

Brazos County Veteran's Treatment Court Committee Report

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Brazos County Veteran's Treatment Court Report

Committee Members

Tom Marty
Vice Commander
American Legion, Department of Texas

Tiffany R. Love, Licensed Clinical Social
Worker (LCSW)
Veterans Justice Outreach
Clinical Social Worker
Central Texas Veterans Health Care System

Julie Anderson
Brazos County Health & Wellness

Nathan Wood
Brazos County Public Defender's Office
Chief Public Defender

Elizabeth Zwiener
Brazos County Attorney's Office

Michelle C. Estes
Master of International Affairs Candidate,
Class of 2024
Texas A&M University
The Bush School of Government and Public
Service

Nancy Fahrenwald, PhD, RN, PHNA-BC,
FAAN
Associate Vice President, University Health
Services, Texas A&M Health
Professor, School of Nursing, Texas A&M
University

Roy D. Brantley
Judge County Court of Law #2 Brazos
County, Texas

Jennifer Goerig, Director
Brazos County Community Supervision and
Corrections Department (CSCD)

Haley C. Bennett
U.S. Air Force Veteran
Graduate Research Assistant, Texas A&M
University

Robert Reed
Director of Behavioral Health Operation
MHMR Authority of Brazos Valley

Heather Huhnke
Veteran of Foreign Wars Representative

Committee Chairman

Bentley Nettles
14th Executive Director
Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (R)
Brigadier General (BRVT) TXARNG (R)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the volunteers who spent numerous hours of their time researching the issues associated with a Veteran's Treatment Court. I am indebted to them for their hard work, which made this paper possible. Also, thank you, to the Brazos County Commissioners for trusting the committee with this important project. All the committee members agreed that trying to find ways to assist veterans who have given so much of themselves and our community is a worthwhile endeavor.

Background

The traditional models of incarceration and probation are not adequately equipped and have never been envisioned to address issues specifically related to veterans. The justice system further traumatizes veterans by punishing them without addressing the underlying causes of dysregulated behavior. By providing specialized support and understanding of the issues veterans face such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, mental disorders, a Veteran's Treatment Court (VTC) can help mitigate challenges and provide a more positive experience for veterans.

Presently, 623 VTCs exist nationwide (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022), with at least 30 such programs in Texas (Texas Specialty Courts, 2019). Large Texas cities have implemented VTC programs over the past decade, with many using state or federal grant funding to begin or sustain parts of their programs. Grant funding continues to be available nearly 30 years after the inception of specialty courts due to their nationwide efficacy. Between 10% and 20% of the service members who served in Iraqi and Afghan have PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury(TBI), depression, or substance use disorder (SUD). Of these, PTSD and SUD increase the

likelihood of veteran offenses resulting in incarceration (Marlowe, 2016). VTCs are a way to hold veterans accountable for their offenses and unmet treatment needs. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs supports VTCs and has proactively assigned a Veterans Administration (VA) staff to assist with the development of a VTC in Brazos County.

Brazos County is home to between 6,501–10,000 veterans (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2021). A review of the Veterans Re-Entry Search Service (VRSS) shows that 88 unique persons identified “veteran” upon admission to the Brazos County Detention Center between December 12, 2022, and April 14, 2023 (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010). When cross-checked in the Veterans Information Solution (VIS) database, 30 were enrolled with the VA at the time; an additional 12 were eligible for services but not enrolled at the VA (Veterans Information Solution, 2022). This data from a 4-month snapshot of 2023 suggests that 42 veterans could potentially enter a VTC in Brazos County. Additionally, it suggests that candidates should be closely screened for appropriate veteran status. A regional court would allow Brazos County to serve additional veterans from other counties.

Currently, in Brazos County, when we have defendants who would qualify for a Veteran’s Court, the County Attorney’s Office works those cases individually within the office to get treatment and help where it is needed. Some veterans have participated in Veterans Court in the counties in which they lived; and once completed, Brazos County Attorney’s Office dismissed their cases. If a case has a victim, the victim must agree with this decision. Our county historically has a specialty court, and a few veterans participate in this existing program. Resources for certain treatments, such as counseling for mental health, moral injury, and PTSD, are scarce. The specialty court currently meets four times a month after business hours on

Tuesdays. The Brazos County Jail currently operates a specialized unit for veterans in custody; veteran inmates have a high degree of cooperation and fewer behavioral problems than non-veteran inmates, because of their ability to adapt and understand rules and structure (Sheriff Wayne Dickey, personal communication, March 2023).

Brazos Valley, Texas, is a region with a significant military veteran population. However, like many other parts of the country, these veterans face challenges, including mental health issues, substance abuse, and homelessness. These challenges are often a result of their military service and can lead to their involvement in the criminal justice system. To address this issue, the community needs a VTC, which will benefit both veterans and the broader community.

Between January 01, 2018, and January 1, 2023, a total of 1,045 veterans entered the Brazos County Jail. Several of those veterans came in multiple times. (Sergeant B. Daily, Inmate Programs, Brazos County Sheriff's Office, April 2023, Personal Communication).

Problem Statement: Veteran's Treatment Court (VTC)

Men and women in the U.S. military endure high costs of service. While some of these costs are immediate and obvious, such as death or injury, other costs may not surface or be fully realized until years later. The impact of military service on veterans can be immense and long-lasting. This may include alcohol and substance abuse, mental illness, homelessness, unemployment, and strained relationships, among others. Veteran's Courts allow veterans to experience the treatment court process with similarly situated people who have common past experiences and needs. This type of court connects individuals to service providers who either

share or understand the unique experiences of military service and military life as well as the distinctive needs that may arise from those experiences.

Recommendation

This Committee reached a non-unanimous consensus that the Commissioners should create a VTC to accommodate those veterans who qualify for acceptance pursuant to Texas Government Code Chapter 124, Section 124.002(a)(1): Veterans who suffer from brain injury, mental illness, mental disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, or was a victim of military sexual trauma if the injury, illness, disorder, or trauma: (A) occurred during or resulted from the defendant's military service; and (B) affected the defendant's criminal conduct at issue in the case.

For veterans who commit crimes in our community, such offenses must be addressed with the goal of changing the core behavior that led to the offense and reducing the likelihood of recidivism. Safety in our community is and will continue to be one of our highest priorities. Ultimately, the success of a VTC in Brazos County will depend on the overall participation of all the stakeholders in the county. These programs are rehabilitative in nature, and they increase the otherwise limited options available to prosecutors and defense attorneys when addressing the underlying causes of criminal behavior.

A VTC can take many different forms. Two committee members recommended that Brazos County consider a regional court that would work with contiguous counties, and one committee member thought that veterans would best be served by maintaining the status quo. The approach that would require the fewest infrastructure changes would be creating a veteran's

docket that is handled by an existing court, similar to the manner in which Hays County has established its VTC.

Please consider these arguments and recommendations and create a VTC in Brazos County. This program could run in an already existing court with a judge who presides over criminal matters.

Pros of VTC Adoption

- The prosecutor and defense have a significantly less adversarial courtroom relationship. These individuals work together as part of an interdisciplinary team focused on recovery and law-abiding behavior (Justice Involved Veteran Program in Texas; Rammunno, 2019).
- The State of Texas offers free training for VTC team members, which is essential for developing shared values, goals, and operating procedures among the VA, justice system, and treatment system components (Justice Involved Veteran Program in Texas).
- The VTC program forges partnerships in the community to expand the continuum of services through a system-wide approach (Justice Involved Veteran Program in Texas; Rammunno, 2019).
- The Texas Veterans Commission's Veterans Mental Health Department (VMHD) supports all VTCs as part of its role in ensuring access to competent mental health services for service members, veterans, and their families (Texas Veterans Commission, 2022).

- Funding support for VTCs is available through grants from the Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) (Texas Veterans Commission, 2022).
- Allowing the judge to make decisions better insulates the prosecutor and the process from public pressure, and moving from the traditional prosecutorial authority to the judicial branch recognizes the unique responsibility of the government to support those who served our country (Baldwin & Hartley, 2022).
- The results of an exploratory study by Ahlin and Douds (2016) suggest that a shared culture serves to motivate justice-involved veterans to seek out VTCs over other treatment options and remain engaged in this problem-solving court while inspiring a sense of obligation to do well in treatment for themselves and their fellow veterans.
- There appear to be many nonprofit agencies and individuals currently providing supportive services to veterans during and after exiting a VTC, including a Military Veterans Peer Provider through the MHMR Authority of Brazos Valley, which provides veterans with direct peer-to-peer services, supports, and referrals.
- Almost all VTC participants are in Pretrial Intervention Programs, meaning that they have not formally pled to charges other than by contract. Once the program is completed, these cases are dismissed and typically expunged from veteran's records. This means that the charges originally brought against veterans cannot be used to enhance future offenses they may commit. In both Hays and Montgomery Counties, VTC participants have the cost of the program covered. Montgomery County has many community resources available.
- Hays County is close in size to Brazos County. Their program currently has 22 participants who are only required to meet with the court once a month. Hays County

Court at Law 2 (CCL2) handles these cases. The Veteran's Court is run during normal business hours. One CCL2 prosecutor is assigned to the Veteran's Court in addition to their regular caseload. Hays County VTC only allows misdemeanor cases to be considered in its court; assaults are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and most defendants are in Pretrial Intervention Programs like the one in Montgomery County.

- Both Hays and Montgomery Counties reported low recidivism in their VTCs.
- Montgomery County has 30 participants and has accepted out-of-county referrals. However, sanctioning out-of-county participants can be complicated because the court lacks direct jurisdiction over the participant. Montgomery County's VTC meets after hours. A VTC can provide specialized support to veterans by addressing their unique challenges and needs.
- A VTC may have staff trained in military culture and may provide additional services, such as job training and housing assistance. Additionally, VTCs often have partnerships with local VA services, which can provide further resources and support to veterans in the program.
- It is important to consider the potential benefits of a VTC for the entire criminal justice system. Studies have shown that VTCs can lead to lower recidivism rates and decreased criminal justice system costs. This is because VTCs focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment by providing veterans with the support they need to overcome their challenges and avoid future involvement with the criminal justice system.
- VTCs can be more cost effective than traditional court processes. By connecting veterans with treatment services, VTCs can reduce the likelihood of future criminal behavior and

incarceration, which can be expensive for both individuals and the criminal justice system.

- VTCs may be able to secure funding and resources from government and community organizations, further reducing the financial burden on the criminal justice system.
- VTCs improve public safety by reducing veteran recidivism rates. By addressing the underlying issues that may contribute to criminal behavior, such as mental health challenges and substance abuse, VTCs can help veterans successfully reintegrate into their communities and lead productive lives.
- Local law enforcement supports the creation of a Brazos County VTC and anticipated no required changes in their departments or procedures if this change occurred (Chief Couch, Assistant Chief Darby and Sheriff Dickey, personal communication, March 2023).
- The Bell County program has an over 90% success rate for veterans who complete it.
- Commander Clemons and Adjutant Baimbridge, American Legion Post 618, Willis, TX, strongly support the VTC after witnessing firsthand the positive effects on one of the Post Legionnaires who completed the program on an alcohol-related offense in the last year and completely turned his life around.
- A mentor for the VTC in Georgetown, TX, has personally guided 12 veterans through the program and all successfully completed the program requirements (Paul Wade, American Legion Post 196 Commander, Georgetown, TX, personal communication, March 2023).
- I met with American Legion Auxiliary Member Cynthia Zavala, a clerk in the Bexar County Court System, who has also worked in the county's VTC. She is impressed with the court process and thinks that it has been highly successful in Bexar County, with most

of the outcomes being positive. She did point out one possible downside: some of the veterans who are referred to the VTC complain that program completion takes over a year, while probation on a plea deal would only last six months.

- VTCs divert veterans out of jail, which prevents them from losing their veteran benefits (Pensions, Bonuses, and Veterans' Relief, 1980).
- A VTC program gives veterans an opportunity to reestablish the order and camaraderie that helped them thrive in the military. A VTC forces veterans to be accountable for their mental health and legal offenses.
- Nationally, VTC success rates are high, ranging from 80% to 90%.

Cons of VTC Adoption

- The number of veterans with mental illnesses currently interacting with the criminal justice system appears low, which would call into question the need for a mental health court. However, as Ahlin and Dodds (2016) noted, "it is unclear how many veterans are involved in the criminal justice system as individuals are not required to self-identify as veterans and some prefer not to divulge this information."
- Being in an area experiencing a mental health care shortage, the capacity might not exist through the VA to provide timely psychiatric and therapy services to all referred veterans.
- Montgomery County is almost three times larger than Brazos County, so it raises the question, will there be sufficient veteran defendants to justify a VTC in Brazos County.
- A VTC program is more work for the prosecutor.

- Only meeting with a VTC once or twice a month may not have the same success that the current Brazos County specialty court has experienced. Grant funding sustainability is a concern, as is the case with most other public service projects.
- To be clear, running a drug court and a mental health court in Brazos County will not address all veterans' needs.
- Based on a review of the literature provided to the committee and conversations with other stakeholders and counties, several obstacles could prevent a VTC from being successful in Brazos County:
 - Limited resources: The success of a VTC depends on resource availability, including funding, staffing, and support from the justice system and community. A VTC with insufficient resources may struggle to provide the necessary services to veterans, which can lead to poor outcomes.
 - Lack of acceptance: If criminal justice system stakeholders—including judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys—do not fully support the VTC, it may be unsuccessful. The same is true for the community, including law enforcement agencies and veterans' organizations.
 - Limited eligibility: VTCs are often limited to veterans who have been charged with certain types of offenses or who meet specific criteria. This can result in a narrow participant pool that may not fully represent the veteran population's needs.
 - Lack of accountability: While VTCs emphasize treatment and rehabilitation over punishment, it is important that participants are held accountable for their actions.

If participants do not take responsibility for their behavior, it can be difficult to motivate them to participate in treatment and make positive changes.

- Limited evidence: While there is growing evidence that VTCs can be effective, the research is still relatively limited. Without strong evidence of effectiveness, it can be difficult to justify the resources and support necessary to establish and maintain a VTC.
- There are currently fewer than 50 self-reported veterans under Brazos County supervision. This number includes those on bond supervision and probation as well as absconders and cases that have transferred both out of and into Brazos County for supervision. Of this number, not all have been identified as needing services, and some will successfully discharge probation soon. For the individuals who need them, we currently utilize locally available and Waco/Temple resources. Substance abuse treatment services, such as intensive outpatient treatment, individual counseling, relapse prevention, and 12-step meetings, are done in-house by a team of licensed chemical dependency counselors. In addition, the CSCD contracts with a service provider who specializes in trauma-based counseling. *

Veteran Service Organizations

Committee members met with the following representatives of veteran organizations in Bell, Hayes, and Montgomery Counties: John Potts, Commander of Post 133 American Legion in Temple, Texas; Past District Commander Ted Weeks of Post 326 American Legion; and Commander John Potts, American Legion Post 133 in Temple, Texas, who has been involved

with some of the veterans in the Bell County VTC program. One of his Post members is a Deputy District Attorney in Bell County and veteran who worked in that court and spoke highly of the program. Commander Weeks was involved in forming the San Marcos VTC and strongly supports the program, which has been successful in their community since its inception. He has participated in graduation ceremonies for the past several years.

Current Brazos County Specialty Court

On February 8, 2023, specialty court personnel observed the Montgomery County VTC in its entirety, including staffing prior to court and docket handling. The process was nearly identical to Brazos County's current specialty court in operation. The specialty court (formerly known as the Drug Court) has existed since 2004 with an outstanding success rate. The CSCD employs two officers (one a veteran himself) and a licensed chemical dependency counselor who serve as part of the specialty court team. The current court has served veterans throughout the years, and one veteran who completed the program acknowledged that he had been provided with all the resources he needed during his time in the court.

* Several numbers appear to be used when reporting veterans who are potentially eligible for a VTC. This is attributable to several factors, such as defining who is eligible, the period the snapshot covers, and at what part in the process the number is taken. To provide a complete picture, all figures were included.

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Texas Government Code, 2019, Veterans Treatment Court Program, Chapter 124, Section

124.002(a)(1)



BELL COUNTY SPECIALTY COURTS APPLICATION

Submit completed application to:

Jessie McCarty, LCSW
Veterans Treatment Court & Drug Court Coordinator
County Court-at-Law #3
1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513
Phone: (254) 831-2212.
Fax: (254) 933-5792
Jessie.McCarty@bellcounty.texas.gov

Please attach appropriate addendum and any specified supporting documentation.

For which program is the Defendant applying? (Select One)

Veterans Treatment Court/VA Docket Mental Health (ST1) DWI/Drug Court

Defendant _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Email _____ DL# & State: _____

Social Security Number _____ Aliases (If Any): _____

Employment/School _____ Emp Phone _____

Attorney _____ Attorney Phone _____

Attorney Email _____ Attorney Fax _____

Is the Defendant current receiving SSI/Disability? YES NO

Is Defendant competent? YES NO

Current Bell County, Texas Cause Number(s)/Dates of arrest/Charge(s):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Previous Criminal History: Charge(s)/Dates of arrest/Outcome:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

If needed, additional active charges or criminal history may be attached on separate sheet of paper.

ADDENDUM – VETERANS TREATMENT COURT



This program is supported by a grant from the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance. The Fund for Veterans' Assistance provides grants to organizations serving veterans and their families. For more information, visit www.TVC.Texas.gov.

Exclusion Criteria:

- No significant connection between current offense and military history/resulting trauma.
- Past or current charge of a sex offense.
- Aggravated cases involving weapons.
- Assaultive offenses will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Past or current manufacture/delivery charge (will review past charges on a case-by-case basis.)
- More than one previous DWI offense (will review on a case-by-case basis.)
- Substantial history of violent offenses.
- Not currently residing in Bell County.
- Not able to comply with program requirements due to pervasive mental illness.
- Dishonorable military discharge.

Did the Defendant serve in the United States military? YES NO

Enrolled in VA? YES NO **Service Connected?** YES NO **Percentage:** _____

Please complete the VA Release of Information, regardless of VA enrollment.

What branch did the defendant serve in? _____

What type of discharge did the defendant receive? _____

What combat zone or other similar hazardous duty area was defendant deployed to?

Dates of deployment(s): _____

Does the defendant have a mental health diagnosis? YES NO

When/where (by whom) was the defendant diagnosed?

When/where did the defendant last receive mental/behavioral health treatment?

Has the defendant previously participated in an outpatient or residential substance use treatment program (not to include AA/NA, etc)? YES NO

If yes, when and where? _____

Did the veteran/service member successfully complete the program? YES NO

PENDING COMPLETION

Basic Program Requirements Include:

- Minimum of 12-months participation prior to graduation.
- Ongoing participation in substance use and/or mental health treatment throughout the duration of the program (may be outpatient or residential, pending treatment team recommendation.)
- Attendance of all scheduled court appearances (minimum of 2x/month.)
- High-frequency random drug and alcohol testing.
- Completion of Moral Reconciliation Therapy groups in-person at the Bell County Justice Complex from 3:00PM – 4:30PM each Thursday prior to graduation.
- Additional requirements as identified by the treatment team and/or ordered by the Veterans Treatment Court Judge.

Defendant Statement of Understanding and Intent:

I have reviewed the Veterans Treatment Court program requirements above with my attorney. I believe I am capable of complying with all program requirements, and, if accepted to the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court, I intend to fully participate in the program as instructed by the Veterans Treatment Court treatment team.

Defendant Signature

Printed Name

Date

Attorney Statement:

I have reviewed the Veterans Treatment Court program requirements above with my client. I believe my client fully understands what will be expected in the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court program and is capable of complying with all program requirements.

Defense Attorney Signature

Printed Name

Date

Consent to Release and Obtain Information

Bell County Specialty Courts and Social Work Program
County Court at Law #3
1201 Huey Rd, Belton TX 76513

I, _____
(Client Name, Printed)

_____/_____/_____
(Date of Birth)

do hereby authorize the Bell County Specialty Courts and Social Work Program to release and obtain the following information to/from the persons, organizations, or establishments identified below.

ALL TREATMENT RECORDS

Intake/Screening Records

Substance Use Treatment Records
to include drug and alcohol testing information

Psychosocial Assessments
to include mental health, substance use, and/or
medical diagnoses and treatment information

Specialty Court Progress Reports

Discharge Summary

Verbal Exchange

Other: _____

I understand that this authorization extends to all information contained in my records about mental illness, developmental disabilities, chemical or alcohol dependency, communicable diseases such as HIV and AIDS, genetic information, and any other types of protected health information.

This authorization is for two-way exchange of information unless otherwise indicated.

One-way only (release)

The above listed information may be exchanged between the Bell County Specialty Courts and Social Work Program and the following individual or agency.

(Name) *Defense Attorney*
(Relationship)

The disclosure of verbal or written information authorized herein is made for the following purpose(s):

Continuity of Care Progress in Treatment Legal Referral Personal Communication

_____ I understand that this authorization is voluntary, and I may refuse to sign this authorization. I understand that refusal to sign shall not prohibit the Bell County Specialty Court and Social Work Program from offering appropriate services.

_____ I understand that I may revoke this authorization in writing at any time, but the cancellation will not affect any disclosures already made prior to the receipt of cancellation notice.

(Client initial above.)

This authorization will expire ONE YEAR FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF SERVICES from the Bell County Specialty Courts and Social Work Program, unless otherwise specified below.

INFORMATION TO BE RELEASED SHOULD COVER THE TIME PERIOD FROM _____ TO _____

Client

Date

Parent or Legal Guardian/Relationship to Client

Date

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT: This information may be disclosed to you from records protected by Federal confidentiality rule 42-CFR part 2. The Federal rules prohibit you from making any further disclosure of this information unless further disclosure is expressly permitted by the written consent of the person to whom it pertains or as otherwise permitted by 42 CFR part 2. A general authorization for the release of medical or other information is NOT sufficient for this purpose. The Federal rules restrict any use of the information to criminally investigate or prosecute any alcohol or drug abuse patient.



REQUEST FOR AND AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE HEALTH INFORMATION

PRIVACY ACT INFORMATION: The execution of this form does not authorize the release of information other than that specifically described below. The information requested on this form is solicited under Title 38 U.S.C. The form authorizes release of information in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, 45 CFR Parts 160 and 164; 5 U.S.C. 552a; and 38 U.S.C. 5701 and 7332 that you specify. Your disclosure of the information requested on this form is voluntary. However, if the information including the last four of your Social Security Number (SSN) and Date of Birth (used to locate records for release) is not furnished completely and accurately, VA will be unable to comply with the request. The Veterans Health Administration may not condition treatment, payment, enrollment or eligibility on signing the authorization. VA may disclose the information that you put on the form as permitted by law. VHA may make a "routine use" disclosure of the information as outlined in the Privacy Act system of records notices identified as 24VA10P2 "Patient Medical Record - VA" and in accordance with the VHA Notice of Privacy Practices. VA may also use this information to identify Veterans and persons claiming or receiving VA benefits and their records, and for other purposes authorized or required by law.

TO: DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (Name and Address of VA Health Care Facility)

VA Central Texas Health Care System
1901 Veterans Memorial Dr, Temple, TX 76504 and any other VHA hospital system where the Veteran has or will receive services.

LAST NAME- FIRST NAME- MIDDLE INITIAL

LAST 4 SSN

DATE OF BIRTH

NAME AND ADDRESS OF ORGANIZATION, INDIVIDUAL, OR TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL TO WHOM INFORMATION IS TO BE RELEASED

Bell County Court: 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX. 76513 - all affiliated individuals, agencies, attorneys, and court evaluator -see attached listing. Veteran agrees to additional guests of the court/research investigators.

VETERAN'S REQUEST

I request and authorize Department of Veterans Affairs to release the information specified below to the organization, or individual named on this request. I understand that the information to be released includes information regarding the following condition(s):

- DRUG ABUSE, ALCOHOLISM OR ALCOHOL ABUSE, SICKLE CELL ANEMIA, TESTING FOR OR INFECTION WITH HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)

DESCRIPTION OF INFORMATION REQUESTED

Check applicable box(es) and state the extent or nature of information to be provided:

- HEALTH SUMMARY (Prior 2 Years), INPATIENT DISCHARGE SUMMARY (Dates), PROGRESS NOTES, OPERATIVE/CLINICAL PROCEDURES (Name & Date), LAB RESULTS, RADIOLOGY REPORTS (Name & Date), LIST OF ACTIVE MEDICATIONS, OTHER (Describe): All relevant medical record information needed for court supervision.

PURPOSE(S) OR NEED

Information is to be used by the individual for:

- TREATMENT, LEGAL, OTHER (Specify below)

LAST NAME- FIRST NAME- MIDDLE INITIAL	LAST 4 SSN	DATE OF BIRTH
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AUTHORIZATION

I certify that this request has been made freely, voluntarily and without coercion and that the information given above is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after I sign it. I may revoke this authorization in writing, at any time except to the extent that action has already been taken to comply with it. Written revocation is effective upon receipt by the Release of Information Unit at the facility housing records. Any disclosure of information carries with it the potential for unauthorized redisclosure, and the information may not be protected by federal confidentiality rules.

I understand that the VA health care provider's opinions and statements are not official VA decisions regarding whether I will receive other VA benefits or, if I receive VA benefits, their amount. They may, however, be considered with other evidence when these decisions are made at a VA Regional Office that specializes in benefit decisions.

EXPIRATION

Without my express revocation, the authorization will automatically expire.

UPON SATISFACTION OF THE NEED FOR DISCLOSURE

ON _____ (enter a future date other than date signed by patient)

UNDER THE FOLLOWING CONDITION(S): Upon completion/discharge of court program and probation.

PATIENT SIGNATURE (Sign in ink)	DATE (mm/dd/yyyy)
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LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE (if applicable) (Sign in ink)	DATE (mm/dd/yyyy)
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PRINT NAME OF LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE	RELATIONSHIP TO PATIENT
------------------------------------	-------------------------

FOR VA USE ONLY

TYPE AND EXTENT OF MATERIAL RELEASED

VJO may provide summary of progress via written, verbal, telephonic and secured email that is required by court for monitoring of patient progress in treatment and compliance with legal conditions, inclusive of all relevant medical record information both past and future. Information will include but not be limited to: diagnoses (medical, mental health, and substance/alcohol), relevant labs, medical diagnoses, progress in treatment programming, developmental, social, financial and military data as relevant to court/legal circumstances to the designated court team and additional guests as permitted by authorization.

DATE RELEASED	RELEASED BY:
---------------	--------------

Client ID#	Today's Date	Facility ID#	Zip Code	Administration
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TCU DRUG SCREEN 5

During the last 12 months (before being locked up, if applicable) –

Yes	No
-----	----

- | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Did you use larger amounts of drugs or use them for a longer time than you planned or intended? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Did you try to control or cut down on your drug use but were unable to do it? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Did you spend a lot of time getting drugs, using them, or recovering from their use? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Did you have a strong desire or urge to use drugs? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Did you get so high or sick from using drugs that it kept you from working, going to school, or caring for children? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Did you continue using drugs even when it led to social or interpersonal problems? ... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Did you spend less time at work, school, or with friends because of your drug use? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Did you use drugs that put you or others in physical danger? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Did you continue using drugs even when it was causing you physical or psychological problems? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10a. Did you need to increase the amount of a drug you were taking so that you could get the same effects as before? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10b. Did using the same amount of a drug lead to it having less of an effect as it did before? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11a. Did you get sick or have withdrawal symptoms when you quit or missed taking a drug? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11b. Did you ever keep taking a drug to relieve or avoid getting sick or having withdrawal symptoms? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. Which drug caused the most serious problem during the last 12 months? [CHOOSE ONE] | | |
| <input type="radio"/> None
<input type="radio"/> Alcohol
<input type="radio"/> Cannaboids – Marijuana (<i>weed</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Cannaboids – Hashish (<i>hash</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Synthetic Marijuana (<i>K2/Spice</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Opioids – Heroin (<i>smack</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Opioids – Opium (<i>tar</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Stimulants – Powder Cocaine (<i>coke</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Stimulants – Crack Cocaine (<i>rock</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Stimulants – Amphetamines (<i>speed</i>) | <input type="radio"/> Stimulants – Methamphetamine (<i>meth</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Synthetic Cathinones (<i>Bath Salts</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Club Drugs – MDMA/GHB/Rohypnol (<i>Ecstasy</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Dissociative Drugs – Ketamine/PCP (<i>Special K</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Hallucinogens – LSD/Mushrooms (<i>acid</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Inhalants – Solvents (<i>paint thinner</i>)
<input type="radio"/> Prescription Medications – Depressants
<input type="radio"/> Prescription Medications – Stimulants
<input type="radio"/> Prescription Medications – Opioid Pain Relievers
<input type="radio"/> Other (specify) _____ | |

13. How often did you use each type of drug during the last 12 months?	Never	Only a few times	1-3 times per month	1-5 times per week	Daily
a. Alcohol	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Cannaboids – Marijuana (<i>weed</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Cannaboids – Hashish (<i>hash</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Synthetic Marijuana (<i>K2/Spice</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Opioids – Heroin (<i>smack</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Opioids – Opium (<i>tar</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Stimulants – Powder cocaine (<i>coke</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Stimulants – Crack Cocaine (<i>rock</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Stimulants – Amphetamines (<i>speed</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Stimulants – Methamphetamine (<i>meth</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Synthetic Cathinones (<i>Bath Salts</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Club Drugs – MDMA/GHB/Rohypnol (<i>Ecstasy</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Dissociative Drugs – Ketamine/PCP (<i>Special K</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Hallucinogens – LSD/Mushrooms (<i>acid</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Inhalants – Solvents (<i>paint thinner</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. Prescription Medications – Depressants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q. Prescription Medications – Stimulants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
r. Prescription Medications – Opioid Pain Relievers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
s. Other (specify) _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. How many times before now have you ever been in a drug treatment program?
 [DO NOT INCLUDE AA/NA/CA MEETINGS]

- Never 1 time 2 times 3 times 4 or more times

15. How serious do you think your drug problems are?

- Not at all Slightly Moderately Considerably Extremely

16. During the last 12 months, how often did you inject drugs with a needle?

- Never Only a few times 1-3 times/month 1-5 times per week Daily

17. How important is it for you to get drug treatment now?

- Not at all Slightly Moderately Considerably Extremely

Mental Health Screening Form III

Instructions: In this program, we help people with all their problems, not just their addictions. This commitment includes helping people with emotional problems. Our staff is ready to help you to deal with any emotional problems you may have, but we can do this only if we are aware of the problems. Any information you provide to us on this form will be kept in strict confidence. It will not be released to any outside person or agency without your permission. If you do not know how to answer these questions, ask the staff member giving you this form for guidance. Please note, each item refers to your entire life history, not just your current situation, this is why each question begins –“Have you ever”

- 1) Have you ever talked to a psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist, social worker, or counselor about an emotional problem?
YES NO
- 2) Have you ever felt you needed help with your emotional problems, or have you had people tell you that you should get help for your emotional problems?
YES NO
- 3) Have you ever been advised to take medication for anxiety, depression, hearing voices, or for any other emotional problem?
YES NO
- 4) Have you ever been seen in a psychiatric emergency room or been hospitalized for psychiatric reasons?
YES NO
- 5) Have you ever heard voices no one else could hear or seen objects or things which others could not see?
YES NO
- 6) a) Have you ever been depressed for weeks at a time, lost interest or pleasure in most activities, had trouble concentrating and making decisions, or thought about killing yourself?
YES NO
b) Did you ever attempt to kill yourself?
YES NO
- 7) Have you ever had nightmares or flashbacks as a result of being involved in some traumatic/terrible event? For example, warfare, gang fights, fire, domestic violence, rape, incest, car accident, being shot or stabbed?
YES NO
- 8) Have you ever experienced any strong fears? For example, of heights, insects, animals, dirt, attending social events, being in a crowd, being alone, being in places where it may be hard to escape or get help?
YES NO
- 9) Have you ever given in to an aggressive urge or impulse, on more than one occasion, that resulted in serious harm to others or led to the destruction of property?
YES NO

- 10) Have you ever felt that people had something against you, without them necessarily saying so, or that someone or some group may be trying to influence your thoughts or behavior? YES NO
- 11) Have you ever experienced any emotional problems associated with your sexual interests, your sexual activities, or your choice of sexual partner? YES NO
- 12) Was there ever a period in your life when you spent a lot of time thinking and worrying about gaining weight, becoming fat, or controlling your eating? For example, by repeatedly dieting or fasting, engaging in much exercise to compensate for binge eating, taking enemas, or forcing yourself to throw up? YES NO
- 13) Have you ever had a period of time when you were so full of energy and your ideas came very rapidly, when you talked nearly non-stop, when you moved quickly from one activity to another, when you needed little sleep, and believed you could do almost anything? YES NO
- 14) Have you ever had spells or attacks when you suddenly felt anxious, frightened, uneasy to the extent that you began sweating, your heart began to beat rapidly, you were shaking or trembling, your stomach was upset, you felt dizzy or unsteady, as if you would faint? YES NO
- 15) Have you ever had a persistent, lasting thought or impulse to do something over and over that caused you considerable distress and interfered with normal routines, work, or your social relations? Examples would include repeatedly counting things, checking and rechecking on things you had done, washing and rewashing your hands, praying, or maintaining a very rigid schedule of daily activities from which you could not deviate. YES NO
- 16) Have you ever lost considerable sums of money through gambling or had problems at work, in school, with your family and friends as a result of your gambling? YES NO
- 17) Have you ever been told by teachers, guidance counselors, or others that you have a special learning problem? YES NO

Print Client's Name: _____ Program to which client will be assigned: _____

Name of Admissions Counselor: _____ Date: _____

Reviewer's Comments: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

_____ Study
 _____ ID
 _____ Point
 _____ Date
 _____ Raid
 UCA000- Revised 3/25/96 3 Pages

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND CHANGE ASSESSMENT (URICA) SCALE

PROBLEM: _____

This questionnaire is to help us improve our services. Each statement describes how a person might feel when starting therapy. Please indicate the extent to which you tend to agree or disagree with each statement. In each case, make your choice in terms of how you feel right now, not what you have felt in the past or would like to feel. For all the statements that refer to your "problem", answer in terms of the problem you have written at the top. And "here" refers to the place of treatment.

There are **FIVE** possible responses to each of the items in the questionnaire: Strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. Circle the number that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

There are FIVE possible responses:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. As far as I'm concerned, I don't have any problems that need changing.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I think I might be ready for some self-improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am doing something about the problems that had been bothering me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It might be worthwhile to work on my problem	1	2	3	4	5
5. I'm not the problem one. It doesn't make much sense for me to be here.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It worries me that I might slip back on a problem I have already changed, so I am here to seek help.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am finally doing some work on my problem.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I've been thinking that I might want to change something about myself.	1	2	3	4	5

There are FIVE possible responses:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. I have been successful in working on my problem, but I'm not sure I can keep up the effort on my own.	1	2	3	4	5
10. At times my problem is difficult, but I'm working on it.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Being here is pretty much of a waste of time for me because the problem doesn't have to do with me.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I'm hoping this place will help me to better understand myself.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I guess I have faults, but there's nothing that I really need to change.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am really working hard to change.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I have a problem and I really think I should work on it.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I'm not following through with what I had already changed as well as I had hoped, and I'm here to prevent a relapse of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Even though I'm not always successful in changing, I am at least working on my problem.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I thought once I had resolved the problem I would be free of it, but sometimes I still find myself struggling with it.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I wish I had more ideas on how to solve my problem.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have started working on my problems but I would like help.	1	2	3	4	5

There are FIVE possible responses:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. Maybe this place will be able to help me.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I may need a boost right now to help me maintain the changes I've already made.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I may be part of the problem, but I don't really think I am.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I hope that someone here will have some good advice for me.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Anyone can talk about changing; I'm actually doing something about it.	1	2	3	4	5
26. All this talk about psychology is boring. Why can't people just forget about their problems?	1	2	3	4	5
27. I'm here to prevent myself from having a relapse of my problem.	1	2	3	4	5
28. It is frustrating, but I feel I might be having a recurrence of a problem I thought I had resolved.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I have worries but so does the next guy. Why spend time thinking about them?	1	2	3	4	5
30. I am actively working on my problem.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I would rather cope with my faults then try to change them.	1	2	3	4	5
32. After all I had done to try and change my problem, every now and again it comes back to haunt me.	1	2	3	4	5



BELL COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Participant Handbook

County Court at Law No. 3

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Introduction

Welcome to the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC), overseen by the Honorable Judge Rebecca DePew in County Court at Law No. 3. Veterans Treatment Court was created to offer veterans and active-duty service members an opportunity to address service-connected mental health and substance use concerns that contributed to criminal behaviors. The program incorporates mental health assessment and treatment along with intensive supervision to help participants make lasting change. Above all, the program requires active engagement in treatment and a commitment to maintaining sobriety.

This handbook is designed to provide an overview of the VTC program and explain what will be required of you as a participant. Prior to officially entering the program, you will also attend an orientation, which will allow you to become more familiar with the roles of the VTC team members and the program expectations. Keep in mind that, in addition to the general program rules and requirements, you will also be expected to follow any instructions given by the VTC judge and comply with the treatment plans developed for you by your treatment provider(s) and the VTC team.

Please read this handbook carefully. It is your responsibility to be familiar with its contents. We encourage you to share this information with family and friends who support your treatment and recovery. Be aware that the information in this handbook may change without prior notice and should not be considered a binding agreement between you and the VTC program.

Overview

The Bell County Veterans Treatment Court is a four-phase, 12-month intervention program for veterans and active-duty service members whose mental health and/or substance use issues have contributed significantly to their active criminal charge or criminal conviction. One criterion for participation in Veterans Treatment Court is a clearly discernable connection between the applicant's military service, trauma sustained, related mental health and/or substance use concerns, and their criminal charge(s). Candidates interested in participating in the Veterans Treatment Court program will undergo an extensive screening process to determine eligibility. In addition, participation requires consent from the prosecutor, defense counsel, and the defendant, as well as approval by the VTC judge.

While participation in the VTC program is a valuable opportunity, it should in no way be considered a "free pass." This rigorous program requires frequent court appearances, intensive supervision, frequent random drug and alcohol testing, unscheduled home visits by VTC staff, and mental health and/or substance use treatment attendance, as well as other services as determined appropriate by the VTC team. Each participant's success in the VTC program is largely determined by their willingness to participate in all components of the program fully and authentically.

Benefits of the Veterans Treatment Court Program

"What's in it for me?" The Bell County Veterans Treatment Court is a voluntary program, meaning that participants of the program choose to enter the program with the expectation that the program will ultimately benefit them. Benefits of participating in the VTC program range from positive legal outcomes to progress on personal goals.

A Healthy Lifestyle

The most significant benefit of the Bell County VTC program is the support that you will receive as you pursue a healthy lifestyle. VTC will help you develop tools to improve your mental health and address substance use, but the VTC team also recognizes the importance of taking a holistic approach and offering support in other areas of your life. These might include healthy meal choices, terminating tobacco consumption, reducing stress, becoming fully employed, financial health, rebuilding family relationships, and becoming a more fulfilled, productive member of society.

Dismissal or Reduction of Charges

In most misdemeanor cases, successful completion of the VTC program is incentivized by dismissal or reduction of the participant's original charge. Outcomes in some cases may vary, depending on the details of your individual case. At orientation, you will have the opportunity to meet with your VTC defense attorney to review your participant contract, including the agreed upon outcomes that you can expect with successful completion of the VTC program.

Potential Expunction of Charges

In some cases, participants may have the opportunity for pretrial misdemeanor charges to be expunged from their record six months after successful completion of the program. Expunction is conditional upon remaining arrest-free and compliance with any established aftercare plan. At orientation, you will have the opportunity to discuss with your attorney whether expunction may be offered on your case.

Confidentiality

As a treatment program, the Veterans Treatment Court complies with federal regulations that safeguard protected health information (PHI) and substance use treatment records, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and 42 CFR Part 2. You can find more information about your rights in the Notice of Privacy Practices located within Appendix A of this handbook.

While the VTC program is a treatment program, participants are also under pretrial or post-adjudicated community supervision and must consent to home visits and possible contact of employers or references as a condition of supervision. Additionally, your status as a VTC participant may be shared with parties outside the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court for legal reasons. However, specific information about your treatment, including any drug and alcohol testing used to inform the treatment process, will not be made accessible to other parties without your written consent. In some specific cases, disclosures of your treatment and/or testing information may be made in the interest of your immediate safety or the safety of others. For more details about confidentiality and the limitations thereof, please review the Notice of Privacy Practices.

The VTC Team

The Hon. Judge Rebecca DePew oversees the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court and presides at all multidisciplinary team meetings and court sessions. With input from the VTC staff, treatment providers, and other support services, Judge DePew will make all determinations regarding your participation in the VTC program.

In addition to the presiding judge, the Veterans Treatment Court team includes:

Name	Title	Contact
Jessie McCarty, LCSW	VTC Coordinator	Jessie.McCarty@bellcounty.texas.gov 254-444-7173
Amy Gauna	VTC Post-Adjudicated Supervision Officer	Amy.Gauna@bellcounty.texas.gov 254-228-3751
Nicholas Miller	VTC Pretrial Supervision Officer	Nicholas.Miller@bellcounty.texas.gov 254-444-8916
Michael Jackson	Mentor Coordinator	Michael.jackson@bellcounty.texas.gov 254-913-4123
Bradford Glendening	VTC Defense Attorney	Bradford@glendeninglaw.com 254-226-0240
Ron Carney, LCSW-S	Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist	Ronald.Carney@va.gov 254-338-0397

The Bell County Veterans Treatment Court also hosts social work interns, who operate as case managers and offer clinical services to clients during the term of their placement within the program. Social work interns are skilled and valuable assets to the VTC team and, as such, should always be treated with the same level of respect afforded to all team members.

Behavioral Health Treatment

Behavioral health treatment is the primary focus of the Veterans Treatment Court program. As a participant, you will be required to engage in an evidence-based treatment component throughout the duration of the program. The frequency and format of each participant's treatment will vary based on individual needs and the recommendation of the treatment team, but you should be prepared to engage in treatment sessions immediately upon entering the VTC program. Neither court attendance nor participation in a peer support group will meet this requirement, so it is important to communicate clearly with the VTC staff to ensure you are engaged in an approved treatment program.

What is Evidence-based Treatment?

The VTC program requires attendance of "evidence-based treatment." Evidence-based treatment refers to any therapy program that has been shown to be effective by scientific, objective research. Some popular interventions may not be evidence-based and do not meet the requirements of the VTC program. If you are interested in a treatment option but are unsure whether it is evidence-based, please talk the treatment team for more information.

Attendance

It is always your responsibility to track and maintain attendance of your scheduled treatment appointments. Failure to attend treatment appointments will prevent you from making progress in the VTC program and will

ultimately lead to extended time in the VTC program. If you are unable to attend a treatment appointment, it is your responsibility to reach out to your treatment provider prior to your appointment to reschedule. You should also maintain communication with the VTC team about any rescheduled or missed appointments. "No showed" appointments and/or patterns of canceled or rescheduled appointments will be considered non-compliance with the requirements of the VTC program and will lead to extensions or other sanctions within the VTC program.

While treatment attendance is a requirement of the VTC program, please realize that it is also your responsibility to arrive at your treatment appointments ready to engage in the treatment process. Your treatment provider will not be able to offer appropriate services if you are not open and honest about your treatment needs. Furthermore, you will only receive from your treatment experience what you are willing to put into it. The VTC team recognizes that authentically engaging in the therapeutic process is hard work, and we are ready and willing to support you through the journey.

Individualized Case Plan

Upon entering the VTC program, you will work with a case manager to create an individualized case plan (ICP), including general treatment recommendations, as well as any additional recommended services or objectives. You will be expected to participate in every aspect of treatment specified in your individualized case plan. Failure to follow the treatment team's recommendations will be considered noncompliance. Nonattendance of treatment will prevent you from advancing in the program and will eventually lead to sanctions. Continuous non-compliance with your recommended treatment plan will result in discharge from the VTC program.

Because behavioral health treatment is an essential component of the program, you should enter the Veterans Treatment Court only if you are willing to follow the treatment team's recommendations for treatment options.

Your individualized case plan may include some of the following behavioral health treatment and recovery components:

- Outpatient treatment (including group and/or individual sessions)
- Inpatient/residential treatment
- Substance use treatment
- Family counseling
- Violence intervention
- Participation in support groups
- Transitional housing/sober living placement

Other resource referrals that may be offered include:

- Employment assistance, including training and placement services
- Parenting support/education
- Rental/housing assistance
- Financial literacy training
- Life skills classes
- Medical/dental services
- Financial assistance

Remember that your individualized case plan reflects a partnership between you and the VTC team. You are expected to communicate with your case manager about any issues you experience with your treatment

provider or any other component of your ICP. Changes can be discussed and made in a collaborative manner, but you should not discontinue any component of your ICP without communicating with the treatment team.

Your progress in the VTC program will be reviewed periodically, and your individualized case plan may be updated to reflect identified treatment or resource needs.

Authorization to Disclose Protected Health Information

To facilitate communication between the VTC staff and your treatment providers, you will be expected to sign consent forms authorizing the release of protected health information (PHI) to the Veterans Treatment Court. Any PHI obtained will be used solely for the purpose of monitoring your progress in treatment and—when necessary—determining appropriate changes in your treatment, other program requirements, or appropriate incentives or sanctions. Throughout your participation in the VTC program, consent forms authorizing disclosure of PHI may need to be updated due to changes in treatment providers, expiration of consent forms, etc. VTC staff will notify you if consent forms need to be updated.

Moral Reconciliation Therapy

Prior to graduation from the VTC program, you will be required to complete Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT). MRT is a manual-based group therapy program facilitated by VTC social workers. The length of time required to complete MRT will depend on individual progress; however, the program requires a minimum of 12 weeks to complete. MRT can be completed at any point during the VTC program but should be started no later than Level 3 to allow time for completion prior to graduation.

MRT group rules emphasize respect for all group participants and the group process. Therefore, group participants are expected to arrive on time and ready to fully participate in all sessions. Activities should be completed in the MRT workbook prior to group and presented each week when attending the group session. Consistent attendance of weekly sessions is essential, and participants who have three or more unexcused absences may be required to restart the group. For this reason, it is very important to communicate any potential absences to your group facilitator in advance. If absences become excessive, group facilitators may use discretion in excusing absences, even with advance notice. Be advised that group participants may be refused admittance to the group if tardy, and any such instances would constitute an unexcused absence.

The VTC Moral Reconciliation Therapy group meets every Thursday, 1500-1630, in Auxiliary Court #1.

Supervision

Upon entry into the VTC program, you will be assigned to a specialized Veterans Treatment Court supervision officer. Your supervision officer will be responsible for monitoring your compliance with all program requirements, as well as any other terms and conditions of probation.

Communication

To ensure any participation concerns are addressed immediately and effectively, it is imperative that you maintain communication with your supervision officer, as well as other VTC staff. Communication may occur by phone, text messaging, email, and messaging within the Reconnect app. Participants will be expected to respond promptly to any contact attempts. Failure to respond to contacts within at least one business day will be considered noncompliance with program expectations and could result in sanctions.

Drug and Alcohol Testing

While participating in the Veterans Treatment Court, you will be expected to abstain from the use of alcohol, all illegal substances, any prescription medications that are not prescribed specifically for you by a medical provider, and certain over-the-counter medications and supplements (see Banned Substances, page 13). Compliance with this requirement will be monitored by random urinalysis (UA) testing. In addition to randomly scheduled tests, participants will also be required to test at each court appearance and may be expected to test during random home visits. Participants may also be ordered by their supervision officer to report for testing at any time. Failure to report for testing as instructed or to submit a sample by the close of your testing window will result in a “no show” or “refusal.”

Prescriptions

Because some prescription medications may cause positive results during urinalysis testing, it is important that you provide your supervision officer with a comprehensive list of all prescription medications you are currently using.

Furthermore, please communicate with your prescribing physician about your status as a participant of the VTC program and be forthcoming about any substance use history that may impact decisions regarding your medical care. This will help your physician to avoid prescribing medications that may be problematic for you or may cause difficulties with drug and alcohol monitoring. If concerns arise as to the impacts of your prescribed medications on your recovery process, the VTC team may seek an authorization to communicate directly with your provider to address said concerns.

Daily Check-ins

The VTC program uses a mobile app called Reconnect Community to accommodate daily check-ins and random test scheduling. Upon entering the program, you will be asked to download and install the Reconnect app on your mobile device. **Note: It is important to install the app on a device that you use regularly, as the app is also used for communication via its messaging feature.** With your personalized username and testing pin, you will then log onto Reconnect and begin completing daily check-ins. During your check-in, the app will take your picture and report your location. The app will then indicate whether you are scheduled to test on each date.

You will be required to check-in daily between 0700 and 1200; however, you are encouraged to check-in as early as possible. This will allow more time to address any scheduling conflicts or transportation concerns if you are scheduled to test. Many participants have also noted that checking in first thing in the morning becomes a habit and helps them to create a habit and avoid missed check-ins. Check-ins that occur after 1200 are considered “late” check-ins, as they do not allow adequate time to ensure arrival at your designated testing location before the end of the testing window. Missed and/or late check-ins will result in sanctions from the VTC judge.

ATTENTION: If your app is not working appropriately or you are unable to check-in on Reconnect for any reason, it is your responsibility to contact your supervision officer or another member of the VTC team to find out whether you are scheduled to test on the date in question. Missed tests resulting from failure to check-in will not be excused and will lead to sanctions from the Court.

Procedures for Testing

On scheduled testing dates, you will be expected to report to your specified testing location between the hours of 1330 and 1600 for urinalysis (UA) drug and alcohol testing. Upon arrival at your assigned testing location, please contact your supervision officer to notify them that you have arrived and are ready to test.

Your urinalysis testing will then be administered by an officer of the same sex and will be observed to ensure validity. The officer administering the test will read the results as soon as the test has processed and will address any concerns, such as positive or tampered results.

When reporting for UA testing, please arrive ready to provide a urine sample. It is recommended that you avoid arriving excessively early, as this may cause extended, uncomfortable wait times. On the other hand, you may be unable to test if you arrive late, so plan to arrive well before the close of the testing window.

If you become aware of any obstacles that might prevent you from reporting for a scheduled urinalysis test during the designated testing window, it is your responsibility to contact your supervision officer as early as possible to address those obstacles. In some cases, your officer may be able to accommodate testing outside of the regular testing window, but this will not occur without advance notice.

Lack of transportation, conflicting work schedule, and other scheduling conflicts are not grounds for excused UA tests. You may be excused from a scheduled UA test due to illness (with proper medical documentation) and some emergency circumstances at the discretion of your supervision officer. Regardless of the reason, any request to be excused from a scheduled UA should be communicated in a timely manner. *Again, communication is key!*

Positive and Tampered Tests

Veterans Treatment Court participants are expected to be open and honest with VTC staff regarding any substance use that may occur during participation in the program. As such, the VTC program incentivizes honesty. Self-reporting substance use shows trust in the program and genuine investment in the recovery process. We understand that this can be difficult, but truthful communication is truly essential in establishing a productive partnership.

Participants who are honest about substance use struggles will be offered increased accountability and treatment interventions to support recovery.

Please note that you do have the right to dispute your UA results. This must be done immediately, before the disposal of the sample in question. Your supervision officer will then follow an established protocol to seal and package your sample for shipping to a lab for further evaluation. Be aware that lab results are then considered conclusive.

Denial of substance use evidenced by lab confirmed testing, as well as tests that are found to be diluted or otherwise tampered, indicate dishonesty on the part of the participant. Willful dishonesty will result in severe sanctions, rather than simply implementing treatment/accountability interventions. Furthermore, continuous dishonesty indicates a lack of readiness to participate in the Veterans Treatment Court program and will ultimately be grounds for termination.

Additional Testing/Continuous Monitoring

Under some circumstances, the VTC judge may require participants to obtain additional testing. This usually occurs as a measure of increased accountability to address substance use concerns or as a sanction in response to noncompliance with current testing requirements.

Some forms of additional testing that may be required:

- "Sweat patch" (continuous transdermal drug monitoring)
- Hair follicle testing
- Continuous alcohol monitoring anklet

- Ignition interlock device*

****All DWI cases with .15 or greater blood alcohol level and/or DWI 2nd cases will be required to obtain ignition interlock device for a minimum of six months or sign a no driving affidavit.***

Participants are responsible for fees associated with testing measures; however, you are encouraged to communicate financial obstacles as assistance may be available on a case-by-case basis.

Home Visits

During your term of participation, home visits will be conducted by your supervision officer and/or other VTC staff. Home visits typically occur on a random basis but may be triggered by the VTC judge due to specific concerns. Home visits are typically brief and are conducted to ensure that your home environment supports your recovery. Be aware that your home will be monitored for the presence of alcohol, illegal substances, and any other banned substances. Drug and alcohol testing may also be conducted during home visits.

It is your responsibility to alert members of your household that home visits will periodically be conducted without warning and communicate the necessity of maintaining a sober home environment, free of alcohol and other banned substances.

Remember to communicate any changes of address to your supervision officer immediately. Also, ensure that your officer is aware of your typical work schedule.

Travel Passes

While participating in the VTC program, you are not permitted to leave Bell County without permission from the VTC judge. Special arrangements can be made for individuals who reside outside the county.

If you wish to travel outside the county, please complete a trip request form using your Reconnect app at least **two weeks prior to your intended travel dates***. Your request will then be reviewed by your supervision officer and the VTC judge. Upon approval, your travel pass dates will be reflected within your Reconnect Calendar, and you will be excused from UAs on the dates of your travel pass.

When requesting a travel pass, please be aware of the following:

- All travel passes are at the discretion of the VTC judge.
- You may be required to provide flight itinerary or lodging confirmation to your supervision officer.
- You will be responsible to continue to check in daily on the Reconnect app during your travel pass.
- Your travel pass will only be valid for the dates and locations listed, and you are responsible for communicating effectively with the VTC staff regarding any changes in travel plans that may occur due to weather, change in booked flights, or other circumstances that are beyond your control.
- You will be expected to contact your supervision officer **immediately** upon return to the county and should be prepared to complete a UA immediately after your travel pass is complete.
- Travel passes are conditional upon compliance with VTC requirements and may be revoked at any time due to noncompliant behavior, regardless of any travel arrangements that have already been made.

**In emergency or unexpected situations, you can also contact your supervision officer directly by phone or text to request travel outside the county. This should be reserved for circumstances that do not allow time for the standard travel request process.*

Additional Post-Adjudicated Probation Requirements

If you enter the Veterans Treatment Court as a post-adjudicated participant, your VTC community supervision officer will also be responsible for monitoring your compliance with all additional terms and conditions of probation. These could include classes, psychological evaluation, community service requirement (CSR), assessed fees, etc. Participation in VTC will not automatically waive any conditions of supervision.

Fees

Pretrial participants will be expected to pay a \$60 monthly VTC fee. Fees will be payable to the Bell County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD). Communicate with your supervision officer regarding any inability to pay monthly fees. Following a budget review, an affidavit may be completed to request a waiver or reduction of fees.

Post-adjudicated participants will be responsible for maintaining all fees assessed as terms and conditions of probation. Again, communicate with your officer in a timely manner regarding any inability to make fee payments. Your supervision officer can then help you establish a plan to avoid becoming overwhelmed with past-due fees.

Be advised that you may be unable to obtain approval for travel requests if you are not current in fees.

Court Appearances

One of the defining features of the Veterans Treatment Court program is regular attendance of court appearances during which participants' progress is monitored. Be aware that, unlike treatment information, court proceedings are open to the public and not subject to confidentiality requirements.

Attendance

Court attendance is mandatory! Court appearances are typically scheduled at two-week intervals but may be increased as needed and may be tapered down as you proceed through the program. Your court dates will be reflected on your Reconnect calendar; however, it is your responsibility to track all scheduled court dates. If you are ever unsure of your next court date, please contact your case manager or the Veterans Treatment Court Coordinator.

In some circumstances, you may be excused from a scheduled court date, or your court date may be reset to accommodate scheduling conflicts. Any request to be excused or to reset your court date should occur well in advance of your scheduled court appearance. If you find that you are unexpectedly unable to attend court due to illness or an emergency, it is your responsibility to notify VTC staff of the situation as soon as possible. Failure to notify the Court in a timely manner could result in your absence being documented as an unexcused failure to appear. Requests to be excused from court attendance due to illness or other medical concerns should always be accompanied by medical documentation.

A failure to appear in court when scheduled will result in a sanction that may include issue of a warrant and a period of incarceration.

Courtroom Behavior

While Veterans Treatment Court is more informal than other court proceedings, participants still need to maintain appropriate courtroom behavior.

The following behavior at court sessions will NOT be tolerated:

Arriving late or leaving early. You will be expected to attend VTC on the date and time indicated on your Reconnect calendar. An important part of VTC participation is attendance and attention for the duration of court sessions, unless specifically excused by the Court. You are responsible for arranging other obligations and plans to accommodate your attendance for each complete VTC session. If an emergency arises that causes you to be late to your scheduled court date, make every effort to notify VTC staff as soon as possible.

Talking. While VTC sessions are more informal than other court proceedings, you are nevertheless in a courtroom and are expected to conduct yourself accordingly. Chatting or visiting and movement in and out of the courtroom are not appropriate conduct during VTC sessions.

Inappropriate attire. Please wear appropriate clothing to court. This includes pants, skirts, blouses, t-shirts (must sit at or below the waist band). Tank tops and shorts are not appropriate. Neither is clothing with any branding, labels, or slogans in reference to drug/alcohol use, nor any other inappropriate behavior.

Food, drinks, cell phones. Food, drinks, and cell phone use are not permitted in the courtroom.

Disrespectful behavior and verbal or physical threats. Always treat other program participants and VTC staff members with the respect that you would like to be afforded, even when communicating differences of opinion.

What Should I Expect at Court?

Your progress on VTC requirements and case plan objectives will be monitored by VTC staff and reported to the VTC judge prior to each of your court appearances. During your court appearance, the judge may ask you for additional information, acknowledge your progress, or address concerns identified by the VTC staff. The Court awards incentives for compliant behavior and treatment progress, while issuing appropriate sanctions for non-compliant behavior. Therapeutic interventions may also be implemented, as needed.

Incentives

The VTC program wishes to highlight and celebrate participants' successes. Participants who demonstrate progress on treatment plan goals and program expectations will be awarded incentives.

Incentives may include:

- Recognition from the Court
- Decrease in urine testing
- Decrease in required court attendance
- Travel passes
- Promotion in program level
- Certificates of completion
- Graduation
- Dismissal or reduction of charges

Therapeutic Interventions

The goal of the VTC program is to respond to substance use and/or mental health concerns with therapeutic interventions. When participants struggle with attaining or maintaining sobriety or with managing mental health symptoms that contribute to risky behaviors, the treatment team may recommend specific interventions which may then be mandated by the Court.

Therapeutic interventions may include:

- Intensified accountability
- Mental health screening and treatment
- Intensive outpatient substance use treatment
- Inpatient substance use treatment
- Inpatient mental health programs
- Recovery support programs

Sanctions:

Noncompliance with program expectations will result in sanctions issued by the VTC judge. Noncompliance is any failure to take appropriate action on program requirements or specific instruction from the Court. The most stringent sanctions will result from acts of dishonesty with the VTC team.

Sanctions may include:

- Increased reporting
- Increased urine testing
- Increased court appearances
- Additional drug and alcohol testing measures (see Additional Testing/Continuous Monitoring, p. 9)
- Curfew and/or continuous GPS monitoring
- Extension of current program level or return to previous level
- Incarceration
- Zero Tolerance Policy
- Termination from the Veterans Treatment Court program

Rules and Requirements

During the term of your participation within the Bell County VTC program, it is your responsibility to be familiar with and abide by all program rules. You should also become familiar with the requirements of each program level to ensure that you are able to advance through the program in a timely manner.

Banned Substances

There are many seemingly innocuous substances that may interfere with testing results by causing "false positive" results. It is your responsibility to become informed about these substances and avoid them. You are also expected to abstain from the use of any "banned substances," as listed below.

Alcohol

Carefully review product labels for any *alcohol* content. Unfortunately, there is no way for labs to delineate between the alcohol contained in many household products and alcohol consumed in alcoholic beverages. Therefore, any failed tests resulting from the use of products containing alcohol will be treated as a violation of program rules.

Practice caution with—

Mouthwash	Makeup
Breath spray	Antiperspirant
Gum	Aftershave
Kombucha	Cologne
Cleaning products	Hair Dye
Hand sanitizer	Any food prepared with alcohol

CAUTION: Non-alcoholic beverages, such as “near bear” or O’Doul’s, contain alcohol!

Vapes

Due to the increased use of vape devices for THC, methamphetamine, and other illegal substance use, the Bell County Veterans Court prohibits the use of vapes by participants.

“Over-the-Counter” Medications and Supplements

Some nonprescription or “over-the-counter” (OTC) medications may interfere with drug and alcohol testing. While you are not expected to avoid all OTC medications, you may be held responsible for the use of OTC medications known to cause false positives. Prior to taking any OTC medication, you should communicate with your supervision officer and/or a pharmacist to identify and avoid any substances that may cause false positives during urinalysis. Furthermore, the Veterans Treatment Court has also banned the use of some OTC medications that are frequently misused (see below).

Participants should also take care with the use of supplements. Again, some supplements may interfere with drug and alcohol testing. Many substances marketed as supplements or natural health aides also have mood-altering or psychoactive qualities that conflict with the overarching goal of the Veterans Treatment Court program.

The use of ANY over-the-counter medication or supplement in a manner inconsistent with intended use, such as to achieve psychoactive effects, is a violation of the Veterans Treatment Court and will be sanctioned accordingly.

The following substances are strictly banned for use by Bell County Veterans Treatment Court participants:

- **Dextromethorphan, “DM”** Cold and flu medications and cough suppressants such as Alka-Seltzer Cold, Comtrex Acute, Contac Cold Maximum, Coricidin, Dayquil/Nyquil, Dimetapp, Dristan Maximum, Robitussin, Sudafed, Triaminic, Tylenol Cold, Vicks 44. There are non-dextromethorphan “DM” versions available of almost all of these.
- **Cannabidiol, “CBD”** CBD products contain trace amounts of THC and can still cause you to test positive—even if the label says the product contains no THC! Use of CBD products is a violation of the VTC program.
- **Delta-8 tetrahydrocannabinol, “Delta-8 THC”**
- **Mitragynine, “Kratom”**
- **Tianeptine, “Tianna”**
- **Piper methysticum, “Kava”**
- **Products containing the following plant substances, often marketed as “herbal incense,” “tea,” or “tincture”**
 - *Canavalia rosea*, commonly known as beach bean or bay bean
 - *Nymphaea caerulea*, also known as Blue Egyptian water lily or *blue lotus*

- *Scutellaria nana*, also known as Dwarf skullcap
- *Pedicularis densiflora*, known commonly as Indian warrior
- *Leonotis leonurus*, also known as **Lion's Tail** and **Wild Dagga**
- *Zornia latifolia*
- *Nelumbo nucifera*, known by several names including Indian Lotus, or simply Lotus
- *Leonurus sibiricus*, commonly called Honeyweed or Siberian motherwort

New Arrests

Participants of the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court are expected to maintain a law-abiding lifestyle. New arrests that occur while you are an active program participant may result in termination from the VTC program. Outcomes are determined by the VTC judge on a case-by-case basis; however, failure to immediately and honestly report the circumstances of an arrest to the VTC team will make further program participation unlikely, if not impossible. Any new arrest incidents should be reported to your supervision officer at the earliest possible opportunity.

Use of Service Animals

As defined by the American with Disabilities Act, service animals are dogs individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

Bell County Service Animal Policy

It is the policy of Bell County that every effort will be made to accommodate the special needs of individuals requiring the use of trained guide dogs. Service dogs are permitted to accompany individuals to all areas of Bell County facilities and property on the same terms and conditions, and subject to the same regulations, as generally govern the admission of the public to the property. Every effort will be taken to ensure a hazardous-free, healthy environment for both individuals and therapy dogs.

Procedures

A service dog functions as an aid to disabled individuals. Disabled individuals are to be permitted to use trained service dogs in Bell County buildings/properties in all situations except where it can be demonstrated that this poses a significant risk, or where the dog exhibits disruptive behavior.

This policy is restricted to trained guide, and service dogs which have been maintained as such by their owners. Dogs whose primary function is that of a pet are not recognized as acceptable service animals. Therapy animals, companion animals, emotional support animals, and pets are not considered service animals, and their access to Bell County buildings/properties are not covered by this directive. Service animals in training are not allowed on the property. Individuals may ask if a dog is a service animal and/or ask what tasks the animal has been trained to perform. Service dogs do not require special ID cards.

Service dogs are not permitted to run free or roam in Bell County buildings/properties. The service dog must be in a guiding harness, or on a leash, and under control at all times while in Bell County buildings/properties unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other

effective controls. Service animals are not allowed on furniture or tables. The owner/handler must carry elimination supplies and is responsible for cleanup of animal wastes.

Service dogs who are poorly controlled, or whose owners demonstrate an inability to care for their basic needs, may be excluded or restricted from Bell County buildings/property. A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service dog from the premises except in the following situations and areas:

- The dog is out of control and the dog's owner does not take effective action to control it.
- The dog poses a DIRECT threat to the health or safety of others. The determination of a direct threat or safety MUST be based upon medical or other evidence, not on stereotype or conjecture. Dogs found to be infected with external parasites (ticks, fleas, or lice) or which vomit or have diarrhea, must be immediately removed from the premises.
- The care, handling, and monitoring of any service dog brought onto Bell County buildings/property is the responsibility of the handler and not that of Bell County staff.

Animals other than service animals are not permitted to be present on Bell County property, and any individual with a non-service animal must remove it.

Program Levels

The Bell County Veterans Treatment Court consists of four levels or phases. Each level emphasizes a different objective and requires specific tasks to be completed prior to advancement to the subsequent level. Upon entering each phase of the VTC program, you will meet with your defense attorney to review and sign a Level Agreement, which will detail specific requirements (see Appendix B, Level Agreements).

Level 1

The first level within the VTC program focuses on **stabilization** and will extend for a minimum of 60 days. This is the foundational phase of the program, during which your individualized case plan will be established, and you will begin treatment attendance. During Level 1, participants are expected to work with their case manager to identify and address areas in need of immediate stabilization, such as untreated mental health concerns or housing issues. The goal is to address obstacles immediately to help you move forward in the program successfully.

Book Report

During Level 1, you will be expected to read the book, *Once a Warrior, Always a Warrior*, by Charles W. Hogue. This book will be provided at orientation. *Alternatively, a copy of the audio book can be made available to you upon request.* Upon completion, you will write and present to the court a "book report." The book report will be a written reflection of the book, which may include summarization of main points, material that felt relevant to your experience, information you found helpful or that you feel may be helpful to family members or loved ones, etc. The book report does not have a minimum length but will require you to show that you have put serious thought into the exercise. You will be responsible to submit your book report to the VTC Coordinator prior to the court date on which you intend to advance to Level 2.

When presenting your book report during your court appearance, you are encouraged to identify and share **three main "take-aways"** from your written book report. It is not necessary to read your entire written report to the Court. Also, avoid sharing detailed information about your own experiences that may be triggering for others and yourself. You will find your VTC peers to be an extremely supportive audience.

Level 2

The second level of the VTC program focuses on **positive environments** and extends for a minimum of 120 days. This is an action phase during which you will develop greater awareness of the places, people, and activities that you engage in and how they impact your mental health and/or substance use recovery.

Community Service Project

During Level 2 of the Veterans Treatment Court Program, you will identify and complete a 20-hour service project of your choosing.

Service Project Requirements:

- 20 hours in total
- Hours must be logged with a service agency that can provide confirmation of completed hours (See Appendix D, Service Hours Log.)
- Must not be receiving any compensation/credit by any other entity
Note: Service Project hours are to be performed separately from any CSR hours required by probation and/or MRT Helping Hours.

The Court will expect you to submit a written Service Project Plan for approval before you begin completing your service hours.

Your plan will include the following information:

- **Agency information**
Which agency will you be serving with? Where is it located? Please provide a point of contact (name, phone number, email, etc). What population does this agency serve?
- **Your role**
What will you be doing with the agency?
- **Your schedule**
When will you begin working on this project? Have you designated specific days and times? When do you expect to complete the project?
- **Your purpose**
Why did you decide on this specific project? Is there a personal connection? Did you notice a need in your community? Is it related to one of your interests?

Upon completion of your service project, please submit your Service Hours Log to the VTC Coordinator.

When you are ready to phase up to Level 3, you will be asked you will submit documentation of your completed service project to the VTC Coordinator (see Appendix D, Service Hours Log) to present your completed service project to the court. This will be your opportunity to share with your peers about your experiences. When preparing to present, consider the following:

- How did this experience meet your expectations? Was it different than expected?
- Was any part of this experience especially challenging for you? How did you address those challenges?
- Was any part of this experience especially rewarding? What made it rewarding?
- Did you learn anything through the process? What did you learn about yourself?
- How did you impact others during your service experience? How were you impacted?

Level 3

The third phase of the VTC program will focus on **restructured thinking** and will extend for a minimum of 120 days. During Level 3, you will be tasked with recognizing destructive thought patterns and identifying different ways of thinking to promote ongoing recovery. You will also begin thinking about how you will continue your recovery process after graduation from the VTC program.

During Level 3, you will meet with a case manager periodically to discuss restructured thinking and complete a relapse prevention plan, as well as a plan for ongoing recovery.

When you are ready to advance to Level 4, you will be expected to present your personal plan for "Ongoing Recovery." This is essentially your opportunity to make a commitment to your peers in VTC about how you plan to continue the journey you started in the program. You should share your plan for ongoing support and personal development, including any recovery programs you plan to participate in. You may also wish to share what coping skills you have found to be effective and little bit about the goals you will be pursuing as you transition out of the VTC program.

Level 4

The final phase of the VTC program is focused on **maintenance** and will extend for a minimum of 65 days. During Level 4, your court dates will be reduced to once a month, and the frequency of scheduled urinalysis tests will also be reduced. The VTC team will provide resources to assist with any maintenance needs—any services that will you continue on your recovery path. You are encouraged to begin focusing on transition, with an emphasis on expanding external support structures. You may also be required to attend a recovery support program, if this was included in the ongoing recovery plan that you created with your case manager.

GRADUATION

Graduation is a time to celebrate the progress you have made as a participant of the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court program. We encourage you to invite your family and friends to join you at your graduation ceremony. This special event is a recognition of your accomplishments and time to share words of wisdom with your battle buddies in the program. Upon graduation, you are encouraged to maintain contact with the VTC staff and other successful participants. We also welcome you to return to visit and to encourage current VTC participants by sharing about your personal recovery experience. The Bell County Veterans Treatment Court is eager to celebrate your successes and to continue offering support as needed. Remember that graduation from Veterans Treatment Court does not mean the end of your recovery process, but will instead be the beginning of a new phase in your life-long recovery journey.

Appendices

Appendix A: Notice of Privacy Practices

Notice of Privacy Practices

Bell County Specialty Courts

County Court at Law #3

1201 Huey Rd, Belton TX 76513

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. **Please review it carefully.**

YOUR RIGHTS

When it comes to your health information, you have certain rights. This section explains your rights and some of our responsibilities to you.

You have the right to...

Get an electronic or paper copy of your medical records

- You can ask to see or get an electronic or paper copy of your medical record and other health information we have about you.
- We will provide a copy or a summary of your health information, usually within 30 days of your request.

Ask us to correct your medical record

- You can ask us to correct health information about you that you think is incorrect or incomplete.
- We may say "no" to your request, but we'll tell you why in writing within 60 days.

Request confidential communications

- You can ask us to contact you in a specific way (for example, home or office phone) or to send mail to a different address.
- We will say "yes" to all reasonable requests.

Ask us to limit what we use or share

- You can ask us **not** to use or share certain health information for treatment, payment, or our operations. *We are not required to agree to your request, and we may say "no" if it would affect your care*
- If you pay for a service or health care item out-of-pocket in full, you can ask us not to share that information for the purpose of payment or our operations with your health insurer.
We will say "yes" unless a law requires us to share that information.

Get a copy of this privacy notice

- You can ask for a paper copy of this notice at any time, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically. We will provide you with a paper copy promptly.

Get a list of those with whom we've shared information

- You can ask us for a list (accounting) of the times we've shared your health information for six years prior to the date you ask, who we shared it with, and why.
- We will include all the disclosures except for those about treatment, payment, and health care operations, and certain other disclosures (such as any you asked us to make).

Choose someone to act for you

- If you have given someone medical power of attorney or if someone is your legal guardian, that person can exercise your rights and make choices about your health information.
- We will make sure the person has this authority and can act for you before we take any action.

File a complaint if you believe your rights have been violated

- You send us a written complaint if you feel we have violated your rights:
Bell County Specialty Court Program
County Court at Law #3
1201 Huey Rd Belton TX 76513
- You can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights by sending a letter to 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington D.C. 20201, calling 1-877-696-6775, or visiting www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/.
- We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

YOUR CHOICES

For certain health information, you can tell us your choices about what we share. If you have a clear preference for how to share your information in the situations described below, talk to us. Tell us what you want us to do, and we will follow your instructions.

You have both the right and choice to tell us to:

- Share information with your family, close friends, or others involved in your care
- Share information in a disaster relief situation
- Include your information in a hospital directory
- Contact you for fundraising efforts

If you are not able to tell us your preference, for example if you are unconscious, we may go ahead and share your information if we believe it is in your best interest. We may also share your information when needed to lessen a serious and imminent threat to health and safety.

In the case of fundraising:

- We may contact you for fundraising efforts, but you can tell us not to contact you again.

We never share your information for:

- Marketing purposes
 - Sale of your information
-

OUR USES AND DISCLOSURES

How do we typically use or share your health information? We typically use or share your health information in the following ways.

To inform treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can use your health information and share it with other professionals who are treating you. 	<i>Example:</i> A doctor treating you for an injury asks another doctor about your overall health condition.
To run our organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can use and share your health information to run our practice, improve your care, and contact you when necessary. 	<i>Example:</i> We use health information about you to manage your treatment and services.
To bill for your services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can use and share your health information to bill and get payment from health plans or other entities. 	<i>Example:</i> We give information about you to your health insurance plan so it will pay for your services.

How else can we share your health information?

We are allowed or required to share your information in other ways - usually in ways that contribute to the public good, such as public health and research. We must meet many legal conditions before we can share your information for these purposes. For more information, go to www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hippa/understanding/consumers/index.html

Comply with the law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will share information about you if state or federal laws require it, including with the Department of Health and Human Services if it wants to see that we're complying with federal privacy law.
Do research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can use or share your information for health research.
Help with public health and safety issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can share health information about you for certain situations such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventing disease Helping with product recalls Reporting adverse reactions to medications Reporting suspected abuse, neglect, or domestic violence Preventing or reducing a serious threat to anyone's health or safety
Respond to organ and tissue donation requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can share health information about you with organ procurement organizations.

Work with a medical examiner or funeral director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We can share information with a coroner, medical examiner, or funeral director when an individual dies.
Address workers' compensation, law enforcement, and other government requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We can use or share health information about you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For workers' compensation claims ○ For law enforcement purposes or with a law enforcement official ○ With health oversight agencies for activities authorized by law ○ For special government functions such as military, national security, and presidential protective services
Judicial and administrative proceedings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We may disclose your health information in any criminal or civil proceeding if a court or administrative judge has issued an order or subpoena that requires us to disclose it. Some types of court or administrative proceedings where we may disclose your health information are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commitment proceedings for involuntary commitment for court-ordered treatment or services ○ Court-ordered examinations for a mental or emotional condition or disorder ○ Proceedings regarding abuse or neglect or a resident of an institution ○ License revocation proceedings against a doctor or other professional
Correctional institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you are in the custody of a correctional institution, we may disclose your health information to the institution in order to provide healthcare to you.
Criminal justice system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We may disclose your health information to other state agencies involved in your treatment, rehabilitation, or supervision.

OUR DUTIES TO YOU

- We are required by law to maintain the privacy and security of your protected health information.
- We will let you know promptly if a breach occurs that may have compromised the privacy or security of your information.
- We must follow the duties and privacy practices described in this notice and give you a copy of it.
- We will not use or share your information other than as described here unless you tell us we can in writing. If you tell us we can, you may change your mind at any time. Let us know in writing if you change your mind.

For more information see: www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hippa/understanding/consumers/noticepp.html

42 C.F.R. § 2.22

The confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records maintained by this program is protected by federal law and regulations. Generally, the program may not say to a person outside the program that a patient attends the program, or disclose any information identifying a patient as an alcohol or drug abuser unless: (1) The patient consents in writing; (2) The disclosure is allowed by a court order; or (3) The disclosure is made to medical personnel in a medical emergency or to qualified personnel for research, audit, or program evaluation. Violation of federal law and regulations by a program is a crime. Suspected violations may be reported to appropriate authorities in accordance with federal regulations. Federal law and regulations do not protect any information about a crime committed by a patient either at the program or against any person who works for the program or about any threat to commit such a crime. Federal laws and regulations do not protect any information about suspected child abuse or neglect from being reported under state law to appropriate state and local authorities.

See 42 U.S.C. § 290DD- 3 for federal law and 42 C.F.R. Part 2 for federal regulations.

Appendix B: Level Agreements

BELL COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT**LEVEL 1: STABILIZATION
MINIMUM OF 60 DAYS**

The amount of time required to complete the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court program will be determined by the participant's individual progress, but the program requires a **minimum** of 12 months to complete.

At VTC orientation, you will meet with the Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist (VJO), who will provide recommendations for treatment. During Level 1, you will work with a case manager to create an Individualized Case Plan, which will include your treatment plan and any initial stabilization goals. You will also be assigned a specialized VTC Supervision Officer, who will monitor your compliance with all program requirements. Your program compliance and treatment progress will be reported to the VTC judge on a regular basis.

Level 1 requirements include:

- Participate in a psychosocial assessment to identify treatment needs and individualized goals. Course of treatment is individualized according to participant needs.
- Attend Veterans Treatment Court appearances as scheduled (approximately 2 times monthly).
- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team (minimum of weekly).
- Report for all randomly scheduled drug and alcohol tests (approximately 2-3 times weekly).
- Allow the VTC supervision officer to visit you in your home at least once a month.
- Maintain weekly contact with case manager to address basic stabilization needs including housing assistance, mental health treatment resources, and other assistance avenues as necessary.
- Maintain contact with Veteran Mentor, if assigned.
- Read *Once a Warrior, Always a Warrior* by Charles W. Hoge and write book report. See instructions on page 16 of VTC handbook.

Advancement Criteria:

- Report for all scheduled urinalysis tests and maintain negative test results for a minimum of 30 consecutive days. *NOTE: Diluted or otherwise tampered tests will be counted as positive.*
- No unexcused absences from scheduled services for 14 consecutive days and sanction free for 14 consecutive days.
- Complete Individualized Case Plan with caseworker.
- Presentation of book report on the book titled, *Once a Warrior, Always a Warrior*.
- Demonstrate a positive adjustment to treatment.

I understand and agree to adhere to the Level 1 requirements of the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court. I understand that failure to comply with the Level 1 requirements will result in sanctions and will prevent me from advancing in the Veterans Treatment Court Program. Furthermore, I understand that persistent noncompliance will ultimately result in dismissal from the Drug Court Program.

Participant Signature

Date

BELL COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

LEVEL 2: POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS MINIMUM OF 120 DAYS

In Level 2, your Case Plan will be updated to identify ongoing treatment goals with a focus on Positive Environments. Treatment appointments and meetings will focus on areas that are challenging for you while identifying ways of coping with stressful situations.

Level 2 requirements include:

- Meet with case manager to update Individualized Case Plan.
- Attend Veterans Treatment Court appearances as scheduled (approximately 2 times monthly).
- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team (minimum of twice monthly).
- Report for all randomly scheduled drug and alcohol tests (approximately 2 times weekly).
- Allow the VTC supervision officer to visit you in your home for randomly scheduled home visits.
- Maintain contact with Veteran Mentor, if assigned.
- Meet with/contact case manager as scheduled and continue progress on case plan goals, with a focus on Addiction Treatment (if necessary), positive peer affiliations, developing structured daily activities, and family supports.
- Identify and complete 20-hour service project.

Advancement Criteria:

- Report for all scheduled urinalysis tests and maintain negative test results for a minimum of 60 consecutive days. *NOTE: Diluted or otherwise tampered tests will be counted as positive.*
- No unexcused absences from scheduled services and sanction-free for 30 consecutive days.
- Continued compliance with Individualized Case Plan.
- Employment or productive use of time such as employment, community service, or school attendance.
- Demonstrate a positive adjustment to ongoing treatment.
- Submit Service Project Hours Log and present completed Service Project to the Court.

I understand and agree to adhere to the Level 2 requirements of the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court. I understand that failure to comply with the Level 2 requirements will result in sanctions and will prevent me from advancing in the Veterans Treatment Court Program.

Furthermore, I understand that persistent noncompliance will ultimately result in dismissal from the Drug Court Program.

Participant Signature

Date

BELL COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

LEVEL 3: RESTRUCTURED THINKING MINIMUM OF 120 DAYS

In Level 3, you will address Restructured Thinking. The focus will be to utilize learned skills toward adaptive problem-solving and outreach of supports. This level is designed to support you as a productive and responsible member of our community.

Level 3 requirements include:

- Meet with case manager to update Individualized Case Plan.
- Attend Veterans Treatment Court appearances as scheduled (approximately 2 times monthly).
- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team (minimum of twice monthly).
- Report for all randomly scheduled drug and alcohol tests (approximately 2 times weekly).
- Allow the VTC supervision officer to visit you in your home for randomly scheduled home visits.
- Maintain contact with Veteran Mentor, if assigned.
- Meet with/contact case manager as scheduled and continue progress on case plan goals, with a focus on corrective thinking along with the utilization of skills and supports identified in Levels 1 and 2.
- Complete Relapse Prevention Plan and Ongoing Recovery Plan.
- Complete Moral Reconation Therapy groups prior to graduation.

Advancement Criteria:

- No positive drug test results (including missed, tampered or diluted tests) for 90 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from scheduled services and sanction free 60 consecutive days.
- Demonstrating productive use of time such as employment, community service, or school attendance.
- Demonstrate a positive adjustment to treatment.
- Present Ongoing Recovery Plan to the Court.

I understand and agree to adhere to the Level 3 requirements of the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court. I understand that failure to comply with the Level 3 requirements will result in sanctions and will prevent me from advancing in the Veterans Treatment Court Program. Furthermore, I understand that persistent noncompliance will ultimately result in dismissal from the Drug Court Program.

Participant Signature

Date

BELL COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

LEVEL 4: MAINTENANCE MINIMUM OF 65 DAYS

In Level 4, you will address ongoing recovery needs. The focus will be on maintenance and well-being while working with the treatment team to develop an effective Relapse Prevention Plan and identify any additional resources that may be helpful as you transition into Aftercare. This level is designed to support you as a productive and responsible member of our community.

Level 4 requirements include:

- Attend Veterans Treatment Court appearances as scheduled (monthly).
- Participate in all forms of treatment and/or recovery support group, as directed by the treatment team (minimum of twice monthly).
- Report for all randomly scheduled drug and alcohol tests (approximately 3-4 times monthly).
- Allow the VTC supervision officer to visit you in your home for randomly scheduled home visits.
- Maintain contact with Veteran Mentor, if assigned.
- Meet with/contact case manager as scheduled and continue progress on case plan goals, with a focus on expanding external support systems and recovery maintenance.

Graduation Criteria:

- No positive drug test results (including missed, tampered or diluted tests) for 65 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from scheduled services for 65 consecutive days and sanction free for 65 consecutive days.
- Progress on Individualized Case Plan goals.
- Employment or productive use of time such as community service or school attendance.
- Demonstrate a positive adjustment to treatment.
- Completion of Moral Reconation Therapy program.

I understand and agree to adhere to the Level 4 requirements of the Bell County Veterans Treatment Court. I understand that failure to comply with the Level 4 requirements will result in sanctions and will prevent me from advancing in the Veterans Treatment Court Program. Furthermore, I understand that persistent noncompliance will ultimately result in dismissal from the Drug Court Program.

Participant Signature

Date

Table 1*Comparative Analysis of Nearby Counties with Vet Courts*

	Bell County	Hays County	Montgomery County
Year Vet Court started	2015	2014	2015
Veteran population data ¹	Above 10,000	Above 10,000	Above 10,000
Contiguous county veteran population ¹	3 of 7 contiguous counties also have above 10,000 veterans	4 of 5 contiguous counties also have above 10,000 veterans	1 of 6 contiguous counties have above 10,000 veterans
# of graduates	186	134	78
Vet Court docket capacity	50 between 2 dockets, averages 31	10-20 participants at any given time	30 max, can flux fewer
Entry to court	Case remains active, no plea, it is reset for a year and then reset as needed, participant contract implemented, waiver of jury trial, and amend bond conditions	Must plea guilty 1 st , can be dismissed or expunged after completing vet court	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Misdemeanor Diversion, plea and dismissed after graduation 2. Felony – condition of probation
Types of cases	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Misdemeanor 2. Felony 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Misdemeanor 2. Felony that is being reduced to misdemeanor 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Misdemeanor 2. Felony
Grants	TVC, OOG Specialty Court Grant, CJAD grant for pretrial officer salary	TVC	TVC
Type of specialty dockets	Vet Court, Mental Health Court, Drug Court	Vet Court, Mental Health Court	Vet Court, DWI court, Drug Court, mental health court
Assigned VA Medical Center	Central Texas *VA Support to expand to BCS	Central Texas *VA Support to expand to BCS	Michael DeBakey (Houston)
Distance to VA medical center	Within same county	99 miles	46 miles

¹https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites.VHAc2i/justice_involved_veterans/shared%20Documents/VJP_Maps/VISN_17_Maps/vtmap_VHA%20VISN%2017%20-%20Temple%20VAMC.pdf

Bell County VTC: Jessie McCarty: Jessie.McCarty@bellcounty.texas.gov

Hays County VTC: Gerald.ramcharan@co.hays.tx.us; Shaun.mosqueda@co.hays.tx.us

Montgomery County VTC: Mike Shirley, Mike.Shirley@MCTX.org, Yolanda Alatorre
Yolanda.alatorre@mctx.org