

Veterans Treatment Courts

Giving Our Heroes at Home the Help They've Earned

From the volunteer militias that first served in the Continental Army to the volunteer military currently deployed to our engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States has long been safeguarded by brave men and women ready to defend our freedom at home and abroad. Our Armed Forces have changed significantly over the last two hundred years, but what remains consistent among all branches is the sense of honor, duty, leadership, commitment and respect instilled in those who choose to serve. This is evident in the millions of veterans who have returned home to their communities as productive citizens, strengthened by their military experience.

But we are all keenly aware that some veterans struggle upon returning home. The Vietnam era taught us much about the difficulties veterans can encounter when they are not welcomed home and properly cared for.

“Veterans Treatment Courts present an opportunity for us to come to the aid of the men and women in uniform who are suffering as a result of their sacrifice to this country and should be expanded to serve all veterans in need.”

- General Barry R. McCaffrey (ret.)

Our Call of Duty at Home

This year marks the ninth straight year of America at war. There are now more than 23 million U.S. veterans including 2 million and counting from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The men and women of our military shoulder the burden of protecting our freedom. Over 5,000 have paid the ultimate price and another 37,000 will forever bear the physical wounds of war. Americans are grateful for their service to this nation. But we must ensure our gratitude is extended to all veterans. We must not forget that one in six veterans from

Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom suffers from a substance abuse challenge. One in five has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment. Research continues to draw a link between substance abuse and combat related mental illness and increasing numbers of veterans are appearing in our courts to face charges stemming directly from these issues. Where do many end up? Today, an estimated 60% of the 140,000 veterans in prison have a substance abuse problem. And tonight, roughly 130,000 veterans will be homeless, 70% of whom suffer from a substance abuse and/or mental illness condition.

Veterans Treatment Courts

A Unique Solution - Action on Behalf of Veterans

Twenty years ago, the Drug Court movement evolved out of the necessity for a solution-based approach to an influx of drug abusing offenders before the courts. Ten years ago, DWI Courts came on line to effectively address hardcore impaired drivers. Both models have demonstrative effects on substance abuse, crime and related consequences on the individual, family and community. In fact, Drug Courts and DWI Courts are the world's most successful, cost effective and scientifically validated tool to deal with substance abuse in the criminal justice system.



*Hon. Robert Russell
Buffalo, New York*

Today, the unique consequences of combat call for a unique solution. Judge Robert Russell, presiding judge of the Buffalo Drug Court and Buffalo Mental Health Court, created the nation's first Veterans Treatment Court in response to a growing number of

veterans appearing on his dockets who were addicted to drugs and alcohol and suffering from mental illness. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not unique to Buffalo. Immediately following the launch of the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court, Judge Russell and his team were inundated by requests from courts around the country experiencing the same increases in cases involving veterans. Just two years later, over twenty Veterans Treatment Courts have launched with dozens more being planned.

What is a Veterans Treatment Court?

Like Drug Courts, Veterans Treatment Courts are judicially supervised court dockets that strike the proper balance between the need to treat a veteran suffering from a substance abuse and/or mental health disorder *and* the need to protect community safety; between the need for effective treatment *and* the need to hold people accountable for their actions; between hope and redemption on the one hand and productive citizenship on the other.

Building upon the infrastructure that exists within Drug Courts, Veterans Treatment Courts combine rigorous treatment and accountability for veterans facing incarceration. Veterans Treatment Courts are hybrid



*Tulsa, Oklahoma Veterans
Treatment Court in Action*

Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts. They promote sobriety, recovery and stability through a coordinated response that involves collaboration with the traditional partners found in Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts. But the bonds of military service run deep. Veterans have many shared experiences not common among civilians. Research suggests that traditional community services

may not be adequately suited to meet the distinct needs of a veteran. Therefore, Veterans Treatment Courts involve the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs health care networks, the Veterans Benefits Administration, State Departments of Veterans Affairs, volunteer veteran mentors and veterans and veterans family support organizations.

An Emergent Movement

The U.S. Congress has taken note of local collaboration taking place in Veterans Treatment Courts. NADCP was honored to work with members of the House and Senate to produce the bipartisan Services Education and Rehabilitation for Veterans (SERV) Act, which was introduced in Congress early this year. The SERV Act would provide funding for communities with existing Drug Courts that serve veterans and will establish new Veterans Treatment Courts in communities without them. This critical legislation will be the key to providing the resources necessary to expand Veterans Treatment Courts throughout the country.

State legislatures are also taking action. Nevada and Texas have passed legislation calling for the statewide establishment of Veterans Treatment Courts. Colorado, Illinois and at least nine others are following suit. Three states - California, Minnesota and New Hampshire - have passed legislation that permits judges to order treatment rather than prison in the case of veterans suffering from combat-related mental health disorders.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has recently outlined a comprehensive plan to end homelessness among veterans in five years. As part of this initiative, the VA has made justice-involved veterans a priority and established a national Veterans Justice Outreach program to help connect these veterans with

the services they have earned. The VA stands ready to take the model to scale and is training specialists throughout the country to be involved directly with the courts. The VA has also partnered with NADCP to develop critical curriculum for an eager Veterans Treatment Court community.

The Surge – Bringing Veterans Treatment Court to all Veterans in Need

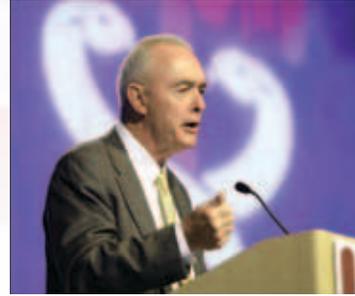
We are off to a great start, but we must do more. We ask much of our men and women in uniform and they ask little in return. We are ultimately responsible for ensuring that whatever effects they suffer in the mission of defending our nation will be treated.



West Huddleston, CEO of NADCP, testifying before Congress

NADCP has been at the forefront of the Veterans Treatment Court movement from the very beginning. In addition to championing the SERV Act, developing and championing numerous state authorization and/or appropriation bills and testifying before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, NADCP is actively securing endorsements from leading national veterans organizations. NADCP has established formal partnerships with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. In doing so, NADCP is about to name four national “Mentor Veterans Treatment Courts” that will serve as learning sites for hundreds of communities interested in planning a Veterans Treatment Court, and as host sites to train new Veterans Treatment Courts.

NADCP is honored to have as its Senior Advisor on veterans and Veterans Treatment Courts General Barry R. McCaffrey (ret.). Before retiring as the youngest Four Star General in the U.S. Army and going on



General Barry R. McCaffrey (ret.)

to serve as Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy for President Clinton, General McCaffrey commanded the 24th Infantry Division during Operation Desert Storm. Under his command, the division conducted the “left hook” attack 370 km into Iraq. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. In Operation Desert Storm he was known for his speed and boldness. During the course of his service including four tours in the Vietnam War he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross twice, the Purple Heart three times and the Silver Star twice.

In addition to enlisting General McCaffrey, NADCP has secured Brian Clubb as its full-time Project Director for Veterans Treatment Courts. Mr. Clubb is a twenty-two year veteran of the United States Marine Corps where he served as an Intelligence Officer, Scout-Sniper Platoon Commander, and Substance Abuse Control Officer. He received his law degree from the University of San Diego and previously worked as a Deputy Public Defender and private attorney in San Jose, CA where he represented clients in the Santa Clara County Drug and Mental Health Courts.

NADCP has obtained support for Veterans Treatment Courts from the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the National District Attorney’s Association and the American Bar Association. On Veterans Day last year, NADCP launched the Veterans Treatment Court Clearinghouse: the only site on the Web for Veterans Treatment Court news and resources. The Clearinghouse can be found at www.VeteransTreatmentCourt.com.

NADCP’s goal is to ensure that every veteran arrested with a substance abuse and/or mental health issues has access to a Veterans Treatment Court. All veterans in need should have the opportunity, not for incarceration, but for treatment and restoration.

About NADCP

It takes innovation, teamwork and strong judicial leadership to achieve success addressing drug-using offenders in a community. That's why since 1994 the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) has worked tirelessly at the national, state and local level to create and enhance Drug Courts, which use a combination of accountability and treatment to compel and support drug-using offenders to change their lives.

Now a national movement, Drug Courts are the shining example of what works in the justice system. Today, there are over 2,300 Drug Courts operating in the U.S., and another thirteen countries have implemented the model. Drug Courts are widely applied to adult criminal cases, juvenile delinquency and truancy cases, and family court cases involving parents at risk of losing custody of their children due to drug abuse. Drug Court improves communities by successfully getting offenders off drugs and stopping drug-related crime, reuniting broken families, intervening with juveniles before they embark on a debilitating life of addiction and crime, and reducing impaired driving.

Now 20 years since the first Drug Court was founded in Miami/Dade County, Florida, more research has been published on the effects of Drug Courts than on virtually all other criminal justice programs combined. The scientific community has put Drug Courts under a microscope and concluded that Drug Courts significantly reduce drug abuse and crime and do so at less expense than any other justice strategy.

NADCP has further championed new generations of the Drug Court model. These include Veteran's Treatment Courts, Reentry Courts, and Mental Health Courts, among others. Veteran's Treatment Courts, for example, are adapting to the needs of our heroes from the armed services, who sometimes have difficulty adjusting to civilian life or coping with combat-related stress, and may become involved with the justice system due to substance abuse or mental illness. Rather than ignore their plight, Veteran's Treatment Courts provide the treatment and structure they need to resume productive lives. Reentry Courts assist individuals leaving our nation's jails and prisons to succeed on parole and avoid a recurrence of drug abuse and crime. And Mental Health Courts monitor those with mental illness who find their way into the justice system.

Today, the award-winning NADCP is the premier national membership, training, and advocacy organization for Drug Courts, representing over 27,000 multi-disciplinary Drug Court professionals. NADCP hosts the largest annual training conference on drugs and crime in the nation and provides 130 training and technical assistance events each year through its professional service branches, the National Drug Court Institute and the National Center for DWI Courts. NADCP also publishes numerous scholastic and practical publications critical to the ongoing growth and fidelity of the Drug Court model. NADCP works tirelessly in the media, on Capitol Hill, and in state legislatures to transform the American justice system through policy, legislation, and appropriations.

Learn more online at www.AllRise.org.



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