

**HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE
11TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT**



**VETERANS TREATMENT COURT
PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK**

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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 concerns 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. 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.

VTC You 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 program coordinator. The entire VTC Team supports you and your efforts and will provide accountability and support. We ask that you show up, be honest and try hard.

Sincerely,

The Veterans Treatment Court Team

VTC OFFICE:

401 W M.L.K. Blvd, Suite 3035
Chattanooga, TN 37402
Phone: (423) 994-5967

Hours of operation:

Monday: 8:00a – 4:00p
Tuesday: 8:00a – 4:00p
Wednesday: 8:00a – 4:00p
Thursday: 8:00a – 4:00p
Friday: 8:00a – 4:00p
Saturday: Closed
Sunday: Closed

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

Courts Building
600 Market Street
Chattanooga, TN 37402

General Sessions Court – Honorable Judge Gary W. Starnes - Division V, Courtroom 1
Criminal Court - Honorable Judge Boyd M. Patterson - Division III, Courtroom 1

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 TEAM

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

Track 1 - General Sessions Judge:	Honorable Judge Gary W. Starnes
Track 2 - Criminal Court Judge:	Honorable Judge Boyd M. Patterson
Assistant District Attorney:	Nicole Evans
Public Defender:	David Schmidt
Program Coordinator:	Matthew Naylor
Case Manager:	Lauren Messer
Risk Assessment Coordinator:	Jasmine Ray The Helen Ross McNabb Center
VA Veterans Justice Officers:	Brad Ellis LaTasha Williams
Hamilton County Veterans Service Officers:	Charles Alsobrook Amy Bailes
Hamilton County Probation Officer:	John Webb
TDOC Probation Officer:	Teanna Chastain
VA Peer Support Specialist:	Dave Carté
Volunteer Criminal Justice Liaison:	Nicole Carreria
Veteran Mentor Coordinators:	Chris Dooley Alan Syler
Law Enforcement:	Hamilton County Sheriff Austin Garrett
Veterans Crisis Hotline:	Dial 988, Press #1

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

JUDGE

The Judge possesses a comprehensive understanding of the impact of substance abuse on the court system, participants, and the broader community. Therefore, the Judge is committed to advancing the program's mission and objectives. In the courtroom, the Judge presides over VTC proceedings and maintains the integrity of the court, speaks directly with you about specific issues or difficulties, and develops a personal working relationship with you while monitoring your progress. The Judge treats you respectfully and fairly, encouraging your success and emphasizing treatment throughout your time in the program. The Judge also regularly reviews case status reports and determines the ultimate program outcome.

Direct contact with the Judge and his office should be avoided beyond the courtroom setting. The Judge is not a case manager, personal attorney, or legal advisor. Information from a participant or your family must go through the Veterans Treatment Court Office or defense attorney. Any ex parte communication with the Judge should be avoided. If an issue arises the proper procedure should be followed to maintain the Judges in-partial unbiased position.

The Judge attends non-court meetings, including planning groups and staffing. The Judge also has the following responsibilities: reviewing applicants for participation, determining appropriate and effective sanctions for program violations, and providing incentives for continued success. Furthermore, the Judge advocates for the program by creating community interest and support for the program and developing community resources to assist you in their treatment.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The Program Coordinator manages the daily operation and administration of the Veterans Treatment Court Program. This includes immediate oversight of staff interaction with participants, assistance with case management development and implementation, training and administration of the case management and drug screening systems, review of court documents, and developing, implementing, and supervising the VTC office's policies and procedures.

CASE MANAGER

The Case Manager is your primary point of contact during the program. Case Managers will provide orientation information and are responsible for ensuring each participant is fully informed of the rules, regulations, and policies of the program; as well as, monitoring each participant's progress. Case Managers are the "central clearinghouse" for all information and communication for the staff, team, and participants. Case Managers maintain participant records, including, but not limited to residence, employment, and court fine payments. They manage and update all participant files, may administer drug and alcohol screens, and create and distribute the Court calendar to the Court Team. The Case Manager may make appropriate referrals for additional services such as employment assistance, education, transportation, and housing. The Case Manager also provides an annual list of all graduates to the Prosecutor for recidivism data collection.

PROSECUTOR

The Prosecutor has many legal responsibilities to the VTC Program. The Prosecutor makes eligibility and referral decisions for entry into the VTC. The Prosecutor attends planning groups, staffing, and court. Assists in the determination of appropriate sanctions and incentives for current participants. Such decisions are made using knowledge of addiction, relapse, and other factors (i.e., criminal history, gender, age, culture) that may impact a participant's success. The Prosecutor participates in policy development which includes designing policy and procedures for screening, eligibility, and case-processing. The Prosecutor educates the community, peers, and colleagues about the program. The Prosecutor also makes recommendations for termination and probation revocations, should they become necessary.

It is not appropriate for you to seek legal counsel from the Prosecutor or staff of the District Attorney's office.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY/PUBLIC DEFENDER

The VTC Public Defender represents each active participant in the VTC Program who is not otherwise represented by counsel. The VTC Public Defender attends planning groups, staffing, and court, assisting in the determination of appropriate sanctions and incentives for current participants. Such decisions are made using knowledge of addiction, relapse, and other factors (i.e., criminal history, gender, age, culture) that may impact a participant's success. The VTC Public Defender participates in policy development which includes designing policy and procedures for screening, eligibility, and case-processing. Like the Prosecutor, the Defense Attorney also educates the community, peers, and colleagues about the program.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement plays a major role in the VTC Program. Law Enforcement provides accountability for participants in this program through attendance at planning groups and staffing, may conduct searches of home, person, car, cell phone or papers and/or drug and alcohol screening. Participants' total honesty and cooperation with all law enforcement is essential to compliance with this program.

PROBATION OFFICER

The Probation Officer administers drug screens, monitors participant compliance while on supervision, and keeps the VTC Team informed of all participant progress on probation by attending staffing and Court. The Probation Officer contributes to community education and cooperation with the program, and assists with community resources to aid the program.

VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH SPECIALIST (VJO)

A key difference between VTC and other accountability courts, is the connection we have with the Veterans Administration. As part of this partnership, the Hamilton County Veterans Treatment Court has been assigned a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist (VJO). The VJO is part of our Court Team, is present during court staffing meetings and court sessions, and is available to each participant for assistance. The purpose of the VJO Program is to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness, and extended incarceration among veterans, by ensuring that eligible justice-involved veterans have timely access to VA services as clinically indicated. VJO Specialists are responsible for direct outreach, assessment, and case management for justice-

involved veterans.

As a participant progresses through the program, they will meet with the VJO Specialist to identify barriers/concerns. The VJO Specialist will then connect the participant with the VA, including the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) and Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Ultimately the participant will develop a plan for ongoing connection with the VA, based upon their particular circumstances.

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE (VSO)

The Hamilton County Veterans Service Office assists veterans and their families in obtaining county, state, and federal benefits to include but not limited to service-related disability claims. Hamilton County Veterans Service Office has partnered with VTC to better assist you and your families in many ways, including: answering questions, advising, and educating you on what benefits are available from federal, state, county, and local resources, assisting you in completing and filing benefit claims, and representing you in VA hearings. VSOs are trained and accredited by the VA or other recognized organizations to provide assistance to veterans, their dependents, and survivors. This includes not only applying for federal and state benefits but also providing information on resources related to: Compensation and Pension, Health Care, Education & Training, Employment, Burial & Survivor Assistance, Housing, Transportation, and Military Records.

The VSO attends planning groups, staffing, and court sessions. The VSO also contributes to community education and cooperation with the program and assists with community resources to aid the program. The VSO may provide case coordination, veteran advocacy, and education to the VTC Team and partners about military culture, trauma, and available veteran resources.

VOLUNTEER VETERAN MENTOR

Another difference between VTC and other accountability courts, is the existence of the Veterans Mentor Program. Veteran Mentors are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces who volunteer their time to assist you in VTC by providing non-legal advice, personal experiences, recommendations, and guidance. Our Veterans Mentors come from a variety of backgrounds and service experience. They share one important thing in common: all have demonstrated a commitment to helping fellow veterans.

Experience has shown that veterans respond more favorably to other veterans who have served in the military and share similar experiences. Veteran Mentors will interact with you as a peer, rather than as an authority figure. It is our hope that this active and supportive relationship will increase the likelihood that you will remain in treatment, maintain sobriety, and improve your chances of success.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE LIAISON

In the VTC, the Criminal Justice Liaison serves as a vital bridge between the criminal justice system and behavioral health services, with a specialized focus on justice-involved veterans. Operating within the Tennessee court system, the CJL works collaboratively with court staff, treatment providers, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), law enforcement, and community agencies to ensure coordinated care and successful legal and clinical outcomes for participants.

Such decisions are made using knowledge of addiction, relapse, and other factors (i.e., criminal history, gender, age, culture) that may impact a participant's success. The CJL attends planning groups, staffing, court sessions, contributes to community education and cooperation with the program and assistance with community resources to aid the program. The CJL may provide case coordination, veteran advocacy, crisis intervention and education to court staff and partners about military culture, trauma, and available veteran resources.

TREATMENT

Substance abuse and mental health treatment are provided by the Veterans Health Administration or community partners. The Treatment Agency will coordinate your treatment and may refer you to additional treatment and/or mental health services. After you enter into the program, The Treatment Agency will develop an individualized plan that may involve both group and individual counseling sessions. The schedule will be determined by the Treatment Agency, and attendance is required. You may be required to attend more groups or individual sessions depending upon your treatment plan. Each treatment plan is individualized to best meet the needs of each participant.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Track 1 (General Sessions) is a minimum of 12 months; it consists of four (4) Phases.

Track 2 (Criminal Court) is a minimum of 18 months; it consists of five (5) Phases.

PHASE ONE (1) – COURAGE

minimum of sixty (60) days – 9 weeks

- Weekly court appearances.
- Meet with Case Manager within 1st week for program orientation.
- Maintain contact with Case Manager daily/weekly or as directed.
- Complete Probation intake within three (3) days of entry and maintain compliance with requirements.
- Bi-Weekly attendance in group CBT facilitated by a LCSW/LPC.
- Bi-Weekly attendance in peer support group (if applicable.)
- Frequent & random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly or as directed.
- Engage with Veteran Mentor.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Formulate an individualized treatment plan.
- Engage in individual counseling and/or group therapy as deemed necessary.
- Discuss and formulate a plan for journal entries at court appearances.
- Engage in positive daily activity and cooperation. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, schooling, and/or volunteer work.

Promotion Criteria: Completion of all phase requirements. Fourteen (14) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances and no jail-time sanctions. Submit written advancement letter at Phase Review Meeting detailing what they learned in the current phase.

PHASE TWO (2) – COMMITMENT

minimum of ninety (90) days – 13 weeks

- Bi-weekly court appearances.
- Maintain contact with Case Manager daily/weekly or as directed.
- Maintain compliance with Probation requirements.
- Bi-Weekly attendance in group CBT facilitated by a LCSW/LPC.
- Bi-Weekly attendance in peer support group (if applicable.)
- Frequent & random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly or as directed.
- Engage with Veteran Mentor.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Follow all requirements of the individualized treatment plan.
- Attend one (1) community/outside recovery support meetings per week (if applicable.)
- Obtain a Recovery Support Sponsor (if applicable.)
- Attend individual counseling and/or group therapy as deemed necessary.
- Begin submitting journal entries at court appearances.
- Discuss and set up a 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.

Promotion Criteria: Completion of all phase requirements. Thirty (30) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances and no jail-time sanctions. Submit written advancement letter at Phase Review Meeting detailing what they learned in the current phase.

PHASE THREE (3) – INTEGRITY

minimum of ninety (90) days – 13 weeks

- Appearance in court every three (3) weeks.
- Maintain contact with Case Manager daily/weekly or as directed.
- Maintain compliance with Probation requirements.
- Bi-Weekly attendance in group CBT facilitated by a LCSW/LPC.
- Bi-Weekly attendance in peer support group (if applicable.)
- Frequent & Random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly or as directed.
- Engage with Veteran Mentor.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Follow all requirements of individualized treatment plan.
- Attend two (2) community/outside recovery support meeting per week, may substitute one (1) for a pro-social activity.
- Continue to engage with Recovery Support Sponsor (if applicable.)
- Attend individual counseling and/or group therapy as deemed necessary.
- Submit journal entries at court appearances.
- 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.

Promotion Criteria: Completion of all phase requirements. Forty-five (45) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances and no jail-time sanctions. Submit written advancement letter at Phase Review Meeting detailing what they learned in the current phase.

TRACK 1 – PHASE FOUR (4) - HONOR

TRACK 2 - PHASE FOUR (4) – EXCELLENCE

minimum of one hundred twenty (120) days – 17 weeks

- Monthly court appearance
- Maintain contact with Case Manager daily/weekly or as directed.
- Maintain compliance with Probation requirements.
- As needed attendance in group CBT facilitated by a LCSW/LPC.
- Once monthly attendance in peer support group (if applicable.)
- Frequent & random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly or as directed.
- Engage with Veteran Mentor.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Follow all requirements of individualized treatment plan.
- Attend three (3) community/outside recovery support meeting per week, may substitute one (1) for a pro-social activity.
- Continue to engage with Recovery Support Sponsor (if applicable.)
- Attend individual counseling and/or group therapy as deemed necessary.
- Submit journal entries at court appearances.
- 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.
- Have relapse prevention plan in place upon graduation.

TRACK 1 GRADUATION CRITERIA: Completion of all phase requirements. Ninety (90) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances and no jail-time sanctions. Completion of Graduation Packet. Complete TNRAS reassessment.

TRACK 2 PROMOTION CRITERIA: Completion of all phase requirements. Ninety (90) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances and no jail-time sanctions. Submit written advancement letter at Phase Review Meeting detailing what they learned in the current phase.

PHASE FIVE (5) – HONOR

minimum of one hundred eighty (180) days – 26 weeks

- Monthly court appearances
- Maintain contact with Case Manager daily/weekly or as directed.
- Maintain compliance with Probation requirements.
- As needed attendance in group CBT facilitated by a LCSW/LPC.
- Once monthly attendance in peer support group (if applicable.)
- Frequent & random urine drug screens, minimum of twice weekly.

- Engage with Veteran Mentor.
- Engage with the Veterans Justice Officer (VJO) as needed.
- Follow all requirements of individualized treatment plan.
- Attend three (3) community/outside recovery support meeting per week, may substitute one (1) for a pro-social activity.
- Continue to engage with Recovery Support Sponsor (if applicable.)
- Attend individual counseling and/or group therapy as deemed necessary.
- Submit journal entries at court appearances.
- 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.
- Have relapse prevention plan in place upon graduation.

TRACK 2 GRADUATION CRITERIA: Completion of all phase requirements. Ninety (90) consecutive days of abstinence from all mood-altering substances and no jail-time sanctions. Completion of Graduation Packet. Complete TNRAS reassessment.

GRADUATION PACKET REQUIREMENTS:

1. Complete *Graduation Questionnaire* and *Recovery Plan for Post-Graduation* and return to Case Manager.
2. Complete a *Giveback Project* and provide pictures and log of hours/work completed to Case Manager.
3. Write *Life Story* in letter form to the Judge regarding your progress in the VTC Program. The life story must be submitted to and approved by the VTC Case Managers and **MUST** include the following:
 - a. Background: Life before VTC
 - b. Arrest situation
 - c. Reflections on VTC successes
 - d. Reflections on VTC struggles
 - e. Plans/Goals for the future: personal and recovery
4. All Court fines must be paid in full unless otherwise approved by the VTC Team.
5. Complete an exit interview with your Case Manager.

GIVE-BACK PROJECT

A Community Give-Back Project must be completed by the end of Phase Five (5) of the program (Phase Four (4) if in General Sessions – Track 1 Docket) in order to successfully complete the Veterans Treatment Court Program. The project should not start prior to your promotion to Phase 3. The project is a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours of community service that benefits the local community. **It will be your responsibility to think of an idea and obtain approval for the project.** You may ask your mentor, the Mentor Coordinator or VTC Peer Support Specialist for help with ideas or in planning a Give-Back Project, but it must be approved by the Case Manager prior to starting. You may team up with other participants on a project as long as each participant completes their hours.

Examples of acceptable projects include: beautification projects, donating time to a local

organization, etc...

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

STATUS HEARINGS/COURTHOUSE BEHAVIOR

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 session. The calendar will also be posted in the VTC office. You must be punctual. Court is called to order at 1:30 p.m. for all phases.

Once in the courtroom, conversations should be minimal. When the Judge is in the courtroom, you are to have no side conversations with your fellow participants. You are not allowed to read or sleep in the courtroom. You are not to have food, drink, or chewing gum in the courtroom. You may not use your cellphone or any other electronic device in the courtroom. If your cellphone goes off, in any way, while in the courtroom, it may be confiscated. You are responsible for the behavior of your guests. When you are addressed by the Judge, you should stand and respond respectfully. This means your answers should be “Yes, sir” and “No, sir,” spoken clearly, and made to the Judge. Do not interrupt the Judge when he is speaking to you or to your fellow participants. Do not use vulgar language. Violations of Courthouse behavior will result in sanctions.

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. Your attire **CANNOT** include sleeveless shirts/dresses, tank tops, see-through clothing, tube/halter-tops, revealing clothing, tight clothing, excessively baggy clothing, hats, sunglasses, flip-flops, clothing with holes or clothing with offensive language, alcohol, or drugs or references to such. Loud and boisterous behavior is unacceptable. This behavior and attire is required **ANYTIME** you are in the courthouse, the VTC Office, or any other location that would be an extension of VTC. 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.

If you are contacted by the VTC Office to report to court even if it is not on a required date, you must appear. You can expect this notice for screening violations or violations which result in community service or jail time.

PHASE REVIEWS

You are required to complete a phase review meeting with your Case Manager at the end of each phase. You will not be allowed to phase up to the next phase with any pending jail and community service sanctions. All phase ups are reviewed and granted at the discretion of the Court Team. You are required to schedule your Phase Review meeting with the Case Manager a maximum of two (2) weeks before the Court date that you anticipate moving to the next phase. The Phase Review meeting will consist of reviewing your care coordination plan and making any necessary updates, completing the Recovery Capital Scale, and Phase checklist. If the team approves, you will be

allowed to move up at your next court session. At that court session, you will read your advancement letter to the court and receive an achievement award from the presiding Judge.

JOURNAL ENTRIES

Starting in phase 2, at each court appearance you 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 your case manager by noon the day before court, then turned over to the Judge to read. Upon graduation, you will receive a packet of all journal entries from the entirety of the program.

TREATMENT SERVICES

The VTC 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 the result of community partnerships with other local agencies:

- Recovery Support Groups (AA/NA, etc.)
- Group Therapy
- Individual Therapy
- Addiction Treatment Services (ATS)
- Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)
- Supervised Transitional Housing Programs
- Residential Treatment
- Relapse Prevention Class (Matrix)
- Seeking Safety Class
- Moral Reconnection Therapy (MRT)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR)
- Sensory Regulation
- Couples and/or Family Therapy
- Life Skills Class
- Mindfulness
- Anger Management Class
- Mental Health referral and follow up services

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

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 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), Buprenorphine (Suboxone), and Methadone while in the program, if the participant is under the supervision of a trusted medical professional. MAT medications are still subject to being abused; therefore, you must only take the recommended dosage as prescribed by a trusted medical professional. If it is determined that you are abusing MAT medications, you may be subject to sanctions.

Prior to enrolling in a MAT program, you should 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 participation in a MAT program.

IN-PATIENT TREATMENT

A participant may be referred to inpatient treatment as a condition of the VTC program or as a result of clinical recommendation, relapse, or noncompliance with treatment. All inpatient treatment placements must be approved by the VTC Team prior to admission, unless immediate placement is required due to a medical or psychiatric emergency, in which case notice shall be provided to the VTC Team as soon as practical. The participant and/or their treatment provider shall notify the VTC Case Manager immediately upon determination of the need for inpatient treatment.

Duration and Communication:

The participant shall remain in the inpatient facility for the duration prescribed by the treatment provider, unless otherwise directed by the Court. The participant is required to maintain regular communication with the VTC Team and Probation Officer during inpatient placement, to the extent permitted by the treatment facility and consistent with clinical recommendations. Treatment updates shall be provided to the VTC Team by the treatment provider at intervals determined appropriate by the team.

Compliance and Program Status:

Time spent in inpatient treatment is considered active participation in the program. Failure to complete the inpatient program without approval from the court team or clinical provider may constitute noncompliance and may result in sanctions or other judicial action. Case Manager shall be notified at least two (2) weeks prior to discharge from the treatment facility in order to facilitate reentry planning. The participant will attend the next scheduled court session, unless otherwise directed and meet with the Case Manager upon return.

Court Attendance and Requirements:

Participants in inpatient treatment are excused from in-person court appearances and program requirements during the period of admission, unless alternative arrangements are made and approved by the VTC judge. The participant shall resume full program participation upon discharge, including drug testing, court appearances, and outpatient services.

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. You are required to meet with a therapist or other

appropriate health care professionals individually upon admission into the program to assess the need for individual sessions.

COMMUNITY-SUPPORT MEETINGS

Community-support meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Celebrate Recovery (CR) or other similar VTC-approved programs are required. There is a variety of meetings in the county. You may pick which ones you would like to attend. When available, the Peer Support Group hosted by VTC 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. If the community support meetings require a sponsor, then the participant must show good faith efforts in obtaining and working with a sponsor. At the meetings you need to:

- Be honest.
- Listen to others and be respectful.
- Good faith efforts in obtaining and working with a Sponsor (if required)
- Gain additional support for your recovery
- Maintain confidentiality

Meeting sheets should be signed at the time of attendance of the community 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.

PRO-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

A pro-social activity is any law-abiding activity that fosters personal growth, enhances social skills, structures free time constructively, encourages positive interactions with others, supports healthy community involvement, or promotes positive lifestyle choices. These activities are intended to replace negative or harmful behaviors with meaningful and rewarding alternatives.

Pro-social activities should meet the following criteria:

1. Promote physical, emotional, or mental wellness
2. Encourage connection to community, family, or peers
3. Foster positive self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment
4. Be legal, safe, and free of substance use
5. Support program goals (e.g., recovery, accountability, employment readiness)

Examples of acceptable pro-social activities include, but are not limited to:

- Attending or volunteering at community events (e.g., festivals, clean-up days, fundraisers)
- Participating in support groups or recovery-related events
- Involvement in organized sports, exercise classes, or recreational leagues
- Volunteering with nonprofit organizations, religious groups, or service clubs
- Attending educational classes, life-skills groups, or vocational training
- Participation in faith-based activities or spiritual gatherings
- Spending quality time with family (e.g., family dinners, outings)

- Attending art classes, hobby groups, or creative workshops (e.g., music, writing, crafting)
- Engaging in healthy leisure activities (e.g., hiking, bowling, visiting museums)

You may be required to provide documentation or verification of pro-social activity participation, such as sign-in sheets, photographs, receipts, or written confirmation from a supervisor or event organizer. All pro-social activities should be discussed and approved in advance by the case manager.

Activities that are solitary, unstructured, or involve substance use, criminal behavior, or associations with high-risk individuals are not considered pro-social and may be grounds for noncompliance.

HOUSING PLACEMENTS

Housing 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 and supportive home to go to after release from jail.
- There are people living in your home who use illegal drugs and/or are under the supervision of the court or other legal issues are present.
- There are people living in your home that are not equipped to assist you with the relationships, friends, places and things that need to change to support your recovery.
- You need more structure and accountability.
- You request it.
- The VTC 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 the facility offers. You must be in Phase Two (2) or above, complete a travel request form and submit it to the Case Manager.
- Attend VTC status hearings, as scheduled, unless other arrangements are made by the placement facility and case manager.
- Attend VTC classes as scheduled.
- Complete a transitional-living plan with the placement facility and case manager before leaving.
- Submit to all drug screens required by the placement facility and the VTC Program.
- Engage in treatment and maintain compliance.

EDUCATION, VOCATION, AND EMPLOYMENT

Recovery from substance addiction and mental health issues means becoming a self-sufficient and productive, responsible member of the community. As part of the VTC Program, if able, you may be required to account for no less than 24 hours each week through employment, volunteer hours, and/or educational hours for the duration of the program. Case Manager must approve these activities. If required, verification showing the total number of hours completed per month must

be submitted to the Case Manager on the 1st Wednesday of each month, by noon, to show proof of hours completed for the previous month. If unemployed, you may be required to submit copies of applications, as directed by the Case Manager, to show your effort in obtaining a job. If you lose or change employment, you must notify the Case Manager within 72 hours of the employment change.

If employed as a contract worker (1099), we require a letter from the employer stating their intent to file the 1099 on your behalf, as well as documentation of continued work. If you are self-employed, you must provide a copy of your business license/business setup documentation initially and then copies of checks, invoices, receipts, purchase of supplies, documentation of hours worked, etc., monthly to show continued work. If you are in school, you must provide proof of continued enrollment through credit hours, class descriptions, schedule, grades, etc. All questions regarding employment verification should be directed to the Case Manager. Failure to work at least 24 hours per week (96 hours a month) will result in sanctions unless a valid excuse has been submitted (i.e., doctor note).

You cannot work in a bar, restaurant or establishment where the primary sales are drugs or alcohol, such as a package store or vape shop. Additionally, you may not work where narcotics, dangerous drugs, or other mood-altering substances are available unless otherwise approved by the staff in advance.

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

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

While active in VTC, you are responsible for meeting all financial obligations such as:

- Restitution.
- 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 delayed phase promotion or completion of the program.

You must provide their case manager with proof of regular payments being made on all fees, costs, fines, and restitution. A participant may request a budget meeting with the Case Manager, or if financial issues are known to the VTC Team, the Judge may order the participant to complete a budget and have follow up meetings with the Case Manager to ensure adherence to the budget. If on a budget or payment contract, failure to make timely payments may result in delayed phase promotion or completion of the program.

DRUG TESTING

Random drug and alcohol screening will be required of all participants entering the Veterans Treatment Court program.

PARTICIPANTS ON MISDEMEANOR SUPERVISION

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.

PARTICIPANTS ON FELONY SUPERVISION

Drug and alcohol testing will be administered by Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) Probation & Parole Services, located at 3602 Elwood Ln, Chattanooga, TN 37416. 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. All specimens will be collected under direct observation, following mandated protocols.
2. 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 VTC Team.
3. 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).
4. 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. Failure to report will be considered a missed screen.
5. It is the participant's responsibility to report to the assigned location at the time given for the test.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. If a participant produces a diluted urine sample, it will be considered a non-negative test for drugs/alcohol and they will be sanctioned.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Participants are informed that the use of creatinine supplements are prohibited while

participating in VTC.

12. 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.
13. 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 Case Manager. Non-negative screens may result in a sanction. The Case Manager 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.

Honesty is the guiding principle for VTC. Therefore, the VTC Team may use discretion in determining the sanction or choose not to impose a sanction if 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

DILUTE DRUG SCREENS

Dilution occurs when an individual consumes an excessive amount of fluid within a short period of time, often in an attempt to mask the presence of alcohol or drugs in the body. A urine specimen is considered dilute when the creatinine concentration is equal to or below 20 mg/dL. The normal range for urine creatinine is 60 to 300 mg/dL in the absence of kidney disease. While creatinine levels may vary from day to day, most individuals fall within the normal range under typical hydration patterns.

VTC encourages all participants to maintain healthy hydration by drinking eight to ten 8-ounce glasses of water daily. However, excessive fluid consumption directly before providing a urine specimen can result in dilution. The body maintains homeostasis, or balance, by regulating fluid intake and waste excretion, and therefore normal hydration will not negatively affect test results. Eating extra protein, exercising, or running does not significantly influence creatinine levels due to this regulatory process. The primary factor that affects dilution is fluid consumption immediately prior to specimen collection.

In order to avoid dilute specimens, participants are advised to limit fluid intake for two to four hours prior to providing a urine sample, while maintaining their normal hydration practices before and after this period. Holding urine for extended periods is not recommended, as this is not

beneficial to bladder health and does not prevent dilution. Additionally, excessive consumption of tea or similar diuretic beverages should be avoided, as they may contribute to a dilute specimen. Products marketed as detoxifiers, flushers or “drug test cleansers” should also be avoided, as they typically act as diuretics and may result in invalid specimens.

When a dilute urine specimen is identified, the result may be considered invalid or non-compliant in accordance with program requirements. In such cases, the participant will review the Dilute Information Sheet with the Case Manager. Chronic or repeated dilute specimens may result in sanctions or service adjustments, up to and including termination.

Medical conditions, such as chronic kidney disease, may cause naturally dilute urine specimens. Individuals with a diagnosed medical condition that may affect test results must provide documentation from a licensed physician prior to admission into the program. The documentation must clearly state the condition and its relationship to dilute specimens. Failure to provide appropriate medical documentation may result in exclusion from program participation.

MEDICATION USE

For some participants, who are actively drug testing as part of this treatment court, it is very important that they not take certain medications, as certain medications could be detrimental to their recovery as well as cause false positives in drug screening.

Remember, once sworn into the program no over-the-counter medications not on the pre-approved list 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 You 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 participants are not compliant with prescription medications, the Treatment Team may recommend the participant take the shot form of the medication to assist with compliance.

INCIDENTAL ALCOHOL EXPOSURE

It is the participants responsibility to limit their exposure to products and substances that contain ethyl alcohol. It is the participants responsibility to read product labels carefully and educate themselves to know what is contained in the products they use and consume and to stop and inspect these products BEFORE use. **Use of products containing ethyl alcohol (ethanol) will NOT be allowed as an excuse for a positive test result. When in doubt, don't use, consume or apply!**

- You are prohibited from using alcohol-containing cough/cold syrups, such as Nyquil®.
- Although legally considered non-alcoholic, NA beers (e.g. O'Douls®, Sharps®) do contain a residual amount of alcohol that may result in a positive test result for alcohol, if consumed. You are not permitted to ingest NA beer or NA wine.
- Fermented products/fermented beverages (such as Kombucha) can have alcohol content percentages often above 0.5% and at higher unregulated levels which could result in a positive screen for alcohol. Flavoring extracts, such as vanilla or almond extract, and liquid herbal extracts (such as Ginko Biloba), could result in a positive screen for alcohol or its breakdown products. Communion wine, food cooked with wine, and flambé' dishes (alcohol poured over a food and ignited such as cherries jubilee, baked Alaska) must be avoided.
- Most mouthwashes (Listermint®, Cepacol®, etc.) and other breath cleansing products contain ethyl alcohol. The use of mouthwashes containing ethyl alcohol can produce a positive test result. Non-alcohol mouthwashes are readily available and are an acceptable alternative.
- Hand sanitizers (e.g. Purell®, Germex ®, etc.) and other antiseptic gels and foams used to disinfect hands contain up to 70% ethyl alcohol. **Excessive, unnecessary or repeated use of these products could result in a positive urine test.** Hand washing with soap and water is just as effective for killing germs.
- Aftershaves and colognes, hair sprays and mousse, astringents, insecticides (bug sprays such as Off®) and some body washes contain ethyl alcohol. While it is unlikely that limited use of these products would result in a positive test for alcohol (or its breakdown products) excessive, unnecessary or repeated use of these products could affect test results.
- Many solvents, lacquers and surface preparation products used in industry, construction, and the home, contain ethyl alcohol. Both excessive inhalation of vapors, and topical exposure to such products, can potentially cause a positive test result for alcohol.

DRUGS THAT ARE NOT TO BE TAKEN INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

CANNABINOIDS/CANNABINOID DERIVATIVES/SYNTHETICS/NARCOTICS

All cannabinoids and their derivatives, to include but not limited to: Delta-8, Delta -9, Delta-10, and CBD, Synthetic Cannabinoids, Synthetic Marijuana, K2, Spice, Salvia, Synthetic Cathinones, Methylenedioxypyrovalerone (MDPV), Mephedrone, Methyline, Bath Salts, Molly, MDMA, Glass Cleaner, Plant Food, Pyro (N-pyrrolidino etonitazene), or any other non-prescribed mood- or mind-altering substances not prescribed by a physician.

While under the supervision of the VTC, you are NOT permitted to use CBD products, kratom, products containing Hemp, products containing poppy seeds, or products containing alcohol. The VTC does NOT accept Medical Marijuana Cards.

VOLATILE SUBSTANCES/INHALANT ANESTHETICS

Anesthetics	Banana Oil	Glue	Penthrane
Amyl/Butyl Nitrite (also called Liquid Gold and Poppers)	Fluothane	Nitrous Oxide (also called Whippets)	Pentothal
	Freon	Paint Thinners	Surital
	Gasoline		

APPROVED “OVER THE COUNTER” MEDICATIONS

The following medications are approved for you 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. You are responsible for reading 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).

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

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/Rolaids

FLU SYMPTOMS: Theraflu (No PM formula), Alka-Seltzer, Mucinex (No DM formula), Sudafed PE

ALLERGY/ COUGH & COLD:

Claritin (Loratadine), Allegra (Fexofenadine Hydrochloride), Zyrtec (Cetirizine Hydrochloride), Seldane (Terfenadine), Nasal Strips, Saline Nasal Spray, Vick’s Vapor Rub (No “D” or “DM” Formula)

VITAMINS: Multi-Vitamin, Pre-natal Vitamin

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**.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A CLEAN, TESTABLE SAMPLE.

PHONE POLICY

VTC Clients **must** have a telephone (or cell phone) to participate in Veterans Court. While clients are residing at a halfway house or treatment facility, 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. In the event a participant's telephone service is disconnected or their phone number is changed, the participant shall notify both the VTC and their Probation Officer as soon as reasonably possible, but in no case later than seventy-two (72) hours from the time of the disconnection or change.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at court sessions, treatment sessions, VA Appointments, and support recovery meetings is mandatory. You will be assigned a recovery support group and will be expected to attend every session as directed. Excused absences are the exception, not the rule. Occasionally, you may be granted excused absences from court, treatment, or other scheduled appointments. You must contact your case manager by 10:00am the day of court if an excuse is needed – documentation must be provided. Examples of reasons for excuse:

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

In the event of a medical emergency, the participant shall present their provider with the Physician Form, available on the program's website, so the case manager is promptly informed of the participants treatment. Proof of the emergency must be given for an absence to be excused after non-attendance.

In the event of a death in immediate family, you must call your case manager. 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.

Court Status Hearings are every Thursday at 1:30pm, unless directed otherwise. You are expected to be on time. You should be seated when the Judge takes the bench. You may be granted a late grace period of five (5) minutes. After five (5) minutes you are considered "No Show" and will be required to report to court the next morning to check in with the Judge and Case Manager to explain your absence. If you do not appear in court following a "No Show" a Capias (warrant) may be issued.

CONFIDENTIALITY

To participate in VTC, you will be required to sign releases of information forms, which include your consent for the release of confidential information for staffing and open court hearings and review. This disclosure of information is for the sole purpose of hearings and reports concerning your VTC Program and Court case for collaboration with substance abuse and mental health providers regarding your treatment.

CONFIDENTIALITY IN STAFFING

The VTC Team will meet prior to court to discuss your progress, at a meeting called staffing. This does not mean that the court personnel will learn about your private discussions during treatments sessions. Rather, the staffing team will learn more general information, such as whether you are participating, and/or progressing in your treatment.

CONFIDENTIALITY IN COURT

The courtroom is a public place, and VTC is open to the public. Recognize that in an open and public courtroom, it is possible for an observer to connect you with the fact that you are in a treatment court. You have consented to this potential disclosure. However, as a general principle, you will not be asked in open court to disclose any mental health diagnosis, mental health medications or personal information discussed in treatment.

CONFIDENTIALITY IN TREATMENT

What is said in group, stays in group. Obviously, people are not going to talk easily about themselves unless they feel safe and secure. One way to feel safe and secure is to make sure that everything shared in group is not mentioned outside the group. Therefore, to avoid hurting fellow group members, do not gossip about what was discussed in group. By “gossiping” outside of group you make it harder for group members to feel safe sharing, and thus all group members end up being deprived of comments and perspectives which could help them grow.

FRATERNIZATION POLICY

Due to the sensitive nature of recovery, participants in the VTC shall not establish an intimate/physical relationship with other participants in the program. Such relationships are prohibited and may result in sanctions or termination from the program. You may not hang out together where alcohol is served (bars, breweries, wineries, etc.) unless it is an event approved in advance by the VTC Office. You are not allowed to be in an establishment where the primary purpose is alcohol or drug related or where food is no longer served. This is not intended as punishment but rather to encourage sobriety. Thus, the goal of drug testing is to provide accountability and confirmation of an individual’s progress towards recovery. At no point in the program should you donate money to each other (including cash, money order, gift cards, etc.). You should use caution when entering into a business relationship with other participants.

You must report any and all contact with law enforcement to the VTC Office by the close of business the next business day. For example, if your law enforcement contact occurs on Tuesday, you must notify the VTC Office by 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday. If contact occurs on the weekend, you must report it to the VTC Office by 4:00 p.m. on Monday. Arrests should be reported immediately.

SOCIAL NETWORKING/PERSONAL WEBSITES POLICY

Participants of VTC shall not use any social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok, Twitter (X), LinkedIn, YouTube, or other medium of communication to post or broadcast any materials which would adversely affect the efficiency, professionalism, integrity or to discredit the court. Participants are prohibited from utilizing the name of Veterans Treatment Court to solicit funds for individual compensation.

TELEHEALTH POLICY

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

TRAVEL REQUESTS

Participants may submit a leave request, in writing, for the team to consider. Participants will be allowed two (2) leave requests per phase, each leave shall not exceed seven (7) days. Leaves cannot be taken consecutively; there must be a minimum of seven (7) days between leaves. The VTC Team must approve the leave request prior to leave being taken and the following conditions must apply:

- Participant may attend support recovery meetings during, before and/or after their leave depending on the details of the request.
- Participant must have a valid reason for the leave request (cannot take leave to “stay home and relax”).
- Participant must be in compliance and have approval from VTC before taking leave.
- Participant must submit the request in time for the team to discuss it prior to the date of the leave requested (7 days prior). Staffing is held on Thursdays; leave must be submitted prior to Treatment Team Meeting.
- If Participant is under the supervision of another agency, they must also be in good standing with that agency and have their approval.
- Participant must report for a drug screen the day prior to leaving and upon return.
- Participant must comply with any additional approval requirements.

Any violation of the terms of the travel request may result in future travel requests being denied.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

You 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 provide childcare services to participants. The VTC staff may assist 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.

MEDICAL LEAVE

If at any time a participant becomes medically unable to continue the program, the participant may be placed on a medical leave status until such time the individual becomes capable of continued participation. It is preferred for medical leave to be approved in advance, if possible, and appropriate forms must be completed so participants are aware of what is expected of them during such a leave. The participant is responsible for complying with all directions of the VTC Team while on medical leave, including, but not limited to, weekly status reports, and updates from any doctor visits. Medical leave does not count as a leave request; however, the participants time in the Program shall be frozen while away. participants may be required to attend court at the direction of the VTC staff during leave. Additionally, medical leave situations will be reviewed by the VTC Team at the six week point to determine if continued leave will be granted. In the event a participant becomes permanently unable to continue the program, participant may be released from the program with an administrative discharge.

Dental & Surgical Procedures

If a participant requires a dental or surgical procedures while in the program, they must inform the VTC staff as soon as possible, prior to the surgery or procedure. The Participant must provide information about the type of procedure and when it is tentatively scheduled. Documentation from the doctor or dentist of the necessity of the surgery or procedure is required. All necessary medication must be pre-approved by the Case Manager; therefore, a list of medications the doctor anticipates prescribing before, during, and after the procedure is required. The Notice to Medical Professionals/Physicians Form must be completed and submitted. Medical leave does not count as a leave; however, your time in the program will be on hold until you return to all program requirements. participants may be required to check in with their Case Manager, as directed by the VTC Team.

Maternity Leave

Any participant who is pregnant is eligible to request maternity leave from active participation in VTC programming, including court appearances, treatment sessions, and supervision requirements. You must notify their VTC Case Manager and/or Treatment Provider of their pregnancy as soon as reasonably possible. A formal written request for maternity leave shall be submitted to the VTC Team, along with documentation from a licensed medical provider confirming the pregnancy and anticipated due date. The VTC Team will review the request and determine the appropriate duration and conditions of the leave.

Duration and Conditions:

Maternity leave shall generally not exceed **six (6) weeks** postpartum, unless additional time is medically necessary and documented. During the leave period, participants are excused from all in-person court sessions, treatment appointments, drug testing, and supervision meetings, unless otherwise specified. Alternative remote check-ins or modified requirements may be implemented based on individual capacity and medical advice. You are required to maintain periodic contact with their VTC Case Manager throughout the leave period to provide updates on their status and anticipated return date. Participants must notify their Case Manager and the VTC Team at least one (1) week prior to their expected return in order to facilitate reentry planning.

Post-Leave Reentry:

Participants are expected to resume full compliance with all VTC requirements upon the conclusion of their approved leave period. A reentry plan, including updated treatment and supervision schedules, shall be developed in coordination with the participant, treatment providers, and the VTC Team.

Non-Compliance:

Failure to notify the court or comply with the maternity leave process may result in non-compliance reporting and appropriate sanctions, unless good cause is demonstrated.

Confidentiality:

All medical information and personal disclosures related to pregnancy and maternity leave shall be treated as confidential and maintained in accordance with HIPAA and applicable privacy laws.

SANCTIONS

Immediate, graduated, and individualized sanctions govern VTC responses to the participant's noncompliance. Graduated sanctions are used to help the participant conform behavior to program requirements. Sanctions are crafted in an individualized and creative manner, as well as in a progressive manner based on the infraction. Sanctions imposed will be centered on evidence-based principles of effective behavioral modification and will be predictable, fair and consistent. Sanctions are issued when there is noncompliance with program rules or failure to comply with treatment plans. Sanctions shall be used as a deterrent to negative behavior and to encourage future compliance.

Below are examples of potential sanctions:

Low Level Sanctions:

- Verbal Warning/Admonishment
- Meeting with Case Manager
- Increased drug testing
- Increase support groups
- Verbal/Written apology to other participants and the court

Moderate Level Sanctions:

- Designated Community Service days
- Suspension/Restriction of travel privileges
- Special assignments such as observing full criminal court sessions – “Jury Box”

High Level Sanctions:

- Daily check-ins
- Behavior contract
- Phase extension/delay
- GPS Monitoring/ House Arrest
- Incarceration
- Termination

IMPLEMENTATION OF SANCTIONS

Once a violation requiring the implantation of a sanction has come to the awareness of the Court, the VTC Case Manager will make a sanction recommendation to the Team at the next Staffing Meeting. The Court Team will discuss the violation and proposed sanction. Once the Team has agreed to the sanction to be imposed, the VTC Public Defender will discuss the sanction with the participant and represent them in front of the Judge. The VTC Public Defendant must have adequate time prior to any sanction being imposed, to discuss the sanction with the participant. A participant may choose to accept the sanction, or contest the violation. If a participant chooses to accept the sanction, the VTC Public Defender will represent the participant while the sanction is being imposed. If the participant chooses to contest the violation, then a hearing will be held before the Judge to determine the validity of the violation. The Prosecutor may call witnesses to testify, or provide documents and other evidence to support the violation. The VTC Public Defender will represent the participant during this hearing. If the Judge sustains the violation, then the participant will receive the sanction as previously determined by the VTC Team or other appropriate remedied determined by the Judge. If the Team cannot come to an agreement on the sanction to be imposed the final decision lies with the Judge.

INCENTIVES

Incentives are also used to recognize accomplishments and reward those individuals who are working their program and making forward progress in their recovery.

Below are examples of possible incentives:

Low Level Incentives:

- Verbal Praise
- Candy
- Go first/ Leave court early
- Point System

Moderate Level Incentives:

- Fee credit
- Applause from the Judge, Team and others present
- Remove/Reduce sanctions
- Written commendations
- Extra leave request
- Other tangible rewards (journal/calendar/planner)

High Level Incentives:

- Certificate of completion of phase/class/program
- Achievement award memorandum
- Handshake from Judge
- Standing ovation from team
- Graduation certificate
- Challenge coin – to be received at graduation.

SERVICE ADJUSTMENTS

Punitive sanctions are not imposed for otherwise compliant participants who are not responding to treatment interventions. Where a participant is not responding to treatment interventions, the Court may adjust the treatment plan or level of care based on professional recommendations. Service adjustments are determined on a case-by-case basis and may be delivered with sanctions.

Examples of service adjustments include, but are not limited to:

Supervision Adjustments:

- Increase or decrease the frequency of court status hearings.
- Increase or decrease the frequency of home visits.
- Increase or decrease the frequency of drug and alcohol testing.
- Increase or decrease the frequency of office or field visits with community supervision officers.

Treatment Adjustments:

- Modify the frequency of sessions, level of care, or modality of treatment.
- Initiate or modify specialized services and counseling groups.
- Initiate or modify medications.
- Implement harm reduction strategies.
- Report daily to a treatment program.
- Increase attendance at a mutual peer support group.
- Initiate or modify peer recovery specialist support.
- Report to peer respite staffed by peer recovery specialists.

Learning Assignments:

- Activity log
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) assignment
- Essay assignment
- Journaling exercise
- Life skills assignment
- Supervised social gatherings

TERMINATIONS

It is the policy of the VTC to attempt to maintain participants in the program whenever possible. The Court and the Team recognize that it cannot have any effect on the person unless they are in the program. It also acknowledges that relapse sometimes occurs, and relapse by itself should not

be cause for expulsion unless such relapses continue to a point that is apparent that the participant is not working to maintain sobriety. VTC will ensure termination hearings are consistent with state regulations. The decision to terminate a participant from VTC will be discussed as a team and only when sufficient evidence is present to support a termination. Once the VTC Team has decided the evidence suggests the need for termination, a termination request will be completed by the Case Manager. This request will include all evidence that supports a termination. The request will be in chronological order and be provided to both the Prosecutor and Public Defender. The Judge will set the termination hearing date. All evidence will be presented at that hearing with the opportunity for cross examination. The Judge will make the ultimate decision.

The following situations may result in termination:

- Participant is chronically non-compliant with the rules of VTC and or Participation Contract (i.e., continual unexcused absences, fails to follow through with treatment recommendations, has refused or failed to sign or update necessary releases or waivers, resulting in the Team being unable to follow the participant's progress.)
- Participant absconds for 30 consecutive days.
- Selling or distributing any illegal substances.
- Participant has moved out of Hamilton County, TN without approval from VTC.
- Participant tampers with or attempts to adulterate/falsify a urinalysis screen.
- Violent, disruptive, or threatening behavior to other participants or VTC Staff.
- Participant is re-arrested for new criminal charges while in the program (case-by-case basis).
- Participant knowingly involves another participant in prohibited actions.
- Participant violates the fraternization policy with another VTC participant.
- Participant needs are outside the scope of services provided by VTC.
- Participant, who is subsequently diagnosed with a physical or mental condition that renders him/her unable to comply with the program requirements, may be released from the program with an "administrative discharge".

SELF-TERMINATION

Termination initiated by a participant is discouraged. However, if a person is adamant that they wish to self-terminate their participation, they are allowed to do so. A hearing will not occur upon a self-termination. The participant will either be advised in Court that their self-termination is accepted or they will receive a letter from the VTC Coordinator advising them that their request has been accepted by the Court and termination ordered. Should a participant elect to self-terminate they will complete an exit interview on termination. Following self-termination, the participant's case will return to the appropriate criminal or sessions court for a probation revocation hearing. Many times, completion of the VTC program is a requirement of a participant's probation. Before a participant initiates a self-termination, he/she will meet with the VTC Public Defender to discuss any potential legal consequences.

ADMINISTRATIVE DISCHARGE

If a VTC participant cannot complete VTC, through no fault of his/her own, he/ she may be administratively discharged. In some cases, an administrative discharge might be initiated by the court for policy reasons, or because the participants needs have changed to a point where the existing services of VTC can no longer meet them. If the VTC Team determines that administrative

discharge is appropriate, a member of the VTC Staff shall complete an affidavit of administrative discharge to provide to the VTC judge. The VTC judge shall complete a Notice of Termination by administrative discharge on a form provided by the court and refer the case back to the appropriate criminal or sessions court. An administrative discharge does not make the participant ineligible to re-apply to VTC at a later date.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR TERMINATION

A discharge for safety concerns occurs when the court determines that a participant's condition makes them too dangerous for the supportive, community-based structure of the program. In a case qualifying for Emergency Procedures for Termination, a request can be made to expedite a termination hearing. The team must first decide if termination is the only remaining option after exhausting other sanctions and treatment modifications. If the team determines termination is necessary due to a public safety threat, they must fully document the behavior, the reasons for termination, and the justification. The participant must be notified by their legal counsel of the allegations, evidence, and upcoming hearing. A termination hearing is required, and the participant must be given an opportunity to be heard and present evidence. If a request for an expedited hearing is made by the VTC Team, the Judge will balance concerns for safety with the participants due process rights to determine when the hearing will occur. VTC must remain a safe environment for the VTC Team, as well as other participants in the program.

DATA COLLECTION

The program realizes the need to measure the programs performance outcomes. The measurements are used to monitor the success and failures of program initiatives and objectives, and to give insight as to any necessary program modifications and implementations. Currently the program measures: ethnicity, gender, marital status, employment, education, community service, terminations, successful You, violations (new arrest and technical), and withdrawals, admissions, urinalysis, officer contacts and field work, risk and needs evaluations, incarceration days served, number of participants in program phases and recidivism.

TITLE VI

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to ensure the people of the United States equal treatment, rights and opportunities regardless of race, color, or national origin. Title VI of that Act prohibits discrimination in federally funded programs.

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Included under National Origin is discrimination based on a person's inability to speak, read, write, or understand English. Persons whose primary language is not English can be Limited English Proficient or “LEP”. These individuals may be entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter.

All programs and operations of entities that receive assistance from the Federal government must comply.

It is important that all applicants and recipients of services know about their rights under the law, and that employees of the Hamilton County Veterans Treatment Court, as well as other agencies, organizations, institutions, and contractors providing services with state support understand what the law requires.

Any person who applies for or receives any benefit or service provided by Hamilton County Veterans Treatment Court may file a complaint if he or she has had unfair or different treatment because of race, color, or national origin.

Complaints must be filed in writing with the Hamilton County Title VI Department or Tennessee Human Rights Commission, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or he/she may file a lawsuit in the appropriate court.

Hamilton County Veterans Treatment Court does not, because of race, color, or national origin:

- Deny any individual any services, opportunity, or other benefit for which he/she is otherwise qualified
- Provide any individual with and service, or other benefit, which is different or is provided in a different manner from that which is provided to others under the program.
- Subject any individual to segregated or separate treatment in any manner related to his/her receipt of service
- Restrict an individual in any way in the employment of services, facilities or any other advantage, privilege or other advantage, privilege or other benefit provided to others under the program
- Adopt methods of administration which would limit participation by any group of recipients or subject them to discrimination
- Address any individual in a manner that denotes inferiority because of race, color, or national origin

A Hamilton County Title VI brochure is provided for your information. If you have questions concerning Title VI, please contact the Hamilton County Title VI Department by calling (423)209-6146 or via email to TitleVI@HamiltonTN.Gov. The Title VI Department is located at 401 W. MLK Blvd, Chattanooga, TN 37403.

PURPOSE: To ensure compliance with the following:

- A. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act states: "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."
- B. Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) 4-21-904: "It is a discriminatory practice for any state agency receiving federal funds, making it subject to Title VI of the Civil rights Act of 1964, or any person receiving funds from a state agency, to exclude a person from participation in, deny benefits to a person, or to subject a person to discrimination under any program or activity receiving such funds, on the basis of race, color or national origin. "

- C. Title VI Limited English Proficiency (LEP): § "Limited English Proficiency"- is defined as the inability to speak, read, write, or understand the English language at a level that permits a service recipient to interact effectively with staff in accessing services and benefits.
- § Executive Order 13166 (August 11, 2000) requires all agencies that receive federal funding to provide services that are accessible to persons with Limited English proficiency.
 - § Not providing services that are accessible constitutes discrimination based on national origin.

POLICY:

VTC will comply with all Federal and State mandated Title VI legislation for the purpose of ensuring that services provided do not discriminate against people because of their race, color, national origin or limited English proficiency. Should Title VI complaints arise, they will be addressed in a timely manner following the policies of Hamilton County General Government (pg. 50).

PROCEDURE:

Signage is available in each VTC office to inform all You, staff, volunteers, and visitors of their right to file a complaint if they feel they have been discriminated against. VTC will take reasonable steps to ensure all clients are notified at their initial contact of their right to receive equal treatment without discrimination based upon their race, color, national origin or having Limited English Proficiency (LEP). They will also be informed of their right to file a complaint and how to file a complaint should they feel discriminated against.

Each participant will have Title VI reviewed with them at plea and at orientation. Chief Operating Officer of Hamilton County Courts will assist in obtaining an interpreter.

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 VTC before a written grievance is filed. All active VTC participants may file a grievance, by requesting the *Grievance Procedure Form* from VTC staff. A completed grievance form will be reviewed by the following until it is resolved:

1. VTC Coordinator
2. Hamilton County Human Resources Director and Title VI Coordinator

If the complaint is directly related to the 1.VTC Coordinator, the process will begin with step two (2).

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 VTC staff receiving personal benefit from actions which he/she directs of the You.

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

- VTC Policies & Procedures, Participant Handbook, rules & regulations.

You 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 participants through the cooperation and collaboration of the Judge, Prosecutor, VTC Public Defender, Probation Officers, Case Managers, Treatment Agencies, counselors, VSO, CJL, VJO 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 their journey to recovery.