

# Veterans Courts

## Resource Guide

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[Resource Guide](#)

[State Links](#)

The first veteran's court opened in Buffalo, N.Y. in 2008. The veteran's court model is based on drug treatment and/or mental health treatment courts. Substance abuse or mental health treatment is offered as an alternative to incarceration. Typically, veteran mentors assist with the programs. An important issue that has to be addressed is the eligibility for veteran's courts in terms of whether charges involving felonies or crimes of violence will be allowed. The inclusion of offenders charged with inter-family violence is also of grave concern to policy makers.

Links to related online resources are listed below. Non-digitized publications may be borrowed from the NCSC Library; call numbers are provided.

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### Featured Links

[Veterans Court Inventory Update.](#) (2016). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs counted 461 veteran-focused court programs in the U.S. as of June 30, 2016. Of the 461 programs, 116 were created in 2015. This fact sheet contains these facts and more data from the 2016 census.

[Spokane Veterans Forum.](#) The Spokane Veterans Forum (SVF) holds monthly meetings where veterans share a meal and attend educational or therapeutic programs. All of the veterans referred from regional Veterans Enhanced Therapeutic Courts at the Spokane County District Court, including those from Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties, attend the monthly meetings. The SVF website provides reference materials used for the monthly forums and includes a link to their 2017 Mentor Handbook.

[DOJ Grants in 2016.](#) (September 2016) The Department of Justice announced over \$4 million in grants to veteran's courts. Awardees include: Kansas 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court; the 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney's Office in Louisiana; Roseau County and Anoka County, both in Minnesota; Miami-Dade County, Florida; City of Norfolk, Virginia, Community Service Board; the Judiciary Courts of the State of Montana; Missouri 22<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Circuit, St. Louis City Drug Court; the Riverside, California, County Probation Department and the Superior Court of California, County of Solano; Denton County, Texas; La Crosse, Wisconsin, Area Veterans Court; and the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts.

Cheesman, Fred L. (Project Director) [Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Veterans Treatment Court Performance Measures.](#) (May 2015). NCSC. This is the first set of performance measures specifically designed for Veterans Treatment Courts and they are designed to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of Pennsylvania's Veterans Treatment Courts.

Moore, Hon. Eileen C. [A Mentor in Combat Veterans Court: Observations and Challenges](#). (2012). *Future Trends in State Courts*. Mentoring is nothing new, but mentoring in a combat veterans court by fellow combat veterans is new. This article comments on the role mentors play in a veterans court, mentor training, and the need for the development of mentor training specific to women.

Russell, Hon. Robert T. [Veterans Treatment Courts Developing Throughout the Nation](#). (2009). *Future Trends in State Courts*. This article discusses the growing number of veterans with a history of mental illness or substance abuse have been appearing in courts and how courts have begun to develop and implement veterans treatment courts to help veterans get their lives back on track.

[Focus: Veterans' Courts](#). (February 2009). *Gavel to Gavel*. A review of state legislation dealing with veterans' courts.

[Veteran Business Ideas](#). A guide for veterans on starting and owning their own business, with links to various resources for support.

### **Development of Veterans Courts**

McGuire, J. Clark, S., Blue-Howells, J. Coe, C. [An Inventory of VA involvement in Veterans Courts, Dockets and Tracks](#). (February 2013). In 2012, the Department of Veteran's Affairs conducted an inventory of veterans courts, dockets, and programs, and tracks and found that Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialists were active in all 168 such entities as of December 2012.

Kravetz, Pamela [Way Off Base: An Argument Against Intimate Partner Violence Cases in Veterans Treatment Courts](#). (2012). *Veterans Law Review*, Vol. 4 The author discusses the intersection of domestic violence and veterans courts and argues against allowing these cases into veterans treatment courts.

[Leave No Veteran Behind: A special court tries to keep troubled veterans out of prison](#). (June 2011). *The Economist* This article reviews the development of veteran's courts across the country since the 2008 opening of the Buffalo, NY court.

Lithwick, Dahlia [A Separate Peace Specialized courts for war veterans work wonders. But why stop at veterans?](#). (February 2010). *Slate* This article looks at the arguments for and against veterans courts.

### **Federal Legislation**

Finnerty, John [Veterans courts in line for funding](#). (March 2012). *The Daily Item* Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Seamus P. McCaffery testified before Congress in support of a measure that would make federal grant funding available to state and local governments to establish Veterans Treatment Courts across the country.

[Justice Department Funds More Than \\$1 Million to Veteran Treatment Courts](#). (November 2011). The Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) plans to support four drug courts designed to meet veterans' needs in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 under the Adult Discretionary Drug Court Program.

## Organizations

[Justice for Vets: The National Clearinghouse for Veterans Treatment Courts.](#) *A Division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP).* This website provides articles, resources, and links to legislation for veterans courts.

## State Related Materials

[Nebraska Veterans Treatment Courts Best-Practice Standards.](#) (2016). *Nebraska Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation.* With the assistance of NCSC, Nebraska developed these best practices despite the relative infancy of veterans treatment courts.

[Primer to Veterans' Courts in Harris County, Texas.](#) This manual provides a description of the veterans' court process for veterans who may be eligible.

[Veterans Treatment Courts in Michigan: A Manual For Judges.](#) (2015). *Western Michigan University-Cooley Law School.* This manual contains suggested practices and advice by Michigan judges who have developed VTCs in their local court system.

Granger, Maria D. Hon. [Veteran's Court Restorative Justice.](#) (July 2013). Indiana Veteran's courts and all other problem solving courts are required to be certified by the Indiana Judicial Center.

[Fayette County Treatment Court Guide for Attorneys and Staff.](#) (June 2013). This guide provides information on eligibility, referral process, and scheduling of hearings.

[Fourth Judicial District Veterans Court – Two Year Review: July 2010 – June 2012.](#) (January 2013). *Minnesota Judicial Branch.* This review of the Fourth Judicial District Veterans Court includes a pre-post analysis of participants at this point in the program. A full evaluation, with a matched comparison sample, will ensue once the number of graduates reaches 100 and those graduates have one year of street-time post Veterans Court.

[Second Judicial District Court Veterans Court Policy Manual.](#) (October 2012). This Washoe County Nevada manual provides program information, referral protocols, and rules and expectations for the veterans' treatment court.

[Volunteer Veteran Mentor Training Program.](#) *Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts.* This program trains volunteer mentors to coach, guide and act as role models for veterans.

[Court Programs for Wisconsin Veterans.](#) (January 2011). *Wisconsin Court System* A brief overview of existing programs in Wisconsin courts including several veteran's treatment courts.

White, Michael D. [The Prevalence and Problem of Military Veterans in the Maricopa County Arrestee Population .](#) (June 2010). *Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network* This report provides an overview of information on veterans in the Maricopa County Jail System, drawing on data collected by the Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network (AARIN). This report is intended to assist the work of the Veterans Court Exploratory Committee.

Bennett, Josephine [Georgia Has First Veterans Court in the Southeast](#) . (July 2009). *Georgia Public Broadcasting* The first veterans' court in the state opened in Forsyth, Georgia and if successful will be replicated around the state.

[Report of Veterans Arrested and Booked into the Travis County Jail](#) . (July 2009). *Travis County Veteran's Intervention Project* This report provides an assessment of the involvement of veterans in the criminal justice system in Travis County, Texas during a 90-day period in 2008.

Bjerke, Todd W. [Synopsis of La Crosse Model of the Veteran's Court](#). (October 2009). This report provides an overview of veterans courts and compares the La Crosse, Wisconsin plan to existing veterans' courts.

Levin, Marc A. [Veterans' Courts Policy Brief](#) . (November 2009). *Center for Effective Justice* This policy brief from the Texas Public Policy Foundation reviews the information on veterans' in the criminal justice system and reviews recent Texas legislation allowing creation of veterans' specialty courts.

[Buffalo Veterans Court: Mentoring and Veterans Hospital Program Policy and Procedure Manual](#) . (2008). This manual describes the Buffalo Veteran's Treatment Court as a specialized criminal court docket involving veterans charged with felony or misdemeanor non-violent criminal offense(s) and explains the diversion process for eligible veteran-defendants with substance dependency and/or mental illness.

[Homeless Court](#). *Veteran's Village of San Diego* The San Diego Homeless Court program grew out of a 1988 Vietnam Veterans of San Diego Stand Down event. Homeless veterans were asked to identify their greatest need. Many responded with the need for assistance in the criminal justice system to resolve court cases and warrants.

[Buffalo Veteran's Court and Veterans Mentor Handbook](#). This handbook provides policies and procedures for the Buffalo Veterans Court Mentoring Program.



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