

# **District Court for Dorchester County Regional Veterans Treatment Court**



**Judge Melvin J. Jews  
District Court for Dorchester County**

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December 14, 2018

# Regional Veterans Treatment Court

- The District Court for Dorchester County Regional Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) seeks to divert eligible defendants who have served in the military with an honorable and/or other than honorable discharge with a substance use disorder and/or mental illness from the traditional criminal justice system to a specialized treatment court.

# Regional Veterans Treatment Court

- The Regional Veterans Treatment Court provides services to the aforementioned defendants who reside in Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester Counties, Maryland.

# Regional Veterans Treatment Court Goal

- The Regional VTC goal is to reduce recidivism and to provide defendants with assistance in identifying resources available through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other programs by facilitating the linkages for services to promote a lifestyle change by remaining drug-free while being productive and law abiding.



# Regional Veterans Treatment Court Supervision and Judicial Intervention

- Supervision – VTC requires mandatory and frequent court appearances, random drug and alcohol testing, substance use treatment services, and any life skills development needed for the participant.
- The program operates on a 5-phase, 14-month treatment-based program designed to focus on High Risk/High Need defendants based on the National Justice for Vets Treatment Court Model. It also incorporates the use of graduated incentives and sanctions.

# Eligibility Criteria



- Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, or Worcester County resident
- Military Service and/or Veteran
- Adult Offender
- Evident substance abuse and amenable for treatment
- CDS Possession case
- Drug-motivated crimes
- Felony and Misdemeanors
- Mental Health and Co-Occurring Disorder Cases
- Domestic Violence
- PWID (determined on case by case basis)
- Weapon Possession (determined on case by case basis)

# Offense Disqualifiers

- History of violent offenses-
- Violent crimes for purpose of disqualification include- Murder, Rape, any Felony Sex Offenses, Burglary (1-3), 1<sup>st</sup> degree Arson, Kidnapping, Robbery, Car Jacking, 1<sup>st</sup> degree Assault, 1<sup>st</sup> degree Escape, Child Abuse, Abuse of Vulnerable Adult, and Animal Cruelty; attempts to commit any of these crimes.

# VTC Program Structure



- We accept criminal cases from both the District and Circuit Courts throughout Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset and Worcester counties
- *The VTC will operate on two models:*
- **Post-Plea Sentence Deferred** – after a guilty plea is imposed, sentencing is deferred pending program participation. Upon successful completion of the program, the case may be dismissed or an appropriate probationary period may be imposed.

# VTC Program Structure

- **Violation of Probation** – after violation of probation is determined, sentencing is deferred pending program participation. Upon successful completion of the program, the defendant may be placed back on an appropriate probationary period or the probation may be terminated. Also, cases coming from Wicomico, Somerset and Worcester Counties will be referred by way of defendant being placed on probation with the condition to successfully complete the Dorchester County Regional VTC. If the defendant is unsuccessful with the VTC, the case will be transferred back to the original sentencing judge.

# VTC Referral Process

- VTC participants will be identified and referred by the following sources and organizations:
- Judicial Officers
- Office of the State's Attorney
- Office of the Public Defender
- Department of Parole & Probation
- Private Counsel
- Local Department of Corrections
- Local Law Enforcement
- Veterans related organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- A VTC referral form is completed and faxed/mailed to the PSC Coordinator to be reviewed and processed.

# VTC Screening Process

- **Will include both a legal and a clinical screening process:**
- *Legal* - The SAO will determine eligibility based upon defendant's criminal history, offense type, and severity.
- **Clinical Screening** - an assessment by the VA (for those who qualify for services) and all others will have an assessment completed by a community treatment provider. Additionally, the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialist will make referrals to any needed treatment and ancillary resources.

# Regional Veterans Treatment Court Volunteer Mentors

- The VTC program has volunteer Veteran Mentors who are assigned to each participant.
- The Veteran Mentor acts as a coach, a guide, a role model, an advocate, and a support for the veteran participating as they progress through the court process.
- VA Mobile Vet Center has satellite communications, video conference/tele-health and many other service available.



# VA Mobile Vet Center

- The VTC Program provides further services to participants with the use of the VA Mobile Vet Center.
- VA Mobile Center is a 40' Mobile Counseling Center that will provide counseling; outreach, and referral services to eligible veterans in Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester counties.

# Community Resources (Community Mapping)

Designed to assist PSC teams in identifying resources (both monetary and in-kind) in their communities (examples):

- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Treatment
- Housing
- Transportation
- Employment/Job Training
- Health/Mental Health Services

# Community Resources (Community Mapping)

- Government Agencies/Officials
- Social Services
- Community-Based Organizations
- Schools/Colleges/University
- Businesses
- Faith-Based Community



# Regional Veterans Treatment Court Team

- Judge
- Court Coordinator
- Assistant State's Attorney
- Assistant Public Defender
- Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists (VJO)
- Mentor Coordinator
- Parole & Probation Agent
- Local Treatment Provider Representative
- Local Law Enforcement
- Local Detention Center

# Regional Veterans Treatment Court Team

- Local Law Enforcement
- Local Detention Center
- Dept. of Labor, Licensing & Regulations



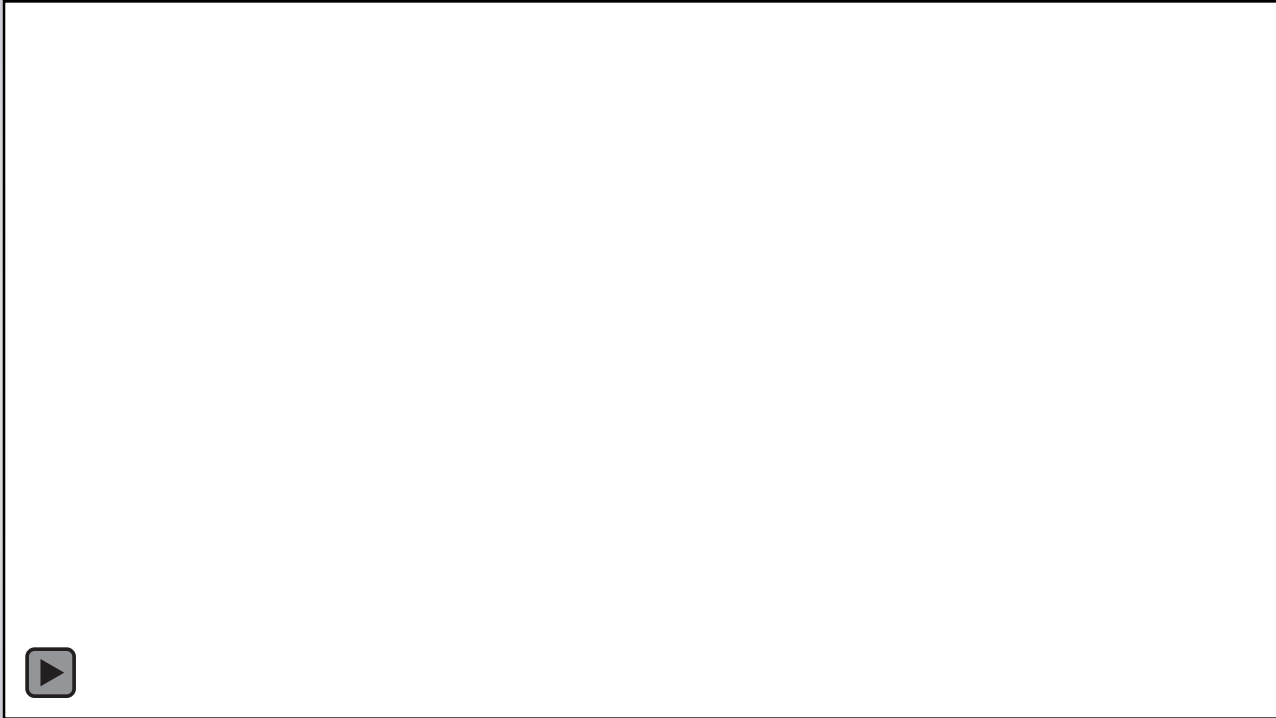
# Regional Veterans Treatment Court Partners

- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Office of the State's Attorney
- Office of the Public Defender
- Division of Parole & Probation
- Dorchester County Health Department
- Cambridge Police Department
- All Local Detention Centers
- Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulations
- And many service providers

# Why a Regional Veterans Treatment Court?

- According to the Justice for Vets program, most veterans are strengthened by their military service, but the combat experience has unfortunately left a growing number of veterans with issues such as PTSD and traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- One in five veterans has symptoms of a mental health disorder or cognitive impairment.
- One in six veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom suffers from a substance use issue ([www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov))

# Media



[Maryland Judiciary Press Release/Video](#)



# Questions or Comments?

Thank you.

