

## Veterans Court Goals

- Reduce criminal recidivism
- Facilitate participant sobriety
- Increase compliance with treatment and other court ordered conditions
- Improve access to VA benefits and services
- Improve family relationships and social support connections
- Improve life stability

## Veterans Court Services

- One-on-one judicial supervision
- Ready access to County Veterans Service Office and qualifying VA services
- Intensive probation supervision
- Substance abuse, mental health, family and other counseling
- Random drug and alcohol testing
- Medication monitoring and social services
- Employment and housing assistance
- Peer mentoring

## Cost

Participants who are placed on probation are required to pay a Correctional Service Fee. In addition, participants may be required to pay a fine and/or restitution.

## Location

The Court operates on Mondays, at 2:00 PM in Courtroom 1659, HC Government Center

## Contact Information

Judge Charles Porter  
Fourth Judicial District Court  
300 South 6th Street, C-16 Government Center  
Minneapolis, MN 55487-0332  
Phone: 612-348-8150 Fax: 612-596-9904

Lori Swenson, Coordinator  
Community Corrections & Rehabilitation  
401 South 4th Street, Public Safety Facility  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
Phone: 612-596-7997 Fax: 612-596-8249

## A Partnership of:

Hennepin County Veterans' Service Office  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Fourth Judicial District Court  
Hennepin County Attorney's Office  
Hennepin County Board  
Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation  
Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department  
Hennepin County Public Defender's Office  
Minneapolis City Attorney's Office  
National Alliance on Mental Illness-Minnesota  
Metropolitan Center for Independent Living  
Battered Women's Justice Project  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs  
Minneapolis Domestic Abuse Project



# Hennepin County Veterans Court

**A court-supervised treatment program for defendants who served in the U.S. Armed Forces**



**Hennepin County Government Center  
300 South Sixth St.. Mpls., MN 55487**

<http://mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=1241>

## What is Veterans Court?

A Veterans Court is a problem solving court that is intended to serve veterans struggling with addiction, serious mental illness and/or co-occurring disorders. The Court promotes sobriety, recovery and stability through a coordinated response that involves cooperation and collaboration with the traditional partners found in problem solving courts, with the addition of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs health care networks, the Veterans Benefits Administration, volunteer veteran mentors and veterans and veterans' family support organizations.

The Hennepin County Veterans Court is a voluntary 12-18 month program designed for defendants who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces who are experiencing a treatable behavioral, mental health or chemical health problems. The program involves ongoing judicial supervision and intensive probation supervision with input from a multi-disciplinary team of professionals led by the judge. The Veterans Court assigns a peer mentor to all participants, and appropriate offenders are referred to the PRISM (Providing Resources and Integrated Services to the Mentally Ill) Center. The PRISM Center oversees medication compliance and provides social services at a single, centralized location.

## Who is Eligible?

Eligibility is evaluated by the Veterans Court team on a case-by-case basis. General requirements include:

- Service in the U.S. Armed Forces
- Charged in Hennepin County with a non-presumptive, or a non-mandatory prison case
- Resides in Hennepin County, or in close proximity to the Court
- Experiencing a treatable behavioral, mental health, or chemical health problem

## Entry & Referral Process

1. The case is referred to Veterans Court upon agreement of the parties.
2. The Court Screener completes an assessment, and:
  - A. Interviews defendant and speaks with accompanying family members and/or case managers.
  - B. If only the defendant is present, the Court Screener checks the relevant information systems to determine if the defendant is receiving or has in the past received services from Hennepin County and if the defendant has a prior criminal record.
  - C. Advises the judge and attorneys as to whether the defendant meets Veterans Court criteria and makes a recommendation to the court as to whether or not the defendant should be accepted. If the defendant is accepted, a conditional release or probation plan is recommended by the Court Screener and must be agreed to by the defendant. If the defendant is not accepted, the case is referred back to the originating calendar. The Court Screener may postpone making a decision on acceptance pending the completion of a psychological or chemical evaluation or the review of existing medical records.
3. An accepted defendant is placed on conditional release or probation by the judge and is assigned by the Court Screener to a supervising social worker or probation officer. A peer mentor is also assigned. The Veterans Service Officer is notified of the need for VA eligibility determination and possible referral to the VA Medical Center.
4. If the defendant has an existing case manager from Hennepin County or other agency, he or she is notified about the court proceedings and invited to participate in the process.
5. If the defendant is without services and is eligible for services in Hennepin County, he or she is directly referred by the Court Screener to appropriate services.
6. The defendant then appears for a series of conditional release judicial reviews to monitor compliance until the attorneys and judge feel that the case is ready for disposition. For cases not already adjudicated, there will be a disposition. The disposition of a case depends on the nature of the case and the performance of the defendant.
  - A. Defendants with less serious current offenses and minimal criminal histories may receive diversion. If diverted, the case is continued for at least a year and then dismissed if the defendant complies with Veterans Court conditions and has no additional charges.
  - B. Less compliant defendants with greater criminal histories plead guilty. The plea is vacated and the charge dismissed after at least one year if the Veterans Court conditions have been followed and there have been no additional criminal charges.
  - C. Some defendants have serious current offenses, serious behavioral problems, and lengthy criminal histories. They plead guilty and are placed on supervised probation to a probation officer. Workhouse time and other traditional correctional sanctions are used to gain compliance with Veterans Court conditions. Some of these defendants may not complete the program in the estimated 12-18 months.
  - D. Post conviction defendants continue to appear in court for judicial reviews to monitor compliance with Veterans Court conditions until they graduate.
  - E. A defendant may participate in court programming and stay in contact with court staff after graduation if it helps maintain stability.

## Graduation

Upon completion of the Veterans Court program, participants are given a certificate of completion. Depending on the sentencing option used by the court, some cases are either dismissed or reduced. Probationers are placed on administrative probation and subject to minimal requirements.