



# Veterans Court SMART BOOK

Superior Court of California  
County of Riverside



Welcome to the Riverside County Veterans Court. This handbook will provide you with a description of what is expected of you as a Veterans Court participant. Participants are encouraged to share this handbook with family and friends. Although the program requirements may seem overwhelming at first, once a routine is established participants do very well and see tremendous benefits in their lives. Three simple rules will insure success:

**1. Be honest**

**2. Show up**

**3. Try hard**

### **VETERANS COURT DESCRIPTION**

The Riverside County Veterans Court is a voluntary program that includes regular court appearances before the Judge. Treatment includes weekly individual and group counseling, drug and alcohol testing - if applicable\*, mental health treatment, and regular attendance at recovery support/self-help meetings. You will be provided with referrals for vocational training, education and/or job placement services. The program's length will be a minimum of 18 months (12 months for selected misdemeanors). Ongoing aftercare services will be available to all graduates.

*\*The majority of participants in Veterans Court have substance abuse issues. If you do not, as determined by the treatment team, none of the drug and alcohol components will be required of you.*

Entry into the Veterans Court is voluntary and will require that you enter a guilty plea. You will be placed on formal probation for a period of five years. Probation supervision will include random drug and alcohol testing, and unannounced home visits, during which both you and your place of residence are subject to search. Your defense counsel will continue to represent you throughout your participation in Veterans Court.

## **SUPERVISION**

You will be required to appear in court for progress reviews. The Judge will be given a progress report prepared by the Probation Department and/or the VA, with input from other agencies, regarding your performance in the program. If you are doing well, you will be encouraged to continue with the program, and to work with your treatment team toward success. If you are not doing well, the Judge will discuss this with you and your treatment team, and further action will be determined. With repeated violations or the failure to progress satisfactorily, the Court may discharge you from the program at which point you are entitled to a hearing.

## PROGRAM RULES

**1. Attend all ordered treatment sessions.**

This includes individual and group counseling, educational sessions, doctor appointments, recovery support/self-help meetings, and any other treatment requirements.

**2. Report to your Probation Officer as directed.**

You must comply with all conditions of probation as directed by your Probation Officer. You must also notify your Probation Officer prior to any change in residence. If you are unable to report as directed, contact your Probation Officer immediately.

**3. Submit to drug and alcohol testing.**

Sobriety is a primary focus of this program. Maintaining a lifestyle free of drugs and alcohol is very important in your recovery process. Do not use or possess any drugs or alcohol. You must be prepared to provide a urine sample at each visit to the VA and/or Probation. If you fail to provide a monitored urine sample, this will be considered a positive drug test.

You must notify your treatment team of any prescription or over-the-counter medication or supplements prior to taking any, unless it is a medical emergency.

**4. Be on time to all appointments including court appearances.**

If you are late for a counseling session or testing, you may not be allowed to participate or test and will be considered non-compliant.

## PROGRAM FEES



As a participant on formal probation, you will be required to pay the cost of probation supervision. The cost is based upon your ability to pay or as directed by the Court. Payments will be made directly to the Probation Department. Treatment providers and/or residential treatment programs may also impose their own fees on a sliding scale. No one will be refused services due to an inability to pay.

## TREATMENT PROCEDURES

The treatment team will assess what level of treatment will best meet your needs and recommend to the Judge that you receive either outpatient or residential treatment. If you are admitted to a residential treatment program, your treatment plan will include the requirements of that program. Upon release from a residential program, you will continue your participation in the program as directed by the Court and treatment team. If you are not admitted into a residential treatment program, you will participate in a multi-component, outpatient program developed through the VA , which includes developing a treatment plan, drug testing, counseling, recovery support services, recovery support/self-help meetings, and working with your mentor. If you are not eligible for VA services, you will be served by the Riverside County Department of Mental Health.

## **Drug Testing**

You will be tested for drug and alcohol use at random times throughout the entire treatment process. During Phase 1, you may be tested a minimum of three times weekly. As you progress through the phases of the program, you may be tested less frequently. Additionally, you may be required to wear a drug test patch (a 24-hour drug testing device). The Judge will have access to all drug test results, including any failures to test, and may order a drug test at any time. Relapse may occur in recovery; however, a positive, dilute or missed test will result in a court-imposed sanction. Tampering with any drug test will be deemed a positive test and may result in program termination. The Judge will review your overall performance in the program; repeated offenses may result in progressively severe sanctions.

## **Counseling**

Substance abuse counseling is comprised of two separate formats: individual and group. As part of your treatment plan, you will be required to participate in both types of counseling if it is appropriate. Together they are designed to develop self-awareness, self-discipline, and coping mechanisms necessary to maintain your sobriety. You may be required to attend additional treatment such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) groups, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) treatment, anger management, parenting, or any other topic the treatment team recognizes as needed. Your attendance at both individual and group counseling sessions will be reported to the Judge as part of your progress report. You must have prior permission from your VA or County counselor to be excused from any counseling sessions.

## **Mentor Program**

You will be assigned a volunteer veteran mentor from the community to support your efforts to create a better life.

## **Recovery Support/Self-Help Meetings**

You may be required to attend recovery support/self-help meetings. The frequency of required attendance is determined by your progress in the program and your phase level. Attendance is an important part of the recovery process. The meetings will familiarize you with the recovery support/self-help philosophy, and help you to create social bonds with other recovering addicts. Your treatment team will provide you with information regarding the time and location of these meetings and will also direct you to special interest and recovery events in your community. You must provide proof of attendance to your health care counselor and Probation Officer prior to each court appearance. The program requires you to have a sponsor and work the steps of your program.

## **TREATMENT PHASES**

Veterans Court is a four-phase, highly-structured program, lasting for a minimum of 18 months (12 months for selected misdemeanors). Individual progress will vary. Each phase consists of specified treatment objectives and specific requirements for advancement into the next phase. Requirements for advancement from each phase are described below.

## **Phase I - Treatment Plan Development**

### **Length: Minimum of 90 days**

In Phase I, You will be assigned a VA Justice Outreach Specialist or DOMH therapist and a probation officer. Your needs will be assessed by the treatment team. Your progress will be closely monitored and reported to the Judge. Requirements include:

- Participate in full assessment in order to determine treatment needs. Course of treatment is individualized according to participant needs.
- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team.
- Comply with additional case management services as determined by the treatment team.
- Drug and alcohol test three times per week minimum. Drug test patch and immediate result drug tests may be used at the treatment team's discretion.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed by medical and mental health professionals.
- Attend daily support/self-help meetings and actively seek a recovery support/self-help sponsor.
- Report to the VA Justice Outreach Specialist or DOMH therapist and the probation officer weekly.
- Participate in clean & sober recreation.
- Attend weekly or bi-weekly court appearances as determined by the Judge.
- Curfew is set at the discretion of the team.

### **Advancement Criteria:**

- No positive drug test results (including missed, tampered or diluted tests) for 60 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from scheduled services for 21 consecutive days.
- Non-narcotic medication taken as directed.
- Employment or productive use of time such as community service or school attendance.
- Documentation of required minimum attendance at recovery support/self-help meetings for a minimum of 60 days.
- Must have a recovery support/self-help sponsor.
- Demonstrate a positive adjustment to treatment.



- Submit a written Phase II advancement essay.

## **Phase II - Ongoing Treatment**

### **Length: Minimum of 120 days**

In Phase II, Your treatment plan will be updated to identify ongoing treatment goals. Counseling and meetings will focus on areas that are challenging for you, and will identify ways of coping with stressful situations. Phase II requirements include:

- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team.
- Comply with additional case management services as determined by the treatment team.
- Drug and alcohol test as directed. Drug test patch and immediate result drug tests may be used at the treatment team's discretion.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed by medical and mental health professionals.
- Attend a minimum of three recovery support/self-help meetings per week, maintenance of a recovery support/self-help sponsor.
- Report to the VA Justice Outreach Specialist or DOMH therapist and the probation officer weekly or as instructed.
- Participate in clean and sober recreation.
- Maintain employment or engage in productive use of time such as community service and school attendance.
- Formulate personal goals in conjunction with the treatment team such as vocational/educational counseling, psychotherapy, exercise, anger management, parenting skills.
- Attend biweekly or monthly court appearances as determined by the Judge.
- Curfew is set at the discretion of the team.

### **Advancement Criteria:**

- No positive drug test results (including missed, tampered or diluted tests) for 90 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from scheduled services for 30 consecutive days.
- Non-narcotic medication taken as directed.
- Employment or productive use of time such as community service or school attendance.

- Documentation of attendance at no fewer than three recovery support/self-help meetings per week, and having a recovery support/self-help sponsor for a minimum of 90 days.
- Demonstrate a positive adjustment to ongoing treatment.
- Submit a written statement to advance to Phase III

### **Phase III – Stabilization/Mentoring**

#### **Length: Minimum of 150 days**

Phase III will address ongoing recovery needs. The focus will be on daily living skills. This phase is designed to support you as a productive and responsible member of our community. Phase III requirements include:

- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed by the treatment team.
- Attend other treatment services as determined to be necessary by the treatment team.
- Drug and alcohol test as directed. Drug test patch and immediate result drug tests used at the treatment team's discretion.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed by medical and mental health professionals.
- Attend a minimum of three recovery support/self-help meetings per week and maintenance of a recovery support/self help sponsor.
- Report to VA Justice Outreach Specialist or DOMH therapist and the probation officer as directed.
- Participate in clean and sober recreation.
- Maintain full-time employment and/or progress toward an educational goal.
- Participate in community service as determined by the team.
- Attend court as determined by the Judge.
- Curfew is set at the discretion of the team.

#### **Advancement Criteria:**

- No positive drug test results (including missed, tampered or diluted tests) for 150 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from scheduled services for 30 consecutive days.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed.
- Employment or actively pursuing a vocational/academic degree.
- Documentation of required attendance at no fewer than three recovery support/self-help meetings each week.

- Progress towards treatment plan goals.
- Have a clear understanding of recovery support/self-help concepts.
- Demonstrate positive adjustment to treatment.
- Submit a written statement to advance to Phase IV.

## **Phase IV – Achievement/Graduation**

### **Length: Minimum of 6 months**

Phase IV Will transition from the Veterans Court structure to a lifestyle more representative of what you will experience following graduation. Phase IV requirements include:

- Participate in all forms of treatment as directed/instructed by the treatment team. Attend individual counseling session to complete an exit plan.
- Attend other treatment services as determined to be necessary by the treatment team.
- Drug and alcohol test on a random basis.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed by medical and mental health professionals.
- Attend recovery support/self-help meetings as determined by the treatment team.
- Report to VA Justice Outreach Specialist or DOMH therapist and the probation officer as directed.
- Participate in clean and sober recreation.
- Maintain full-time employment and/or progress toward a vocational/educational goal.
- Continue established mentoring relationships.
- Become a mentor to a new Veterans Court participant as approved by your treatment team.
- Attend court as directed by the Judge.
- Prepare a graduation speech.

### **Graduation Criteria:**

- No positive drug test results (including missed, tampered, or diluted tests) for 180 consecutive days.
- No unexcused absences from scheduled services for 45 consecutive days.
- Gainful employment or productive use of time including community service or school attendance.
- Take non-narcotic medication as directed.

- Maintain consistent attendance at all court appearances and treatment team appointments.
- Achievement of stable living arrangements and healthy interpersonal relationships.
- A definitive aftercare plan, which may include recovery support/self-help meetings, VA outpatient counseling, group attendance at a former residential program, or active participation in a Veterans Court alumni group.
- Fulfillment of goals as stated in the individual treatment plan.
- Proof of attendance at all other events or courses as required by the Judge.
- Provide an Graduation Essay to Veterans Court Team prior to Graduation.

The graduation ceremony, conducted in the courtroom, is a time to celebrate your success and to allow others in earlier stages to become encouraged and motivated to succeed as well.

## INCENTIVES

If you are in compliance during the program, the Veterans Court Judge may reward your positive progress with one or more of the following:

- Court-announced perfect compliance list
- Drawings for gift certificates
- Applause/Praise from Judge & team
- Sports/Concert tickets
- Advancement to next phase
- Fewer court appearances
- Called first & leave early
- Adjust curfew
- Fun sober events
- Grant travel privileges
- Reduce some felonies to misdemeanors
- Probable dismissal of charges
- Graduation ceremony



## SANCTIONS

If you are out of compliance, the Veterans Court Judge may impose one or more of the following:

- Admonishment from the Judge
- Write an essay and read it aloud
- Increased drug testing
- Increased frequency of court appearances
- Demotion to an earlier program phase
- Community Service
- Lengthen time in program, requiring an admission of a probation violation
- Periods of incarceration



## SOCIAL SERVICES

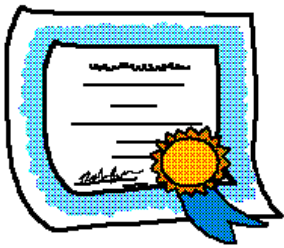
Upon your entry into the Veterans Court program, your treatment team will assess your housing, transportation, family situation and general living needs. When appropriate, the team will refer you to local, state and/or county agencies for additional assistance.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity and privacy will be protected consistent with Federal Regulations and State laws (e.g., 42CFR, Part 2; 45CFR, Parts 160 and 164; CA Health & Safety Code Sections 11812(c) and 5328). You will be asked to sign a waiver authorizing the transfer of information among all participating agencies. An identification number will be

assigned to you that will be used in all research and evaluation activities to insure confidentiality.

## GRADUATION



Once you have successfully completed the criteria for each Phase, you will advance to the next level and eventually be a candidate to graduate from the Veterans Court. You will submit a graduation speech to your Probation Officer in which you will discuss your progress toward the goals you initially set, and why you believe you are ready to graduate. The final decision regarding advancement from each phase and graduation is determined solely by the Judge, assisted by input from the team. At graduation, you may be given the opportunity to withdraw your plea and your case may be dismissed. Your family will be invited to join you as the Judge congratulates you.

## CONCLUSION

The Veterans Court program is designed to help you live in our community as a productive and responsible citizen. The Judge, the Court staff, and the treatment team will guide and assist you, but the final responsibility is yours. You must be committed to a better life. Remember the three basic rules:

### **1. Be honest**

2. Show up

3. Try hard

PHASE REQUIREMENTS AT-A-GLANCE

PHASE	MINIMUM NUMBER OF DAYS	RECOVERY SUPPORT MEETINGS PER WEEK	VA and PROBATION MEETINGS	TREATMENT and COUNSELING MEETINGS
PHASE I	90	7	1/week or TBD	5 days per week or as directed
PHASE II	120	3	1/bi-weekly or TBD	5 days per week or as directed
PHASE III	150	3	1/month or TBD	1 to 2 x/week, or more as needed
PHASE IV	180	3	1/month or TBD	1 to 2 x/week, or more as needed

\*The table above lists the minimum requirements of each phase. Participants may be required to complete more than what is listed, as determined by the treatment team and the Judge.





