

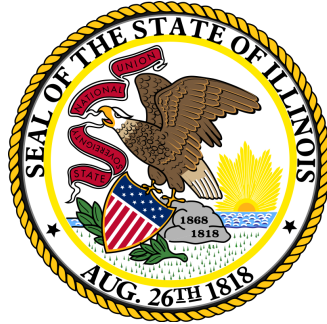
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# MENTOR MANUAL

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## Eleventh Judicial Circuit Veterans Court Mentor Program



2021

# Illinois 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Veterans Court Program Mentor Guide

## **INTRODUCTION**

Approximately 1.6 million American veterans have served in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) and/or in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom). Over the last 15 years, reports have documented the frequency of these returning veterans living with mental health conditions and/or substance use disorder. Service related mental health and/or substance use disorders may contribute to homelessness, arrests, and/or incarceration. To address the increase in veterans coming into contact with the criminal justice system, the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) team for the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit of Illinois have developed a specialized treatment court to address the underlying issues that have resulted in a veteran being referred to the criminal justice system; and provide a courtroom environment that is supportive and respectful of the veteran and the victim, and conducive to reaching a successful outcome.

The VTC team for the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit of Illinois seek to divert eligible veteran-defendants with behavioral health disorders that are charged with criminal offenses, to a specialized criminal court docket. The court uses a treatment-focused, problem-solving model as opposed to traditional court processing. The veterans voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan and attend regular status hearings, during which their progress toward achieving treatment goals and completing legal obligations are reviewed. Completion of the program is based on specific criteria defined at opt-in to the court.

## **Veterans Treatment Court: HISTORY**

In 2018, VTC was introduced to the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Illinois. The goal of this program was reduce, deter and ultimately eliminate future criminal offenses committed by Veterans in the Eleventh Judicial

Circuit (Ford, Livingston, Logan, McLean, and Woodford Counties) by utilizing the Veterans Administration Services, which help promote and restore Veterans to a civilian lifestyle.

## **VOLUNTEER VETERAN MENTOR PROGRAM**

An essential part of the VTC Program is the addition of volunteer mentors as part of the VTC support team. These mentors will, encourage, guide and motivate participants to enter and complete timely and appropriate treatment for physical, psychological, and substance abuse conditions.

We anticipate that trained and committed volunteer veteran mentors who develop active and supportive relationships with the VTC participants will increase the likelihood that the veterans will remain in treatment. Longer treatment tenure has been shown to improve participants' chances for a full and complete recovery that will restore them to health, reduce recidivism, and increase community safety.

### ***Veteran Mentor Role Description***

The role of the Veteran Mentor is to act as a coach, guide, role model, advocate, and a support person for the veteran participant with whom they are working. Mentors need to understand the roles of other support team members and "fill the gap" to help keep the participant moving successfully toward completing the program.

The mentor relationship is intended to encourage, guide, and support the veteran as they progress through the VTC supervised treatment program. One of the most important skills the mentor will bring to the program is their ability to be a good listener. **Mentors should avoid lecturing participants by imposing their own values and beliefs**, and should work to understand the mentee's own values and beliefs and encourage the mentee to solve their own problems before they become destructive to their treatment program or probation compliance. This includes encouraging mentees to be accountable for their behavior and responsibilities.

The mentor must be ready to offer suggestions and general guidance to the participants for any concerns they may have as they progress through the program. **It is important the mentor does not take on the role of acting as a counselor.** This is outside the scope of a mentor and may conflict with any treatment plan the VA has implemented for the veteran. Rather, the mentor can help the participant identify resources that might be helpful and encourage the participant to do the work to get the help they need to solve their own life's challenges.

The mentor must be available and ready to support the participant when they feel alone, frustrated or anxious in a way that only another veteran can appreciate and understand. The mentor should maintain close contact with the Veteran Mentor Coordinator (VMC)/Program Manager and keep them informed of significant issues the participant may have that could derail their treatment program success.

Finally, **the mentor should be protective of sensitive information provided by the participant or the Mentor Coordinator/Program Manager, and not reveal any information unless in a situation where safety of the participant or another human being may be at risk.** In those critical situations, the mentor must make emergency contacts to prevent harm.

All mentors shall be screened and approved by the Mentor Coordinator/Program Manager.

### **Mentor Eligibility Requirements**

In order to participate as a mentor in the program, you must:

- Be a veteran or current service duty member of one of the branches of the United States Military, including Navy, Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, or the corresponding reserve branches of the aforementioned services and members of the National Guard.

*Veterans with an Honorable discharge; with a discharge under less than honorable conditions or a general discharge are eligible to become mentors.*

*Veterans who have a dishonorable discharge are not normally eligible, but those with exceptional success stories are welcome to apply.*

- Agree to follow and abide by all policies and procedures of Veterans Court and its Mentoring program.
- Commit to the VTC Mentoring Program for a minimum period of one year.
- Complete the Mentor orientation program and any additional training that may be required by the program.
- Not currently have any probation requirements for the conviction of any crime (felony or misdemeanor). Have no felony or misdemeanor convictions within the past three years and be able to pass a security background check. *Some misdemeanor convictions can be waived on a case-by-case basis.*
- Complete and file the application form with the VTC Mentor Coordinator and complete the screening process. (The application form is included at the end of this document.)
- Have a basic understanding of the psychological issues veterans may experience and the manner in which such may present challenges to the veteran's path to success. Be able and willing to be a guiding influence toward recovery.

### ***VTC Mentor and Mentor Coordinator Duties and Responsibilities***

VTC Veteran Mentors shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- If available attend scheduled court sessions of their veteran participant or make arrangements with the VTC Mentor Coordinator.
- Participate in mentoring sessions with their assigned VTC participant, as recommended by the VTC Mentor Coordinator. There is no specific time requirement for mentoring sessions and these sessions

can occur in a format preferred by the mentor and mentee (e.g., in person, over the phone).

- Understand and support the VTC participant's requirements, treatment plan and goals, and terms and conditions of probation and support the VTC participant in making progress and achieving success.
- To the extent possible, the mentor should assist the VTC participant to identify ways to resolve personal and family problems that may interfere with success in the court process or treatment program. The mentor should be knowledgeable and prepared to offer available community based resources, but coordinate them with the Mentor Coordinator/Program Manager who then will work to avoid interference with other aspects of the VTC Program, specifically the Counseling sessions conducted at the VA treatment facilities.
- Be supportive of other mentors in the program.
- Be honest with the Mentee at all times.
- **Mentors shall take immediate action to encourage the participant to contact suicide resources, including dialing 911 themselves if there are any indications of suicidal thoughts, attempts or plans on part of the participant.** Mentors should also keep current resource phone numbers on their person at all times and ensure they are able to make contact with the VTC Mentor Coordinator. The VTC Mentor Coordinator shall notify the Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator or probation officer who will then notify the VTC participant's treatment provider immediately if the mentor has any concerns that the mentee may be suicidal.
- Mentors are not to involve themselves in any monetary business arrangements or commitments beyond the mentoring program.
- During mentoring sessions, mentors are not to consume alcohol or other substances or provide alcohol or narcotics to their mentee.

The VTC Mentor Coordinator shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- Assume the major responsibility for recruiting qualified veteran mentors.
- Be responsible for coordinating the mentor orientation program and any specialized training required.
- Be responsible for matching and recommending particular mentors for each eligible veteran participant in the VTC program in conjunction with other court staff.
- Provide all mentors with current contact information for suicide prevention resources, keep them updated, and provide frequent contacts with mentors to ensure they understand the importance of using these resources in appropriate situations.
- Attend all court sessions and carry out any other duties assigned by the VTC Judge.
- Meet with mentors on a monthly basis (minimum) to talk about how the mentor is doing with the program.
- Assist in retaining volunteer mentors.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor or you are a graduate of the VTC and you are interested in becoming a mentor in training (MIT) please contact the VTC Mentor Coordinator [del.saam@mcleancountyil.gov](mailto:del.saam@mcleancountyil.gov) (309) 888-5943 for more information about the VTC Mentor Program or if you have questions about the Mentor Application, provided below.

# VOLUNTEER VETERAN MENTOR APPLICATION



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

County of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Branch of the military in which you served: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Service: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Discharge: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you serve in a combat zone? Yes No If yes, which conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: Male Female

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Why do you want to be a Veteran Mentor?
  2. What characteristics or qualities do you possess that would make you a good mentor for this program?
  3. Have you ever served in the Uniformed Services or for the United States Government as a civilian or contractor within the Department of Defense? If so, what branch?
  4. Have you ever been arrested? If so, explain.
  5. Do you drink alcohol? If so, how often do you drink? How much do you drink?
  6. Have you ever been addicted to drugs of any kind? If so, please Explain?
  7. Are you in recovery for drugs and/or alcohol?
  8. Do you currently, or have you ever, suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?



9. Have you ever had thoughts of self-harm or suicide?
  
  10. What might other people say about you if asked about your character?
  
  11. What do you do for employment?
  
  12. What do you like to do in your spare time?
  
  13. Mentee Preference: Male or Female
  14. Branch Preference: Yes or No    Branch: \_\_\_\_\_
  15. County Preference: \_\_\_\_\_
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Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer mentor for Veterans Courts. By completing and returning the Volunteer Veteran Mentor application you are indicating an interest in volunteering as a mentor in 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment Courts. With your support, these programs will continue to grow in the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Illinois (McLean, Logan, Livingston, Ford, and Woodford County). Thank you for your service and thank you again for your interest in and support of Illinois Veterans Treatment Courts.

By signing below you are stating your intention to become a mentor and will consent to a background investigation to be conducted by personnel in the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_                      Signature: \_\_\_\_\_