

Veterans court opens today in Hennepin County

by [Jessica Mador](#), Minnesota Public Radio

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St. Paul, Minn. — A new court to help veterans opens Monday in Hennepin County. The new treatment court is intended to divert veterans who commit crimes from going to jail, by getting them whatever help they need to stay out of trouble and get better.

The new court is voluntary and modeled after drug treatment court and similar veteran's courts around the country.

In exchange for their participation, veterans must take responsibility for their crimes and follow a strict program overseen by a probation officer.

Eligible offenses include misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor and felony cases. A prosecutor must approve each veteran's participation in the program.

All defendants are evaluated for treatable physical and mental health issues such as PTSD, traumatic brain injury, anger management and substance abuse -- problems which may be contributing to their criminal behavior.

A team of advocates then works to connect defendants with treatment and services, and a mentor to help them stay on track.