

We know that military service uniquely impacts the lives of Veterans and their families.

Many Veterans and their families cope with serious issues such as: Alcohol and substance abuse, mental illness, homelessness, unemployment, and strained relationships. Many issues go unaddressed and too many Veterans end up in the criminal justice system.

One in six veterans returning from the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars suffer from a substance abuse... One in five has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment.

The U.S. faces “an emerging storm” as the more than 1.7 million men and women who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars are returning home. They have been involved in the longest conflicts in our history having faced multiple deployments in a stressful combat environment.

As a our forces return home, they bring with them an extremely high rate of mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Their experiences and injuries, both visible and invisible, have created undue stress on veteran’s families which has made reintegration into their communities a serious national challenge. The economic recession and poor job markets along with the above factors combined to impact the high rates of our veterans unemployment,

homelessness, family difficulties, a high suicide rate and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Over ten percent of prisoners incarcerated in U.S. are Veterans.

Veterans advocates understand that special courts address the unique underlying problems that have resulted in veterans running afoul of the law.

Supervising treatment of these veterans is far less expensive than incarceration and significantly more effective.

“These men and women have served their country and have been injured, we as a society have an obligation to treat them.”



Countless studies and anecdotal evidence bear out that the wounds of war are not only physical but invisible mental wounds that are much harder to detect and heal. Our Country has historically sent our young flesh and blood to put their lives on the line during global crises from World War II to Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Servicemen and women sign on to lay their lives on the line for their Country.

Fact: Treatment Courts Work.

- The effectiveness of Drug Courts is not a matter of conjecture. It is the product of more than two decades of exhaustive scientific research.
- We know beyond a reasonable doubt that Drug Courts significantly reduce drug use and crime and do so with substantial cost savings.
- These savings reflect measurable cost-offsets to the criminal justice system stemming from reduced re-arrests, law enforcement contacts, court hearings, and use of jail or prison beds. When more distal cost-offsets were also taken into account, such as savings from reduced foster care placements and healthcare service utilization, studies have reported economic benefits ranging from approximately \$2.00 to \$27.00 for every \$1.00 invested.
- The result has been net economic benefits to local communities ranging from approximately \$3,000 to \$13,000 per Drug Court participant.

Douglas B. Marlowe, Douglas, B., J.D., Ph.D,
“Research Update on Adult Drug Courts”,
Chief of Science, Law & Policy, 12/2010.



LACKAWANNA COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Honorable Michael J. Barrasse
Presiding Judge,
Lackawanna County Court

45th Judicial District
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Court of Common Pleas
Court House
200 North Washington Avenue
Scranton, Pennsylvania 18503



“Leave No Veteran Behind”



Veteran Treatment Court: The New Specialty Court in Lackawanna County

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

The Lackawanna County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) is one of a new breed of specialty courts under the leadership of Judge Michael J, Barrasse, Presiding, of the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas. Judge Barrasse is recognized as a national leader in the organization of this new type of “specialty court”; Veterans Treatment Court. Judge Barrasse led in establishing the Lackawanna County VTC; the first such treatment court in Pennsylvania. Veterans Treatment Court is an outgrowth of the many specialty courts, such as drug, family, children’s, and mental health, that have been in existence for some time.

The VTC is a “problem solving court” for Veterans whose substance abuse and/or mental health issues have contributed significantly to their current arrest or conviction of a crime. This judicially supervised treatment program will provide Veterans with the tools and knowledge in order to remain arrest free and reintegrate into society as a law abiding member. The Court promotes sobriety, recovery, and stability through a unique coordinated response involving the traditional partners in Court as well as a strong commitment from the U.S. Department of Veterans

Benefits Administration, a wide range of community organizations and a corps of veteran volunteer mentors and veteran family support organizations. The VTC combines rigorous Court supervised treatment and testing programs along with personal accountability with the goal of breaking the cycle of addiction and criminal behavior.

VTC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of this Court is to work with veterans whose substance abuse and/or mental health issues have contributed significantly to their arrest or conviction of a crime and divert eligible veteran-defendants from traditional court processing to a treatment-based problem-solving model court.

For Veterans ... Rehab Instead of Prison

This process supports our Nation’s commitment to our veterans while promoting public safety through a coordinated effort of the Court, veteran’s services and community services to keep our promise that we will leave no veteran behind.



OBJECTIVES

Provide Veteran’s with rehabilitative services; addressing: Substance abuse, Mental health or Lifestyle issues that have occurred in correlation with their military service.

- Reduce participants’ criminal recidivism.
- Facilitate sobriety, abstinence and improved behavioral health.
- Promote public safety through treatment while assisting and supporting veterans and their families through a coordinated response.
- Alleviate issues surrounding Veteran service-related behavioral health issues.
- Improve participants’ family relationships and social support connections.
- Assure VA benefits and services are fully accessed by participants.
- Integrate community based treatment options and services for participants.
- Ensure participants’ compliance with treatment and other court ordered conditions.
- Improve participants’ economic stability.
- Restore the core military values into the participants’ daily routine.

Veterans Get Help Instead of Jail Time

Veteran Eligibility for VTC

Acceptance into the VTC is a joint decision of the Judge and County District Attorney in consideration of the following:

- Veteran - A former member of the United States Armed Forces.
- Veteran enters Court voluntarily and is amenable - motivated to make lifestyle change.
- Nature/severity of charges.
- Appropriate clinical risk assessment and mental evaluation.
- Substance Use Disorder.
- Nexus between diagnosis and criminal charge.

WHY A SPECIAL COURT FOR VETERANS?

We owe our Veterans the necessary treatment for their wounds, both visible and invisible. As a Nation, our out-reach must extend to those who break laws more out of the consequences of their service to our Country than a deliberate intent.

...Special courts for those who served...

