



news

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Denver Drug Court implements a Veterans Track

DENVER – Some military veterans charged with non-violent crimes may now have the opportunity to be enrolled in a court-monitored treatment and accountability program under an expansion of the Denver Adult Drug Court.

The court earlier this month opened a Veterans Track within its existing program. The new track is designed to balance the specialized treatment needs of veterans with the need to protect the community's safety. The goal is to provide non-violent offenders with effective treatment while holding them accountable for their actions.

“I am elated and proud to be a part of this effort to address the needs of those who have given so much and who have subsequently suffered greatly,” said Magistrate Jeffrey English, who presides over the Denver Adult Drug Court. “I appreciate the efforts of the many agencies involved which have educated the courts on veterans’ needs and who were instrumental in implementing the Veterans Track.”

The National Association of Drug Court Professionals reports one in six veterans returning from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq suffer from a substance abuse challenge. One in five has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment. Post-traumatic stress disorder can be an

underlying factor in crimes allegedly committed and subsequent involvement with the criminal justice system.

“The Denver Adult Drug Court once again is in the forefront in addressing the critical needs of vulnerable segments of our society,” said Denver District Court Chief Judge Robert S. Hyatt. “Providing a specialized court experience for veterans is a logical extension of the many services already available in the Denver Adult Drug Court.”

Partners in creating the Veterans Track within Denver Adult Drug Court include the Denver Department of Human Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Denver Adult Probation, Denver District Attorney’s Office and the Denver Public Defender’s Office. Also participating is the Colorado Division of Behavioral Health, which received a five-year jail diversion and trauma recovery-priority to veterans (JDTR) grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The new arm of the Denver Adult Drug Court is the second court program in Colorado specifically designed to address the needs of military veterans. A Veteran Trauma Court in the 4th Judicial District (El Paso and Teller counties) has been operating for two years with a similar goal and program.

For more information on Veterans Track program and the Veterans Trauma Court, contact Laura Williams, Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health, at 303-866-7433 or laura.williams@state.co.us.