

GUADALUPE COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT
PARTICIPANT'S HANDBOOK

UPDATED: OCTOBER 18, 2016



PRESIDING JUDGES:

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COUNTY COURT-AT-LAW

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Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant's Handbook

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What is the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court?

The Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) became the sixth veterans' treatment court in the State of Texas when it opened its doors in January 2011. The VTC represents a fresh and innovative approach to diverting veterans from incarceration into treatment. The court relies on the cooperation and collaboration between the criminal justice system, Veteran's Administration, community agencies and the offenders who meet the eligibility requirements for entrance into the VTC. Participants will receive treatment recommended by the VTC team and supervision by an officer from the Community Supervision and Corrections Department (adult probation).

Participant understanding

As a participant in the VTC, you will be required to follow the instructions and conditions given to you in court by the judge, and you will need to comply with the participant contract developed by the VTC team. You will also be required to remain residing in Guadalupe County, Texas or its contiguous counties during your program commitment. The purpose of the VTC is to help you; 1) to get the treatment you need quickly and without barriers; 2) to help you stay engaged in treatment; and 3) to help you regain control of your life and be a law-abiding citizen so you can enjoy a high quality of life. Also, it is very important that you review all of the information included in your participant contract with your attorney.

What are usual participant expectations?

The VTC team will develop and/or adopt treatment recommendations based on an assessment of your needs for treatment, services, resources, housing, case management, VA benefits and services and other needs. To participate in the VTC you will need to complete and agree to sign all necessary releases and forms, comply with treatment recommendations, and comply with all terms and conditions of your pre-trial diversion. While participating in the VTC, the judge and VTC team members will closely monitor your participation and progress in the recommended and agreed upon treatment. You will need to initially complete an orientation meeting with your Community Supervision and Corrections Officer (CSO). Then, throughout the VTC program, you will be expected to meet as required with your (CSO) and follow all of the terms and conditions of your contract. You will likewise be expected to meet with your VA Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJO) or other treatment provider as required. You must provide the VTC with a copy of your Individual Treatment Plan provided to you by your treatment provider(s). You must agree to sign and abide by the participant contract which is an agreement between you and the VTC. By the beginning of Phase IV, you are required to have completed 48 hours of Community Service Restitution (CSR) volunteer work hours at VTC/CSO approved community service work sites. It is your responsibility to provide written verification of all program requirements to demonstrate that you were in attendance and participated appropriately in accordance with VTC program/treatment requirements. The required compliance documentation will be explained to you further during your CSR orientation meeting. When available, a VTC mentor will be assigned to help you complete the program successfully.

How long is the program?

The VTC is a minimum time commitment of 12 months, with the option available to the court for early termination as early as 12 months, and may include an aftercare component consisting of up to an additional 6 months and other commitments as required by your specific treatment plan. Discharge, termination or involuntary withdrawal from the program could result in a sentence in accordance to the full range of punishment for your offense. Participants successfully completing the VTC will receive a certificate of completion and be given recognition during VTC program graduation.

What is in it for me?

Services:

The VTC team will help you access identified treatment, counseling, case management, supportive housing and other services. All services are contingent upon your specific needs and individual treatment recommendations.

Recognition of Progress:

As you progress through treatment and your involvement with the program, your achievements will be recognized by the court's judge and the VTC team. You will receive a certificate of achievement to acknowledge and celebrate your accomplishments.

Opportunities:

The VTC offers you a chance to address your problems and/or issues. You will have the opportunity to move forward in your life and potentially increase the quality of life for you and your family. The VTC team is there to be of assistance to you and wants to see you succeed. If you take advantage of the assistance offered, you will discover many ways to make a better life for yourself. Change is never easy. It will take commitment, dedication, self-control, perseverance and hard work. The VTC team will provide you with the support, opportunity, assistance and referrals necessary to help you begin making positive changes in your life.

What are the VTC rules?

To remain in the VTC, you must follow all recommendations made by the VTC team and the rules contained in both your participant contract and handbook as follows:

Appear in court as scheduled:

You will be required to appear in front of the VTC judge on a regular basis and in accordance with agreed upon program "phases" as outlined later in this handbook. An initial monthly court appearance schedule will be required. The judge and the VTC team will discuss your progress regularly and address any problems that you may have. As you make progress in treatment, your required court appearances and treatment appointments may be reduced.

Follow your treatment plan:

You are required to complete an initial mental health assessment/evaluation by your treatment provider. Your individual treatment plan (ITP) will include some or all of the following components. Understand that your treatment recommendations may change as your treatment needs change.

- Abstinence from illegal drugs and alcohol
- Medication compliance
- Participation in a behavioral health treatment program
- Intensive or supportive case management services
- Supported or structured housing
- Education services
- Employment or vocational rehabilitation (If currently unemployed, you are required to provide written verifiable proof of ten separate contacts per work-week seeking employment. In the alternative, you are required to provide the VTC with proof of disability preventing employment or proof of enrollment in an institution of higher education. If partially disabled or only enrolled in school part-time, special arrangements will need to be discussed.
- Regular appointments with a VA Justice Outreach Coordinator
- Regular appointments with a psychiatrist and/or psychologist
- Psycho-social or recreational program(s)

Specific rules about areas of your treatment plan are outlined below:

Substance Abuse Treatment:

If your treatment plan requires that you participate in a substance abuse treatment program, you must follow through with recommendations. While in treatment, your treatment provider will regularly report to the VTC regarding your attendance, level of participation and overall compliance with the program. You must attend all scheduled treatment appointments and follow all rules of your treatment program. You may be required to submit to random drug and/or alcohol tests during the program. You must register only “negative” drug and alcohol test results for at least 30 days prior to being considered for advancement from Phase I to Phase II; 60 days from Phase II to Phase III and from Phase III to Phase IV; and 90 days from Phase IV to the final Phase V. You may also be required to use a camera-activated deep lung breath analysis mechanism for any motor vehicle that you drive with all related costs paid by you.

Mental Health Treatment:

All participants of the VTC will be evaluated for mental illness. If mental health treatment is recommended, you must attend all scheduled appointments and follow the rules and policy of the program. Your mental health treatment provider will regularly report your status and progress.

Case Management Services:

Community based intensive and supportive case managers will help you coordinate treatment services at the VA or from community service providers. If services are provided through the VA you will have a Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJO). Additionally, you will have a Guadalupe County Community Supervision and Corrections Officer (CSO) assigned. The VA’s VJO will visit with you monthly at first to evaluate your progress and to provide an overview of your treatment compliance to the VTC. Your CSO may visit you at your home, place of business or treatment program facility. Your CSO will report back to the court on progress, concerns and accomplishments of both treatment and matters outside of

treatment. Both your VJO and CSO may assist you in obtaining a variety of appropriate services that may contribute to your successful completion of the program. The information they provide should be used to assist you to stay on the path of treatment and/or recovery while in the program and after.

Housing:

For some participants of the VTC it may be recommended that you live in a particular type of housing or in a particular housing facility while in treatment. If it is recommended that you live in a specified residence, such as a VA Domiciliary or a half-way house, you must reside there and follow all of the housing provider's rules.

Policy pertaining to the VTC participant's use of prescribed addictive substances:

Participants in the VTC will remain abstinent from all non-prescribed mood-altering substances while enrolled in the program. It is understood that there may be circumstances in which a participant may need to take addictive substances for medical or psychiatric reasons.

The court requires that **prior to filling the prescription** and/or taking the medication, the participants do the following:

- Inform their treatment provider
- Inform the VA's VJO (if applicable) and the Guadalupe County's CSO
- Participants with a substance abuse diagnosis must obtain medical verification from their prescribing physician(s) verifying their knowledge of the participant's active abuse or dependence diagnosis and your enrollment in an abstinence-based chemical dependency treatment program as well as the participant's enrollment in the VTC.
- Participants must sign a consent form which authorizes the release of patient identifying information between their VJO (if applicable) and their CSO, treatment provider(s), physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner who prescribes the drug or substance to the participant/patient.

Should information be received from the physician which supports the participant's continued use of a control substance, the case manager will consult with the prescribing professional to verify their knowledge and awareness of the individual's history of chemical dependence, and if the prescribing professional is unaware of the individual's history of chemical dependence, inform the prescribing professional accordingly; and after the required information is received, if the prescribing professional believes that the individual should be permitted to continue to use the drug or substance prescribed, the individual must be permitted to continue to use the drug or substance. If there is insufficient information to support continued use, the participant must safely cease use of that substance(s) and seek alternative treatment options.

What is meant by infractions and sanctions?

While in the VTC, if you fail to comply with your treatment recommendations, program regulations or commit a criminal offense, you will be sanctioned to include possible

termination from the program. Program infractions and sanctions include but are not limited to:

Infractions:

- Missed treatment appointment(s)
- Missed appointment(s) VJO or CSO
- Missed court appearance(s)
- Abuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Refusal to complete urine or other drug/alcohol tests/screens
- Positive urine screens
- Failure or refusal to take prescribed medications
- Violation of rule(s) of the treatment program
- Violation of rule(s) of housing provider, including curfew
- Threatening behavior, including verbal threat of violence
- Other non-compliance with treatment recommendations
- Violation(s) of probation terms and conditions (to include but not limited to participant contract financial obligations, commission of another criminal offense, or other non-compliance with participant contract agreement terms.)

Sanctions:

- Assign you to write an essay
- Verbal warning
- Increase frequency of urine or other drug/alcohol tests/screens
- Increase frequency of court appearances
- Increase frequency of CSO reporting
- Increase 12-step or support group(s) meetings
- Loss of privileges at treatment
- Loss of privileges at housing
- Serving time in the Guadalupe County jail
- Impose new curfew requirements
- Additional community service requirements
- More restrictive pre-trial diversion services program
- Restarting your current program phase
- Journaling
- Mandatory AA/NA/support group attendance
- Mandatory group attendance (anger management, depression, etc.)
- Possible termination from program

The VTC team will respond to all infractions as appropriate. The team wants you to succeed. However, you must be motivated, be in the center of your own treatment or recovery and also want yourself to succeed. Sometimes the team will require you to increase your treatment-related activities or will direct you to accept a change in your level of care after consulting with your treatment team.

What is meant by rewards?

While in the VTC, if you comply with your treatment recommendations, the terms of the participant's contract and live a crime-free life, you may be acknowledged and rewarded in a number of different ways. Rewards may include but are not limited to:

- Fewer court appearances related to phase advancement
- Certificate of Accomplishment
- Phase promotion
- Encouragement, praise and support
- Referrals to vocational and/or educational services
- Immediate release from status hearing
- Gift certificates
- Graduation

Your Program Phase Progression:

(Your Individual Treatment Plan ITP may include all or some of the following based on diagnosis and needs:)

Phase I – Stabilization (2 – 3 Months)

VA and/or Other Treatment Modalities as Required:

- Substance Dependence Treatment Program (SDTP)
- Psychosocial Assessment
- Emotional Behavioral
- Health Screen
- Random drug and/or alcohol testing (minimum of two tests per month)
- Must test “negative” for 30 days before advancing to Phase II
- Random home visit (at least one during phase)
- CSO Case Management visits (Three visits monthly as minimum – at least one visit on non-court day. Additionally, one random home visit during Phase I)
- Residential Treatment
- Hospitalization
- Addiction Education and Support Groups (Such as enrollment in Alcoholics Anonymous)
- Medication(s) as needed

Mental Health:

- Bio Psychosocial Assessment
- Medication(s) as needed
- Enrollment in specialized treatment
- Psychosis and Mood Disorders/Grp/Ind:
(Seeking Safety; Anger Management; Diagnosis-Specific support education groups; Cognitive Processing Therapy groups; Psychosocial Rehabilitation; Family Therapy; Prolonged Exposure therapy; Psychodrama; OEF/OIF coping Skills; Combat Nightmare Group; Dual diagnosis Groups; Women’s Group; and referrals to Veterans Center programming.)

Ongoing Progress Review by VTC Team:

- Court appearances (Monthly)
- The VTC Team will meet and review/discuss your program progress status (monthly)
- Reports will be made by CSO, VJO (if applicable) and by Program Director

Phase II – Treatment (4 – 6 months)

VA and/or Other Treatment Modalities as Required:

- SDTP Continued
- Relapse Prevention and Aftercare education and support groups (Such as enrollment in Alcoholics Anonymous)
- Random drug and/or alcohol testing (minimum of two tests per month of which one must be alcohol and includes two hair follicle tests during Phase II)
- Must test “negative” for 60 days before advancing to Phase III
- Random home visit (as required)
- CSO Case Management visits (Two visits monthly as minimum – may be on court days.)
- Medication maintenance with MD as needed
- Vocational program

Mental Health:

- Medication (monitoring)
- Continued specialized treatment

Ongoing Progress Review by VTC Team:

- Court appearances (Monthly)
- The VTC Team will meet and review/discuss your program progress status (monthly)
- Reports will be made by CSO, VJO (if applicable) and by Program Director

Phase III – Transitional (3 – 6 months)

VA and/or Other Treatment Modalities as Required:

- SDTP
- Graduation from SDTP
- Certification of Completion
- Relapse Prevention and Aftercare education and support groups (Such as enrollment in Alcoholics Anonymous)
- Random drug and/or alcohol testing (minimum of one test per month alcohol or drug test)
- Must test “negative” for 60 days before advancing to Phase IV
- Random home visit (as required)
- CSO Case Management visits (One visit monthly as minimum – may be on court day)
- Medication maintenance with MD as needed
- Vocational program
- Continued medication monitoring
- Complete all CSR (48 hours) before advancing to Phase IV

Mental Health:

- Graduation from Stabilization and Treatment Phase
- Certification of Completion

Ongoing Progress Review by VTC Team:

- Court appearances (Monthly)
- The VTC Team will meet and review/discuss your program progress status (monthly)
- Reports will be made by CSO, VJO (if applicable) and by Program Director

Phase IV – Maintenance (3 – 9 months)

VA and/or Other Treatment Modalities as Required:

- Treatment completion – monitoring phase for VA and/or other treatment provider
- Relapse Prevention and Aftercare education and support groups (Such as enrollment in Alcoholics Anonymous)
- Continued medication monitoring as needed
- Random drug and/or alcohol testing (minimum of one test alcohol or drug test per every 60 days)
- Must drug/alcohol test “negative” for 90 consecutive days before advancing to Phase V and Graduation from program

Mental Health:

- Continued medication monitoring

Ongoing Progress Review by VTC Team:

- Court appearances (Bi-Monthly)
- The VTC Team will meet and review/discuss your program progress status
- Reports will be made by CSO, VJO (if applicable) and by Program Director

Phase V – Graduation (180 Days)

VA and/or Other Treatment Modalities as Required:

- Graduation from Program
- Continued treatment referral provided as requested as a non-participant

Mental Health:

- Continued treatment referral, support and encouragement as needed

(Note: Your individual Phase Progression may differ from the above with respect to length of time within each phase and specific treatment requirements based on your individual treatment plan approved by the court.)

What else is expected of you?

- Other expectations of you by the VTC include:
- Show up, be completely honest, try hard and be accountable from the start.
- Treat others with the deepest respect; this includes the opinions and feelings of other fellow-veteran participants and the VTC team members.
- Verbal or physical threats to anyone will not be tolerated.
- Any inappropriate behavior will be immediately reported to the court and may result in sanctions or even your termination from the VTC.
- Avoid all drugs, related activities and the use of alcohol.
- You must not possess, sell or use alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Any relapse involving drug and/or alcohol must reported immediately to your treatment team and to the court.
- Be law abiding.
- You must refrain from any further violation of the law.
- Additional offenses may result in additional charges and your termination from the VTC.

Disposition of Court Case:

The VTC is a 12-to-24 month program. The program time period directly relates to your needs and/or compliance with the terms of the Participant Agreement and Performance Contract. Upon successful completion of the program, the case(s) are reviewed by the County Attorney's Office and your legal counsel for appropriate recommended disposition before the court. In the event the agreement is terminated, the case(s) are remanded to the County Court at Law for continued prosecution.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION:

My Attorney: _____

Attorney's phone number(s): _____

Court Supervision Officer: John Martinez

Supervision officer's phone number(s): _____ (830) 303-9714 _____

VA/Other Treatment Provider: _____

Treatment provider's phone number(s): _____

VA Justice Outreach Coordinator: Candace Shepherd

VJO's phone number(s): _____ (210) 616-9915 _____

AA/NA Sponsor/Mentor: _____

Sponsor/mentor's phone number(s): _____

VA Housing Provider: _____

Housing provider's phone number(s): _____

Guadalupe County VTC: Doreen Luehlfing

Phone number(s): _____ (830) 303-8867 _____

Other: _____

Phone number(s): _____

Other: _____

Phone number(s): _____

Other: _____

Phone number(s): _____