



VETERANS TREATMENT COURT



Contents

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Veterans Treatment Court ... 1

The Veteran Population in Florida... 2

Broward's Veterans Treatment Court... 3

How Does the Veterans Treatment
Intervention Court Program Work? ... 4-5



Veterans Treatment Court

Many veterans return home with mental health issues, connected to the trauma of combat and other service-related experiences. Sadly, many veterans turn to drugs and or alcohol to cope with everyday life and ultimately end up in the criminal justice system.

Veterans Treatment Courts serve as an alternative to the traditional court setting and were developed to avoid the unnecessary incarceration of veterans who have developed mental health problems and/or face substance abuse.

Veterans Treatment Courts follow the Drug Court model and therefore emphasize the importance of personal accountability, sobriety, and recovery. Unique to Veterans Treatment Courts is the collaboration among the judiciary, community corrections agencies, volunteer mentors, the VA, and other veterans' organizations. Services provided to the veteran include, supervision, counseling, mentoring, random drug and alcohol testing, medication monitoring, and individualized plans focused on breaking the cycle of drug abuse and criminal behavior. Participation is voluntary.

[Continue reading to learn more about Veterans Treatment Court!](#)



The Veteran Population in Florida

- ❑ Total population of Veterans in Florida → 1,650,900.
- ❑ Florida has the third largest population of veterans in the nation after California and Texas with more than 1.6 million veterans.
- ❑ Wartime veterans make up about 75% of Florida's total veteran population.
- ❑ Vietnam-era veterans → more than 498,000.
- ❑ Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq → more than 231,000.
- ❑ Women veterans → 160,000
- ❑ Florida has the largest population of World War II veterans in the nation with more than 164,000.
- ❑ Florida has the third largest population of disabled veterans in the nation with more than 249,000.
- ❑ There are more than 731,000 veterans over the age of 65 in the Sunshine State.

- Facts Obtained from the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Website

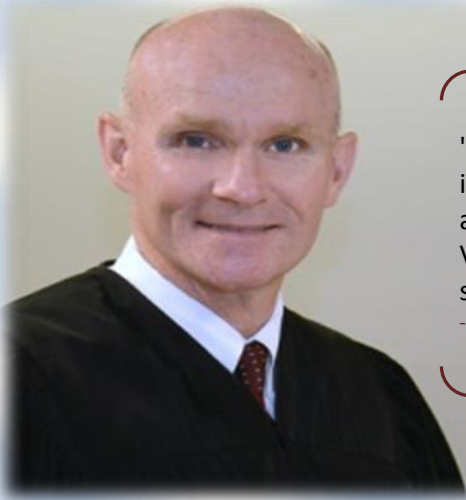


Broward's Veterans Treatment Court

THE HONORABLE EDWARD MERRIGAN

J.D., Judge, Broward County Veterans Court

Judge Edward H. Merrigan, Jr., currently presides over the Broward Veterans Treatment Court. Judge Merrigan is a veteran and Colonel in the U.S. Army. He was appointed to serve as a Circuit Court Judge by Governor Rick Scott in March of 2014. In 2012, Judge Merrigan was honored as the presiding judge for Broward's Veterans Court by Chief Judge Peter M. Weinstein.



"The goal here is to integrate the folks who are going through Veterans Court back into society."

- Daily Business Review

Broward County established the Veteran's Treatment Intervention Court Program on May 7th, 2012. The Court Program is designed to serve the justice-involved veteran population in Broward County. The program covers both County and Circuit criminal cases. Participating veterans are given the opportunity to avoid the criminal justice system by completing an individualized treatment plan that is supplemented by treatment and counseling programs already in place through the VA.

How Does the Veterans Treatment

ELIGIBILITY



Military Status

- An individual (defendant) must be a veteran or servicemember to be transferred to this court program.



Criminal Offense + Mental Health Component

- If you are a veteran charged with a criminal offense (nonviolent felonies, misdemeanor crimes, and probation violations etc.) who suffers from a military-related mental illness, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse disorder, or psychological problem, you may be eligible to participate in the Broward County Veterans Treatment Court Program.



Eligible to Receive VA Services

- In order to participate in the Veterans Treatment Court Program, you must also be eligible to receive VA services.

TRANSFER PROCESS

Once booked, upon meeting your public defender, or when making a first appearance, you should identify yourself as a veteran. Once your military status is verified, your name will be provided to the VJO Coordinator. The VJO Coordinator will then verify that you are eligible for VA services. Subject to meeting the eligibility requirements listed in the chart above, your case may be transferred to Veterans Court. The division judge and Veteran Court Program judge must sign a written court order of transfer. Cases not otherwise qualified for the Veterans Court, may be transferred after a hearing and with the agreement of the State.

Intervention Court Program Work?

REQUIREMENTS ONCE ADMITTED:

If the veteran chooses to participate, the veteran will have his or her charges deferred pending successful completion of a treatment plan, at which time the charges will be dismissed. To reach this point, the veteran is required to appear regularly in court for the judge to review their progress and the veteran must also comply with their treatment plan. Sanctions will be implemented if the veteran fails to meet the obligations imposed by the court. These sanctions may include community service, fines, jail time, and in some instances transfer out of Veterans Treatment Court back to traditional criminal court.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE COURT PROCEEDINGS?

JUDGE

- ☐ The judge assigned to preside over the Veterans Intervention Court Program sets the time and day of the hearings.

VETERAN

- ☐ Is the defendant participating in the court program?
- ☐ The defendant must be a veteran or servicemember whose case has been transferred to Veterans Court.

VETERAN'S JUSTICE OUTREACH COORDINATOR

- ☐ The United States Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA), provides a Veteran's Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJO) to develop an individualized treatment plan for the veteran.
- ☐ The VJO is present at all court hearings and case staffing.

VOLUNTEER MENTOR

- ☐ Veteran who is trained on how to effectively mentor program participants.
- ☐ Mentors offer support in securing housing, employment, training, education, and other services.
- ☐ For information on how to become a mentor visit the Impact Broward website or the Justice for Vets website.



NSU
Shepard Broad
Law Center
Veterans Law Clinic
954-262-6184

SERVICES OFFERED

The Veterans Law Clinic provides representation in a wide variety of cases including expungement, discharge upgrades, family law, driver's license restoration, housing issues, power of attorney, consumer rights, debtor/creditor issues, VA pension benefits, VA disability benefits, and restoration of civil rights.

CLIENT ELIGIBILITY

The Veterans Law Clinic provides legal advice and representation to low-income veterans and military personnel. Proof of veteran or military status must be presented with the completed Determination of Civil Indigent Status Form and New Client Information Sheet.

Acceptable forms of proof of status are a DD214, DD215, veterans designation on Florida driver's license, or valid military identification.

