

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT OF DANE COUNTY



PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Presiding Judge Ellen K. Berz
Dane County Circuit Court, Branch 11

8/20/18

VTC Participant Handbook

A. Introduction

Welcome to Veterans Treatment Court of Dane County (VTC). There are many veterans who apply to participate in VTC. Unfortunately, there are not enough resources to accommodate all of those interested in participating. Fortunately, you have been chosen among the many applicants to fill one of the few openings in this limited-enrollment program. With this opportunity comes the responsibility to put forth your best effort in all aspects of the program for your own benefit as well as the benefit of your fellow veteran participants.

There are times, during the program, that will be more difficult than other times. Know that you have the support and encouragement of the VTC Team. We know that you can persevere through difficult times and achieve your goals. Try your best and never give up. We are with you.

B. Mission

In recognition of their service to our country and the behavioral health challenges they face, the Veterans Treatment Court of Dane County (VTC) works to habilitate veterans by diverting them from the traditional criminal justice system and providing a coordinated response to alcohol, drug and mental health conditions through collaborative, evidence-based practices, thereby promoting public safety, reducing recidivism and enhancing the quality of life.

C. Core Values

The foundation of VTC participation is adherence to the program's core values. Participants are expected to understand and uphold the following three core values:

1. Honesty

Honesty is at the heart of the VTC and the foundation of a person's character. Be honest with the VTC Team, treatment providers, mentors, fellow veteran participants and yourself.

2. Respect

Treat all those associated with the VTC with dignity and respect. Evince self-respect which is a result of knowing you have put forth your best effort.

Support your fellow veteran participants in the VTC. Be a source of positive reinforcement and encouragement for them. Be a role model by sharing your struggles and accomplishments with fellow veteran participants.

3. Courage

Face your fears, challenges and adversities. Mobilize the strength and humility to seek assistance from the VTC Team, treatment providers, mentors and fellow veteran participants. Marshal your inner fortitude to reject negative temptations and make positive choices. Put forth your best effort in treatment and rehabilitation. Resist any enticement to take shortcuts that could undermine your success and the success of your fellow veteran participants. VTC responsibilities are difficult at times. Make those VTC responsibilities your priority.

D. Rules

The following is a list of rules for VTC participation. Many are common sense. Many reiterate rules of DOC supervision. All exist to provide the best framework for success. Participants are expected to follow all of these rules as well as any others imposed by the Judge, VTC Team or DOC (if on supervision).

1. Be honest with all persons associated with VTC, including treatment providers.
2. Behave respectfully toward all persons associated with VTC, including treatment providers and fellow veterans.
3. Put your treatment and other VTC-related responsibilities as your priority, above work, school and recreation.
4. Do not commit any new criminal violations.
5. Notify your case manager and supervising agent (if on DOC supervision) of any police contact.
6. Avoid contact with known criminals and people who are harmful to your best interests.

7. Do not associate with individuals who sell or possess illegal substances.
8. Work toward, and then maintain, sobriety.
9. Do not enter any establishment whose primary purpose is the sale of alcohol (e.g., bars, liquor stores).
10. Do not accept or continue any employment in the alcohol industry (e.g., bars, liquor stores, distribution companies).
11. You are responsible for what goes into your body. Do not consume any over-the-counter products that could impact UA test results. You are responsible for reading labels and knowing whether a product contains alcohol (e.g., cough syrup, non-alcoholic wine or beer, mouthwash, hand sanitizer) or any other substance that could affect test results (e.g., poppy seeds, hemp seeds).
12. Call in daily to the UA testing message phone line to see if you need to submit to a urine screening (i.e., your color is up).
13. Submit to all urine screens (including observed UA's) or other testing when your color(s) is/are up and whenever directed by a VTC Team member.
14. Do not tamper with or falsify any alcohol/drug tests.
15. Urine samples are considered tampered and positive if creatinine levels are under 20 mg/dl or over 400 mg/dl.
16. VTC accepts VA and DOC alcohol/drug test results as indisputably true.
17. Take all prescribed medication as prescribed.
18. Attend all scheduled Judicial Reviews, appointments, meetings and classes as directed by your care/service provider and VTC Team.
19. Participate meaningfully in all VTC-related treatment or activities.
20. Keep a calendar (paper or digital) up-to-date with all (and bring to all) Judicial Reviews, appointments, meetings and classes.
21. Arrive when scheduled, on time, and remain for the entirety of any Judicial Review, appointment, meeting or class.
22. Cancellation of an appointment is only allowed for good cause and upon prior notification.
23. Immediately reschedule any cancelled appointment.

24. Any request to be excused from a Judicial Review must be submitted in writing to the Judge, state good cause and be provided well in advance of the subject date. The request is to be considered denied unless you receive written permission from the Judge. Requests to be regularly excused from all or parts of Judicial Reviews will not be granted.
25. Maintain the ability to communicate with VTC Team members and others in order to fulfill your VTC responsibilities (e.g., telephoning in to check for UA test color).
26. Promptly respond (no later than 24 hours) to any VTC Team member or mentor.
27. Complete all court-ordered community service at a site approved by the VTC Team.
28. Obtain approval from the Judge or agent (if on DOC supervision) before changing residence or employment.
29. Obtain approval from the Judge or agent (if on DOC supervision) before leaving the State of Wisconsin.

E. VTC Team

The VTC Team is a group of interdisciplinary individuals who, led by the Judge, structures the VTC program to meet the particular needs of each participant, confidentially discusses and monitors participant progress, responds to positive/ negative behaviors and determines rank progression. Members of the VTC Team include the Judge, Prosecutor, Public Defender, Department of Corrections (DOC) Supervising Agent (Agent), Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJOC), VA Social Worker, County Veterans Service Office Representative (CVSO), Mentor Coordinator(s) and Court Clerk.

F. Participant Contract

Prior to going on the record at the plea hearing, and with the assistance of counsel (retained, appointed or VTC Public Defender), the defendant must review, complete and sign the VTC Participant Contract. The Participant Contract contains the basic

responsibilities to which every participant must commit in order to participate in VTC. At the plea hearing (held immediately following a regularly scheduled Judicial Review), the defendant must turn in his/her Participant Contract to the Judge. Failure to sign and submit the Participant Contract results in retraction of VTC application approval and return of the case to the prior assigned court.

G. Plea

If a plea is being proffered to enter VTC, it must be a plea of guilty (absent extenuating circumstances) with acceptance of responsibility for the offense. If the VTC Judge does not accept the plea, the case is transferred back to the previously assigned court.

H. Orientation Meeting

At the Orientation meeting before the participant's first Judicial Review, the VJOC and/or Mentor Coordinator, and a current participant (if available), will meet with the defendant. The defendant will be given an overview of VTC. VTC Team members will answer any of the defendant's questions. The defendant also will be provided with an Orientation Checklist.

I. Progression

There are 5 ranks through which a participant progresses in order to graduate from VTC. The length of time in any rank is based upon the individual participant's progress and achievement of the expectations in each rank. However, every participant must remain in a rank for at least the minimum period of time.

J. Rank One (R1) – Orientation: minimum 60 days

- Complete all requirements listed on the Orientation Checklist
- Do not commit any crime
- Be honest in all VTC-related interactions
- Maintain a calendar of all VTC-related Judicial Reviews, appointments and meetings
- Attend biweekly Judicial Reviews (i.e., every two weeks) or as otherwise directed

- Attend all treatment appointments and meetings
- If you are not able to attend an appointment at the VA, call the ADTP Clinic ahead of time to cancel and reschedule
- Arrive on time and remain for the entirety of all Judicial Reviews, appointments and meetings
- Listen respectfully at all Judicial Reviews, appointments and meetings
- Participate meaningfully at all Judicial Reviews, appointments and meetings
- Work with treatment providers to establish a provisional treatment plan
- Take all prescribed medication as prescribed
- Submit to all alcohol/drug screenings
 - at the VA Hospital when your color comes up or as otherwise directed
 - at the DOC office as directed by your Agent
 - do not tamper with your sample
- Admit to any use of alcohol or controlled substances
- Meet with your Agent a minimum of one time per week (if on DOC supervision) at the DOC office, at Judicial Reviews, at home visits or where directed.
 - verify contact information (e.g., residence, phone) at each meeting
 - comply with all conditions of supervision
- Try to refrain from consuming alcohol or illicit drugs

You can only advance to Rank Two if (a) substantially compliant with Rank One requirements for a sustained period of time, including being honest about use and not tampering with or missing alcohol/drug screenings, and (b) the VTC Team approves the promotion.

K. Rank Two (R2) – Adjustment: minimum 60 days

In addition to the unaltered requirements of Rank One:

- Work with treatment providers to finalize/update your treatment plan
- Establish stable housing
- Make progress in substance misuse/mental health treatment
- Demonstrate efforts at sobriety

- Make progress in MRT, DBT or other similar program approved by the VTC Team
You can only advance to Rank Three if (a) substantially compliant with Rank Two requirements for a sustained period of time, including being honest about use and not tampering with or missing alcohol/drug screenings, (b) no positive or missed alcohol/drug screenings for at least 15 consecutive days and (c) the VTC Team approves the promotion.

L. Rank Three (R3) – Implementation: minimum 90 days

In addition to the unaltered requirements of Rank Two (which include the unaltered requirements of Rank One):

- Follow treatment plan
- Implement sobriety
- Maintain stable housing
- Participate in budget counseling to assist with financial stability

You can only advance to Rank Four if (a) substantially compliant with Rank Three requirements for a sustained period of time, including being honest about use and not tampering with or missing alcohol/drug screenings, (b) no positive or missed alcohol/drug screenings for at least 30 consecutive days and (c) the VTC Team approves the promotion.

M. Rank Four (R4) – Stabilization: minimum 90 days

In addition to the unaltered requirements of Rank Three (which include the unaltered requirements of Ranks One and Two):

- Attend monthly Judicial Reviews or as otherwise directed
- Maintain sobriety
- Establish a relapse prevention plan
- Seek/maintain employment or education that does not interfere with VTC obligations
- Implement a budget
- Identify and engage in pro-social activities

- Meet with your Agent a minimum of one time every 2 weeks (if on DOC supervision) at the DOC office, at Judicial Reviews, at home visits or where directed.
 - verify contact information (e.g., residence, phone) at each meeting
 - comply with all conditions of supervision

You can only advance to Rank Five if (a) substantially compliant with Rank Four requirements for a sustained period of time, including being honest about use and not tampering with or missing alcohol/drug screenings, (b) no positive or missed alcohol/drug screenings for at least 60 consecutive days and (c) the VTC Team approves the promotion.

N. Rank Five (R5) – Future Preparation: minimum 90 days

In addition to the unaltered requirements of Rank Four (which include the unaltered requirements of Ranks One, Two and Three):

- Complete MRT, DBT or other similar program approved by the VTC Team
- Maintain a relapse prevention plan
- Maintain employment or education
- Maintain a budget
- Continue pro-social activities

You can only graduate if (a) substantially compliant with Rank Five requirements for a sustained period of time, including being honest about use and not tampering with or missing alcohol/drug screenings, (b) no positive or missed alcohol/drug screenings for at least 90 consecutive days and (c) the VTC Team approves graduation.

O. Incentives

To reinforce a participant’s positive choices, the VTC awards incentives. Positive choices include attending all appointments, completing levels of MRT/DBT, progressing in treatment, maintaining sobriety, gaining employment, finding stable housing and being honest. VTC incentives include:

- Praise
- Recognition
- Applause
- Promotion to next VTC rank

- Core Value card
- Achievement coin
- Gift card
- Name included in prize drawing
- Recommendation for early completion of probation

P. Sanctions

To address a participant’s negative behaviors, the VTC utilizes verbal feedback and sanctions. Sanctions are distinguishable from therapeutic adjustments. As honesty is a core value of VTC, dishonesty with any VTC-related person, including treatment providers, necessitates the imposition of a sanction. In addition to dishonesty, negative behaviors include failure to abide by a court directive, skipping or tampering with alcohol/drug screenings, not attending appointments, lack of participation in treatment and positive alcohol/drug screenings: VTC sanctions include:

- Written apology
- Essay/Thinking report
- Increased contact with VTC Team or VTC Team member
- Increased Judicial Reviews
- Community service
- Delay in rank promotion
- Jail

Q. Graduation

When a participant successfully completes all program requirements of all five ranks as determined by the Judge in consultation with the VTC Team, the participant is eligible to graduate from the VTC. There must be at least two weeks between the VTC’s graduation decision and graduation. The graduation ceremony will be held prior to the delayed start of a regular Judicial Review proceeding.

Upon graduation, the participant will receive a Certificate of Graduation and a VTC Achievement Coin.

R. Termination

If a participant (a) commits a crime or (b) shows a pattern of disregard, disinterest or disobedience to VTC rules and requirements that has been unabated by efforts of the VTC Team, the participant will be considered for termination from the program.

Examples of such disregard, disinterest and disobedience include:

- Failing to attend treatment or therapy
- Absconding from residential/in-patient treatment
- Requesting termination from the program
- Repeated positive substance screenings
- Tampering with substance screenings
- Failure to attend Judicial Reviews

S. Important Addresses (all in Madison)

- ❖ Veterans Treatment Court.....215 S. Hamilton St., courtroom 5A
- ❖ Veterans Hospital.....2500 Overlook Terrace
- ❖ Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator.....345 W. Washington Ave., Suite 5
- ❖ County Veterans Services Office..... 210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Room 108
- ❖ DOC Supervision Office..... 2565 E. Johnson St.
- ❖ Public Defender’s Office..... 17 S. Fairchild St., Suite 200
- ❖ Community Service Program.....810 Olin Ave.

T. Important Phone Numbers

- ❖ Daily Color Notification Recording..... (608) 280-2288
- ❖ VA Appointment Cancellation/Rescheduling (ADTP Clinic).....(608) 280-7073
- ❖ Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator.....(608) 320-2095
- ❖ County Veterans Services Office..... (608) 266-4158
- ❖ DOC Supervision Office..... (608) 243-3300
- ❖ Public Defender’s Office.....(608) 266-9150
- ❖ Veterans Treatment Court Clerk..... (608) 267-8802
- ❖ Community Service Program.....(608) 335-5588

***In the near future, when you are stable, healthy and proud,
you will look back on this period of your life
and be so glad that you never gave up.***