

Become a VTAC (Veterans Treatment & Assistance Ct. Coordinator)

Mission Statement

The mission of the Lake County VTAC Mentor Program is to strive to ensure that no veteran is left behind in the field, or back at home. As a team we will locate judicial involved veterans, assist them and support them as they adjust to a pro-social lifestyle. We shall also assist the veteran in navigating the Court and VA systems during the term of his/her sentence or disposition with the goal of successful completion.

The Role and Responsibilities of the Mentor

The mentor should meet with the justice involved veteran to assist in resolving their issues or just provide pro-social companionship. The meetings should build on previous interactions and should be conducted in person when possible. If you are unable to meet face to face, phone contact is better than no contact. Try to remember you are there as a support. Speak in a respectful manner and utilize a positive tone of voice at all times. Maintain appropriate boundaries with participants. Each mentor should believe that the justice involved veteran has the potential to learn, grow and change.

Mentors are asked to accompany their clients to the bench at all court hearings. This not only shows a symbolic form of support, but often times your client might ask you questions about what is occurring in court and specific directives they have been given by the judge.

The mentor is expected to maintain federal confidentiality standards discussed in training and attend all required clinical and legal training programs supported by the VTAC team. Past and proposed training topics include VTAC/Probation policies and procedures, mental illness, PTSD, psychopharmacology and traumatic brain injury.

The mentor should communicate with the Mentor Coordinators any issues regarding time commitment, resistant participants or unmanageable challenges.

Submission of documentation to the Mentor Coordinator of all meetings with the client is required on a monthly basis.

The mentor will commit to a period of time of at least 6 months and will provide valid military service record DD214 or DD215 if necessary and submit to background verification.

Mentors who are able to provide transportation to and from VTAC related activities are greatly appreciated by the client and the court. As a result, each mentor who is able to provide transportation will be required to submit a copy of a valid drivers' license and proof of insurance on a regular basis.

Mentors **should never** make a clinical recommendation, give legal advice, provide therapy, utilize a stern approach, inappropriately extend the boundaries of the relationship, have inappropriate or sexual contact, or have contact with clients while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Mentor Orientation/Requirements

Prior to case assignment, mentor applications are reviewed and background checks are completed. VTAC mentors must have received an honorable discharge from any branch of service. No mentor will be allowed who has a serious criminal history or is actively involved in the criminal justice system. Once the completed application is received and no concerns are discovered you will be required to attend a one hour training covering basic probation concepts, and evidence based practices currently in place at Lake County Probation.

As a mentor you will be required to attend monthly. The meetings are co-facilitated by the probation staff and the lead mentor. The meetings are an opportunity for probation to convey important dates and information to the mentor team. It also allows mentors the opportunity to ask questions about the program and to raise concerns or issues they are experiencing. Once this has been accomplished the probation staff member will

depart and mentors can discuss case issues collectively in a format that will protect anonymity of their justice involved veteran. The goal of the meetings is to utilize a team approach in assisting the justice involved veterans improve their lives and exit the criminal justice system successfully.

Lastly, Probation and the College of Lake County (CLC) have planned outings for mentors and participants to interact in an informal and recreational atmosphere. This helps to break down barriers and improve the relationship between mentor and participant. To date, outings have included bowling, picnic and volunteer banquets.

Mentor/participant meetings

We ask that each mentor meet at least once per month with their assigned case. During these meetings the expectation will be to discuss existing issues in the lives of the participants. It must also be understood that spending quality time with your assigned mentee can provide immeasurable benefits to your mentee.

Your role as mentor in Court is one of support. The VTAC team's goal will be to avoid putting you in a position where your relationship with your justice involved veteran is jeopardized. This is why communication with the mentor coordinator and your mentor team before Court is so important. Advanced communication will allow problem solving to occur outside of the court room so a prepared approach to any problems can occur. The mentor is expected to appear at each court hearing and might be asked during open court for progress reports. This court will be conscious to ask only general, non-incriminating questions so that the mentee/mentor relationship can maintain a level of trust.

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