



Multnomah County
Veterans Treatment Court



Participant Handbook

Dear Participant,

Welcome to the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC)! The philosophy behind the VTC is that our community will be safer in the long run if people who live with identifiable treatment needs are treated and supervised in the community, rather than sending the individual to jail or prison, only to be released not having received the treatment they need. The purpose of the VTC is to help you address the behaviors that contributed to your offenses. Providing you with a probation period where you do not use alcohol or illegal substances, we believe, will help improve the quality of your life, as well as the safety and security of our community.

It is our hope and belief that this program can give you the skills to continue these benefits long after your probation ends.

The VTC is a structured program that aims to support your success in meeting your uniquely identified goals and promote your engagement with treatment and other supportive programs. Everyone who contributes their work and effort to the VTC - the court and its staff, attorneys, case managers, law enforcement and treatment providers- have your success as their goal and will do all they can do to support your positive efforts. But ultimately it will be your hard work, your determination, and your willingness to honestly confront your situation that will determine whether you will be successful in making a better future.

This handbook has been created to give you a full explanation of the VTC, so that you can make an informed decision about whether to enter this program and also to prepare you to comply fully with VTC probation conditions. Once you enter the program, your PO and defense attorney will be available to answer your questions as they arise, and to help you deal successfully with the situations and challenges you will face in complying with your VTC probation.

The restoration and renewal process you are about to begin will benefit you, your loved ones and your community. We look forward to working with you toward the worthy goal of a life that is happier and healthier and a community that is safer.

Good luck in your program.

Sincerely,
Judge Ramras

The VTC Team Contact Information

The VTC team is here to help you as your work towards finding long-term recovery. The team works together to create a safe and supportive environment and recovery plan so you can succeed in the program.

VTC Team	Resources
VTC Judge Honorable Christopher Ramras	County Crisis Line (800) 716-1769
Program Coordinator Jennifer Rivas Jennifer.E.Rivas@ojd.state.or.us Cell: 503-894-3789	Community Resources 211 (call) 898-211 (text)
VA Contact or VJO Peggy Kuhn (503) 757-3174 Peggy.Kuhn@va.gov	Veterans Justice Outreach 503-721-1025 http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO.asp
Probation Office (503) 988-3801	Veterans Service Office 503-988-8387
Metropolitan Public Defenders (MPD) (503) 225-9100	ODVA 800-692-9666 orvets.benefits@odva.oregon.gov
Multnomah Defenders Inc. (MDI) (503) 226-3083	The Salvation Army Veterans & Family Center
Deputy District Attorney (503)-988-3162	

This program is designed to support your recovery, encourage responsible, pro-social behavior, and promote self-sufficiency. By beginning your recovery journey and establishing a solid foundation, you'll discover a path forward that leads away from the criminal justice system and toward realizing your full potential. As a veteran who has honorably served our country, the VTC team is here to help you succeed by focusing on rehabilitation, recovery, and reintegration into society. This court is specifically designed for veterans like you.

VTC is a collaborative partnership which includes the Judge, attorney, probation officer, District attorney and treatment. This team works together to support you in achieving your goals. The team does this by providing guidance, encouragement, accountability, and incentives as your progress through the program.

This handbook will be a great resource to you. It is designed to provide overall information including details on what is expected of you and what to expect from us throughout your time in VTC.

You can request a copy of this handbook at any time from a VTC team member.

Tips for Success in VTC

The two biggest tips you will often hear repeated in the program are to:

1. Show up!

We can't help you if you are not showing up. If you have missed something, including court, you can always do the next right thing by showing up and reaching out. The team will always take this into consideration in how to move forward. Even if you are struggling or have program violations, showing up and engaging in treatment is a sign you are willing to do the hard work needed for recovery.

2. Be honest!

The VTC team understands substance use disorder can be difficult to recover from. Until you receive the treatment services and learn the skills you need to remain substance free, we do not impose sanctions for reporting new use.

However, we **do** impose sanctions for dishonesty. If we don't know how often you are using or you are dishonest with the team in other ways, we cannot provide you right services you need. We may not expect everyone to be able to be sober right away, but we do expect you to be honest with us. Please reach out to your attorney at any time if you have questions about this.

Confidentiality

State and federal laws require that your identity and privacy be protected. VTC Court and its team members and partners have developed policies and procedures that guard your privacy. You will be asked to sign Releases of Information (ROI). You will be asked to sign Release of Information forms to facilitate communication between the VTC team and your treatment team. The ROIs you sign for VA treatment are limited to information pertaining to your engagement in treatment including diagnosis, treatment plan, treatment dates.

If you do not sign a ROI, you cannot participate in the VTC. Sharing information within the team is the only way we can work together. These ROIs are for the sole purpose of allowing the VTC partner organizations to communicate about your supervision and treatment participation in this program. Other team members (or treatment facilities) may require that you sign additional forms and ROIs relative to your specific case within VTC.

The team will respect your right to privacy and refrain from sharing unnecessary personal information with other members of the team if it does not affect case planning, program expectations, or decision making. We take this very seriously.

If you have any questions about what may or may not be shared in treatment with the rest of the team, please ask your counselor. Our goal is for treatment to be a safe and comfortable space.

Information shared in court is public record by law, so please keep that in mind during your appearances.

Your attorney can also help answer any questions you may have about confidentiality and how we share information.

Equity and Inclusion

VTC is committed to providing an equitable and inclusive program. If there is need, concerns, or questions you have, please reach out to a team member.

The VT has several community partnerships and resources available to you that focus on supporting diverse communities.

All are welcome in VTC.

What are Treatment courts?

Treatment courts utilize a collaborative, team-based approach to help individuals in the criminal justice system begin a recovery-oriented life by addressing addiction and related mental health issues. A key distinction of VTC court probation, compared to traditional probation, is the close collaboration between the court, treatment providers, probation officers, Veterans Services, and community resources. Our goal is to reduce recidivism, promote rehabilitation, and equip you with the tools and resources needed to engage positively in the community.

There are over 600 Veterans Treatment courts in the U.S today. The goal of VTC court is to support participants in finding recovery and healing from addiction and other mental health needs which have led to criminal justice involvement. This model has been proven to reduce repeated incarceration and crime in the community and more fulfilling lives by those who participate.

VTCs are supported by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program, which provides case management, assessment, and direct outreach for veterans involved in the criminal justice system. VTCs operate independently of the VA, but VJO staff work with local justice system partners to coordinate care for veterans in VTCs.

VTCs have these benefits:

- A cost-effective alternative to long term incarceration
- An alternative to prison with treatment services
- Assists in building a positive peer support community.

- Supports reconnecting with supportive family, friends and/or children.
- Supports building positive relationships with law enforcement and courts.
- Supports restitution to victims.
- Provides swift and sure incentives and accountability.

What will participation in VTC look like?

Listed below is what you can expect from VTC. This handbook will go into these core program requirements in more detail:

- Five program phases
- Minimum of one year
- Drug/alcohol treatment services based on needs.
- Mental health evaluation and services based on needs.
- CBT based on Charge and/or need.
- Random drug and alcohol testing throughout each week
- Regular court appearances with the VTC Judge
- Intensive supervision by a VTC probation officer
- Incentives and sanctions - acknowledging when you do well and providing accountability to support change.
- Support and encouragement from the VTC team
- Collaborative treatment and supervision plan

Court Dates and Hearings

As a VTC participant you will appear in court regularly. If you do not appear in court as required, it may result in a warrant. You will be given your next court date at each appearance.

The VTC dockets are held every other Thursday (twice a month)

The following team members will be present during your court hearings:

- A Judge
- Your defense attorney
- Deputy District Attorney
- Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist (Treatment representative)
- The program coordinator
- Other VTC participants
- Veteran Recovery mentors

The VTC dockets are open to the public as required by law. Victims from your probation case(s) may also be present for probation violation hearings. Court appearances are an opportunity for us to acknowledge your progress as well as provide accountability, structure, and discuss any challenges you may be having.

Court Staffing

Prior to VTC Court hearings, the VTC in-court team meets to review your progress since your last court appearance.

The review may include your drug test results, supervision and treatment, attendance, participation and engagement behaviors in the community, employment/school other requirements that may have been

imposed, compliance with probation conditions and status of your financial obligations. Your defense attorney is always present during these discussions and will advocate on your behalf.

Incentives

The court awards incentives to acknowledge progress and positive behavior and imposes sanctions for accountability and to support progress.

While doing well in the program, you may receive **incentives** such as the following:

- Praise by the Court/Judge.
- Applause
- Letter of recognition or support
- Certificates of achievement or completion
- Advancement to next phase
- Reduced court appearances
- Addition to the quick list
- Waiver of community service requirements
- Waiver of court ordered fines and fees.
- Fast-Passes (called first in court – before the quick-list)

Participants who are meeting all program requirements may qualify for the quick list for court appearances. Participants on the quick list are called at the beginning of the docket so you can be recognized by the court team and your peers for meeting program requirements. By being on the quick list, you will spend less time in court waiting to appear and your peers will have the opportunity to learn from your progress and accomplishments.

Quick list participants at a minimum will have met the following:

- No drug or alcohol use within the last week
- No positive, diluted, or disputed drug tests
- Attended all required treatment services since your last appearance.
- Attended all PO meetings since your last appearance.
- No arrests or jail sanctions since your last appearance
- Complied with all court orders and program rules.
- Paid restitution, fines, or fees as required.
- No outstanding sanctions to be served (community services, jail, etc.)

Sanctions

Participants who have violations may be given **sanctions**. The program uses a variety of sanctions to provide accountability, support you in behavior change, and ensure community safety such as:

- Sit sanction (writing an essay on a topic provided, watching the entire court docket and reporting what was seen)
- Increased court reporting
- Community service
- Suspended jail or community service
- Curfew or house arrest
- Electronic monitoring
- Alcohol monitoring bracelet

- Jail sanctions
- Probation revocation and potential jail or prison incarceration

Treatment

Once you complete your intake with your treatment provider you will be given an appropriate treatment plan everyone will be assessed for substance abuse and mental health services. The VTC program partners with Veterans Administration to provide clinically indicated treatment services including residential and outpatient substance use and mental health treatment, interpersonal violence programs, and medication management.

If you are assessed as needing residential treatment, the Veterans Justice Officer will assist you to secure appropriate placement.

Treatment Stages

Treatment stages are designed by the treatment providers to outline what treatment will consist of throughout your time in the program. This is separate from the program phases, which are both described later. The treatment stages are specific to how many hours of treatment you are attending each week, which groups you will complete, and any other services or recovery community activities your counselor has included in your treatment plan.

VTC participants will attend Veterans Administration for treatment. VA treatment will provide a structured outline of what your treatment will consist of, and you will be included in creating your treatment plan. As your treatment provider, the VA will be reporting regularly to the VTC team about your level of engagement and progress in treatment.

Alumni Group

As we grow, the VTC plans to offer an alumni group made up of active participants, and alumni. This is a great source of support while you are in the program and after graduation. The alumni group will be involved in service work, and recovery events. It will also be a great place to seek support from those that have completed the program and were once in the same position as you are today.

Program Phases

VTC Court has five program phases. These phases help outline your journey through the VTC program as you move towards graduation. In this section you can find what to expect in each phase. The program phases are different than treatment stages. Program phases track your overall progress in the program including meeting goals set by your probation officer, restitution requirements, community services requirements, obtaining clean and sober housing, meeting UA requirements, etc. Completion of phases will be acknowledged in court.

Your VTC team can help answer any questions about program phases during your time in the program.

VTC Court - Program Phases

Phase 1 - Stabilization (minimum of 90 days – from orientation)

- Appear in court twice a month in person unless otherwise approved by the court or PO
- Demonstrate honesty.
- Attend office visits with PO as required.
- Comply with case plan set by probation officer.
- Establish housing plan.

- Comply with conditions of probation.
- Establish and engage in drug/alcohol and/or mental health treatment.
- Comply with UA expectations.

Phase 2 - Treatment Engagement (minimum of 90 days)

- Appear in court every other week in person unless otherwise approved by the court or PO (if maintaining requirements)
- Demonstrate honesty.
- Attend office visits with PO as required.
- Comply with case plan set by PO.
- Engage in drug/alcohol and/or mental health treatment or other required treatment.
- Comply with UA expectations.
- Comply with housing plan.

Phase 3 – Pro Social Habilitation (minimum 120 days)

- Appear as instructed.
- Demonstrate honesty.
- Attend office visits with PO as required.
- Comply with case plan set by PO.
- Engage in required treatment drug/alcohol and/or treatment plan.
- Establish court approved community recovery support activity plan.
- Engage in an organized community activity weekly.
- Comply with UA expectations.
- Comply with housing plan.
- Set restitution payment plan with the court if restitution is imposed.
- Make at least one restitution payment or complete a restitution work crew as required.
- Review court ordered community service with probation officer.

Phase 4 – Adaptive Habilitation (minimum 90 days)

- Appear in court every four weeks (if maintaining requirements)
- Demonstrate honesty.
- Attend office visits with PO as required.
- Comply with case plan set by PO.
- Engage with drug/alcohol and/or mental health treatment plan.
- Maintain recovery network.
- Engage in an organized community activity weekly.
- Comply with UA expectations.
- Demonstrate consistency with restitution payments and/or completing restitution crew.
- Demonstrate consistency with community service requirements.
- Work with a career coach if not enrolled in school, employed, or otherwise approved.
- Comply with long term housing plan.
- Approval of wellness plan document by treatment, PO, and the court

Phase 5 - Living Well (minimum 60 days)

- Appear in court once as instructed.
- Demonstrate honesty.
- Attend office visits with PO as required.
- Review transition plan with PO
- Follow wellness plan.

- Maintain recovery network.
- Engage in an organized community activity weekly.
- Comply with UA expectations.
- Comply with long-term housing plan.
- Satisfy community service requirements.
- Satisfy restitution requirements.
- Satisfy all probation conditions.
- Obtain stable employment, full-time school, or provide proof of disability compensation benefits unless approved otherwise.
- Minimum of 12 consecutive weeks of being in the wellness plan stage of treatment

Wellness Plan

The wellness plan is a long-term recovery plan that you and VA will create once you are ready for the wellness plan stage of treatment.

Graduation

Upon your **successful completion** of the five phases and satisfaction of all other court requirements, you will be eligible to graduate the VTC program.

Graduation from VTC is a very important event. Your family, friends and supports will be invited to join you as the VTC team recognizes and congratulates you for successfully completing the program.

Before graduation, your PO will review what is next for your probation. This is different for all graduates based on conditions of probation, restitution, amount of time left on probation. Completion of VTC does not always mean completion of probation supervision. Your probation may continue with Department of Criminal Justice. Continued drug, alcohol, and mental health services will always be available to you after graduation, which many people find helpful.

Program Termination/Probation Revocation

Termination from VTC is a decision taken very seriously by the team. All team members review your history in the program and discuss if termination is the appropriate response. Some of the most common reasons for termination are:

Absconding - multiple warrants, leaving residential treatment and not reporting, etc.

Repeatedly missing drug tests

Tampering with a drug test (including diluting your samples)

Repeatedly missing program obligations

Conditions of supervision are not being followed.

Conviction of new crime(s)

Falsifying documents (medical paperwork, meeting slips, waitlist groups attendance logs, treatment logs, etc.)

Violence or threat of violence directed at VTC team members, other participants, or members of the community.

Contact with Victim in violation of a court order.

Program Rules and Expectations

In VTC you will be required to follow all general and special conditions of your probation, as well as PO directives. This includes the program rules and policies outlined here:

1. **You are required to appear in court on every other Thursday in VTC Court (unless you are scheduled to appear sooner) if any of following occur:**
 - a. Miss a drug test - this includes not being able to provide a sample, random drug tests, or other requests from team members to provide a sample.
 - b. Miss a treatment appointment including groups, individual sessions, intake, or assessments.
 - c. Miss a PO appointment
 - d. Leave residential treatment without PO approval.
 - e. Leave detox without PO approval.
 - f. Fail to submit treatment logs (if required)
3. Follow all treatment recommendations and requirements in addition to their program rules and policies.
4. Be respectful of others privacy and confidentiality.
5. Comply with drug testing requirements:
 - a. Provide non-dilute urine samples.
 - b. Submit samples as required as directed by PO.
 - c. Tampering with a drug test is major violation may result in revocation in the program and new criminal charges.
 - d. You are responsible for what you put in your body.
 - e. Alcohol, marijuana, NyQuil, "non-alcoholic" beer, CBD, cooking wine, kratom, poppy seeds, are not allowed.
 - f. Synthetic and designer drugs are not allowed. This includes but is not limited substances commonly referred to as bath salts, flakka, spice, k2.
 - g. If you take cold medication, you are responsible for knowing what is in it
 - h. Having used a shared e-cigarette, vapes, cigars, cigarettes, etc. is not a valid excuse for testing positive for substances not allowed. If you test positive after doing so, you will be required to change your program sobriety date.
6. Follow all courthouse rules when appearing in VTC as well as:
 - a. Attend court on time. Not being present at roll call may result in a sanction and failing to appear may result in a warrant.
 - b. Please keep your cell phone silenced and put away while in the courtroom.
 - c. If you need to leave the courtroom for any reason you must first, ask court staff for permission. Smoke breaks, personal calls, etc. are not allowed during court.
 - d. Inform any medical care providers or prescribers that you are in a recovery program and are participating in a treatment program.
7. In addition to following all conditions of supervision and PO directives:
 - a. Disclose to your PO within 24 hours of any prescriptions you have received from a medical doctor and sign an ROI (Release of Information) so PO's may verify you notified the prescriber that you are in a Veterans Treatment Court.
 - b. If released from custody, you must contact your PO within 24 hours.
8. Answer questions from program team members honestly and truthfully
9. Do not provide altered or forged document to the court. This is considered a major violation may result in revocation in the program and new criminal charges.
10. Be respectful of other participants, staff, community partners and others in the community.

Follow all courthouse rules when appearing in VTC:

1. Attend court on time. Not being present at roll call may result in a sanction, and failing to appear may result in a warrant.
2. Please keep your cell phone silenced and put away while in the courtroom.
3. If you need to leave the courtroom for any reason, you must first ask the PO or court staff for permission. Smoke breaks, personal calls, etc., are not allowed during court.

In addition to following all conditions of supervision and PO directives:

1. Disclose to your PO within 24 hours of any prescriptions you have received from a medical doctor and sign a Release of Information (ROI) so the PO can verify that the prescriber has been notified.
2. If released from custody, you must contact your PO within 24 hours.
3. Answer questions from program team members honestly and truthfully.
4. Do not provide altered or forged documents to the court. This is considered a major violation and may result in revocation from the program and new criminal charges.
5. Inform any medical care providers or prescribers that you are in a recovery program and are participating in a drug and alcohol treatment program. You may need to notify the prescriber that probation conditions prohibit the use of certain substances.
6. Be respectful of other participants, staff, community partners, and others in the community.

Signature Page

By signing this page, I affirm that I have read through the VTC Court Participant Handbook and understand what is expected of me as a participant while in the VTC Court Program.

Reviewed participant handbook with: _____

Printed name: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Handbook Version Date: