

**HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE  
11<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

**VETERANS TREATMENT COURT  
OPERATIONS & PARTICIPANT  
HANDBOOK**

**TRACK 1**

**HONORABLE JUDGE  
GARY W. STARNES**

**HAMILTON COUNTY  
GENERAL SESSIONS COURT**





## **WELCOME TO THE VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM**

The Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) Program is committed to assisting Veterans with intervention, treatment, and rehabilitation of substance use disorders and/or mental health issues who desire to change their lives.

This handbook will provide overall information about the VTC Program and what is expected of you as a participant. You are encouraged to share this handbook with your family and friends.

VTC participants are responsible for following all the rules of the VTC Program, those established by the court, treatment personnel, and supervision officers.

If you have any questions not answered in this handbook, please call your case manager or the Recovery Court Director. The entire VTC Team supports you and your efforts and will provide accountability and support.

Sincerely,

Honorable Judge Gary W. Starnes  
The Veterans Treatment Court Team

## VETERANS TREATMENT COURT TEAM

The team meets each week to review participants' progress through the program. The following are its active members and their positions within the program and subject to change:

<b>Judge:</b>	<b>Honorable Gary W. Starnes</b>
<b>Assistant District Attorney:</b>	<b>Nicole Evans</b>
<b>Public Defender:</b>	<b>David Schmidt</b>
<b>Program Coordinator:</b>	<b>Matthew Naylor</b>
<b>Case Manager:</b>	<b>Lauren Messer</b>
<b>Risk Assessment Coordinator:</b>	<b>Jasmine Ray Helen Ross McNabb</b>
<b>Volunteer Criminal Justice Liaison:</b>	<b>Nicole Carreria</b>
<b>Hamilton County Probation:</b>	<b>Dustin Robertson-Criminal Court Jessa Hartzell-General Sessions Court</b>
<b>Law Enforcement:</b>	<b>Sheriff Austin Garrett</b>
<b>VA-Veterans Justice Officer:</b>	<b>LaTasha Williams Brad Ellis</b>
<b>Pier Support Specialist:</b>	<b>Billy Truesdell</b>
<b>Hamilton County Veterans Service Officers:</b>	<b>Charles Alsobrook Amy Bailes</b>
<b>Veterans Mentor Coordinators:</b>	<b>Chris Dooley Alan Syler</b>
<b>Veterans Crisis Hotline:</b>	<b>Dial 988, Press #1</b>

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## **INTRODUCTION TO VETERANS TREATMENT COURT**

First and foremost, welcome to Veterans Treatment Court (VTC). As a participant of VTC, you are expected to follow the instructions given to you in court by Judge Gary Starnes and the treatment team. You will also be responsible for complying with the individualized treatment plan developed specifically for you. This treatment plan will be developed by treatment staff at VTC with your input. This handbook will explain what is expected of you and provide general program information. **We encourage you to share this handbook with your direct support system so they will know about the work you are doing with the court. Support from those around you will be extremely important throughout your participation in the program.**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE INFORMATION IN THIS HANDBOOK MAY CHANGE AS NEW MANDATES ARE RELEASED BY STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATORY AGENCIES, THE TREATMENT TEAM MAKES ADJUSTMENTS, OR FUNDING CHANGES OCCUR.**

### **OFFICE ADDRESS & TELEPHONE/FAX NUMBERS:**

600 Market St., Room 108  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
Phone: (423) 209-7660  
Fax: (423) 209-7661

### **COURT GENERAL HOURS OF OPERATION:**

**Monday: 8:30a – 4:30p**  
**Tuesday: 8:30a – 4:30p**  
**Wednesday: 8:30a – 4:30p**  
**Thursday: 8:30a – 4:30p**  
**Friday: 8:30a – 4:30p**  
**Saturday: Closed**  
**Sunday: Closed**

**THE VETERANS' COURT RECOVERY OFFICE IS A TOBACCO AND SMOKE FREE FACILITY. YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO VAPE OR USE TOBACCO PRODUCTS INSIDE THE FACILITY.**

### **VETERAN TREATMENT COURT MISSION**

The mission of the Hamilton County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) is to identify and provide specific interventions for veterans involved in the criminal justice system, in such a way to promote public safety, reduce recidivism and costs, while improving the lives of said veterans, their families, and the community through treatment, support, and intensive court supervision.

## **VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The VTC Program (Track 1) is designed to be a minimum of 12 months, consisting of four (4) phases; each phase having a minimum time to complete. The four phases are designed to help break the pattern of substance abuse/dependency, address mental health issues, and to assist with re-entry into the community. The VTC program incorporates supervision through judicial leadership, oversight, and treatment to support participants through their recovery process. Treatment may consist of residential, inpatient, and outpatient treatment, or a combination of any of the above. These services may be provided through the VTC program, the VA, and/or medical and community resources.

VTC is a VOLUNTARY program for its participants but requires approval of the prosecutor, defense counsel, the referring Judge, and the VTC treatment team. While there are certain things that you must complete, your ability to progress through the program and graduate will depend greatly upon your actions. If you miss appointments, ignore court requirements, or fail to remain sober your time and participation in the program can be impacted through delayed movement through phases or possible termination.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Individuals may apply for the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) at any time prior to sentencing. In addition, an otherwise eligible probationer who becomes subject to an application to revoke their probation may be eligible for admission. Individuals must have a minimum of twelve (12) months remaining on their probationary period in order to be eligible.

Eligibility Requirements are as follows:

- Candidate must voluntarily agree to enter the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC).
- Candidate must sign and execute all the necessary documents including medical release information.
- Candidate must be eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- Candidate must be a Veteran OR Active-Duty Military.
- Candidate must have been Honorably Discharged (Need DD214 proof). The Court may consider other than honorably discharged candidates on a case by case basis and solely within the discretion of the Court.
- Candidate must reside within the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. The Court may consider out of county and/or out of state candidates on a case by case basis and solely within the discretion of the Court.
- Candidate must not have violent criminal charges and/or convictions, no A or B felony criminal charges and/or convictions, no sex offenders, must not be on the sex offense registry, no gang members, and no child related criminal charges and/or convictions. The Court may consider other criminal cases on a case by case basis and solely within the discretion of the Court.
- Candidate must have all legal matters in other courts and/or other jurisdictions resolved. The Court may consider these cases on a case by case basis and solely within the discretion of the Court.
- Candidate must score as moderate risk to high risk on the assessment criteria.

## **CORE VTC PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

### **VETERANS' TREATMENT COURT STATUS HEARINGS**

Your VTC status hearings are set on **Thursdays, at 1:30 p.m.** unless rescheduled ahead of time by the court. You will be given a calendar indicating the date and time you are to appear for court each month. The calendar (Docket) will also be posted in the VTC office.

Court status hearings give you a chance to discuss your progress in the program directly with the Judge. The Judge is truly interested in the progress that you are making and wants to assist you in any way possible. It is still a court appearance, and you are expected dress appropriately, address the Judge respectfully, and behave in a respectful manner during the entire proceeding. In the event of severe weather, closings will be announced by all major television stations and radio stations. If the Hamilton County Courts are closed, there will be no Veterans Treatment Court. If the Hamilton County Government is closed, the VTC offices will be closed.

### **JOURNAL ENTRIES**

At each court appearance all participants are required to submit a journal entry for the Judge to read. This journal entry should be a one-page summary of how you are doing in the program. This journal entry is submitted to case management at court who then turns them over to the Judge to read. Journal entries are returned to case management the following week. Upon graduation, each participant receives their journal entries from the entirety of their program.

### **TREATMENT SERVICES**

The Recovery Court team will assess what level of treatment will best meet your needs and will develop an individualized treatment plan based on services available. The following services are available and may be provided to you during your participation in the program. Many of these services are provided in house, but others are the result of community partnerships with other local agencies.

- Residential Intensive Inpatient Treatment
- Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)
- Supervised Transitional Housing Programs
- Group Therapy
- Individual Therapy Sessions
- Relapse Prevention Class (Matrix)
- Seeking Safety Class
- Recovery Support Groups (AA/NA, etc)
- Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR)
- Acudetox
- Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)
- Sensory Regulation
- Couples and/or Family Therapy
- Equine Therapy
- Life Skills Class



- Mindfulness
- Anger Management Class
- Yoga
- Mental Health referral and follow up services

**Note:** Treatment groups continue to be added as needs are presented and training is obtained.

### **CASE MANAGEMENT**

Your case manager will be your primary point of contact during the program. It is important that you keep them informed of any changes in your contact information. Services made available by your case manager include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Maintain contact with residential placements
- Home visits and family contacts
- Ensure drug screening
- Verify all over the counter and prescribed medications
- Verify employment status
- Verify financial obligations
- Present Phase Promotion to Treatment Team
- Conduct curfew checks (if assigned)
- Assist with budgets and schedules
- Assist the participants in understanding legal issues such as child support, custodial issues and drivers' licenses
- Maintain contact with participants to ensure they are in compliance with the program
- Annotate client notes to state level database
- Communicate issues and concerns with Treatment Team
- Is the primary person the participant is to maintain all contact with, and must be aware of what is happening in the participant's daily life

### **COUNSELING**

Counseling sessions are a required part of your treatment plan. Substance abuse and mental health counseling is comprised of two separate formats: individual and group. Together they are designed to develop self-awareness, self-discipline, and coping mechanisms necessary to maintain an individual's sobriety and mental health. All participants are required to meet with a therapist or other appropriate health care professional individually upon admission into the program to assess the need for individual sessions.

### **MENTORING PROGRAM**

The Mentoring Program is a unique and vital component of the VTC. The Mentor Program ensures that every participating veteran receives the services they require/need, by pairing them with a mentor to help them better navigate their time in the program by acting as a coach and ally. The volunteer mentors engage, encourage, and empower their fellow veterans to change their lives. Mentors have served in Vietnam, Korea, Operation Desert Shield/Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom as well as various other duties/locations during their military service.

Once you become part of the program, a mentor will be assigned to you upon entering Phase 1. They listen to your concerns and problems and assist you in finding solutions. They also help you to set and achieve goals, not only as part of the program but to succeed in your personal life. Mentors provide feedback highlighting your successes and encouraging you to become better. You will meet with your mentor after every court appearance or as arranged by your mentor. What you and your mentor discuss is confidential unless there is reason to believe that you will cause harm to yourself or someone. The bond between you and your Mentor is critical to the success in the program.

### **SUPERVISION**

Most participants of the VTC Program are furloughed into the program on their charges. In other cases, the person is placed on Probation or Community Corrections to be supervised by the VTC staff. Unless notified differently, you will report to VTC staff who will send reports as needed to other supervising agencies.

### **VETERANS TREATMENT COURT (VTC) PROGRAM**

The VTC Program Track 1 is designed to be a **minimum of 12 months**; it consists of four (4) Phases, each phase having a minimum time to complete. **It is essential that each participant presents with open and honest communication to establish a foundation for recovery. It is also fundamental that each participant demonstrates willingness to participate and utilize learned skills. Advancing in phase is done at the discretion of the treatment team.**

Once approved for phase advancement, participants are required to share a short synopsis of what they learned in the prior phase, and what they hope to learn in the coming phase.

#### **PHASE ONE (1)**

Phase One (1) is designed to last a **minimum of sixty (60) days**. Actual program time will vary by participant. Phase One (1) includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Meet with Case Manager and/or others to formulate an individualized treatment plan.
- Meet with Case Manager in person daily/weekly or as indicated by the treatment team.
- Frequent & random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly.
- Attend group therapy as directed by individualized treatment plan.
- Engage with Veteran Mentor if applicable.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Weekly court appearances.
- Discuss and formulate a plan for journal entries at court appearances.
- Engage in individual counseling and/or therapy as deemed necessary.
- Discuss and set up a payment plan with the Criminal Court Clerk's Office for fines, fees, and court costs.
- Discuss and formulate a plan of action for employment.
- Engage in positive daily activity and cooperation. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, schooling, and/or volunteer work.
- Pay monthly program fees (\$50.00/mo.).

To successfully complete Phase One (1), **participants must have fourteen (14) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances**. This is evidenced by negative urine drug screens. Any non-negative and/or missed screens may result in an extension of the phase. Participants must also be in compliance with their individualized treatment plan and have attended 90% of the required recovery support meetings.

### **PHASE TWO (2)**

Phase Two (2) is designed to last a **minimum of ninety (90) days**. Actual program time will vary by participant. Phase Two (2) includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Follow all requirements of the individualized treatment plan.
- Meet with Case Manager and/or others in person daily/weekly or as directed by the treatment team.
- Frequent & random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly.
- Attend one (1) community/outside recovery support meetings per week (if applicable.)
- Obtain a Recovery Support Sponsor (if applicable.)
- Attend group therapy as directed by individualized treatment plan.
- Engage with Veteran Mentor if applicable.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Bi-weekly court appearances.
- Begin submitting journal entries at court appearances.
- Engage in individual counseling and/or therapy as deemed necessary.
- Continue actively seeking employment and/or obtain employment.
- Continued compliance of payment plan with the Criminal Court Clerk's Office for fines, fees, and court costs.
- Engage in positive daily activity and cooperation. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, schooling, or volunteer work.
- Pay monthly program fees (\$50.00/mo.)

To successfully complete Phase Two (2), **participants must have thirty (30) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances**. This is evidenced by negative urine drug screens. Any non-negative and/or missed screens may result in an extension of the phase. Participants must also be in compliance with their individualized treatment plan and have attended 90% of the required recovery support meetings.

### **PHASE THREE (3)**

Phase Three (3) is designed to last a minimum of ninety (90) days. Actual program time will vary by participant. Phase Three (3) includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Follow all requirements of individualized treatment plan.
- Meet with Case Manager and/or others in person monthly, or as directed by the treatment team.
- Frequent & Random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly.
- Attend one (1) community/outside recovery support meeting per week (if applicable.)

- Continue to engage with Recovery Support Sponsor (if applicable.)
- Attend group therapy as directed by individualized treatment plan.
- Engage with Veteran Mentor if applicable.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Appearance in court every three (3) weeks.
- Submit journal entries at court appearances.
- Engage in individual counseling &/or therapy as deemed necessary.
- Continued compliance of payment plan with the Criminal Court Clerk's Office for fines, fees, and court costs.
- Engage in positive daily activity and cooperation. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, schooling, or volunteer work.
- Pay monthly program fees (\$50.00/mo.)

To successfully complete Phase Three (3), **participants must have forty-five (45) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances**. This is evidenced by negative urine drug screens. Any non-negative and/or missed screens may result in an extension of the program. Participants must also be in compliance with their individualized treatment plan and have attended 90% of the required recovery support meetings.

#### **PHASE FOUR (4)**

Phase Four (4) is designed to last a **minimum of one hundred twenty (120) days**. Actual program time will vary by participant. Phase Four (4) includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Meet with Case Manager in person monthly, or as directed by the treatment team.
- Frequent & random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly.
- Attend one (1) community/outside recovery support meetings per week, (if applicable.)
- Continue to engage with Recovery Support Sponsor (if applicable.)
- Attend group therapy as directed by individualized treatment plan.
- Engage with Veteran Mentor as needed.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Monthly court appearance
- Submit journal entry at court appearance.
- Engage in individual counseling and/or therapy as deemed necessary.
- Continued compliance of payment plan with the Criminal Court Clerk's Office for fines, fees, and court costs.
- Engage in positive daily activity. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, schooling, or volunteer work.
- Pay monthly program fees (\$50.00/mo.)

To successfully complete Phase Four (4), **participants must have three months (90 days) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances**. This is evidenced by negative urine drug screens. Any non-negative and/or missed screens may result in an extension of the phase. Participants must also be in compliance with their individualized treatment plan and have attended 90% of the required recovery support meetings.

## **AFTERCARE**

Aftercare is an important part of recovery treatment programs. Instead of the graduate completely leaving the supportive environment provided by the program, it provides a step down. Aftercare effectively transitions the participant from a more intensive program back into their daily life. Aftercare is voluntary and implemented when the participant graduates the VTC program but acknowledges the need for continued support. The type of program that each client chooses with the Treatment Team, as well as the length of time they commit to it, will vary depending on their unique situation and needs. Typically, Aftercare lasts a minimum of one hundred eighty (180) days. Actual program time will vary by participant. Aftercare includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Follow all requirements of individualized treatment plan.
- Meet with Case Manager in person monthly, or as directed by the treatment team.
- Random drug screens.
- Attend one (1) Veterans Support Group per week.
- Attend group therapy as directed by individualized treatment plan.
- Monthly court appearances.
- Submit journal entries at court appearances.
- Engage in individual counseling &/or therapy as deemed necessary.
- Engage in positive daily activity and cooperation. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, schooling, or volunteer work.
- Continued compliance with payment plan with the Criminal Court Clerk's Office for fines, fees, and court costs.
- Pay monthly program fees (\$50.00/mo.)

To successfully complete Aftercare, **participants must have three months (90 days) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances**. This is evidenced by negative urine drug screens. Any non-negative and/or missed screens may result in an extension of the phase. Participants must also be in compliance with their individualized treatment plan and have attended 90% of the required recovery support meetings.

## **COMMENCEMENT FROM VETERANS TREATMENT COURT**

Prior to the completion of Phase Four (4), the participant will be presented to the Treatment Team to discuss eligibility for Graduation/Commencement. The participant will complete a *Graduation Questionnaire* (Attachment Q) and return to their Case Manager.

Each year, or as needed, the VTC Program will hold a formal commencement ceremony to honor those who have successfully completed all five phases of the VTC Program. The purpose of this celebration is to recognize the commitment each graduate has made to themselves, their family, and their community to make the necessary changes to be law abiding citizens. Representatives of the community, local and state government, current participants, family members, and partnering agencies are invited to attend and join in the celebration.

Successful completion of the VTC program may result in a reduction of court costs, fines and fees, the dismissal of criminal charges, or a reduction in the terms of the graduate's probation period. This is a decision that is dependent upon the originating Judge.

## **TERMINATION FROM VETERANS TREATMENT COURT**

The VTC is a voluntary program. A participant may voluntarily terminate their participation in the program at any time. The participant should inform their Case Manager of their decision to exit the program and the Case Manager should present the information to the Treatment Team. This will result in the participant returning to their court of origin for a due process hearing or the imposition of the sentence associated with their charges.

Outside of self-termination, participants in the VTC program may be terminated as a Treatment Team decision carried out by the Judge. The following situations may result in termination.

- Participant has continually failed to follow the rules of the VTC program.
- Participant does not follow the individualized treatment plan.
- Participant attempts to adulterate a urine drug screen.
- Participant needs are outside the scope of services provided at the VTC program.
- Participant is re-arrested for new criminal charges while in the program.
- Participant knowingly involves another participant in prohibited actions.
- Participant enters a sexual/romantic relationship with another VTC program participant.
- Participant is a danger to other VTC participants and/or VTC members.
- Participant absconds from the VTC program.

## **OTHER VTC POLICIES**

### **PHONE POLICY**

VTC Clients must have a telephone (or cell phone) at client's place of residence to participate in Veterans Court. While clients are residing at a halfway house, they are to follow the house rules. Therefore, if the placement house has a restriction on cell phones the phone number for the placement house is the contact number for the client. If client does not have a phone, the VTC program

Team reserves the right to require electronic monitoring at client's expense.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance at court sessions, treatment sessions, VA Appointments, and support recovery meetings is mandatory! You will be assigned a weekly group and will be expected to attend every group. Excused absences are the exception, not the rule. Occasionally, participants may be granted excused absences from court, treatment, or other scheduled appointments for the following reasons:

- Severe medical emergencies
- Other court obligations
- Illness (must have a doctor's note)
- Death in your immediate family

Unless you are proven unconscious, you must call your case manager prior to seeking treatment for any medical emergency, and proof of the emergency must be given for an absence to be excused after non-attendance. In cases of non-emergency illnesses, you must report to the office/meeting first and request to be excused.

In the event of a death in your immediate family, you must call your case manager or treatment counselor. Proof may be required and if so, a copy of the obituary or some other form of information can be provided. Unexcused absences may result in a sanction if the judge decides it is necessary.

### **TELEHEALTH POLICY**

If attendance of court, treatment sessions or case management appointments is not an option due to illness, medical quarantine, or death of an immediate family member, participants may be asked to report via teleservices. Veterans Court is set up to utilize a HIPAA compliant platform which allow the privacy of all participants. When utilizing teleservices, participants should ensure that they are in a private setting where others cannot overhear. It is recommended that headphones are utilized. During telehealth sessions, participants should be fully clothed and adhere to the same guidelines as if in person at the 11<sup>th</sup> JDRC facility.

### **TRAVEL REQUESTS**

Participants may submit a leave request, in writing, for the team to consider once they enter Phase Two (2). The VTC Team must approve the leave request prior to leave being taken and the following conditions must apply:

- You must be in Phase Two (2) (or above) of the VTC Program.
- You must attend support recovery meetings during, before and/or after your leave depending on the details of the request.
- You must have an important reason for the leave request.
- You must have approval from the VTC before taking leave.
- You must submit the request in time for the treatment team to discuss it prior to the date of the leave requested (14 days prior). Staffing is held on Wednesdays; leave must be submitted prior to Treatment Team Meeting.
- You must be in compliance with the VTC program.
- If you are under the supervision of another agency, you must also be in good standing with that agency and have their approval.
- You must report a drug screen the day prior to leaving and upon your return.

*\*You are advised not to make reservations of any sort until you have been informed that your Travel Request has been approved.*

### **ANY VIOLATION OF THE TERMS OF YOUR TRAVEL PASS, MAY RESULT IN FUTURE TRAVEL REQUESTS BEING DENIED.**

### **HOUSING PLACEMENTS**

Placements are NOT punishment. They are used to give support for recovery and a safe environment to help with your transition. You may be required to live in a supported transitional housing placement if:

- You do not have a stable, supportive home to go to after your jail release.
- People living in your home use illegal drugs and are under the supervision of the court or other legal issues are present.
- People living in your home are not equipped to assist you with the people, places and things that need to change.

- You need more structure and accountability.
- You request it.
- The Veterans Treatment Court Program determines it is in your best interest.

During your stay at placements, you must:

- Follow all the rules of the placement and VTC program.
- Apply to the VTC Team for any overnight or weekend passes. You must be in Phase Two (2) or above and complete a Travel Request Form with your Case Manager.
- Attend VTC status hearings, as scheduled, unless other arrangements are made by our placement and case manager.
- Attend VTC classes as scheduled.
- Complete a transitional-living plan with the placement and your case manager before leaving.
- Submit to all drug screens required by the placement and the VTC Program.
- Engage in treatment and maintain compliance.

### **HOME VISITS**

VTC staff may visit you at your home or place of employment. Home visits may be random. Therefore, it is imperative that the address and phone number provided to the VTC are accurate.

### **TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

Participants must arrange transportation in advance for office visits, treatment, and court. The VTC staff does not have the ability to be the primary mode of transportation. If transportation becomes an issue, you shall immediately notify your case manager so that all solutions can be examined.

### **SEARCH POLICY**

Participants of the VTC program are subject to random searches for the protection and safety of staff and fellow participants. Searches may be conducted if there is reasonable suspicion of illegal activity or safety concerns. Search methods may include pat searches (conducted by same sex staff members,) automobile search, or no-contact search of participant and/or their personal property. Participants of VTC voluntarily consent to allow the staff to search their person, automobile, or residence at any time without a warrant. This search will be for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the agreement made with VTC and may be conducted without probable cause.

### **CHILDCARE POLICY**

The VTC does not currently provide childcare services to participants. The VTC staff will assist all participants in locating and obtaining adequate childcare services to allow for full participation in the VTC program. In instances where childcare falls through, the participant is responsible for contacting their Case Manager to make arrangements for any missed treatment sessions.

### **RECOVERY-SUPPORT MEETINGS**

Recovery-support meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA) or other similar VTC-approved programs are required. There is a variety of meetings in the county. Your case manager has a list of locations, meeting dates, and times. You may pick which ones you would like to attend. The Veterans Support Group at our facility is mandatory and counts



toward one of your meetings. How many meetings you are required to attend each week depends on what phase you are in, your treatment plan and the discretion of your case manager and/or VTC Team. Obtaining and working with a sponsor and Veteran Mentor is part of this requirement. At the meetings you need to:

- Be honest.
- Listen to others and be respectful.
- Find a Sponsor (as required)
- Gain additional support for your recovery
- Maintain confidentiality

Meeting sheets should be signed at the time of attendance of the recovery support meetings. These meeting sheets should be turned into the assigned case manager weekly, or as directed. The VTC treatment team will not tolerate the forgery of meeting sheets. If meetings sheets are suspected of being forged, the participant will face a sanction and may have their treatment plan adjusted.

### **WORK, COMMUNITY SERVICE AND/OR SCHOOL**

As part of the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) Program, you are required to:

- Maintain gainful employment, and/or
- Complete community service work, and/or
- Enroll in school full-time

You may choose a combination of these, but it must be approved by the Treatment Team. You are required to provide proof of hours worked, hours in school, and/or hours involved in community service. Your Case Manager will occasionally check with your employer, school, or community service agency or group to verify your report.

VTC Program participants who need to address literacy or other education needs for better employment will enroll in classes to address those needs.

You are also required to complete 8 hours of community service work. The hours and places you work must be approved and verified by your Case Manager. These hours are a way for you to give something back to Hamilton County and to help in your recovery by being part of something productive and helping someone else. The VTC Team may require additional community service hours as a result of:

- A pre-arranged part of your sentence
- Failure to follow VTC rules
- A VTC group project
- Failure to obtain employment if required

The VTC treatment team will not tolerate the forgery of Community Service Hours (CSW) hours. If documents are suspected of being forged, the participant will face a sanction and may have their treatment plan adjusted.

## **FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

You are responsible for meeting all your financial obligations such as:

- Court costs.
- Fines.
- Restitution.
- VTC program fees.
- Probation fees
- Rent or Mortgage costs, transitional housing costs if applicable
- Personal Costs such as housing, utilities, etc.
- Maintain a telephone and make sure the VTC is updated with any changes

For court-related costs and fees, unless a specific amount is ordered by the court, payment schedules are to be established with the Hamilton County Criminal Court Clerk's Office and documented for the Judge's approval. Failure to make timely payments may result in delaying your phase promotion or completion of the program.

You must provide your case manager with proof of regular payments being made on all fees, costs, fines, restitution, and rent. Again, failure to make timely payments may result in delaying your phase promotion or completion of the program.

## **DRUG TESTING**

Random drug and alcohol screening will be required of all participants entering the Recovery Court program. Drug and alcohol testing will be administered by **HAMILTON COUNTY ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING** (HCAS), located at 6215 Dayton Blvd, Hixson, TN 37343. All tests conducted are laboratory tests/quick tests.

**Non-negative drug screen results include positive test results, missed drug screens, tests where an insufficient sample is provided or where the participant is unable to provide a sample. A non-negative result can also mean that a specimen was adulterated (tampered with), substituted or invalid. Test results showing abnormal creatinine are considered a non-negative result.**

Random drug testing protocols include the following:

1. Upon entry into the program, each participant will call the HCAS drug screen line at (833) 589-2187, push #1, and enter his or her Spin Number, daily after 6 a.m. to see if their Phase is called for testing. The drug screen line must be called 7 days per week, 365 days per year.
2. HCAC business hours are from **8:30 am-4:00pm Monday-Friday**. On weekends and holidays, hours are **9:00a.m.-12:00pm** (if applicable).
3. All specimens will be collected under direct observation, following mandated protocols.
4. If a screen is completed by another approved agency, the VTC Court office will receive a copy of the drug testing form (unless otherwise approved). Any outside agency used for drug testing must be pre-approved by the Director of Recovery Courts/VTC Courts and the treatment team must agree.
5. It is the participant's responsibility to make sure the staff/treatment team is aware of all medications they are prescribed prior to drug testing (refer to medication policy).

6. It is the participant's responsibility to know if they are called for a screen and to make the appropriate arrangements. Failure to do so is considered a non-negative screen.
7. Participants are required to call the drug screen line daily to see if they have a drug screen. Staff may also contact participants to report for a drug screen. When this occurs, failure to report will be considered a missed screen.
8. It is the participant's responsibility to report to the assigned location at the time given for the test.
9. If the participant is late for a test, or misses a test, it will be considered as a non-negative test for drugs/alcohol and the participant may be sanctioned.
10. If a participant fails to produce a urine specimen or if the sample provided is not of sufficient quantity, it will be considered as a non-negative test for drugs/alcohol and they may be sanctioned.
11. If a participant produces a diluted urine sample, it will be considered a non-negative test for drugs/alcohol and they will be sanctioned.
12. The participant is informed that the ingestion of excessive amounts of fluids can result in a diluted urine sample and they understand that their urine sample will be tested to ensure the sample is not diluted.
13. Participants are informed that substituting or altering their specimen or trying in any way to modify their body fluids for the purposes of changing the drug testing results will be considered as a non-negative test for drugs/alcohol and will result in sanctioning and may be grounds for immediate termination from the program.
14. Participants are informed that the use of creatinine supplements are prohibited while participating in Recovery Court.
15. If a participant is non-negative for any substance that requires a specialized test for confirmation, (e.g. Synthetic Cannabinoids/Synthetic Drugs, Gabapentin, Neurontin, CBD, Wellbutrin, Ketamine, Kratom, etc.) participant may be responsible for the cost of that specialized drug screen.
16. If a participant would like to dispute the results of the initial laboratory testing, the participant is required to pay the additional costs associated with said testing.

**Each participant agrees to the following regarding Urine Drug Screen (UDS) at program intake:**

- All non-negative drug/alcohol screens will be reported to the Treatment Team at the weekly meeting. Non-negative screens may result in a sanction. The Treatment Team will make sanction recommendations to the presiding Judge who will determine the appropriate sanction.
- Using, possessing, or being in the presence of any illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia or alcohol will result in a sanction.
- A participant's final 90 days of drug/alcohol screens must be free of drugs and/or alcohol for that participant to be considered for Graduation/Commencement.

Honesty is the guiding principle for the VTC Recovery Court Program. Therefore, the treatment team may use discretion in determining the sanction or choose not to impose a sanction if a participant self- reports use absence of a scheduled drug screen or prior to a drug screen. The team will consider the following in making this determination:

- Participant personal safety
- Safety issues to the general public or community
- How many sanctions previously imposed

- Treatment compliance and recommendations
- Program and supervision compliance

### **MEDICATION USE**

**As a person who is actively drug testing as part of this treatment court, it is very important that you not take certain medications, as they could be detrimental to your recovery as well as cause positives in your drug screening.**

**Remember, once sworn into the program no over-the-counter medications may be taken without permission!**

### **MOOD-ALTERING SUBSTANCE POLICY**

Many medications are mood-altering, either as their primary purpose or as a side effect. For a person who needs these medications and uses them appropriately, mood-altering medications are positive and promote the person's overall well-being. However, for people trying to recover from addictions to substances in this category, mood-altering medications can be extremely dangerous. Because of these dangers, VTC participants are prohibited from taking mood-altering medications unless all the following conditions are met:

- The medication is necessary and truly promotes the person's health and well-being and does not cross-react with the drug screens used by the VTC.
- The prescription is written by a physician who is aware or made aware of the person's history of substance abuse and status as a VTC participant. The participant is required to provide a copy of this policy to the treating physician. The prescription must be reviewed regularly, and these actions must be documented by use of the appropriate VTC form.
- The VTC Team has given approval prior to the participant's filling the prescription.
- The Participant understands and agrees that random pill counts and calls to pharmacies may be required as an additional method to verify that she/he is taking the medication as prescribed. The participant understands that this medication cannot be left accessible to any other person, especially any other VTC participant.
- The VTC participant fully understands these conditions, agrees to them, and acknowledges that taking this medication in any way other than exactly how it is prescribed will be treated as a positive drug screen, subject to the same sanctions as any other positive drug screens.

The use of such substances will be considered on a case-by-case basis and the VTC Team reserves the right to exercise its reasonable discretion with respect to each case.

**Once in the VTC program, documentation of all medications prescribed by a physician must be on file including any change in dosage. All medications must be taken as they are prescribed. If you are not compliant with your prescription medications, the Treatment Team may require you to take the shot form of the medication to assist with compliance.**

### **APPROVED "OVER THE COUNTER" MEDICATIONS**

The following medications are approved for VTC participants to take without prior approval of the Case Manager. This medication MUST be taken for the labeled ailments and at the recommended dose found on the label. Taking more than the recommended dose may result in a positive drug screen. Please make certain that you read the entire label to ensure that there are no

additives (i.e Tylenol Cold/ Tylenol PM/ Mucinex DM) that may result in a positive Urine Drug Screen (UDS). If you have any questions about a medication, please contact your Case Manager.

**FOR PAIN:**  
*(No PM  
Formula)* Acetaminophen (Tylenol)  
Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)  
Aspirin (Ecotrin)  
Naproxen (Aleve)  
Excedrin Migraine

**JOINT PAIN:** Ben Gay muscle rub &/or thermal patches  
Icy Hot muscle rub &/or thermal patches

**FOR STOMACH:** Mylanta  
Milk of Magnesia  
Pepto Bismol  
Pepcid (Famotidine)  
Prilosec (Omeprazole)  
Tums/Roloids

\ **FLU SYMPTOMS:** Theraflu  
*(No PM formula)* Alka-Seltzer

**ALLERGY/ COUGH & COLD:**  
*(No "D" or "DM"  
Formula)* Claritin (Loratadine)  
Allegra (Fexofenadine Hydrochloride)  
Zyrtec (Cetirizine  
Hydrochloride) Seldane  
(Terfenadine)  
Nasal Strips  
Saline Nasal Spray  
Vick's Vapor Rub

**VITAMINS:** Multi-Vitamin  
Pre-natal Vitamin

Your Case Manager will tell you what approved medications you may take if you have a cold, headache, or other minor illness. **While under the supervision of the VTC, you are NOT permitted to use CBD products, kratom, products containing poppy seeds, or products containing alcohol.** It is your responsibility to be aware of what you are putting in your body. Please read the full ingredients list on all products- alcohol is a main ingredient in many over the counter meds, mouth washes and vanilla extract! Failure to report medication (prescribed or over the counter) use prior to a positive drug screen is considered a failed screen and a sanction will be imposed.

**THE BOTTOM LINE: The use of any materials (i.e. chemicals, ingestibles, drugs, non-medicinal products, non-FDA approved supplements, etc) that have the potential to interfere with the court's ability to accurately and reliably evaluate or interpret the results of abstinence monitoring/drug testing ARE PROHIBITED.**

## **MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT (MAT)**

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) is the use of medications in conjunction with counseling and behavioral therapies to treat substance use disorders and prevent opioid overdose. Research shows that a combination of medication and therapy can successfully treat these disorders, and for some people struggling with addiction, MAT can help sustain recovery. MAT is primarily used for the treatment of addiction to opioids such as heroin and prescription pain relievers that contain opiates but may be utilized for the treatment of alcohol use disorder as well. The VTC allows for the use of Naltrexone (Vivitrol) and Buprenorphine (Suboxone) while in the program, if you are under the supervision of a trusted medical professional.

Prior to enrolling in a MAT program, please consult with your Case Manager to ensure that you follow the proper protocol. All MAT providers must be willing to provide the VTC with a comprehensive treatment plan surrounding your participation in a MAT program.

## **SANCTIONS AND INCENTIVES**

It is important to understand that part of the recovery process is change and we recognize that change is not always an easy process. This program is designed to deal with issues of non-compliance by issuing sanctions for noncompliance that are determined by the VTC Team.

Sanctions used by the VTC include, but are not limited to:

- Admonishment
- Meeting with Team
- Designated Community Service hours
- Writing Assignments
- Increased drug testing
- Increase support group
- Daily check-ins
- Home visits
- Suspension of privileges
- Verbal/Written apology to other participants and the court
- GPS monitoring
- Behavioral contract/Probation
- House Arrest or earlier curfew
- Special assignment such as attending full criminal court sessions
- Phase extension
- Restarting of current phase
- Incarceration

Incentives are also used to recognize accomplishments and reward those individuals who are working following their program and making forward progress in their recovery. Incentives used by the VTC include, but are not limited to:

- Certificates for completion of the phases
- Certificates for completion of classes

- Verbal recognition
- Applause from the Judge, Team and others present
- Handshake from Judge
- Waive fees/Fee reduction
- Remove/Reduce sanctions
- Travel privileges
- Leave early from court
- Food and coffee during class
- Medallions or coins
- Other tangible rewards

### **PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES/RIGHTS**

- Participants are not responsible for the emergency transportation or emergency medical care of other program participants in the case of an emergency
- Participants are not responsible for the care of other program participants
- Participants are not responsible for the supervision of other program participants
- Participants are not required to access confidential information for the completion of any program related task
- Participants of the VTC have the right to treatment regardless of race, creed, national origin, religion, sexual preference/orientation, and/or gender.
- Participants have the right to considerate, respectful care with recognition of their personal dignity and individuality. Internal policies will ensure that each participant is given respect and consideration and will be protected from all forms of exploitation. No verbal, physical, fiduciary or psychological abusive behavior is allowed by the VTC at any time.
- Participants have the right within law to personal and informational privacy as covered under Federal Confidentiality (42 CFR part 2) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) (45 CFR parts 160 & 164) regulations
- Participants have the right to refuse to see or talk with anyone not officially connected with the VTC.
- Participants have the right to expect his/her treatment records to be kept in a locked file, accessible only to those involved in his/her treatment or those responsible for monitoring treatment quality
- Participants have the right to expect his/her presence and activities to be totally confidential unless he/she gives permission otherwise
- Participants have the right to expect reasonable safety; Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure a participant's safety
- Participants have the right to be fully informed upon admission about their rights and responsibilities and about any limitations on these rights, which might be imposed by the rules of the VTC
- Participants have the right to be assisted by the VTC and exercise their civil rights
- Participants have the right to be free of any requirements by the VTC that are ordinarily performed by the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Recovery Court (JDRC).
- Participants have the right to privacy and freedom in the use of the restroom (except

when submitting a direct observation urine drug/alcohol screen)

- Participants may request from the VTC staff a review of their personal record in order to correct any false information
- Participants have the right to contact outside legal, medical and advocacy services
- Participants have the right to not be involved in any on-site research projects
- Participants have the right to voice grievances to the VTC staff, to and to outside representatives of their choice with freedom from restraint, interference, or discrimination
- Participants have the right to be treated with consideration, respect, and full recognition of their dignity and individuality
- Participants have the right to be protected by the VTC from neglect; from physical, verbal, and emotional abuse (including corporal punishment), and from all forms of exploitation
- Participants have the right to be free of any requirement by the VTC that they perform services that are ordinarily performed by staff
- Participants have the right to participate in the development of their individual program plans and to receive sufficient information about proposed and alternative interventions and program goals to enable them to participate effectively

## **TITLE VI**

The 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Recovery Court (JDRC) assures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity. The VTC further assures that every effort will be made to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its programs and activities, whether these programs are federally funded or not.

If you believe that you have been aggrieved by an unlawful discriminatory practice by an employee of the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Recovery Court VTC program under Title VI, you have the right to file a formal complaint. Any such complaint must be in writing and filed with the Hamilton County Department of Human Resources. Title VI Discrimination Complaint forms may be obtained by contacting **Human Resources, Hamilton County, 117 E . 7th St #100, Chattanooga, TN 37402, (423) 209-6120.**

## **RELEASES OF INFORMATION & CONFIDENTIALITY**

The program's policy on participant confidentiality and the need for releases of information should be clearly explained. Participants should be assured that their information is protected and will only be utilized for the intended purpose of the VTC program.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Every effort should be made to resolve issues within the Recovery Court before a written grievance is filed. All active Recovery Court participants may file a grievance, by requesting the *Grievance*



*Procedure Form* from the Recovery Court staff. A completed grievance form will be reviewed by the following until it is resolved:

1. Clinical Supervisor of the Recovery Court
2. Hamilton County Director of Recovery Courts
3. Hamilton County Human Resources Director and Title VI Coordinator

If the complaint is directly related to the Recovery Court Director, the process will begin with step three (3).

A meeting will be held with the participant within five (5) business days of the filing of a grievance.

Certain matters are subject to grievance by a participant and certain matters are not. The following **ARE** examples of matters that are appropriate for filing a grievance:

- Abusive/distasteful language directed specifically at the participant and/or his/her family;
- Physical/sexual abuse or harassment; and/or
- Conflicts of interest, such as the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Recovery Court (JDRC) staff receiving personal benefit from actions which he/she directs of the participants.

The following are examples of matters that **ARE NOT** accepted for grievance:

- VTC Operations & Participant Handbook Rules & Regulations

**PARTICIPANTS MUST FILE GRIEVANCES WITHIN FORTY-FIVE (45) DAYS OF THE ALLEGED INCIDENT; OTHERWISE THE GRIEVANCE DOES NOT APPLY.**

### **CONCLUSION**

The VTC Program is dedicated to supporting you through the cooperation and collaboration of the Judge, prosecutors, defense counsel, probation authorities, case managers, counselors, peer specialist, plus an array of local service providers to increase the odds of a successful outcome. Our hope is that we can be a positive support in your journey to recovery.