treatment Courts have a mentor coordinator who serves in the position as liaison between the mentor component and the VTC Program. Douglas County VTC does not currently have a mentor coordinator. In the absence of that role, the VTC Coordinator will serve as a liaison between the mentors and the VTC Team.

The VTC Court Coordinator is responsible for recruiting, training, and ensuring the wellness of the mentors within the program. The VTC Court Coordinator help you navigate any concerns, conflicts, or needs you may have during your time as a mentor. VTC Court Coordinator also works to provide community outreach and engagement activities as well as fund raising.

YOUR ROLE AS A MENTOR

Veteran Mentors provide support by engaging, encouraging, and empowering their mentees throughout their time in the VTC program. Mentors are asked to dedicate a minimum of one

hour a week to providing time in and out of court with their mentee. Mentors function as a coach, a guide, a role model, and an advocate for the mentee. They listen to the concerns and problems of mentees and assist them in finding solutions. Mentors provide supportive feedback to mentees and highlight their successes. Mentors understand the roles of other support team members, and "fill the gap" to help keep the mentee moving towards successful completion of the VTC program. As participants navigate the rigorous and sometimes overwhelming treatment process, the mentor is by their side, ensuring we "Leave No Veteran Behind."

VTC MENTOR CRITERIA

- Be a United States Military Veteran
- Be discharged/released with dispositions other than dishonorable
- Not currently on probation for any crime (felony or misdemeanor). Have no felony or misdemeanor convictions within the last 3 years
- Complete Interview with VTC Coordinator
- Attend a VTC court session
- Commit to the VTC Mentoring Program for 18 months,
- Be willing to spend at least 1 hour a week with the mentee, and meet both inside and outside of the courthouse
- Sign the Mentor Agreement

PREFERRED SKILLS AND ABILITIES OF A MENTOR INCLUDE...

- Understands decorum and dressing for court
- Maintain a level of confidentiality and trust with participants.
- Listening without judgment.
- Make general suggestions (direct and guide, do not try to become the pro).
- Be a role model and advocate.
- Share knowledge of community resources.
- Be patient, as the mentee may be resistant to trusting or interacting with the mentor.
- Understand that the relationship will take hard work and patience.
- Able to model selfcare and integrity

EXPECTATIONS AROUND BOUNDARIES

Mentors are encouraged to form a bond of trust and mutual respect with their mentee, however there are boundaries to that relationship. An important part of being a mentor is

modeling appropriate boundaries with your mentee. If you have concerns about boundaries, please discuss it with the VTC coordinator.

A MENTOR IS **NOT** THE MENTEE'S:

Therapist, Drill Sergeant, Lawyer, Doctor, Banker, or Romantic Partner

Be a positive influence...

The mentor is meant to have a positive influence on the mentee and is expected to act appropriately, including:

1. No drinking or utilizing prohibited drugs with or in sight of the mentee.
2. Do not engage in behavior that is socially unacceptable.
3. Avoid discussions of religion and politics
4. Do not enter a business or financial arrangements with the mentee.
5. Do not gamble with or loan money to the mentee.
6. Do not make racial, sexual, or other inappropriate comments.
7. Be culturally sensitive.
8. Be respectful and loyal to the court in front of the mentee.
9. Be in control of every situation. Remember the mentor is the leader and the one who sets the example.
10. Be empathic and realistic with goals and expectations.
11. Be an advocate for the mentee and assist, but within limits. Set boundaries and operate within them.
12. Provide positive, encouraging feedback to the mentee.

Administrative Requirements

Part of being a successful mentor is ensuring that what you are doing is documented, organized, and trauma informed. The section below will give you an overview of the requirements for documentation, professionalism, and ongoing skill development necessary to excel as a veteran mentor.

DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING

During each contact between the mentor and participant, the mentor will document the interaction in a mentor log. Documentation of mentoring sessions is necessary and mandatory. Mentors will be provided with a log for each mentee, which will be submitted to

the VTC Coordinator prior to status review hearings.. The VTC Coordinator will take the assigned Veteran's log to each team staffing.

These logs are intended to document the frequency, duration, and quality of interactions between the mentor and participant. Our court requires the mentor to keep a log of all contact with the mentee. There is an important distinction here: it is the *contact* itself, not the *content* of the conversation that is being tracked by the court. What you discuss with your mentee, aside from safety concerns, is confidential.

The Mentor is responsible for documentation and ensuring the VTC Coordinator has the latest documentation log prior to the VTC staffing each Wednesday.

- The log is due on Tuesday before 5pm for veterans who will be in court on Wednesday.
- The log should be kept secure and confidential.
- An example of a documentation log is found in the Appendix.

THE NEED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is an ESSENTIAL requirement to the mentor-mentee relationship. The mentee must understand that their conversations with their mentor, including informal conversations as well as a mentoring session are confidential, "secured" communications. If the judge asks the mentor how the mentee is doing, the mentor's answer may be more of a general statement such as, "making progress," "doing well," or "getting the guidance they need." When needed, the mentor can encourage the mentee to make better choices and ask for any assistance they may need from the court team.

If the mentee shares that they intend to harm themselves or someone else during a mentorship session, that information should be reported to law enforcement as a matter of safety. If such a disclosure occurs, please contact the VTC Coordinator to provide information regarding what was disclosed and why.

MENTOR SAFETY, CONFLICTS, AND CONCERNS

If a mentor is uncomfortable with the mentor/mentee relationship for any reason or has concerns about the mentee that are not safety related, the mentor should contact the VTC Coordinator regarding the concerns. Efforts will be made to resolve the concern, or change the mentor assigned to the case depending on the needs of a specific mentor. A mentor may choose to end a mentee relationship at any time, and is not required to disclose the reason for ending the mentorship. Mentors should communicate with the VTC coordinator to inform her of any decision to end a mentorship. Mentors may request to be reassigned to

a different mentee, to be contacted after a break, or to be removed from the mentor program.

VTC MENTOR TRAINING

All Rise, through partnership with <https://psvcharmormor.org>, have developed ten Justice for Vets modules to provide training on the fundamentals for effective mentoring in a Veterans Treatment Court.

The link to their website is: (<https://allrise.org/trainings/veteran-mentor-online-courses/>).

To begin mentoring, please complete these modules, and send your certificate of completion to dc-veteranscourt@dgcoks.gov :

- ☐ What is a Veterans Treatment Court?
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/what-is-a-veterans-treatment-court-j4v>
- ☐ Role of a Veteran Mentor
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/role-of-a-veteran-mentor-j4v>
- ☐ Communication Skills
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/communication-skills>
- ☐ Boundaries and Confidentiality
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/boundaries-and-confidentiality-j4v>
- ☐ Mentoring a Participant with Substance Use Disorder
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/mentoring-a-participant-with-a-substance-use-disorder-j4v>
- ☐ Suicide Awareness and Prevention
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/suicide-awareness-and-prevention-j4v>
- ☐ Risk Factors for Repeated Justice Involvement
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/risk-factors-for-repeated-justice-involvement-j4v>
- ☐ Empowering Wellness and Recovery
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/empowering-wellness-and-recovery-j4v>
- ☐ A Trauma Informed Approach
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/a-trauma-informed-approach-j4v>
- ☐ Mentor Self Care
 - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/courses/mentor-self-care-j4v>

ONGOING TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The 7th district court of Kansas is committed to excellence within the mentorship program, and we want to ensure all mentors are supported, prepared and properly trained. As a mentor, you will be offered regular opportunities to learn more about the courts, veteran services, substance abuse, and mental health treatments. We invite you to share any resources you find with your fellow mentors.

To support the mentor program, the VTC will host an annual mentor development weekend each spring, where mentors will come together to participate in training, support one another, and learn ways to more effectively provide support to participants.

Mentees: The Veterans Treatment Court Participants

Many Veterans have a warrior's mentality and often do not address their treatment needs for physical and psychological health care. Often those who are referred to the Veterans' Treatment Court are experiencing a high level of need for treatment services, that is preventing them from functioning to their potential as family members, employees, and citizens of our community. Veterans Treatment Court offers accountability, support, and motivation for change. The collaboration of people and agencies builds the opportunity for these Veterans to regain stability in their lives.

WHO IS THE PARTICIPANT (MENTEE):

VTC participants have served for any length of time in any of the branches of the United States Armed Forces. They must be experiencing mental health, substance abuse, trauma, and/or acquired brain injury symptoms that are severe enough to impact their functioning and contributing to their criminal behaviors. Participants are accepted regardless of their discharge status. If there is evidence that their discharge was related to mental illness of addiction needs, participants may be seeking to upgrade their discharge status while in the VTC.

The VTC is a five-milestone program typically lasting 18 months or longer. Participants must successfully complete each milestone before transitioning to the next milestone. Each milestone has a key concept or focus. Upon completion of the 5th milestone, the Veteran may petition the VTC team to graduate. Upon successful graduation the Veteran will receive a certificate of successful completion, public recognition and their case will be resolved by the judge.

As you walk with our mentee through the milestones, you will support them in assessing their own value and values. For many justice-involved veterans, connection to military community can be powerfully healing and offers a change for redemption.

Milestone One: Courage

Courage is the quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty despite fear or criticism. You will have achieved the courage milestone when you understand what is expected of you, from VTC and your treatment providers, and you are prepared to take actions toward change.

Expected duration: 30-60 days

- Complete drug and alcohol testing as scheduled
- Attend court every Wednesday at 12:00pm and bring your calendar
- Meet with CSO weekly or as scheduled
- Work with the VTC team and service providers to address any concerns related to housing & safety
- Attend recommended treatment and social service appointments
- Meet with VJO, DCCCA, or Bert Nash to collaborate on a service plan
- Complete a Management Team Meeting (MTM)
- Allow home visits with CSO and LEO for supportive assessment of needs
- Meet with a veteran mentor

Milestone Two: Commitment

Commitment is a pledge or dedication to a certain cause, activity, or principal. You will have achieved the commitment milestone when you are regularly going to treatment and building treatment relationships.

Expected duration: 90 days

- Complete drug and alcohol testing as scheduled
- Attend court every Wednesday at 12:00pm and bring your calendar
- Meet with CSO weekly or as scheduled
- Allow home and community visits at the discretion of the CSO or as needed
- Work with the VTC team and services providers to address any concerns related to housing & safety
- Attend recommended treatment and social service appointments
- Meet with a VJO as needed
- Meet with VA Health, DCCCA, or Bert Nash providers as scheduled and follow through with treatment recommendations
- Select and engage with a mentor regularly
- Attend meetings with a supportive community regularly

Milestone Three: Integrity

Integrity is being honest and acting out of one's principles. You will achieve the integrity milestone when your behavior does not require you to be dishonest but instead shows the hard work you are doing towards recovery.

Expected duration: 90-120 days

- Complete drug and alcohol testing as scheduled
- Attend court on the second and fourth Wednesday at 12:00pm and bring your calendar
- Meet with CSO twice a month or as scheduled
- Allow home and community visits at the discretion of the CSO or as needed
- Work with the VTC team and services providers to address any concerns related to housing & safety
- Attend all recommended treatment and social service appointments
- Meet with Veteran Mentor weekly or as needed
- Meet with a VJO as needed
- Meet with VA Health, DCCCA, or Bert Nash providers as scheduled and follow through with treatment recommendations
- Complete Management Team Meeting (MTM) to review and update treatment plan and address any concerns
- Work on Recovery skills
- Attend meetings with a supportive community regularly
- Work to build community connections outside of treatment court with people who support your recovery

Milestone Four: Honor

Honor is honesty, fairness, or integrity in one's beliefs and actions. You will achieve the Honor Milestone when you are stepping in to positive roles in your family, community, work, and/or education.

Expected Duration: 90-180 days

- Complete drug and alcohol testing as scheduled
- Attend court on the fourth Wednesday at 12:00pm and bring your calendar
- Meet with CSO monthly or as needed
- Meet with VJO as needed
- Meet with VA Health, DCCCA, or Bert Nash providers as scheduled and follow through with treatment recommendations
- Work with the VTC team and services providers to address any concerns related to housing & safety
- Attend all treatment and social service appointments
- Review progress, risks, barriers, and relapse prevention strategies

- Continue to participate with veteran mentor
- Develop coping skills as needed
- Attend meetings with a supportive community regularly
- Attend enjoyable activities in the community
- Continue to build relationships with people who support your recovery

Milestone Five: Valor

Valor is honor plus dignity. It's gallant bravery and strength of mind and spirit. You will have achieved the final milestone of Valor when you have demonstrated that you are prepared to continue your recovery beyond Veterans Treatment Court.

Expected Duration: 90 Days

- Complete drug and alcohol testing as scheduled
- Attend court on the fourth Wednesday at 12:00pm and bring your calendar
- Meet with CSO as instructed
- Meet with VJO as needed
- Meet with VA Health, DCCCA, or Bert Nash providers as scheduled and follow through with treatment recommendations
- Take steps toward repairing damage caused by your actions if needed.
- Continuing to attend enjoyable activities in the community
- Continue to build relationships with people who support your recovery
- Review threats toward sustaining recovery and identify a path forward.

HOW TO START A CONVERSATION WITH A MENTEE/PARTICIPANT

Consider your own experience and strengths and what you can bring to the introduction and discussion. Remember that the conversation is a "two-way street." Do not ask clinical questions or anything pertaining to their court case.

Don't forget to have casual conversation about non-VTC and non-military related subjects. Small talk builds relationships and a sense of safety. The casual connections you make with your mentee distinguish you from a probation officer, case manager, attorney, judge, etc. For many veterans, it may take months to be vulnerable with a mentor. Remain patient and know that if you can connect on anything you are succeeding in your role.

Be aware that not all Veteran participants may be ready for open and vulnerable conversations, and it is a requirement that the mentee does actively participate and communicate with the mentor every week. Please communicate with the VTC team as soon as you notice a lack of communication from your mentee, rather than waiting until it frustrates you.

HELPFUL KNOWLEDGE AND TIPS

- Ask your mentee what their goals are. Discuss whether the mentee would like your assistance in working towards the goal.
- Do not do the work for the mentee. Maintaining ownership over their own journey is critical to your mentee's success.
- Pay attention in court. If you notice the questions the Judge asks often, you can help prepare your mentee for his/her court appearances.
- It is likely that the mentee will encounter setbacks. This is when they will need the support of the mentor the most. Reassure the mentee you and the VTC team are there to assist them through the setback and remind them that failure is a normal part of the recovery process.
- If the veteran has not told anyone else about what is going on in their life, the mentor should encourage and empower them to bring it up to the Judge or their treatment providers.
- Remind the participant that your conversation is confidential, but that you must inform the court if they intend to hurt themselves or another person.
- Look for commonalities.
- Be attentive and mindful that every veteran's experience is different.
- Ask questions to ensure understanding of the conversation.
- The foundation of every good relationship is trust.
- Remain non-judgmental

Think of yourself as a "Battle Buddy." Each battle buddy is expected to look out for each other's safety and well-being. This is now a battle for the mentee's future. Like in training or on the battlefield, trusting your battle buddy is paramount to mission success.