



## **Veterans Treatment Courts: 2015 Survey Results**

### **New Report Provides a Closer Look at Veterans Treatment Courts**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (Nov. 17, 2016)** — Specialized Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC) — a growing trend across the U.S. — are effectively providing former members of the armed forces with the support and services they need, according to [Veterans Treatment Courts: 2015 Survey Results](#), a new report by the Justice Programs Office (JPO) at American University’s School of Public Affairs.

“Veterans Treatment Courts are relatively new,” said Kim Ball, Director of JPO. “We hope that this report, the most in-depth on this topic to-date, will help courts continue to improve and meet best practice standards.”

According to a [2008 study](#), nearly half a million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression. More than 300,000 struggle with substance abuse and an equal number are estimated to have suffered some form of traumatic brain injury (TBI). VTCs help to connect vets with essential health and other services and provide a sense of “mission” and a military support network that many participants in the courts say they lost when they returned to civilian life. Introduced in 2008, VTC is a new type of “problem solving” or “treatment court” that addresses substance use disorders and other issues underlying participants’ involvement in the justice system; successful participants become eligible to have their sentences reduced or the charges against them dropped.

“The VJOs are what set Veterans Treatment Courts apart from other problem solving dockets,” said Retired Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Stratton, who participated in starting the VJO program at the Veterans Administration. “The VJOs become part of the court’s treatment team and provide valuable resources. The VJOs also help the vet to navigate a challenging VA system in finding those resources at a time when they need help the most.”

The JPO report analyzed responses to questionnaires completed by participants in VTCs around the country and found that, true to their intent, these new courts are providing veterans with the access to much needed services. More than 80 percent of the courts indicated that they were able to match participants with veteran mentors who could provide assistance both in and out of the courtroom. Most courts are also following established best practices. More than 80 percent of the courts conducted random drug tests for those whose offenses involved substance abuse; more than 90 percent had policy and procedure manuals, formal mission and purpose statements, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities for those who are part of the Veterans Treatment Court team; and more than 90 percent said they shared information with the Veterans Administration to facilitate service delivery, usually through Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) specialists assigned to the court.

“The men and women who serve our country deserve all the help we can provide them when they return home,” said AU School of Public Affairs’ Senior Associate Dean Vicky Wilkins, who has conducted research on veterans issues. “Veterans Treatment Courts hold participants accountable, but they also allow veterans to receive the treatment and services they need to heal.”

A [webinar](#) highlighting the findings [of the report](#) will be held on Tuesday, December 13, at 2 p.m. Please [click here](#) for more resources on VTCs including a [video](#) detailing the report featuring JPO's Program Associate Kerwin Henderson, an executive summary, past webinars on VTCs & a map of operational Veterans Treatment Courts.

For questions and further inquiries, please contact the Justice Programs Office at American University at **202-885-2875** or email us at [justice@american.edu](mailto:justice@american.edu)

**-AU-**

*American University is a leader in global education, enrolling a diverse student body from throughout the United States and nearly 140 countries. Located in Washington, D.C., the university provides opportunities for academic excellence, public service, and internships in the nation’s capital and around the world.*