



## FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

### **Fourth Judicial District Veterans Court – Two Year Review: July 2010 – June 2012**

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## ***Fourth Judicial District Veterans Court - Two Year Review Executive Summary***

- The Fourth Judicial District Veterans Court began in July 2010 as a voluntary problem-solving court for veteran offenders with treatable chemical dependency and/or mental health issues. It is a hybrid of the drug court and mental health court models.
- Veterans Court promotes sobriety, recovery, and stability through a coordinated response that involves the cooperation and collaboration of court and probation personnel along with the addition of the VA Medical Center, VA Benefits Administration, and volunteer veteran mentors.
- In its first two years of operation, 131 individuals entered Veterans Court. Nearly all (97%) are male, two-thirds are white, the average age at entry is 44 years, and nearly half have gross misdemeanor offenses. The most common offense type is gross misdemeanor DWIs (40%), followed by misdemeanor domestic offenses (20%). Nearly half (47%) have been deployed overseas at least once, most commonly to Iraq (60%).
- At the end of two years, there are seventy-three active participants (56%), forty-one graduates (31%), eight individuals terminated by the Court (6%), seven who voluntarily withdrew (5%), and two who are no longer active due to other reasons (death, transfer out of state).
- This review of Veterans Court includes a pre-post analysis of participants at this point in the program. A full evaluation, with a matched comparison sample, will ensue once the number of graduates reaches 100 and those graduates have one year of street-time post Veterans Court.
- Since this is a program review, all goals should be considered in progress
  - Goal 1: Reduce criminal recidivism
    - During the first six months after entry into Veterans Court, 83% of participants commit fewer offenses than during the six months just prior to entry. This pattern maintains through both years of data: 72% of participants who have at least 24 months post-entry commit fewer offenses than during the 24 months just prior to entering the Court (*Table 6, page 17*).
    - The majority of Veterans Court participants have no new offenses while in the program, and those who do commit new offenses generally do so at a non-felony level (*Table 8, page 18*).
  - Goal 2: Promote participant sobriety
    - Not all participants are in Veterans Court for drug or alcohol related issues: indeed only two-thirds of graduates and terminated defendants were required to take alcohol and drugs tests while in the program. Graduates test positive at a lower rate than terminated defendants do (*Table 9, page 19*).

- Goal 3: Increase compliance with treatment and other court-ordered conditions
  - Between two-thirds and three-fourths of all participants are ordered to complete chemical dependency treatment and/or domestic abuse programming. No graduate or active participant has failed to complete treatment, while nearly half of the non-completers do not enter treatment before terminating from the Court.
  - More than half (57%) of graduates complete inpatient treatment while 39% of active participants do so (*Table 10, page 21*). If needed, active participants may be required to complete a more intensive level of treatment prior to their graduation.
- Goal 4: Improve access to VA benefits and services
  - Veterans Court works closely with a VA benefits specialist and the Hennepin County Veterans Service Office to assist participants in filing claims as needed to begin receiving benefits or to increase benefits to the level to which they are entitled.
  - Nearly three-fourths (73%) of participants already receive benefits prior to entering the Court, while others connect while in Veterans Court (21%). A few participants (5%) are not eligible for VA benefits - for example, due to income level, dishonorable discharge status, or because they are currently active in the Guard/Reserves.
- Goal 5: Improve family relationships and social support connections
  - The Hennepin County Veterans Court has established a mentor program, in which participants are matched with veterans in the community if they so choose in order to help them navigate the court and VA Medical Center system as well as to provide support and friendship in the community.
- Goal 6: Improve life stability
  - More than half of graduates maintain or increase their level of employment from entry to graduation (*Table 11, page 23*).
  - Nearly three-fourths of graduates live on their own in a private residence at both entry and exit from the program, while another 15% increase their housing stability from entry to graduation (*Table 12, page 23*).
- Overall, participants are extremely satisfied with the services they receive through Veterans Court and its partners. On the uSPEQ<sup>®</sup> survey scores can range from one (strongly disagree) to four (strongly agree), and in both the first and second years of Veterans Court the average score on all five question categories (service responsiveness, informed choice, respect, overall value, and participation) was 3.8 or higher. Although slight, scores on all five measures increased in the second year (*Table 13, page 25*).

## Recommendations

### Courtwide:

1. Continue the Fourth Judicial District Veterans Court.
2. Identify all veterans entering the criminal justice system as early in the process as possible, both to aid in steering veterans toward the benefits for which they are entitled

and to allow the creation of a matched comparison sample of veterans who do not enter Veterans Court for use in future program evaluations.

Veterans Court Team:

3. Update the existing Veterans Court Policy and Procedure Manual to reflect current policies and procedures accurately.
4. Create more clearly defined criteria for advancement through Veterans Court to reach graduation. Program goals and the means by which achievement of these goals are measured should be clear to all participants to give them more control over their progress. Provide an increased number of tangible incentives for achievement of goals identified in participants' case plans. Consider adding such incentives as sobriety medallions, gift cards, etc. *(Note: as of late 2012, a Veterans Court sub-committee is working on this issue).*
5. Provide participants with clearly defined graduated sanctions that the judge may impose for failure to comply with their case plan or court orders. Implement these sanctions as uniformly and as soon after the infraction as possible.
6. Develop a strong mentor program composed of volunteer veteran mentors who will aid participants in navigating through the court and VA system and serve as advocates and allies to their mentees. *(Note: As of late 2012, stronger development of this program is underway, with the aid of a volunteer mentor coordinator provided by the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living).*

Community Corrections and Rehabilitation:

7. When recommending graduation, probation officers should present participants' goal achievements, as well as any lack of achievement, to the team at pre-court staffing. Probation officers should also document performance on all goals for the evaluators.
8. Collect life stability measures consistently for all defendants at entry and exit from the Court, including housing status, employment status, education level, and extent of family relationships.

District Court Research:

9. Assess data completeness quarterly to ensure the ability to conduct a thorough evaluation when the number of graduates meets the threshold of 100 defendants who have been out of the program for a full year.
10. Continue to evaluate Veterans Court regularly to assess whether it is achieving the defined goals.

## ***Introduction***

The first Veterans Court in the United States started in Buffalo, NY, in 2008 and was modeled closely after Drug Courts, which had emerged in the 1980s. Since establishment of the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court, similar courts have been implemented across the country. By June 30, 2012, there were 104 Veterans Treatment Courts operating in the United States, with many more in the planning stages.<sup>1</sup> Like Drug Courts, Veterans Courts are based on a problem-solving model rather than the traditional punitive court model. The goal of problem-solving courts is to address the underlying chemical and mental health issues faced by offenders. A coordinated and comprehensive approach is used to facilitate short and long-term behavioral change.

As part of a national movement emphasizing the special needs of returning veterans facing criminal charges in the court system, the Fourth Judicial District Court and the Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCCR) developed Minnesota's first Veterans Court, which began hearing cases in July 2010. This problem-solving court serves veteran defendants struggling with addiction, mental health issues, and/or co-occurring disorders and is a hybrid of the drug court and mental health court models. The Court promotes sobriety, recovery, and stability through a coordinated response that involves the cooperation and collaboration of court and probation personnel along with the addition of the U.S Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center, the Veterans Benefits Administration, and volunteer veteran mentors.

The Hennepin County Veterans Court calendar convenes once a week on Monday afternoon. Veterans Court Team members<sup>2</sup> meet before court to discuss the progress of each participant on that day's calendar, as well as to review any new referrals that will be appearing in court that day. A Steering Committee comprised of key personnel from various agencies<sup>3</sup> meets monthly to discuss Veterans Court policies and procedures, to resolve issues and conflict, and to provide community support and buy-in.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.justiceforvets.org/vtc-history>

<sup>2</sup> The **Veterans Court Team** consists of the judge, a senior court clerk, the Veterans Court coordinator, a County Attorney's office prosecutor, two Minneapolis City prosecutors, two public defenders, Veterans Court probation officers, a Veterans Court probation supervisor, a VA Medical Center Veterans Justice Outreach Officer (VJO), Hennepin County Veterans Service Office officers, a Veterans Benefits Specialist, a veterans employment representative from the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), a volunteer mentor coordinator from the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, and a research analyst.

<sup>3</sup> The **Veterans Court Steering Committee** consists of the personnel listed in footnote 2, as well as a law enforcement representative from the city of Minneapolis and managers from the departments listed in the previous footnote.

## ***Overview of Veterans Court***

### **Mission and Goals**

The mission of the Hennepin County Veterans Court is to promote public safety and to assist and support veterans and their families by creating a coordinated response through collaboration with the Veterans service delivery system, community-based services, and the criminal justice system.

The Court's goals are to reduce criminal recidivism, facilitate participant sobriety, increase compliance with treatment and other court-ordered conditions, improve access to VA benefits and services, improve family relationships and social support connections, and improve life stability for participants.

### **Program Structure**

The Hennepin County Veterans Court is a voluntary program utilizing a multi-faceted approach by conforming to the Ten Key Components of Veterans Courts (see Appendix A). Defendants may enter Veterans Court pre-adjudication<sup>4</sup> or post-adjudication<sup>5</sup>. It consists of intensive supervision by Hennepin County probation officers; referral and case management services provided by a Veterans Justice Outreach Officer (VJO) through the VA Medical Center; frequent appearances before the Veterans Court judge; mandatory chemical health and/or mental health treatment; regular attendance at self-help/support groups; and random drug testing if identified as a need by the judge, probation officer, or VJO. The presiding judge and a multidisciplinary team of professionals work collaboratively to simultaneously address the offense behavior and treat the existing mental health, chemical health, or behavioral problem(s). An additional primary focus is connecting eligible veterans with the Veterans Administration so they can receive all services for which they are eligible.

A volunteer mentor program, provided through the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, provides participating defendants with a veteran mentor if they choose to participate. Mentors help the defendants navigate court, treatment, and VA systems and serve as advocates and allies. Mentor connections are encouraged for all defendants; however, participation is not required as a condition of Veterans Court.

Veterans do not attend court hearings on a strictly defined schedule. Rather, the Veterans Court team decides on the frequency of court appearances based upon the demands of defendants' outside programming and their progress toward achieving program goals. Court appearances range from weekly to once every ninety days. Generally the time between court appearances increases as

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<sup>4</sup> Acceptance after charging but prior to a plea or finding of guilt.

<sup>5</sup> Acceptance after a plea or finding of guilt.

defendants progress through Veterans Court, barring any chemical, mental health, or behavioral setbacks.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

The Veterans Court team evaluates eligibility for participation on a case-by-case basis. General requirements include: at least eighteen years old; service in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces; charged in Hennepin County with any level of offense as long as it is a presumptive probation case<sup>6</sup>; having a Hennepin County residence or residing in close proximity to Hennepin County; and experiencing a treatable behavioral, mental health, and/or chemical health problem. The prosecutor, the defense counsel, and the Court must all agree that Veterans Court is appropriate; in addition, defendants must consent to participate. Defendants do not need to be eligible for VA benefits to participate in Veterans Court; ineligible defendants<sup>7</sup> receive community-based treatment services.

### **Screening Process**

Once legal eligibility is established, a Veterans Court probation officer and a Veterans Justice Outreach Officer from the VA Medical Center conduct clinical screening. The purpose of the screening is to determine the impact that behavioral and chemical health issues are having on the defendant's criminal behavior. If screening staff and the Veterans Court Team agree that the defendant is suitable for Veterans Court, a plan is proposed that becomes the basis of the sentence imposed. A Hennepin County Veterans Court probation officer monitors compliance with the case plan.

### **Veterans Court Phases**

The current Veterans Court policy and procedure manual, drafted in April 2010, outlines an orientation phase and four program phases with specific criteria required to advance to the next phase. However, when Veterans Court began in July 2010, it quickly became clear that due to the variety of chemical dependency, mental health, and physical health issues facing participants these lockstep phases were not feasible for the population served.

In reality, Veterans Court phases are not firmly established. A defendant moves through the program based on individual chemical, mental, and behavioral health needs and progress is determined by success in following a case plan. The defendant's probation officer develops the case plan, in conjunction with the VA Medical Center if they will be providing services. Court reviews occur more frequently in the beginning of a defendant's involvement with Veterans Court and less frequently as he

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<sup>6</sup> This is a charge that falls within the presumptive probation category on the MN Sentencing Guidelines grid.

<sup>7</sup> For example, those without sufficient length of military service or with a Dishonorable military discharge.



or she moves successfully through the program. More frequent appearances are required if a defendant experiences difficulty complying with the Court's orders.

The Policy and Procedure manual has not been updated since before Veterans Court was implemented and needs to accurately reflect how a participant advances through and completes the program. The Veterans Court team has discussed having phases that are more general and allow individualized programming for each participant, as is being done in practice.

### **Graduation Criteria**

A defendant's probation officer recommends graduation when the defendant has achieved his or her case plan goals. The Veterans Court team must agree that graduation is appropriate. At graduation, defendants receive a Certificate of Completion and a graduation coin as a formal acknowledgment of successfully completing their case plans. If a participant has not yet served the entire probationary period ordered, he or she is placed on Administrative Probation for the remainder of that period. During this time, the defendant is not actively monitored by probation, but may be brought back into Veterans Court if the team deems necessary. Occasions when a defendant may be reactivated into Veterans Court include, for example, chemical use or new criminal behavior.

### **Termination Criteria**

Termination from Veterans Court can be initiated either by the defendant or by the Veterans Court team. Since participation is voluntary, a defendant may choose to withdraw from Veterans Court at any time. Termination from Veterans Court by the team generally occurs only after graduated sanctions<sup>8</sup> have been imposed and the participant continues to disregard the rules of the Court. Examples of continued disregard for program rules include but are not limited to: absconding from a residential/treatment facility, failing to attend treatment or therapy, repeated positive alcohol or drug tests, tampering with alcohol/drug tests, or commission of new offenses. Once terminated from Veterans Court, a defendant returns to the regular court calendar for sentencing in the traditional manner if participation in Veterans Court was pre-adjudication or has his or her sentence imposed if sentencing occurred prior to Veterans Court referral.

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<sup>8</sup> Graduated sanctions include, for example, warnings and admonishments from the bench, increased alcohol and drug testing, sentence to service, and jail time.

## ***Research Design***

Because Veterans Court is only slightly more than two years old and there are as yet relatively few graduates and terminated defendants, this will be a program review rather than a comprehensive evaluation. A program review is a process evaluation and not a full outcome evaluation; it provides helpful information on how the program is progressing in terms of meeting its goals. When at least one hundred graduates have a year of street-time after completing the program, it will be important to identify a comparison group consisting of veterans who look similar to the Veterans Court group in all measures but their participation in Veterans Court in order to evaluate the long-term success of the program.<sup>9</sup> For this report, the performance of participants during their time in Veterans Court is compared to their performance prior to entering the program. In essence, this is a pre-post evaluation of participants.

### **Data Sources**

- The Veterans Court Policy and Procedure Manual. This allows examination of how closely Veterans Court is following existing policies and procedures.
- Data extracted from the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS). This includes Veterans Court criminal case information, participant demographic data, criminal history, and new charges and convictions.
- Data from the Hennepin County Community Corrections and Rehabilitation information system (CORRIS). These data will include probation department drug and alcohol testing results as well as treatment completion information.
- Veterans Court databases maintained by Hennepin County Community Corrections and Rehabilitation. These databases include specific information on housing, education, and employment status at entry and exit; self-reported chemical, physical, and mental health issues; and participant satisfaction questionnaire (uSPEQ®) responses.
- Veterans Court Screening Documents completed by Hennepin County DOCCR probation officers and verified by the VA Medical Center. These data include the branch of service a veteran served in as well as dates of service, deployment history, and discharge status.
- VA Medical Center: VA drug and alcohol testing information.

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<sup>9</sup> In the absence of a Veterans comparison group, another option would be to match Veterans Court defendants with other defendants with similar offenses, criminal histories, and demographics who have gone through traditional court or other problem solving courts. The exact type of comparison group will be determined by the court's ability to identify veterans systematically in its information system, MNCIS.

## **Limitations**

Because veterans are not routinely and systematically identified by the Hennepin County jail or at court appearances, we cannot to identify a comparison group of veterans who did not enter Veterans Court at this time. Therefore, this review includes a pre-post analysis of Veterans Court participants to assess if their 'behavior' has improved while participating in this problem solving court. The hope is to determine a true Veterans comparison group in the future in order to conduct a more thorough evaluation of Veterans Court.

### ***Demographic Profile of Defendants Screened for Veterans Court***

Between July 2010 and June 2012, Veterans Court screened 176 defendants. Of these, the Court accepted 131<sup>10</sup>, declined to accept 31, and 14 elected to decline participation. Demographic and offense characteristics of these defendants are shown in Table 1. Demographically, defendants are similar in characteristics whether they are accepted, not accepted, or decline to enter the Court. Of all defendants screened, only four (3%) are female and they all entered Veterans Court. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of those entering are white, and the average age of an entering veteran is 44 years.

Over forty percent (43%) of those accepted into Veterans Court have a gross misdemeanor offense as their highest-level charge; one-fourth (25%) entered Veterans Court on a felony charge and nearly one-third (32%) on a common misdemeanor charge. These percentages are similar to those screened but not accepted by the team. Defendants who decline to enter Veterans Court are most likely to have a misdemeanor as their highest-level charge (64%). Because of the length of time and programming commitment required to participate in Veterans Court, this finding is not surprising; a traditional misdemeanor conviction would be a less onerous disposition for the defendant. However, it is important to note that the number declining to enter is very small compared to those accepted, so any generalizations regarding level of charge affecting choice to enter Veterans Court is premature.

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<sup>10</sup> One participant entered Veterans Court twice during the first two years of the program, so is included in both the failure to complete and the active categories. Recidivism and other goal performance data is based upon his initial entry date into the program.

**Table 1. Profile of Defendants Screened for Veterans Court**

		Accepted (n=131)	Not Accepted (n=31)	Declined to Enter (n=14)	Total (n=176)
<b>GENDER</b>	<b>Female</b>	4 3.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4 3.1%
	<b>Male</b>	127 96.9%	31 100.0%	14 100.0%	172 97.7%
<b>RACE</b>	<b>White</b>	82 62.6%	11 35.5%	9 64.3%	102 58.0%
	<b>Non-White</b>	43 32.8%	14 45.2%	5 35.7%	62 35.2%
	<b>Unknown</b>	6 4.6%	6 19.4%	0 0.0%	12 6.8%
<b>AGE</b>	<b>Average Age at Screening</b>	44.4	48.6	50.7	45.6
	<b>Age Range</b>	20-74	22-71	23-65	20-74
<b>HIGHEST LEVEL CHARGE</b>	<b>Felony</b>	33 25.2%	7 22.6%	3 21.4%	43 24.4%
	<b>Gross Misdemeanor</b>	56 42.7%	12 38.7%	2 14.3%	70 39.8%
	<b>Misdemeanor</b>	42 32.1%	12 38.7%	9 64.3%	63 35.8%

***Profile of Defendants Accepted Into Veterans Court***

In addition to the characteristics listed in Table 1 above, the Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Fourth Judicial District Court collect additional data regarding defendants accepted into Veterans Court. These data are presented in Tables 2 through 4.

**Table 2. Profile of Defendants Accepted Into Veterans Court**

		<b>Active Participants (n=73)</b>	<b>Graduates (n=41)</b>	<b>Non-Completers<sup>11</sup> (n=17)</b>	<b>Total (n=131)</b>
<b>GENDER</b>	<b>Female</b>	2 2.7%	1 2.4%	1 5.9%	4 3.1%
	<b>Male</b>	71 97.3%	40 97.6%	16 94.1%	127 96.9%
<b>RACE</b>	<b>White</b>	42 57.5%	28 68.3%	12 70.6%	82 62.6%
	<b>Non-White</b>	26 35.6%	12 29.3%	5 29.4%	43 32.8%
	<b>Unknown</b>	5 6.8%	1 2.4%	0 0.0%	6 4.6%
<b>AGE</b>	<b>Average Age at Screening</b>	43.9	44.7	46.1	44.4
	<b>Age Range</b>	20-64	23-63	25-74	20-74
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	<b>Married/Live with partner</b>	12 16.4%	12 29.3%	1 5.9%	25 19.1%
	<b>Never married</b>	21 28.8%	14 34.1%	7 41.2%	42 32.1%
	<b>Separated/Divorced</b>	34 46.6%	14 34.1%	8 47.1%	56 42.7%
	<b>Unknown</b>	6 8.2%	1 2.4%	1 5.9%	8 6.1%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	16 21.9%	13 31.7%	2 11.8%	31 23.7%
	<b>Part-time</b>	7 9.6%	1 2.4%	2 11.8%	10 7.6%
	<b>Unemployed</b>	31 42.5%	13 31.7%	7 41.2%	51 38.9%
	<b>Not employed-other<sup>12</sup></b>	10 13.7%	10 24.4%	3 17.6%	23 17.6%
	<b>Unknown</b>	9 12.3%	4 9.8%	3 17.6%	16 12.2%
<b>HOUSING STATUS</b>	<b>Independent</b>	34 46.6%	23 56.1%	7 41.2%	64 48.9%
	<b>With parent/friend/relative</b>	21 28.8%	14 34.1%	5 29.4%	40 30.5%
	<b>Homeless/shelter</b>	8 10.9%	1 2.4%	4 23.5%	13 9.9%
	<b>Residential facility</b>	4 5.5%	2 4.9%	0 0.0%	6 4.6%
	<b>Unknown</b>	6 8.2%	1 2.4%	1 5.9%	8 6.1%

<sup>11</sup> Terminated by the Court (8), voluntarily withdrawal (7), deceased (2), transferred out of state (1). Those terminated by the Court and those who voluntarily withdraw look very similar to each other,

<sup>12</sup> Disabled, student, retired, homemaker.

**Table 2 (cont.). Profile of Defendants Accepted Into Veterans Court**

		Active Participants (n=73)	Graduates (n=41)	Non-Completers (n=17)	Total (n=131)
<b>LEVEL OF EDUCATION</b>	Less than high school graduate	6 8.2%	2 4.9%	1 5.9%	9 6.9%
	High school graduate/GED	21 28.8%	9 22.0%	7 41.2%	37 28.2%
	Some post-high school education	25 34.2%	16 39.0%	5 29.4%	46 35.1%
	Technical/two-year degree	7 9.6%	6 14.6%	1 5.9%	14 10.7%
	Four-year degree	4 5.5%	7 17.1%	2 11.8%	13 9.9%
	Post-graduate degree	3 4.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 2.3%
	Unknown	7 9.6%	1 2.4%	1 5.9%	9 6.9%
	<b>HIGHEST LEVEL CHARGE</b>	<b>Felony</b>	21 28.8%	8 19.5%	4 23.5%
	<b>Gross Misdemeanor</b>	33 45.2%	18 43.9%	5 29.4%	56 42.7%
	<b>Misdemeanor</b>	19 26.0%	15 36.6%	8 47.1%	42 32.1%

Similar to those screened for Veterans Court, those accepted into the court are mostly white males in their mid-forties. Over one-third have a high school degree or lower, another third had some post-high school education, and almost one-fourth received a post-high school degree of some sort. About half report being independent with regard to their housing and slightly more than half report being without a job. Over 40% are separated or divorced. These data point to instability in the lives of many of the entering veterans. The majority come into Veterans Court with lower level offenses (non-felony) with only one-quarter having felony level offenses.

A primary goal of Veterans Court is to improve life stability for those participating in the program (see Veterans Court Goal 5). Although these data are collected upon acceptance to Veterans Court, they are not consistently obtained upon completion of the program. The remedy for this problem is in place beginning in 2013 when probation officers will collect these data at both entry into and exit from Veterans Court.

### **Offense Type**

The most common type of offense for which participants enter Veterans Court is DWIs (40%), followed by domestic offenses<sup>13</sup> (20%). The remaining 40% are a mix of numerous offense types, including assaults, terroristic threats, possession of drugs, property crimes, driving-related offenses, and conduct offenses such as disorderly conduct and obstructing the legal process, mostly at the non-felony level.

<sup>13</sup> Domestic Assault, Violation of Orders for Protection, and Violation of No Contact Orders.

## Military Service

The majority (52%) of Veterans Court participants served in the Army, followed by the Marines (19%), Navy (16%), and Air Force (9%). Six participants served in more than one branch – three in the Air Force and Army, two in the Army and Marines, and one in the Army and Navy.

Table 3 shows the range of participants' ranks at the time of discharge from military service. All but two participants were enlisted service members. Enlisted ranks range from E1 to E9. Officers must have a four-year college degree or higher; ranks range from O1 to O10.

**Table 3. Military Rank at Discharge**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
E1	24	18.3%
E2	13	9.9%
E3	15	11.5%
E4	41	31.3%
E5	19	14.5%
E6	2	1.5%
E7	2	1.5%
E8	1	0.8%
O2	2	1.5%
Rank unknown	12	9.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Type of Military Discharge

Table 4 shows participants' type of discharge from the military. Nearly three-fourths (73%) received an Honorable Discharge and 20% received a General (Under Honorable Conditions) discharge. A few participants received Other Than Honorable or Dishonorable discharges. Appendix B describes the five possible types of discharge.

**Table 4. Type of Military Discharge**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Honorable	95	72.5%
General (Under Honorable Conditions)	26	19.8%
Other Than Honorable	3	2.3%
Bad Conduct	0	0.0%
Dishonorable	3	2.3%
Unknown	4	3.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Deployments

Nearly half (47%) of Veterans Court participants were deployed overseas at least once. Of those deployed, nearly 60% served in Iraq, 18% served in Vietnam, 15% in the Persian Gulf, and the remaining 7% in Afghanistan, Panama, Jordan, Kuwait, and Bosnia. Approximately 10% of those deployed had more than one deployment.

## Court Appearances

Table 5 displays time in Veterans Court along with the number of court appearances made. Graduates spend an average of 14.1 months in Veterans Court, while defendants terminated by the court participate for an average of 8.4 months and those who voluntarily withdraw take part for an average of 3.2 months. Both graduates and those terminated by the court have an average of nine court appearances, while defendants who voluntarily withdraw do so after an average of five. Before termination from Veterans Court, defendants are given increased levels of program intervention and treatment services as well as a series of graduated sanctions, including warnings from the judge, sentence to service, and jail time.

**Table 5. Length of Time and Number of Appearances in Veterans Court**

	<b>Active<sup>14</sup> (n=73)</b>	<b>Graduated (n=41)</b>	<b>Terminated by Court (n=8)</b>	<b>Voluntarily Withdrew (n=7)</b>	<b>Total (n=129)<sup>15</sup></b>
<b>Average # of Months in Veterans Court</b>	8.6	14.1	8.4	3.2	10.0
<b>Range</b>	0.1 – 23.6	5.5 – 23.5	3.9 – 19.3	1.2 – 7.6	0.1 – 23.6
<b>Average # of Appearance in Veterans Court</b>	7.0	9.2	9.0	4.6	7.7
<b>Range</b>	1 -18	3 - 15	5 - 21	2 – 7	1 – 21

<sup>14</sup> Active participants have been in Veterans Court for varying lengths of time and because they are still receiving services and making court appearances, these numbers are fluid.

<sup>15</sup> Two participants excluded from this analysis (one deceased, one transferred to probation in another state).



## ***Achievement of Veterans Court Goals***

### **Goal 1: Reduce Criminal Recidivism**

At this time, assessing recidivism will be addressed by comparing participants to themselves, analyzing their criminal activity prior to and after entering Veterans Court. The number of cases charged statewide at four points after entering Veterans Court is compared to the number of cases charged during those same periods prior to entering. As shown in Table 6, most Veterans Court participants are charged with fewer offenses post-entry compared to pre-entry. For example, 83% of defendants are charged with fewer cases in the first six months after entering Veterans Court compared to the six months just prior to entering the Court, while 12% are charged with the same number of cases after entering and 5% are charged with more. When looking at charged cases within twenty-four months of entering Veterans Court compared to the twenty-four months just prior to entering, nearly three-fourths (72%) are charged with fewer cases after entering, while 14% are charged with the same number of offenses and 14% are charged with more offenses.

**Table 6. Criminal Activity after Entering Veterans Court versus Same Time Periods Prior to Entering**

<b>Number of Charged Cases Post- Entry versus Pre-Entry</b>	<b>Veterans at 6 months</b>	<b>Veterans at 12 months</b>	<b>Veterans at 18 months</b>	<b>Veterans at 24 months</b>
Fewer	97 82.9%	77 81.1%	55 78.6%	21 72.4%
Same	14 12.0%	10 10.5%	7 10.0%	4 13.8%
More	6 5.1%	8 8.4%	8 11.4%	4 13.8%
Total	117 100.0%	95 100.0%	70 100.0%	29 100.0%

Graduates are more likely than non-completers to have no new offenses at all four points after entering Veterans Court (6, 12, 18, and 24 months). Although only two data points are shown in Table 7, graduates are approximately twice as likely as non-completers to have no new offenses at each of the four data points examined. About three-fourths of graduates have no new offenses at six, twelve, and eighteen months after entering the Court and at twenty-four months, more than half (56%) still have not reoffended. In contrast, less than half of the non-completers have not reoffended within six months of entering Veterans Court, and only about one-third have not reoffended at twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months.

**Table 7. Number of New Cases Charged after Entry into Veterans Court**

	Within 12 Months of Entry			Within 24 Months of Entry		
	Active Participants	Graduates	Non-Completers	Active Participants	Graduates	Non-Completers
<b>None</b>	25 65.8%	31 75.6%	6 37.5%	2 40.0%	10 55.6%	2 33.3%
<b>1</b>	11 28.9%	9 22.0%	6 37.5%	3 60.0%	7 38.9%	3 50.0%
<b>2 - 4</b>	2 5.3%	1 2.4%	4 25.0%	0 0.0%	1 5.6%	1 16.7%
<b>Total</b>	38 100.0%	41 100.0%	16 100.0%	5 100.0%	18 100.0%	6 100.0%

Not only do graduates commit new offenses at a lower rate than non-completers, but when they do reoffend it is more often a less serious offense. Again, only two data points are shown in Table 8, but at all four points after entering Veterans Court (6, 12, 18, and 24 months), non-completers are about three times more likely to commit a felony than graduates. At six, twelve, and eighteen months after entry they are approximately twice as likely to commit a non-felony as graduates, but by twenty-four months after entry they commit new non-felony offenses at the same rate. The number of reoffenders is still very small, however (ten graduates and ten non-completers at twelve months from entry and eight graduates and four non-completers at twenty-four months); re-offense rates and patterns will be reassessed when at least one hundred graduates have had a year's time to reoffend post-Veterans Court.

**Table 8. Most Serious Level of Re-Offense**

	Within 12 Months of Entry			Within 24 Months of Entry		
	Active Participants	Graduates	Non-Completers	Active Participants	Graduates	Non-Completers
<b>None</b>	25 65.8%	31 75.6%	6 37.5%	2 40.0%	10 55.6%	2 33.3%
<b>Misdemeanor</b>	10 26.3%	4 9.8%	5 31.2%	3 60.0%	4 22.2%	2 33.3%
<b>Gross Misdemeanor</b>	1 2.6%	3 7.3%	1 6.2%	0 0.0%	2 11.1%	0 0.0%
<b>Felony</b>	2 5.3%	3 7.3%	4 25.0%	0 0.0%	2 11.1%	2 33.3%
<b>Total</b>	38 100.0%	41 100.0%	16 100.0%	5 100.0%	18 100.0%	6 100.0%

## Goal 2: Promote Participant Sobriety

At the time defendants enter Veterans Court, 85% report alcohol or illegal substance use within the past twelve months. The most common substances reported are alcohol (89%), marijuana (37%), cocaine (13%), and prescription medications not prescribed to the veteran (10%).<sup>16</sup> Although no use of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs is a condition of Veterans Court participation, random drug and alcohol tests are not a requirement unless chemical dependency or abuse is an identified issue. As shown in Table 9, approximately two-thirds of graduates (66%) were required to take random drug and alcohol tests, while slightly more than half (53%) of those who did not complete the program were required to do so. Active participants are required to test at the highest rate (89%). There are no major differences in the types of offenses accepted into Veterans Court in the early stages of the program compared with recent admissions. The increase in defendants required to test for alcohol and drugs is due to the court more systematically ordering testing of all defendants with the exception of those verified to have no chemical health concerns by a chemical health assessment or VA intake examination.

Active participants have the highest average number of positive tests (2.6), but a few participants with many positive tests<sup>17</sup> drives up this average. When excluding the six active participants with more than ten positive tests the average number declines to 1.0, lower than both graduates and non-completers. Although defendants who did not complete Veterans Court were tested slightly more often than graduates, their average numbers of positive drug and alcohol tests do not differ. However, it is important to note that the number of non-completers is still extremely small. Once there are more non-completers, statistical differences in drug use between the groups can be analyzed.

**Table 9. Results of Random Drug and Alcohol Tests for Graduates and Terminated Defendants**

	<b>Active Participants (n=73)</b>	<b>Graduates (n=41)</b>	<b>Non-Completers (n=17)</b>
Required to take Tests	65 89.0%	27 65.9%	9 52.9%
Average Number of Tests Taken*	14.0 Range: 1-67	15.9 Range: 1-70	17.9 Range: 1-61
Average Number of Positive Tests*	2.6 Range: 0-35	1.7 Range: 0-9	1.7 Range: 0-7
Percent with No Positive Tests*	56.9%	44.4%	55.6%

\* Results include only those participants required to take random drug and alcohol tests.

<sup>16</sup> Percentages add to greater than 100% because respondents could report the use of multiple substances.

<sup>17</sup> Six active participants had more than ten positive drug and alcohol tests. In all cases, the high number of positive tests is due to frequent, repeated testing to look for decreasing levels of drugs in urine indicating cessation of chronic use.

### **Goal 3: Increase compliance with treatment and other court-ordered conditions**

Unlike defendants in other problem-solving courts such as DWI Court and Drug Courts, Veterans Court participants enter with a variety of offense types and chemical health, mental health, and medical needs. Therefore, court-ordered conditions and treatment plans are less uniform than in the traditional Drug Court model and are designed to address each participant's unique treatment needs. The local VA Medical Centers in Minneapolis and St. Cloud, MN, are strong partners with Hennepin County Veterans Court. They provide the majority of client treatment services, including inpatient and outpatient chemical dependency treatment and aftercare, psychiatric and psychological treatment, medical care, and other specialized therapies including dialectic behavioral therapy (DBT), cognitive behavioral therapy, prolonged exposure treatment for PTSD, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, and dual disorder treatment for clients with both mental health and chemical dependency issues.

In order to graduate from Veterans Court, each participant must complete chemical dependency treatment and/or domestic abuse programming, *if ordered*, and be successfully working with the VA Medical Center or community-based resources on other programming as indicated in their case plan. Many of these veterans have medical, mental health, and chemical dependency issues that will need to be addressed and monitored on a long-term basis. As long as a participant is actively engaged in recommended programming, he or she is eligible for graduation from Veterans Court.

Participation in chemical dependency and/or domestic abuse programming is displayed in Table 10. Between two-thirds and three-fourths of all participants are ordered to completed treatment. Graduates are more likely to be required to complete treatment; however, active participants may still be ordered to complete treatment before graduating, so differences between these two groups may be due to this factor. In addition, some participants are not ordered to complete treatment because they have done so prior to entering Veterans Court. No graduate or active participant has failed to complete treatment, while nearly half of the non-completers do not complete before terminating from the Court. More than half (57%) of the graduates complete inpatient treatment compared with 39% of active participants. However, this table reports only the highest level of treatment completed thus far. If needed, active participants may complete a higher level of treatment before graduation.

**Table 10. Participation in Chemical Dependency Treatment and/or Domestic Abuse Programming**

	<b>Active Participants (n=73)</b>	<b>Graduates (n=41)</b>	<b>Non-Completers (n=17)</b>
<b>Treatment Ordered*</b>	46 63.0%	30 73.2%	11 64.7%
<b>Treatment Completed</b>			
<b>Yes</b>	40 87.0%	30 100.0%	6 54.5%
<b>No</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	5 45.5%
<b>In progress</b>	6 13.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Highest Level of Treatment**</b>			
<b>Inpatient</b>	18 39.1%	17 56.7%	5 45.5%
<b>Outpatient</b>	28 60.9%	13 43.3%	1 9.1%
<b>Did not enter</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	5 45.5%

\*Chemical dependency and/or domestic abuse programming only.

\*\*Can be ordered to multiple treatments; most intensive type of treatment reported here.

#### **Goal 4: Improve access to VA Benefits and Services**

A primary goal of Veterans Court is to get eligible veterans connected with all possible VA benefits. Veterans Court works closely with a VA benefits specialist and the Hennepin County Veterans Service Office, who are members of the Veterans Court team, to assist participants in filing claims as needed to begin receiving benefits or to increase benefits to the level which they are entitled.

Nearly three-fourths (73%) of participants have connected with the VA to receive benefits prior to entering the Court, while most of the others connected during their time in Veterans Court (21%). A few participants (5%) are not eligible for VA benefits or services - for example, due to income level, dishonorable discharge status, or because they are currently active in the Guard/Reserves. If a veteran does not qualify for benefits, the VA benefits specialist has been vital to the team in providing guidance regarding the filing of a new claim or appeal in order to attempt to gain access to VA services. When a participant is not eligible for the services of the VA Medical Center, probation officers find community-based services to provide the veteran with the services he or she requires.

Less than two-thirds (58%) of participants already deemed eligible for VA services report using their benefits at time of entry into the Court and a similar number (57%) express a desire to know more about the benefits for which they are eligible. When an eligible participant who is not using VA services enters the Court, the VA makes contact with the veteran as soon as possible in order to reconnect him or her with the VA, determine what services are needed, and commence service delivery.

## **Goal 5: Improve family relationships and social support connections**

Many of the defendants entering Veterans Court do not have strong family or social support connections. A primary goal of Veterans Court is to facilitate the development of community support in maintaining sobriety, mental health, and physical health as well as to offer veterans the opportunity to develop pro-social relationships with sober individuals. Through the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, the Hennepin County Veterans Court established a mentor program in which participants can be matched with other veterans if they so choose in order to help them navigate the court and VA Medical Center system as well as to provide support and friendship in the community. The program encountered some difficulties gaining momentum during the first two years; however, in late 2012, personnel changes occurred. The new mentor coordinator is himself a graduate of the Hennepin County Veterans Court and has been involved with the court since shortly after its inception. Initial plans for the revamped mentor program look promising.

Additionally, one of the Veterans Court participants took it upon himself to start a bowling league for Veterans Court participants and several defendants have taken part in this informal social group. The group's activities have expanded over time to include other social events for Veterans Court participants.

Beginning in 2013, probation officers will submit quarterly reports, including information on family relationships, to the Fourth Judicial District's Research Division so that future evaluations can assess whether or not there is improvement on this goal.

## **Goal 6: Improve Life Stability**

This goal compares the change in participants' employment and housing status between when they entered Veterans Court and when they exited the program. Participants who were still active at the end of the second year are not included in analyzing performance on this goal as data is only collected at entry and exit and not during program participation. These data are obtained from Hennepin County Community Corrections and Rehabilitation's interviews with defendants and is not available for all those exiting the program; the information below reports on 63% of graduates, 38% of those terminated by the Court, and 29% of those who voluntarily withdrew. Change in level of education is not available, as education level is only asked by probation at entry into the Court.

Because there is such limited information on the already small number of terminated and voluntarily withdrawing defendants, the information in Tables 11 and 12 is not very helpful in determining whether life stability improved more for graduates than for those who did not complete the program. However,

Table 11 shows that more than half (54%) of the graduates for which we have exit information remained employed or a student, or their level of employment increased. Nearly one-fourth (23%) remained unemployed or their level of employment decreased, and nearly one-fourth (23%) had no change in employment status due to being disabled.

**Table 11. Change in Employment/Benefits Status during Veterans Court Participation**

	<b>Graduates (n=41)</b>	<b>Non- Completers (n=17)</b>
<b>No change – still employed/student</b>	9 34.6%	0 0.0%
<b>Increased level of employment</b>	5 19.2%	0 0.0%
<b>No change – disabled</b>	6 23.0%	1 20.0%
<b>No change – still unemployed</b>	2 7.7%	4 80.0%
<b>Decreased level of employment</b>	4 15.4%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	26 100.0%	5 100.0%
<b>Number Missing*</b>	15	12

\* Incomplete data: not collected in probation database at exit from Veterans Court.

As shown in in Table 12, nearly three-fourths of graduates (73%) live on their own in a private residence at both entry and exit from the program, while another 15% increased their housing stability while in Veterans Court. Only 4% of reporting graduates report decreased housing stability from entry to exit.

**Table 12. Change in Living Situation During Veterans Court Participation**

	<b>Graduates (n=41)</b>	<b>Non- Completers (n=17)</b>
<b>No change – private residence</b>	19 73.1%	4 80.0%
<b>Increased housing stability</b>	4 15.4%	1 20.0%
<b>No change – 24-hour residential facility</b>	2 7.7%	0 0.0%
<b>Decreased housing stability</b>	1 3.8%	0 0.05%
<b>Total</b>	26 100.0%	5 100.0%
<b>Number Missing*</b>	15	12

\* Incomplete data: not collected in probation database at exit from Veterans Court.

Beginning in 2013, probation officers will report data quarterly regarding progress on Goals 2 through 6. The three-year report will include more comprehensive information regarding improvement in quality-of-life indicators while participating in Veterans Court

### **Participant Satisfaction with Veterans Court**

As part of defendants' participation in Veterans Court, they are asked to complete a satisfaction survey, known as uSPEQ<sup>®18</sup>. This survey is a nationally validated tool using standardized "best practice" items to measure satisfaction at ninety-day intervals while in the program. However, some participants may not be available to participate in the survey (e.g., in residential treatment for chemical or mental health issues) while others may decline to participate. Therefore, results are not systematically available for all participants at each ninety-day benchmark. Nevertheless, overall results can be helpful in monitoring general satisfaction with Veterans Court. Particularly in the early phases of a problem-solving court, when policies are being fine-tuned, participant feedback can be useful in determining if the court is serving its customers as intended. Questions include defendants' experience with Veterans Court as well as a series of demographic questions. The twenty-nine substantive questions group into the following categories: Service Responsiveness, Informed Choice, Respect, Overall Value, and Participation.

Of the 131 defendants who entered Veterans Court during the first two years, 51 (39%) were administered at least one uSPEQ<sup>®</sup> questionnaire. Nearly two-thirds (63%) completed between three and five questionnaires, while slightly more than one-third (37%) completed one or two. Results are split into responses from year one (July 2010 - June 2011) compared to year two (July 2011 - June 2012). Table 13 lists a summary of findings, while Appendix C contains responses to the individual questions. Overall, participants are extremely satisfied with the services they receive through Veterans Court and its partners. Scores can range from one (strongly disagree) to four (strongly agree), and in both the first and second years of Veterans Court, the average score on all five question categories was 3.8 or higher. Although slight, there are improvements in the second year of the program in each of the overall categories of the survey.

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<sup>18</sup>Universal Stakeholder Participation and Experience Questionnaire, <http://www.uspeq.org>.



**Table 13. Average Ratings on uSPEQ<sup>®</sup> Survey  
Year 1 Compared to Year 2 of Veterans Court**

	July 2010-June 2011 (n=40)	July 2011-June 2012 (n=94)
<b>Service Responsiveness</b>	3.89	3.94
<b>Informed Choice</b>	3.85	3.95
<b>Respect</b>	3.92	3.95
<b>Overall Value</b>	3.87	3.95
<b>Participation</b>	3.79	3.98

### **Summary and Recommendations**

The Fourth Judicial District Veterans Court program began in July 2010 and is an intensive problem-solving court for veterans with identifiable chemical dependency and/or treatable mental health issues. It is a voluntary program and participation must be consented to by the Veterans Court judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, and defendant. The Court promotes sobriety, recovery, and stability through a coordinated response that involves cooperation and collaboration with traditional court and probation personnel, the VA Medical Center, VA Benefits Administration, and volunteer veteran mentors.

During the first two years of operation, 176 defendants were screened for Veterans Court. Of these, 131 were accepted, 31 were not accepted, and 14 chose not to participate. Of those entering Veterans Court, nearly all (97%) are male, two-thirds (63%) are white, the average age is 44 years, and nearly half (45%) have gross misdemeanor offenses. The most common type of offense is gross misdemeanor DWIs (40%), followed by misdemeanor domestic offenses (20%). Nearly half (47%) have been deployed overseas at least once, most commonly to Iraq (60%).

In the first two years, forty-one participants graduated from Veterans Court, the Court terminated eight for continued non-compliance with conditions of probation, and seven voluntarily withdrew and returned to the regular court calendar for traditional sentencing. Graduates spend an average of fourteen months in Veterans Court and make an average of nine Veterans Court appearances, while terminated defendants spend an average of eight months in the Court and also make an average of nine appearances. Defendants who withdraw voluntarily do so after an average of three months and five court appearances.

During the first six months after entry into Veterans Court, 83% of participants commit fewer offenses than during the six months just prior to entry. This pattern holds up to two years, when 72% of participants who have at least twenty-four months post-entry are charged with fewer offenses than

during the twenty-four months just prior to entering the Court. At six months from entry into Veterans Court, graduates are twice as likely as non-completers to have no new offenses; and at twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months from entry they remain nearly twice as likely to have no new offenses than non-completers.

Two-thirds of graduates and terminated defendants are required to take alcohol and drugs tests while in the program. Graduates test positive at a lower rate than do terminated defendants. In order to graduate, participants must successfully complete chemical dependency treatment and/or domestic abuse programming, if ordered, and be successfully working with the VA Medical Center or community-based resources on other programming as indicated in their case plan. Veterans Court works closely with a VA benefits specialist and the Hennepin County Veterans Service Office to assist participants in filing claims as needed to receive or increase their benefits to the level to which they are entitled.

The Hennepin County Veterans Court has established a mentor program, in which participants can be matched with other veterans if they choose to in order to help them navigate the court and VA Medical Center system as well as to provide support and friendship in the community. In addition, a Veterans Court participant took it upon himself to start a social bowling league; this group is expanding to include other social events as well.

The Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCCR) interviewed two-thirds of graduates at both entry into and exit from Veterans Court. Of these, more than half (54%) maintained or increased their level of employment from entry to graduation. Nearly three-fourths (73%) lived on their own in a private residence at both entry and exit from the program, while another 15% increased their housing stability from entry to graduation.

Overall, participants are extremely satisfied with the services they receive through Veterans Court and its partners. On the uSPEQ<sup>®</sup> survey scores can range from one (strongly disagree) to four (strongly agree), and in both the first and second years of Veterans Court, the average score on all five question categories (service responsiveness, informed choice, respect, overall value, and participation) was 3.8 or higher. Although slight, scores on all five measures increased in the second year.

### **Recommendations:**

Courtwide:

1. Continue the Fourth Judicial District Veterans Court.
2. Identify all veterans entering the criminal justice system as early in the process as possible, both to aid in steering veterans toward the benefits for which they are entitled

and to allow the creation of a matched comparison sample of veterans who do not enter Veterans Court for use in future program evaluations.

#### Veterans Court Team:

3. Update the existing Veterans Court Policy and Procedure Manual to reflect current policies and procedures accurately.
4. Create more clearly defined criteria for advancement through Veterans Court to reach graduation. Program goals and the means by which achievement of these goals are measured should be clear to all participants to give them more control over their progress. Provide an increased number of tangible incentives for achievement of goals identified in participants' case plans. Consider adding such incentives as sobriety medallions, gift cards, etc. *(Note: as of late 2012, a Veterans Court sub-committee is working on this issue).*
5. Provide participants with clearly defined graduated sanctions that the judge may impose for failure to comply with their case plan or court orders. Implement these sanctions as uniformly and as soon after the infraction as possible.
6. Develop a strong mentor program composed of volunteer veteran mentors who will aid participants in navigating through the court and VA system and serve as advocates and allies to their mentees. *(Note: As of late 2012, stronger development of this program is underway, with the aid of a volunteer mentor coordinator provided by the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living.)*

#### Community Corrections and Rehabilitation:

7. When recommending graduation, probation officers should present participants' goal achievements, as well as any lack of achievement, to the team at pre-court staffing. Probation officers should also document performance on all goals for the evaluators.
8. Collect life stability measures consistently for all defendants at entry and exit from the Court, including housing status, employment status, education level, and extent of family relationships.

#### District Court Research

9. Assess data completeness quarterly to ensure the ability to conduct a thorough evaluation when the number of graduates meets the threshold of 100 defendants who have been out of the program for a full year.
10. Continue to evaluate Veterans Court regularly to assess whether it is achieving the defined goals.

## **Appendix A**

### **Veterans Treatment Court Key Components<sup>19</sup>**

**Key Component #1:** Veterans Treatment Court integrates alcohol, drug treatment, and mental health services with justice system case processing.

**Key Component #2:** Using a nonadversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights.

**Key Component #3:** Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the Veterans Treatment Court program.

**Key Component #4:** Veterans Treatment Court provides access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, mental health, and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.

**Key Component #5:** Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing.

**Key Component #6:** A coordinated strategy governs Veterans Treatment Court responses to participants' compliance.

**Key Component #7:** Ongoing judicial interaction with each veteran is essential.

**Key Component #8:** Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness.

**Key Component #9:** Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective Veterans Treatment Court planning, implementation, and operations.

**Key Component #10:** Forging partnerships among Veterans Treatment Court, Veterans Administration, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances Veteran Treatment Court effectiveness.

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<sup>19</sup><http://www.justiceforvets.org/sites/default/files/files/Ten%20Key%20Components%20of%20Veterans%20Treatment%20Courts%20.pdf>

## Appendix B. Military Discharge Types<sup>20</sup>

**Honorable:** Honorable discharge is an administrative separation when the quality of the member's service generally has met the standards of acceptable conduct and performance of duty for military personnel, or is otherwise so meritorious that any other characterization would be clearly inappropriate.

**General (Under Honorable Conditions):** General (Under Honorable Conditions) discharge is an administrative separation when significant negative aspects of conduct or performance of duty outweigh positive aspects of the member's military record.

**Other Than Honorable:** Other Than Honorable discharge is an administrative separation when the reason for separation is based upon a pattern of behavior constituting a significant departure from the conduct expected of members of the Military Services.

**Bad Conduct:** Bad Conduct discharge is a punitive discharge that can be adjudged by either a general court-martial or a special court-martial.

**Dishonorable:** Dishonorable discharge is a punitive discharge that can only be adjudged by a general court-martial.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/justicelawlegislation//aadischarge1.htm>

**Appendix C. uSPEQ® Survey Results  
Year 1 Compared to Year 2 of Veterans Court**

**SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS**

How long have you been receiving services here?

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>First visit</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Less than three months</b>	1 2.5%	0 0.0%
<b>3-6 months</b>	21 52.5%	24 25.5%
<b>7-12 months</b>	17 42.5%	35 37.2%
<b>1-2 years</b>	1 2.5%	35 37.2%
<b>3 or more years</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	40 100.0%	94 100.0%

The amount of time I wait to get service is reasonable.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36 90.0%	91 96.8%
<b>Agree</b>	2 5.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	2 5.0%	2 2.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	40 100.0%	94 100.0%

It is easy for me to get to this service location.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	37 92.5%	91 96.8%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.5%	2 2.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	2 5.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	40 100.0%	94 100.0%

Services are available at times that are OK for me.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	39 97.5%	91 96.8%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.5%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	2 2.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	40 100.0%	94 100.0%

I am able to get what I need at this service location, when I need it.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	34 85.0%	91 97.8%
<b>Agree</b>	2 5.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	4 10.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	40 100.0%	93 100.0%

There are enough staff members available to meet my needs.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	39 97.5%	92 98.9%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.5%	0 0.0%
<b>Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	40 100.0%	93 100.0%

### **INFORMED CHOICE**

Staff members make accommodations that meet my individual needs.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36 92.3%	91 97.8%
<b>Agree</b>	2 5.1%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

Staff members at this location pay attention to what I say.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36 92.3%	90 96.8%
<b>Agree</b>	2 5.1%	2 2.2%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

I have the opportunity to make choices that are important to me.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36 92.3%	91 97.8%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	2 5.1%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

Service options were explained in a language I understood.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	38 97.4%	90 97.8%
<b>Agree</b>	0 0.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	92 100.0%

I agreed with the goals in my plan for services.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	32 82.0%	89 95.7%
<b>Agree</b>	3 7.7%	2 2.2%
<b>Disagree</b>	3 7.7%	2 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%



**RESPECT**

Staff here treat me/my family with respect and courtesy.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	38 97.4%	92 97.9%
<b>Agree</b>	0 0.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	94 100.0%

Staff members are respectful of my culture.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	37 94.9%	93 98.9%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	94 100.0%

People at this service location respect me as a person.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	37 94.9%	93 98.9%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	94 100.0%

Staff members respect my privacy.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	37 94.9%	89 96.7%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	2 2.2%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	92 100.0%

**OVERALL VALUE**

I would recommend this organization to a friend or family.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	38 97.4%	90 96.8%
<b>Agree</b>	0 0.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

The services I receive meet my expectations.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	35 89.7%	89 95.7%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	2 5.1%	3 3.2%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

I feel safe at this service location.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	37 94.9%	92 98.9%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

The services I receive at this location make me better able to do the things I want to do now.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	35 89.7%	90 97.8%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	3 7.7%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	92 100.0%

This service location meets the need I came here for.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	35 89.7%	91 97.8%
<b>Agree</b>	2 5.1%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	2 5.1%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

Overall, I am satisfied with the services I receive.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36 92.3%	89 95.7%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	2 2.2%
<b>Disagree</b>	2 5.1%	2 2.2%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

Overall, I believe the services I get from this service location have helped or will help me/my family.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36 92.3%	90 96.8%
<b>Agree</b>	2 5.1%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	2 2.2%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	93 100.0%

### **PARTICIPATION**

I am able to deal effectively with everyday life activities.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	32 82.1%	89 96.7%
<b>Agree</b>	3 7.7%	2 2.2%
<b>Disagree</b>	4 10.3%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	92 100.0%

I am able to make choices that are important to me.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	35 89.7%	89 96.7%
<b>Agree</b>	3 7.7%	2 2.2%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	39 100.0%	92 100.0%

I know where and how to get help I need in the community.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	35 92.1%	91 98.9%
<b>Agree</b>	2 5.3%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	38 100.0%	92 100.0%

I am generally able to do things I need without major barriers.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	34 89.5%	89 96.7%
<b>Agree</b>	4 10.5%	3 3.3%
<b>Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	38 100.0%	92 100.0%

Written materials are easy for me to understand.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	31 81.6%	91 98.9%
<b>Agree</b>	5 13.2%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	2 5.3%	0 0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	38 100.0%	92 100.0%

Staff members give me clear information on the different service choices available to help me.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	38 100.0%	91 98.9%
<b>Agree</b>	0 0.0%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	38 100.0%	92 100.0%

Staff members here clearly explain to me what I need to do next to get the services I need or want.

	July 2010-June 2011	July 2011-June 2012
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36 94.7%	91 98.9%
<b>Agree</b>	1 2.6%	1 1.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	1 2.6%	0 0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
<b>Total</b>	38 100.0%	92 100.0%