

Federal Veterans Court

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Federal Veterans Court Program in the Eastern District of Missouri. You entered this program because you want to make changes in your life and there is a team of professionals and counselors that want to help you establish a stable and healthy lifestyle. We are glad you are here and will provide quality treatment and counseling to you.



The team of people that will oversee your program and follow your success are those from the John J. Pershing VA Medical Treatment Center counselors and medical personnel; your assigned Probation and Parole Officer; the Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist; representatives from Vocational Rehabilitation and Missouri Veterans Commission; an Assistant US Attorney and Federal Public Defender.

Within the program there will be a mentor available to help assist you in outside areas that can be of help to see you meet the goals and criteria of your program. Your mentor is not a counselor and cannot give legal advice. But your mentor can spend time with you to assist you in maintaining compliance with your program and give you someone to talk to outside the treatment program.

If at any time you have questions regarding you and your program requirements, you are to contact any of the team members.

Because there will be many changes going on in your life throughout your participation in this program, the program rules are to give you structure and guidance so that you can be successful in completing this program.

Those that graduate successfully from the Federal Veterans Court Program will be eligible for unsupervised release and/or early discharge once they have completed 50% of their supervised release/probation. If you have maintained sobriety, reported as directed and have met all the requirements of your special conditions of supervised release/probation, the supervising probation officer can submit a report to the court recommending an early discharge from supervised release/probation.



DRESS CODE

The following is the dress code for all participants in the Federal Veterans Court Program. You will adhere to these rules.

- 1) Men and women will **NOT** wear any shorts or any other clothing with holes or tears in the materials to court.
- 2) Men and women will **NOT** wear anything that advertises or promotes drug use; gang activity; etc. **at any time** while a participant in the Federal Veterans Court Program.
- 3) For **women specifically**, you will not wear halter tops, tank tops, sleeveless tops, spaghetti straps tops to court or when you report to your supervising PO.
- 4) For **men specifically**, you will not wear tank tops, or sleeveless shirts, to court.
- 5) No flip-flops or shorts are to be worn to court.
- 6) You will not wear hats in the courtroom or when reporting to your supervising probation officer.

PROGRAM ATTENDANCE AND REPORTING DIRECTIVES

1. You will be on time for each group session, individual counseling session, appointment with your PO, and for each Veterans Court session.
2. You will attend all group counseling, individual counseling sessions, specialized session as directed by your treatment case manager and/or the Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist. You will attend all required court sessions.

3. You must obtain **prior** permission from your probation officer to be excused from any group session or scheduled appointment with a specialized doctor or therapist.
4. You will report as directed to your probation officer.
5. You will submit a UA at anytime when requested by the Probation Officer or treatment provider that is working with you in this program.

BEHAVIOR

1. If you are arrested and charged with a new felony offense, any type of violent offense or other serious matters, your status in the program will be determined by the treatment team and Veterans Court judge.
2. You will conduct yourself in a proper and respectable manner while in group sessions, in court and during your individual counseling sessions.
3. **You will tell the truth.** If you fail to tell the truth and the issue at hand is proven to be different than what is said by you, you will be sanctioned for lying.

EMPLOYMENT

As a component of the program, if you are eligible and/or physically able to work, it will be required that you obtain and maintain employment. Through the assistance of the vocational/rehabilitation specialist or treatment provider assigned to work with you, your ability to work will be determined and you will then comply with what is determined for you.

If you are unable to work, it will be recommended that you conduct some productive activity within your community through volunteer work; return to school to further your education; or what may be identified and worked on between you and your counselor or treatment provider.

PROGRAM RULES

1. You will **NOT** unlawfully possess a controlled substance.
2. You will **NOT** frequent places where controlled substances are illegally sold, used, distributed, or administered.
3. You cannot hang around old friends; have friends or family around

that are using drugs; and you may not go to your friends or family homes or places of residency where drugs are present.

4. When the Probation Officer is making a home visit, if there are friends and/or family present, and any or all of them are on supervision for a misdemeanor and/or felony offense the Probation Officer has the right to ask of their names and ask for identification to verify who they are.
5. If you are found to be under the influence of illegal drugs and/or alcohol, this information will be immediately reported to your PO and/or your counselor. This is a direct violation of the program and will be immediately addressed with action or sanction being imposed by the Veterans Court judge at the earliest day and time set by the judge.
6. **You are NOT allowed to take anyone else's prescription medication of any kind. NO EXCEPTIONS!**

All medications will be taken as prescribed by your physician. Any abuse of your medication, or taking more than what is prescribed will be considered a violation of your program. You will be sanctioned. All medications will be taken to the treatment provider when reporting for drug testing.

7. You are directed to follow all of the conditions of supervised release/probation.

PROGRAM PHASES AND REQUIREMENTS

FEDERAL VETERANS COURT PROGRAM

The Federal Veterans Court Program is a program that works to bridge the gap between justice involved veterans and the Department of Veteran Affairs. This is done by identifying a variety of issues including substance abuse, mental health, homelessness, unemployment and medical care. Your participation in this program is to give you the opportunity to receive the best treatment that will resolve the problems identified and the criminal behavior that brought you here. Through the expertise of all treatment counselors and managers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, veteran's benefits specialists and supervising officer, you will have the benefit of having all services available to you throughout your journey through this program.



Phase I Responsibilities Contract-Minimum 3 months

I, the undersigned Federal Veterans Court participant, acknowledge that *in addition to complying with my Veterans Treatment Court Program Agreement and Supervision rules*, I will complete the following minimum Phase I program requirements **before I am permitted to advance to Phase II.**

1. During Phase I:
 - I will follow orders of treatment sessions as required (mental health and/or substance abuse).
 - I will participate in treatment orientation
 - I will participate in treatment plan updates
 - I will complete my goals as developed with the treatment provider, treatment team and probation officer.
 - I will participate in volunteer work in my community.
2. I will have weekly contact with my Probation Officer, or unless otherwise advised.
3. I will submit to urine analysis and /or breath analysis tests:
 - At the direction of the probation officer
 - Whenever my assigned Pacts number is called or “on demand” when requested
4. I will be on time for:
 - My appearance before the Veterans Court judge
 - My individual/group counseling sessions with the treatment provider

5. I will secure and maintain drug free housing for myself and/or my family that is conducive to my sobriety. I understand that I cannot reside with any other person who uses drugs in order to protect my sobriety.
6. If I am not employed:
 - I will seek appropriate employment that is approved by my Probation Officer, or
 - Attend school or vocational training, as directed
 - If documented as disabled, I will perform volunteer hours as directed
7. I will not move without prior permission of the court and/or supervising probation officer. Any residence changes must be approved **10 days in advance by my supervising Probation Officer unless an emergency exists.**
8. Travel, outside of the Eastern District of Missouri is not allowed without prior approval by my supervising officer and the Treatment Court judge. A travel permit is required before leaving the Eastern District of Missouri. **Only the supervising probation officer can administer the travel permit.**
9. I will remain current on all copays related to drug testing.
10. I will not associate with anyone who:
 - has a felony conviction
 - is currently using drugs
11. In order to promote to Phase II I will:
 - Be sanction free for 90 consecutive days
 - Be clean and sober for 90 consecutive days

PHASE II Responsibilities Contract-approximately 6 months

I, the undersigned Veterans Court participant, acknowledge that *in addition to complying with my Veterans Court Program Agreement and Supervision rules*, I will complete the following minimum Phase II Program Requirements **before I am permitted to advance to Phase III.**

1. During Phase II:
 - I will attend group sessions with my assigned treatment provider as directed.
 - If additional group counseling is required I will comply
 - I will complete my goals as determined by the treatment provider, treatment team and probation officer.

2. I will maintain monthly contact with the Probation Officer.
3. I will submit to urine analysis and/or breath analysis tests
 - at the direction of the probation officer
 - or whenever my assigned Pacts number is called or “on demand” when requested
4. I will be on time:
 - for my court appearance before the Veterans Court judge.
5. I will:
 - secure and maintain drug free housing for myself and/or my family that is conducive to my sobriety. I understand that I cannot reside with any other person who uses drugs, in order to protect my sobriety.
 - I will not move without prior permission of the Court and/or supervising probation officer. Any residence changes must be approved **in advance by my supervising probation officer.**
6. Travel, out of the Eastern District of Missouri is not allowed without prior approval by my supervising probation officer. A travel permit is required before leaving the Eastern District of Missouri. Only the supervising probation officer can administer the travel permit.
7. If I am not already employed:
 - I will seek appropriate employment that is approved by my supervising probation officer
 - or attend school or vocational training, as directed
 - If documented as disabled, I will perform volunteer hours, as directed.
 - I will remain current on all copay fees related to drug testing.
 -
8. I will not associate with anyone:
 - who has a felony conviction or pending felony,
 - who is currently using drugs
9. In order to promote to Phase III:
 - I will have met all goals for Phase II
 - I will be sanction free for 90 consecutive days
 - I will be clean and sober for 90 consecutive days

PHASE III Responsibilities Contract-Minimum 90 days

- I, the undersigned Veterans Court participant, acknowledge that *in addition to complying with my Veterans Treatment Court Program Agreement and Supervision rules*, I will complete the following minimum Phase III Program Requirements **before I am eligible for graduation.**

1. During Phase III:
 - I will attend any group and/or individual sessions as prescribed by the treatment team.
 - I understand that additional group counseling sessions may be required.
 - I will complete my goals as outlined by the treatment team.
2. I will have monthly contact with my probation officer, or unless otherwise advised by the court.
3. I will submit to urine analysis and/or breath analysis tests:
 - at the direction of the probation officer;
 - or whenever my assigned Pacts number is called or “on demand” when requested
4. I will be on time:

for my court appearance before the Veterans Court judge.
5. I will:
 - secure and maintain drug free housing for myself and/or my family that is conducive to my sobriety. I understand that I cannot reside with any other person who uses alcohol/drugs, in order to protect my sobriety.
 - I will not move without permission of the Court and/or supervising probation officer.
6. Travel is not allowed without prior approval by my supervising officer. A travel permit is required before leaving the Eastern District of Missouri. Only the supervising probation officer can administer the travel permit.
7. If I am not already employed:
 - I will obtain employment that is approved by my supervising probation officer
 - Or attend school or vocational training
 - If documented as disabled, I will perform volunteer hours as directed
 - I will remain current on all copay fees related to drug testing.
8. I will not associate with anyone who:
 - has a felony conviction or pending felony,
 - who is currently using drugs
9. I will participate in volunteer work in the community as agreed upon with Veterans Court judge and treatment team.

- I will be sanction free for ninety (90) consecutive days prior to graduation.
- I will be drug free for ninety (90) days prior to graduation.

INCENTIVES AND SANCTIONS

As a reward for outstanding progress at the completion of a phase the court team may reward you with incentives that may include gift cards. It is the team's decision as to incentives awarded.

Community Service is encouraged and expected throughout each phase. After a participant successfully completes a minimum of 12 months with the Veterans Court program, an individual could be eligible to earn additional time off of their supervision period beyond what they will receive for graduating Veterans Court. Subject to the discretion of the district court, for every 10 hours of community service completed, a month of supervision will be deducted from your time on the Administrative Caseload. This benefit does not apply to those who are eligible for immediate discharge upon graduation from Veterans Court.

When you have committed a violation of the program, which constitutes a violation of your probation as well, a team discussion is held which determines a level of sanction that is imposed by the treatment court judge

Each person's case is treated individually therefore sanctions are not always the same as someone else's sanction. Sanctions can include community service work, weekends in jail, essays, increased counseling, house arrest, or any other type of sanction that is determined by the treatment team.



Below is a copy of what the program agreement is for anyone participating in the Veterans Court Program. You will be provided a copy of your signed agreement at the time you begin the program.

PROGRAM AGREEMENT

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI Proposed AGREEMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Name: _____
PACTS # _____
Today's Date: _____
Date of Conviction: _____
Sentence Expiration Date: _____

INTRODUCTION

You have been invited to participate in a specialized supervision program. Participation is entirely voluntary, and there will be no negative consequence if you do not wish to participate. If you agree to participate your supervision conditions will be modified to include a condition to comply and successfully complete the program. If you successfully complete this program, your term of supervision may be shortened or you could be placed on unsupervised release.

THE BASICS

The program will last approximately one year but could be longer in length if necessary to meet treatment goals. Participants will be under the supervision of a Probation Officer (PO) who has been specifically assigned to the program. Participants agree to take part in a needs assessment, which includes, but is not limited to, substance abuse, mental health, housing, employment and education, and agree to all treatment recommended by the Veteran Court team. Participants agree to abstain from the use of intoxicating substances, alcoholic beverages (including beer and wine), prescription drugs (unless medically indicated), and illegal substances. In addition actively engaging in recommended services and compliance with the general conditions of supervision will be required.

The program team will include an Assistant Federal Public Defender (AFPD) and an Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA). Both the AFPD and the AUSA will work with the PO in order to provide support and encouragement for success in the program. In addition, a PO, a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist (VJO), a treatment service provider (if applicable), and a mentor will be program team members.

LENGTH OF THE PROGRAM

The program will last approximately one year. Participants who struggle in the program, but remain dedicated to progress, may be given extensions in order to follow through with services and still be rewarded with the reduction in supervision.

COURT SESSIONS

Participants will be required to appear before the program Judge to evaluate progress every three weeks. Every effort will be made to ensure the time of the appearance does not conflict with employment or other programming. The PO, VJO, treatment team members, AFPD, and AUSA will be present. Progress reports from the PO and treatment provider will be provided to the Court and treatment team. These reports will describe both successes and problems experienced on supervision and with case plans.

By entering this voluntary program, the participant understands that, Stephen N. Limbaugh, Jr., United States District Judge is the program Judge and consents to his authority and jurisdiction. Any action taken by Judge Limbaugh as the program Judge, including but not limited to the imposition of sanctions will have the same legal authority as if the action was taken by your sentencing Judge.

SUPERVISION VIOLATIONS & SANCTIONS

As with traditional supervision, upon finding a violation of probation or supervised release the Veterans Court may impose a sanction or modify the conditions of supervision to address the violation.

TERMINATION FROM THE PROGRAM

Termination from the program may occur because of failure to participate in services and supervision, including repeated violations of general conditions of supervision, failure to attend Court sessions, or a new law violation. Participants terminated from the program will return to traditional supervision status, and may face a violation hearing. It is the policy of the Probation Office that a formal violation will not be based on conduct that occurred during the program that was previously addressed. However, the Probation Officer may inform the Judge presiding over the violation hearing of all conduct by the participant during the program and of all sanctions that have been imposed.

REDUCTION IN SUPERVISION TERM

Upon successful completion of the program, the total term of supervision may be reduced by up to one half or you may be placed on unsupervised release per the Judge's discretion. The decision about whether or not to reduce the term of supervision, and the length that supervision is reduced will be made by the Judge assigned to the participant's case. The participant will be required to comply with all conditions of any remaining term of supervision.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT, CONSENTS, AND SIGNATURE

I have read (or someone has read to me) this Agreement for Participation and I understand it. I agree to abide by the rules of Veteran Court. By signing this document I am voluntarily consenting (1) to the disclosure of my confidential information to the Veteran Court team members and during court sessions as appropriate and (2) to the jurisdiction and authority of a United States District Judge to preside over Veteran Court sessions, to act as the program judge, and to impose sanctions as deemed appropriate.

Signature of Participant

Date

Acceptance by Probation Office:

Signature of Probation Officer

Date