

Veteran's Court

Share this page

Veterans Court was implemented through a partnership between the Municipal Court, Prosecutor's Office, Public Defender's Office, and Phoenix Veterans Administration (VA). The goal of Veterans Court is to restore veterans to being successful, contributing members of the community. The court focuses on ensuring that veterans entering the criminal justice system make contact with specific programs to address the root causes of the behavior that resulted in the veteran becoming a defendant in the criminal justice system.

The target population consists of defendants (veterans) who served in the United States Armed Forces who are experiencing treatable behavioral issues such as post-traumatic stress (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), anger management, domestic violence, or substance and alcohol abuse.

Eligible veterans may participate in Veterans Court by voluntarily opting into the court. Both the defense counsel and prosecutor screen the case and stipulate that the case is appropriate for Veterans Court. Veterans Court meets as a separate court docket. A Veterans Administration representative is present and conducts a VA eligibility assessment.

The prosecutor and veterans with their attorneys gather in Veterans Court along with the VA coordinator; together they explore the various counseling and behavioral programs available to the veteran and determine which is most appropriate for each veteran. When they reach a decision, a treatment plan is incorporated into a plea agreement that becomes the contract for the veteran's responsibility. The court ultimately must review and accept the agreement for the resolution of the case to be completed.

The veteran must be willing to participate fully with the designated program(s). If the veteran chooses not to participate in the agreed upon program(s), the court removes the case from the Veterans Court docket and returns it to the traditional criminal track. As with other cases

within Municipal Court, some cases will be eligible for diversion if the veteran completes specified treatment programs. In most cases, the programs will be specifically tailored for the underlying issues of the veteran. For example, domestic violence cases in a traditional track would be sent to standard domestic violence counseling. Veterans Court sends domestic violence offenders to counseling at the VA. If PTS is an underlying issue, then PTS counseling is incorporated into this program.

The VA coordinator and prosecutor regularly review cases to monitor compliance. As part of the therapeutic approach of Veterans Court, frequent sentence review hearings are used to verify the veteran's compliance with the program. This not only establishes accountability for the veteran but also allows the court to recognize the accomplishment of the veteran in taking responsibility for their actions.

Additional Links

Justice for Vets

Veteran's Affairs