

VA San Diego Healthcare System



VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROGRAM

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Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Initiative



**Prevent the unnecessary
criminalization of mental health
issues and extended
incarceration, by providing
timely access to mental health
and substance abuse issues.**

Veterans Treatment Review Calendar



SAN DIEGO SUPERIOR COURT

Penal Code § 1170.9



Active Duty Service Members and Veterans may be eligible for treatment in lieu of incarceration if they meet the following criteria:

- Verified time in military service
- Mental health and/or substance abuse issue(s) resulting from time in service
- The alleged charges are directly related to the identified mental health/substance abuse issue(s)
- Access to appropriate treatment options available to address service-related mental health/substance abuse issue(s)

Veterans Treatment Review Calendar (VTRC)



- Pilot program commenced in March 2011
- Voluntary 12-18 month post-sentencing, judicially supervised treatment program
- Currently 40 participant slots available

Basic Eligibility Criteria:

- Post 9/11 service in the United States Military
- Meet the criteria for Penal Code § 1170.9 with available treatment options
- Cases must be probation-eligible
- Treatment must be started within 30-days of entry into VTRC



VTRC Team

A multi-disciplinary team designed to provide support and supervision to participants while they move through the phases of the treatment court

Court Coordinator

District Attorneys

City Attorneys

Public Defenders

Probation Officers

Treatment Providers

Peer Mentors

VA VJO Specialists

VTRC Phases



Phase I:

Demonstrating Accountability

Phase II:

Demonstrating Responsibility

Phase III:

Demonstrating Independence and Productivity

Incentives



- Legal incentives per plea agreement
- Verbal recognition from the Judge/VTRC Team
- Travel privileges (out of San Diego County)
- Removing or relaxing terms of supervision
- Advancement to the next VTRC phase
- Fewer court appearances
- Change from formal to informal probation
- Reduce some felonies to misdemeanors
- Dismissal of charges
- Recognition ceremony

Penal Code § 1170.9 (h)



As of January 1, 2013 Penal Code § 1170.9 section (h) was added which states:

“(h) (1) It is in the interests of justice to restore a defendant who acquired a criminal record due to a mental health disorder stemming from service in the United States military to the community of law abiding citizens...He or she has demonstrated significant benefit from court-ordered education, treatment, or rehabilitation to clearly show that granting restorative relief pursuant to this subdivision would be in the interests of justice.”

“Straight 1170.9” vs. VTRC



Straight 1170.9

- Supervision provided by the Court and Probation Department (if applicable)
- Court appearances as ordered (typically less frequently than VTRC)
- Referrals and linkages provided and VJO assistance as needed
- Progress updates provided to court by individual treatment providers

VTRC

- Team approach for supervision and support
- Court appearances based on VTRC phases
- Case management provided by VTRC Liaison
- Progress updates provided to court by VTRC Liaison

Veterans Justice Outreach



JAIL OUTREACH

“Veterans Day” Outreach Events



Outreach Team:

- Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist
- VA Healthcare Enrollment Coordinator
- Veterans Benefits Administration Coordinator
- Veterans Court Coordinator
- Representatives from Community Veterans organizations (including treatment providers and permanent housing program)

Goal:

To aid in re-entry planning and provide linkage to appropriate treatment and transitional housing programs.



Outreach is provided at the San Diego jails by Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist.

Outreach conducted at Donovans by a VA Re-entry Specialist (within 60-days of release).

7 San Diego Jails

- East Mesa Re-entry Facility
- Facility 8
- George Bailey Detention Facility
- Las Colinas Detention Facility
- San Diego Central Jail
- South Bay Detention Facility
- Vista Detention Facility

1 San Diego Prison

- R. J. Donovan Correctional Facility

Homeless Court



- Homeless Court Program is a Superior Court session for homeless defendants, held at two homeless programs.
- Aims to resolve outstanding misdemeanor offenses and warrants to remove legal barriers that hinder homeless individuals with achieving their maximum potential.
- Participants are tasked with addressing the underlying causes of homelessness in order to receive relief from the Court.



VA Role in Homeless Court

Historically, the VA's role in the San Diego Homeless Court has required a Veteran's successful completion of the 28-day VA inpatient Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program.

Presently, the VA treatment can consist of inpatient and outpatient treatment including attendance and participation in:

- Residential rehabilitation
- Mental health treatment
- Substance abuse treatment
- Case management
- Psychotropic medication management



Community Education and Training

Sheriff's Department

Attorneys

Families

VA Staff

Community Partners

Military personnel

- Provide education regarding the specific mental health and treatment needs of justice-involved Veterans.
- Educate community members on treatment options available to Veterans and resources.
- Train local law enforcement on Veterans' issues and strategies to aid justice-involved Veterans.



Thank You