TEN KEY COMPONENTS

BUTLER VETERANS COURT

Butler Veterans Court has adopted the Ten Key Components designed and utilized by Buffalo New York’s Veteran’s Treatment Court. Buffalo implemented the first Veteran’s Court and is a model by which most, if not all, others, are designed. Buffalo used “slight modifications [of] the essential tenements of the ten key components as described in the U.S. Department of Justice Publication entitled “Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components”, (Jan.1997)” in order to develop what is listed below.

Key Component #1: Veterans Treatment Court will integrate alcohol treatment, drug treatment, and mental health services with justice system case processing

Veterans Court promotes sobriety, recovery and stability through a coordinated response to veteran’s dependency on alcohol, drugs, and/or management of any mental health issues. Realization of these goals requires a team approach. This approach includes the cooperation and collaboration of the traditional partners found in drug treatment courts and mental health treatment courts with the addition of the Veteran Justice Organization/Veteran’s Administration, veterans and veterans family support organizations, and veteran volunteer mentors.

Key Component #2: Using a non-adversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights

To facilitate the veterans’ progress in treatment, the prosecutor and defense counsel shed their traditional adversarial courtroom relationship and work together as a team. Once a veteran is accepted into the treatment court program, the team’s focus is on the veteran’s recovery and law-abiding behavior—not on the merits of the underlying case.

Key Component #3: Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the Veterans Court program

Early identification of veterans entering the criminal justice system is an integral part of the process of placement in the Veterans Court program. Arrest can be a traumatic event in a person’s life. It creates an immediate crisis and can compel recognition of inappropriate behavior into the open, making denial by the veteran of the need for treatment difficult.

Key Component #4: Veterans Court provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, mental health and other related treatment and rehabilitation services

While primarily concerned with criminal activity, alcohol and drug use, and mental illness, the Veterans Court team also consider co-occurring problems such as primary medical problems, transmittable diseases, homelessness, basic educational deficits, unemployment and poor job preparation, spouse and family troubles—especially domestic violence—and the ongoing effects of war time trauma.
Veteran peer mentors are essential to the Veterans Treatment Court team. Ongoing veteran peer mentors interaction with the Veterans Treatment Court participants is essential. Their active, supportive relationship, maintained throughout treatment, increases the likelihood that a veteran will remain in treatment and improves the chances for sobriety and law-abiding behavior.

**Key Component #5: Abstinence is monitored by frequent alcohol and other drug testing**

Frequent court-ordered drug testing is essential. An accurate testing program is the most objective and efficient way to establish a framework for accountability and to gauge each participant’s progress.

**Key Component #6: A coordinated strategy governs Veterans Court responses to participants' compliance**

A veteran’s progress through the treatment court experience is measured by his or her compliance with the treatment regimen. Veterans Court rewards cooperation and sanctions noncompliance. Veteran’s Court establishes a coordinated strategy, including a continuum of graduated responses, to continuing drug use and other noncompliant behavior.

**Key Component #7: Ongoing judicial interaction with each Veteran is essential**

The judge is the leader of the Veterans Court team. This active, supervising relationship, maintained throughout treatment, increases the likelihood that a veteran will remain in treatment and improves the chances for sobriety and law-abiding behavior. Ongoing judicial supervision also communicates to veterans that someone in authority cares about them and is closely watching what they do.

**Key Component #8: Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness**

Management and monitoring systems provide timely and accurate information about program progress. Program monitoring provides oversight and periodic measurements of the program’s performance against its stated goals and objectives. Information and conclusions developed from periodic monitoring reports, process evaluation activities, and longitudinal evaluation studies may be used to modify program.

**Key Component #9: Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective Veteran’s Court planning, implementation, and operations**

All Veteran’s Court staff should be involved in education and training. Interdisciplinary education exposes criminal justice officials to veteran treatment issues, and Veteran Administration, veteran volunteer mentors, and treatment staff to criminal justice issues. It also develops shared understandings of the values, goals, and operating procedures of both the veteran administration, treatment and the justice system components. Education and training programs help maintain a high level of professionalism, provide a forum for solidifying
relationships among criminal justice, Veteran Administration, veteran volunteer mentors, and treatment personnel, and promote a spirit of commitment and collaboration.

**Key Component #10: Forging partnerships among Veteran’s Court, Veteran’s Administration, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances Veteran’s Court effectiveness**

Because of its unique position in the criminal justice system, Veterans Court is well suited to develop coalitions among private community-based organizations, public criminal justice agencies, the Veteran Administration/Veteran’s Justice Outreach, veterans and veterans’ families support organizations, and drug & alcohol and mental health treatment delivery systems. Forming such coalitions expands the continuum of services available to Veterans Court participants and informs the community about Veterans Court concepts. The Veterans Court fosters system wide involvement through its commitment to share responsibility and participation of program partners.