

Mission Statement of the Mentor Program

To make certain to the best of our abilities that no veteran is left behind. We will find them, offer them assistance, assess their needs, and help them solve their problems. We will support veterans through their readjustment to civilian life, assist them in navigating their way through the court, treatment, and VA systems, and act as a mentor, advocate and ally.

MENTOR PROCEDURES

An essential part of the Nassau Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) Program is volunteer mentors who serve as part of the support team that encourages, guides and motivates participants to enter and complete timely and appropriate treatment for physical, psychological and substance abuse issues.

Veteran Mentor Role Description

The role of the VTC Veteran Mentor is to act as a friend (war buddy), coach, guide, role model, advocate, and a support person for the individual veteran participant (Mentee) with whom he/she is working. Mentors also understand the roles of other support team members and “fill the gap” to help keep the participant moving successfully toward completing the VTC program.

A Mentor IS NOT:

the mentee’s Counselor

the mentee’s Lawyer

the mentee’s Doctor

the mentee’s Banker

the mentee’s Intimate Partner

The Mentor’s Role

The mentor will be a primary resource and referral provider to the mentee by helping connect him/her with benefits, assistance and support services. The mentor will be an “Information Resource” to the veteran. Access to these support services will help reduce the participant’s stress that can be caused by distractions like housing or family needs, VA benefits, educational assistance, civil legal services, New York State Veterans Benefits and the like. Every mentor will have a list of resources available to the mentees. The mentorship relationship is intended to encourage, guide, and support the veteran as he/she progresses through the court-

supervised treatment program. One of the most important skills the mentor will bring to the program is his/her ability to be a good listener. A very important role is for the mentor to listen to the concerns of the veteran and help that person address their needs. Mentors should avoid lecturing participants by imposing their own values/beliefs, but should work to understand the mentee's own values/beliefs and encourage mentees to solve their own problems before they become destructive to their treatment program or court-imposed conditions.

Mentors must also be respectful of court decorum. Silence must be adhered to when the Judge is speaking to a mentee. This is critical. This is when we hear what issues and problems the mentee is experiencing.

The mentor must be ready to offer suggestions and general guidance to the participants for any concerns they may have as they progress through the program, but it is NOT the mentor's job to solve the problem for the mentee or ACT AS A COUNSELOR. Rather, the mentor should help the participant identify resources that might be helpful and encourage the participant to do the "legwork" to get the help they need to solve their own life's challenges. The mentor (in consultation with the Mentor Coordinator, will refer the mentee to professionals or other resources who can help the mentee.

The mentor must be available and ready to support the veteran when he/she may feel alone, frustrated or anxious in a way that only another veteran can appreciate and understand. In doing this, the mentor should maintain close contact with the Mentor Coordinator/Assistant Coordinator, and keep them informed of significant issues the mentee may have that could derail his/her treatment program success.

Finally, the mentor should be protective of sensitive information given to him/her by the veteran or the Mentor Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator, and not reveal any information, unless it is a situation where the safety of the participant or another human being may be at risk. In those critical situations, the mentor must inform the Mentor Coordinator or the Assistant Coordinator. This information will be given to appropriate Court officials immediately.

Mentors do not advise the court to terminate or punish a mentee. That is the role of the court. Also if a mentee does not want to talk to a mentor that is their right.

Mentors will be expected to assist the Mentor Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator and to cooperate fully with other members of the VTC team and the participant's treatment providers.

Mentor Eligibility Requirements

In order to participate as a mentor program, you must:

- A. Be a veteran or active member of one of the branches of the United States military, including Navy, Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, or the corresponding Reserve or National Guard component. The mentor must have an Honorable Discharge.
- B. Agree to follow and abide by all policies and procedures of the Nassau Veterans Treatment Court and its Mentoring Program.
- C. Commit to the Mentoring Program for a minimum 6 month period.
- D. Complete the Mentor Training Program and any additional training that may be required.
- E. Not be currently on probation for a conviction for any crime (felony or misdemeanor). Have no felony or misdemeanor convictions within the past five years, and be able to pass a security background check. The Mentor Coordinator will handle all misdemeanor or felony convictions issues on a case-by-case basis on incoming mentor applications.
- F. Active employees of the Unified Court System, active members of law enforcement or members of any other organization that may present a conflict of interest with the mentor program are not eligible.
- G. Complete and file an application form with the Mentor Coordinator and complete the screening process.
- H. Understand and support assigned mentee's requirements, treatment plan and goals, terms and conditions of probation, and assist the mentee in complying to make progress and achieve success.
- I. Understand the psychological war wounds from which the mentee suffers and the manner in which this will present challenges to the mentee's path to success. Be able and willing to be a guiding influence toward recovery. Do not be judgmental or negative in your relationship with mentees.

Mentor Duties and Responsibilities

- A. Attend all scheduled court sessions of their veteran participant unless excused by the Mentor Coordinator.

- B. Participate in and lead mentoring sessions with their assigned mentees, as required by the Mentor Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator.
 - C. Be supportive of the veteran's treatment progress and steer him/her towards program compliance and success.
 - D. To the extent possible, the mentor should assist the veteran to identify ways to resolve personal and family problems that may interfere with success in the court process or treatment program. The mentor should be knowledgeable and prepared to offer referrals to available community-based resources, and coordinate them with the Mentor Coordinator.
 - E. Be supportive of other mentors in the program.
 - F. Be honest with the mentee, mentor team members, and the Court at all times.
 - G. Mentors shall take immediate action to encourage the participant to contact suicide resources, including calling 911 themselves if there are any indications of suicidal thoughts, attempts or plans on part of the participant. Mentors should keep current resource phone numbers on their person at all times and ensure they are updated by frequent contact with the Mentor Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator.
2. The Mentor Coordinator shall have the following duties and responsibilities:
- A. Assume the major responsibility for recruiting qualified veteran mentors.
 - B. Be responsible for coordinating the mentor orientation program and any specialized training required.
 - C. Be responsible for matching and recommending particular mentors for each eligible veteran participant.
 - D. Provide all mentors with current contact information for suicide prevention resources, keep them updated, and provide frequent contacts with mentors to ensure they understand the importance of using these resources in appropriate situations.
 - F. Attend all court sessions and carry out any other duties assigned by the VTC Project Director or the Judge.
 - G. Appoint an Assistant Mentor Coordinator and Team Leaders as required.
 - H. Write and update Mentor Manual.
 - I. Maintain a structured, formal mentoring program.

J. Will have final say in mentor policies and disputes. Will be the liaison between the mentors and the Judge and court staff for all questions or issues

K. Counsel Mentors if needed. Terminate mentor, if warranted

Signature of Mentor----- Date-----

Signature of Mentor Coordinator -----Date-----

By signing this document you accept the above mentor standards and procedures.

I also will respect the Veteran's right to privacy. I will not discuss his/her name, address, background, family relationships, or the nature of his/her problems. I understand confidentiality continues even if I cease to be a mentor.