



**State of Colorado - First Judicial District  
Jefferson & Gilpin Counties  
VETERANS TREATMENT COURT**

# **PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK**

*"...to care for him who shall have borne the battle..."  
- ABRAHAM LINCOLN*



## **First Judicial District Veterans Treatment Court**

**Welcome to the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Veterans Treatment Court (VTC). Our mission is to reduce recidivism of individuals who served in the armed forces, suffer from a behavioral health diagnosis (including PTSD and/or TBI), and are involved in the criminal justice system. We will promote public safety, ensure participant accountability, and improve quality of life for participants and their families with a cost effective, integrated continuum of care through community resources. The VTC will assist participants in achieving long-term stability to become law-abiding citizens and successful community members.**

**We would like you to know that we are committed to your success. That means that we will reinforce your strengths and positive changes, support you during difficult times and sanction behaviors that interfere with your recovery.**

**As a participant in the VTC, you are expected to follow the instructions given to you in Court by the Judge and the VTC team. This handbook will explain what is expected of you and provide general program information. Feel free to bring it to Court with you.**

**Again, welcome to Veterans Treatment Court and Good Luck!**

## —— What is Veterans Treatment Court? ——

**There is hope!** You are not alone. The Veterans Treatment Court Team is here to support you. We will provide you with tools that will help you make the necessary changes to be active in wellness and recovery. We will connect you with resources to help you along your journey. The Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) is primarily, a treatment court, and you will be expected to **make treatment a priority**. This program requires a total commitment to following your treatment plan, remaining sober, and leading a law-abiding life.

Participating in the VTC requires regular court appearances before the VTC Judge. Court is located on the fourth floor of the Jefferson County Administration and Courts Building in Courtroom 4D. Initially, you will attend court weekly. As you advance through the phases, you will likely have fewer court appearances. Participants are expected to attend court appearances and a warrant for your arrest will be issued if you fail to appear.

Before court, the judge will be given progress reports regarding your drug tests, attendance, interactions with the VTC team, probation compliance, and progress in treatment. The judge will ask you about your successes, hurdles and goals at every appearance.

You will create, follow, and complete a treatment plan while you are in VTC. Expect to be in treatment throughout the duration of your participation. Treatment is individualized and can look different for everyone. You will need to make treatment attendance a priority and you must be on time for all sessions. If you are late, you may not be allowed to attend and may be considered absent. The VTC team will assist in paying for treatment when possible.

### ***This treatment plan may require all or some of the following:***

- Outpatient treatment
- Inpatient/residential treatment
- Halfway House or Transitional housing placement
- Counseling (individual and group)
- Educational/vocational/employment programs
- Participation in self-help groups

VTC staff will also help you with other areas of your life based on your individual needs. We can provide resources to help with education, vocational training, parenting skills, prosocial activities, etc. You will work with your probation officer to identify areas in which you need help.

### ***This may include referrals for:***

- Skills testing and an educational assessment
- Peer support
- Job Training and job-readiness training
- School or other educational services
- Job placement services
- Family counseling (with you, your spouse, and/or your children)
- Life Skills classes
- Public Assistance/Medicaid
- Recreational/pro-social activities

## ———— VTC Team Members ————

- Judge
- District Attorney
- Public Defender
- Probation Officer
- Veteran Justice Outreach Specialist
- Court coordinator
- Jefferson County Sheriff Deputy
- Peer Mentor Coordinator

**Judge:** The judge is the formal leader of the VTC and makes all final decisions about your participation and progress in the program. These decisions will be based on information provided by other team members in regularly held staffing that precede all court appearances.

**District Attorney:** The VTC DA represents the People of the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District.

**Public Defender:** The defense attorney represents a defense-oriented perspective of suitability and continued participation of individuals in the VTC.

**Probation Officer:** Your probation officer is your primary contact person, and is also the primary source of information to the VTC team regarding your compliance and progress in the program. They supervise your success in the program.

**Veteran Justice Outreach Specialist (VJO):** Your VJO provides direct services to justice-involved Veterans. They serve both incarcerated Veterans and justice-involved Veterans who have not been incarcerated and work with the courts to help eligible justice-involved Veterans get mental health assessment, treatment planning, and referrals to VA services.

**Court Coordinator:** Coordinator works closely with all team members and oversees the program's day-to-day operations.

**Sheriff Deputy:** Assists the court in ensuring compliance with the program and community safety.

**Peer Mentor Coordinator:** The mentor coordinator recruits and trains volunteer mentors, facilitates interaction between program participants and mentors, and locates resources for participant

## ———— Program Rules ————

- All participants in the First Judicial District Veterans Treatment Court are expected to abide by the general VTC rules. Failure to do so may result in sanctions up to and including termination from VTC.
- Comply with the terms and conditions of your probation.
- The amount of time you spend in the VTC program will be determined by **your individual progress**, but it will be no less than 14 months.
- Attend all treatment sessions as required by your treatment plan on time.
- Attend all VA and probation appointments as scheduled.
- Arrive on time for all scheduled court appearances.
- Turn off cell phone before court; no cell phone use during court whatsoever.
- Personal needs must be scheduled around VTC requirements, which includes court reviews, treatment, probation appointments and drug testing.
- Abstain from the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, mind-altering substances and controlled substances unless prescribed by a licensed physician.
- Abstain from the use of marijuana even if you have a medical card.
- Submit to all required drug testing.
- Tampering with drug tests results (including diluting test results) is strictly forbidden and attempts to tamper will receive a high-level sanction (which may include termination from the court).
- Take all prescribed medications as directed by physician.
- If prescribed a narcotic or habit-forming medication or drug, participant must disclose this to probation officer within 24 hours.
- Attend all self-help or community support groups if ordered by the judge.
- Be respectful to the VTC team and other VTC participants.
- Complete any sanction ordered by the judge (by the given deadline).
- Dress appropriately for court reviews and treatment sessions.
- Do not argue with the Judge or staff; if you disagree with something, state your position in a calm manner.
- Do not make threats toward other participants or staff.
- Abide by all other rules and regulations imposed by the VTC.

## Termination from Veterans Treatment Court

### ***Termination Process:***

To be terminated from VTC the probation department or district attorney's office shall file a motion to revoke probation or deferred judgment. An attorney for the participant may provide representation in any revocation proceedings.

### ***Termination Criteria:***

- Participant will be terminated from the program for the following:
- Participant revokes the release of information that allows the VTC team to share information about his or her case or treatment progress.
- Participant presents a threat to public safety, any VTC personnel, participants, or victims.
- Participant moves away from the area in which necessary providers can provide treatment and participant does not have adequate transportation. While this is grounds for program termination, it may not necessarily result in a probation revocation.

### ***Participant may be terminated for the following:***

- Failure to remain law abiding.
- Violation of program rules.
- Failure to follow treatment plan
- Failure to comply with monitored sobriety (this includes attempts to alter your drug tests results by tampering, diluting, etc.).
- Failure to attend scheduled court review hearings.
- Participant absconds from probation supervision.
- A post-entry determination that the participant was not appropriate for the VTC program due to his or her level of need or ability to comply with basic program requirements.

## ———— Tips to Help You Graduate from VTC ————

- ❑ Understand the VTC team is here to help and support you! Keep in mind, you and the VTC team are working towards the same goal--- to see you graduate from the program!
- ❑ **Be HONEST!** The only way the VTC team can help you is if you are open and honest about your life. If you are struggling with sobriety, tell the VTC team. If you had law enforcement contact, tell the VTC team. If you didn't complete your sanction, tell the VTC team. If you tampered with your drug test, tell the VTC team.
- ❑ The VTC team will be more understanding of a relapse than dishonesty! We understand sobriety might be a struggle and we encourage you to be honest about your use. The more we understand your needs, the better we can help you!
- ❑ Make it a priority to **COMMUNICATE** with your probation officer. If something changes in your life, your probation officer should be the first person to know. If you are having an emergency and are going to miss court, call your probation officer to avoid the issuance of a bench warrant.
- ❑ Volunteer mentors attend court every week to support you. **Please utilize this valuable resource!**
- ❑ If you need any kind of assistance, let the mentors and team know. Between the mentors and the team, it is highly likely we will be able to find a resource to provide you with the assistance you need.
- ❑ **\*\*\* Non-Alcoholic beer contains alcohol. No alcohol means no alcohol. \*\*\***
- ❑ Do not take any alcohol-based fluids, example: cough syrup, NyQuil, Listerine, etc. There are items sold over the counter that contain no alcohol.
- ❑ Docket starts at 10:00 am. Participants are called in order of where they are in the program (i.e., participants in later phases and most compliant participants are called first).
- ❑ Do not miss drug tests, dilute drug tests, or tamper with the drug tests. Any missed or dilute drug tests are considered positive tests. It is better to submit a positive drug test than miss or dilute your drug test. Missed tests, diluted tests and tamper attempts will result in a harsher sanction because it demonstrates dishonesty.
- ❑ Know how you will travel to court and have a back-up plan if you are relying on another person to bring you here. **Under no circumstance should you drive yourself to court if you do not have a valid driver's license.**
- ❑ **Please remember this is a voluntary program.**

## ———— Regular Treatment Attendance ————

Treatment includes counseling, individual sessions, substance abuse groups, education, and all other sessions as directed. If you miss treatment, it may result in a sanction from the court. You may also be required to attend treatment because of your sentence (ex: Anger Management, Domestic Violence treatment, DUI classes, etc.).

**\*\*\* Personal needs must be scheduled around Veterans Treatment Court requirements, which include: court, treatment, probation appointments, drug testing, etc. \*\*\***

## ———— Drug and Alcohol Screening ————

Because achieving and maintaining sobriety is one of the main goals of the VTC, you will be tested randomly throughout your participation in the program. Drug testing is generally done using urine screens, saliva samples, and breathalyzers. Other mechanisms used to monitor sobriety may include SCRAM, Antabuse, hair follicle tests, or other procedures approved by the court. Participants are responsible for the costs of testing, unless other arrangements have been made with your probation officer or treatment provider.

- Drug testing will be done on a random basis.
- You will be observed during testing to ensure freedom from errors.
- A drug test may be ordered at any time and may be conducted at your drug testing facility, during court appearances, or at any other time.
- If you have a positive test in any Veterans Treatment Court phase and you have **not** been honest about your drug, alcohol or other substance use before testing positive, the judge will apply an immediate sanction.
- Missed, dilute (urine samples with creatinine levels below 20 mg/dl), altered or refused screens will be considered positive and subject to sanction.
- Attempts to tamper with drug screen results are taken very seriously and may result in a high-level sanction.
- You are responsible for ensuring the screens you provide are valid. You should be aware that prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, herbal remedies, coffee, GNC products, energy drinks, dietary, or energy supplements can affect your test results. As such, you must have prior approval from the VTC team to use anything that may affect your sample.
- Do not take any medication (including over-the-counter medications) without first talking to your probation officer. Never take someone else's medication.
- Lack of money to pay for a drug screen does not excuse you from submitting. If you have financial constraints, discuss this with your probation officer.



## ———— Incentives & Sanctions ————

**INCENTIVES** are rewards for positive behavior. When you demonstrate compliance and progress in treatment, you will be awarded incentives.

***Incentives used by the court may include:***

- Verbal acknowledgement
- Written acknowledgement
- Peer recognition
- Gift cards
- Court paying for transportation passes
- Court paying for drug testing
- Court paying for treatment
- Phase promotion
- Reduction in court costs or treatment fees
- Reduced supervision (court hearings, PO meetings, etc.)

If you have complied with all requirements since your last court review, you will be recognized as a **Strong Performer**. If you are a Strong Performer, your name will be on the white board when you come into court and you will draw a random token which symbolizes a reward. Additionally, if you are a Strong Performer, you will be allowed to leave court as soon as you are done speaking with the judge. If you are not a Strong Performer, you are required to stay until the end of court.

***Strong Performer Rewards may include:***

- White Token- Entry into a monthly gift card drawing
- Red Token- Choose from of a variety of gift cards
- Blue Token- Choose from a variety of higher dollar gift cards or special event tickets

**SANCTIONS** are consequences for negative behavior. If you continue to use illegal substances or violate program rules, you will be subject to sanctions. Sanctions will be imposed every time a non-compliant behavior occurs. The sanctions imposed will increase in severity for serious violations as well as repeated violations. Sanctions will be imposed for the entire period you are involved in the Veterans Treatment Court program.

***Sanctions used by the court may include:***

Verbal warning

- Written assignment
- Increased court appearances
- Increased or daily reporting (to your PO)
- Community service
- Behavior contract
- Increased drug testing
- SCRAM
- Phase regression
- Time in custody
- Termination contract
- Program removal

## ———— Proximal and Distal Goals ————

**Proximal goals are behaviors you are already capable of achieving.**

Some examples of proximal goals are telling the truth, attending treatment, making your UAs.

**Distal goals are behaviors that are ultimately desired, but will take some time for you to accomplish.**

Some examples of distal goals are gainful employment, effective parenting, sobriety.

The sanctions you are assigned vary per your proximal and distal goals. Distal goals eventually become proximal goals as you make progress in the program. You will receive a harsher sanction for violating a proximal goal than a distal one.

## ———— Probation Meetings ————

Your relationship with your probation officer is **very important** – you must comply with the terms and conditions of probation as part of this program. Your probation officer coordinates services and provides case management, case planning, contingency management, and referral information. They also monitor your substance use/sobriety through testing, home, and other field visits, and provide all relevant information to the VTC team.

Your probation officer has a comprehensive knowledge base of local and statewide treatment, monitoring, and supervision resources for all aspects of your life and your probation officer is here to help you navigate your way through this program. Let your probation officer if you need a resource!

If you have a question, miss a treatment session, drug test, or other appointment, or change your schedule, you should notify your probation officer.

## ———— Payment for Services ————

You will be assessed for your ability to pay for treatment and monitored sobriety at the beginning of each phase. Please address your payment concerns with your probation officer. Traditionally, clients pay for more treatment and drug testing as they progress through the program. We understand you may have fines, fees, and restitution to pay off, and we will work with you to make sure your financial burden is bearable. It is expected that each participant will financially invest in his/her treatment and drug testing. Failure to attend treatment or submit a drug test due to an inability to pay result in a sanction.

You will be expected to establish a payment plan with the collections investigator to work towards paying off court fines and restitution. We understand monthly payments may not be possible at the beginning of your participation in the program, but participants in the later phases of the program should be making payments towards the balance.

## ———— Employment and Disability ————

As a participant in the VTC, treatment is your top priority. As you progress through the program, you will be asked to find employment or pursue education. We understand some veterans who come to us will be on disability and unable to work. If you are on disability, you may be encouraged to find a way to volunteer your time to help those in need to the best of your ability. If you are on disability, please discuss this requirement with your probation officer and a plan will be developed catered to your needs.

## ———— Transportation ————

Under no circumstances should you drive yourself anywhere if you do not have a valid driver's license. You should have a plan, and perhaps a backup plan, for your weekly obligations. Did you know that if you are 50% or more disabled, you can present your disability card to RTD and ride for free? Discuss this with your probation officer if you are struggling with transportation issues.

## ———— Peer Mentors ————

The Veteran Peer Mentor Program is a vital aspect of the VTC program. In addition to the VTC team, a group of volunteers serve in the court as mentors. Volunteer mentors can serve a variety of roles, including coach, facilitator, advisor, and supporter. Mentors act as a support for the veteran participant in a way that only other veterans can. We ask that you, as a participant, utilize the mentors as they are here for you. Volunteer mentors could be your first step in building a prosocial network- take advantage of this opportunity!

## ———— Phase Guidelines ————

The VTC program has four phases, each with different requirements. Your probation officer and your treatment providers will help you develop case plans to fit your specific needs. Participation in VTC is a **minimum of 14 months**, but it may take longer depending on your personal progress.

As a participant, it is expected that you meet with the peer mentors, participate in pro-social activities, or go to support services if needed. It is essential that you develop a support system as well as the skills that will allow you to find long term recovery. Together, we can make it work.

Please note, if inpatient treatment is part of your treatment plan and you successfully complete inpatient treatment, you will be given credit for the time you spent in treatment after you demonstrate two weeks of compliance (***including negative drug test results***) once you are out of treatment. Use the momentum you get from successfully completing inpatient treatment to make strides in the community!

Program progression may be temporarily suspended if participant is unable to actively participate in VTC. Additionally, if probation files a complaint to revoke your probation while you are in VTC, you will not be able to advance phases within the program. If you obtain new criminal charges while in VTC, your ability to advance to the next phase will be suspended until your newly acquired case reaches a resolution.

## Phase One

### **PHASE ONE: ORIENTATION** (minimum of 30 days)

This is the starting point of your involvement with VTC. You will make initial contact with your probation officer, treatment provider, begin submitting drug tests, attending court and meet the veteran mentors. You will be expected to develop a treatment plan with your treatment provider and a case plan with your probation officer.

#### ***Phase One Requirements:***

- Maintain contact with probation officer as directed.
- Establish contact with VA and/or community providers.
- Promptly submit to all required drug and alcohol testing.
- Attend VTC weekly or as ordered by the judge.
- Remain law abiding.
- Work with Veteran Mentors as required by the VTC team.
- Create a goal sheet with your probation officer.

#### ***Criteria for Advancement to Phase Two:***

1. On date of advancement to Phase 2, a VTC participant must have sobriety for the past 14 days with no missed, positive, dilute, or tampered drug or alcohol tests.
2. No program violations for two weeks prior to phase advancement.
3. Comply with all program requirements and probation supervision plan.
4. Review goal sheet with your probation officer prior to phase advancement and update as needed.
5. Advancement.

## Phase Two

### **PHASE TWO: TREATMENT STABILIZATION** (minimum of 120 days)

You have proven to yourself and the VTC team you can be successful in making good choices! Now, you must stabilize your life! During phase two, you must have a safe and stable place to live. This phase requires the participant to work with the VA and any other community-based treatment providers on issues identified in the individualized treatment plan.

#### ***Phase Two Requirements:***

- Maintain contact with probation officer as directed.
- Attend all appointments with VA and other service providers.
- Promptly submit to all required drug and alcohol testing.
- Attend Veterans Treatment Court every other week or as ordered by the VTC judge.
- Remain law abiding.
- Follow the individualized treatment plan.

***Phase Two Requirements continued:***

- Obtain safe and stable housing.
- Develop a schedule with your probation officer; this may include employment, school, or volunteering.
- Work with Veteran Peer Mentors as required by the VTC team.
- Continue working towards goals established with probation.

***Criteria for Advancement to Phase Three:***

1. On date of advancement to Phase 3, a VTC participant must have sobriety for the past 60 consecutive days with no missed, positive, dilute, or tampered drug or alcohol tests.
2. Petition VTC team for advancement to next phase, showing compliance with individualized treatment plan.
3. No program violations for 4 weeks prior to phase advancement.
4. Comply all program requirements and probation supervision plan.
5. Review goal sheet with your probation officer prior to phase advancement and update as needed.
6. Advancement.

———— **Phase Three** ————

**PHASE THREE: TREATMENT MAINTENANCE** (minimum of 180 days)

This phase requires the participant to continue working with treatment providers on your individualized treatment plan. Additional emphasis is placed on establishing a safe and stable residence, gainful employment or in school, and establishing pro-social supports and activities.

***Phase Three Requirements:***

- Maintain contact with probation officer as directed.
- Attend all appointments with VA and any other service providers.
- Promptly submit to required drug and alcohol testing.
- Attend court appearances every three weeks or as ordered by the judge.
- Remain law abiding.
- Follow the individualized treatment/aftercare plan.
- Obtain and maintain stable housing.
- Maintain a schedule as approved by your probation officer (employment, school, volunteering, etc.).
- Establish pro-social supports and activities.
- Work with Veteran Peer Mentors as required by the VTC team.
- Continue working towards goals established with probation.

**Criteria for Advancement to Phase Four:**

1. On date of advancement to Phase 4, a VTC participant must have sobriety for the past 90 consecutive days with no missed, positive, dilute, or tampered drug or alcohol tests.
2. Petition VTC team for advancement to next phase, showing compliance with individualized treatment plan.
3. No program violations for 6 weeks prior to phase advancement.
4. Maintain a schedule as approved by your probation officer (employment, school, volunteering, etc.).
5. Create an aftercare plan describing how participant will maintain stability after discharge from VTC and present the plan to VTC team and other VTC participants in court.
6. Comply all program requirements and probation supervision plan.
7. Review goal sheet with your probation officer prior to phase advancement and update as needed.
8. Advancement.

———— **Phase Four** ————

**PHASE FOUR: TRANSITION TO STANDDOWN** (minimum of 90 days)

Congratulations! You made it to the final phase of VTC! This phase requires the participant to work with the VA, other treatment providers, community support systems, and the VTC team to show a plan for continued success once no longer involved with the VTC.

**Phase Four Requirements:**

- Maintain contact with probation officer as directed.
- Attend all appointments with VA and any other service providers.
- Promptly submit to required drug and alcohol testing.
- Attend monthly court appearances or as ordered by the VTC judge.
- Remain law abiding.
- Follow the treatment aftercare/stability plan.
- Maintain a schedule as approved by your probation officer (work, school, volunteering, etc.).
- Maintain pro-social supports and activities.
- Maintain permanent housing.
- Pay all outstanding fines, fees, costs, and restitution or comply with payment plan.
- Continue working towards goals established with probation.

**Graduation Criteria:**

1. On date of completion of court requirements, a VTC participant must have sobriety for the past 90 consecutive days with no missed, positive, dilute, or tampered drug or alcohol tests.
2. Petition VTC team for graduation, showing compliance with individualized treatment plan and present a written relapse prevention/safety plan. Turn in to probation officer for VTC team review and approval at least 2 weeks before scheduled graduation date and present verbally to VTC team and other VTC participants on day of graduation.
3. No program violations for 8 weeks prior to graduation.
4. Maintain a schedule as approved by your probation officer (employment, school, volunteer, etc.).
5. Have safe and stable housing.
6. Comply all program requirements and probation supervision plan.
7. Graduation.

**\*\*\* Graduation from the Veterans Treatment Court is an important event. \*\*\***

**Please invite your loved ones to join you on your graduation day!**

**The VTC team looks forward to congratulating you for successfully completing the program and achieving your goals!**

**NOTE:** While program graduates are no longer required to appear in VTC, if they remain on probation after graduation, they will continue to be subject to all terms and conditions set by the sentencing judge until they are discharged from probation.

**“Believe that you can and you're halfway there.”**

**- THEODORE ROOSEVELT**