

**Statement for the record of
Hennepin County Veterans Court
(Fourth Judicial District of the state of Minnesota)**

submitted to the

**U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism**

for the hearing

**“Drug and Veterans Treatment Courts: Seeking Cost-Effective Solutions for
Protecting Public Safety and Reducing Recidivism”**

<http://judiciary.senate.gov/hearings/hearing.cfm?id=3d9031b47812de2592c3baeba6209f34>

July 19, 2011

Although Hennepin County Veterans Court is only one-year old, it is already recognized as an innovative and effective response to the unique and often untreated problems of veterans of the United States Armed Forces who are criminal defendants.

The target population of this court experiences treatable behavioral and chemical health problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, anger management / domestic violence and / or substance abuse or chemical dependency.

The court facilitates a rapid response to these problems and maximizes the defendant’s compliance with program requirements with its multidisciplinary team and seamless referral process to VA medical centers, and local treatment and probation services.

Each defendant’s participation in treatment is supervised by a probation officer and monitored by the team. In select cases, a peer mentor is assigned to support and encourage the participant, who also periodically appears in court for judicial supervision.

Eligible offenses for Veterans Court include misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors and felonies, except mandatory and presumptive prison commitments. Participation in this 12-18 month program is voluntary.

While it is too early to issue a formal evaluation, the pilot program is off to a remarkable start:

- Thus far there have been 112 referrals and 76 admissions to the program;
- Of those admitted, four defendants have opted out, three were terminated for non-compliance, and two have graduated; and
- It is estimated that less than five percent of active program participants have been charged or convicted of a new criminal offense during the first year of operation.

On the Web:

<http://mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=4010>