

# Veterans Court Mentors

**Tribal Veterans Wellness Court Symposium**

**Missoula, Montana August 30, 2019**

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**Missoula Veterans Court**

# Missoula Veterans Court Program

- **Eligibility:** Veteran with mental health challenge and co-occurring substance use disorder, involved in any stage of criminal justice system, including probation.
- **Screening:** substance use and mental health assessments, willingness, (not enthusiasm) to participate in program.
- **Court program:** five phased program includes individualized treatment requirements, vocational goals, long-term recovery practice.
- **Team:** Prosecutor, Defense, Probation Officer, Law Enforcement, VA VJO, Missoula Vet Center representatives, VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic treatment representative, Mentors, Judge and participant.

# Missoula Veterans Court Treatment Services

- **Missoula Vet Center, Missoula Community Based Outpatient Clinic, Fort Harrison VA Hospital, Non-Veteran services; “Seeking Safety.”**
- **Heroes Therapeutic Outreach Program: Red Willow Learning Center.**
- **X-Sports for Vets.**
- **Ancillary Services.**
- **Upcoming this Fall: Courthouse Meditation for participants and mentors.**



# Veterans Court Mentors

- **Volunteer Veterans from community.**
- **“Trusted Friend,” not counselor.**
- **Annual training plus monthly meetings.**
- **Application process: background check.**

# Veterans Court Participants since 2011

- **Two thirds are combat Veterans: all combat eras and zones since Vietnam.**
- **Offenses: assault and partner or family member assault, DUI and criminal endangerment, (while driving).**
- **Substances: alcohol, THC, meth.**
- **Driver's licenses: almost half begin program without a license.**
- **Employment: 1/3 begin the program unemployed, majority obtain job, enter school or receive VA disability while in program.**

# Volunteer Veterans From the Community

- **Why Veterans?**
- **Where to find mentors?**
  - ❖ **Outreach**
  - ❖ **Publicity**
  - ❖ **Current Mentors**



## **“Trusted Friend”**

- Peer, not counselor.**
- Advisor, not systems navigator.**
- In crisis, connect participant to clinician, (911).**

# Annual Mentor Training

- **Training for current and new mentors: eight hours on Saturday and Tuesday evening in November.**
- **Court description and process; post-combat issues.**
- **Native Americans and historic trauma.**
- **Treatment services description.**
- **Mentor panel.**
- **Graduate/participant panel.**



# Monthly Mentor Training Topics

- **Suicide prevention: QPR, safeTALK, VA Montana suicide prevention program.**
- **Motivational Interviewing.**
- **Overview of Job Service Veterans Services.**
- **Drug Testing.**
- **Veterans Housing Issues.**
- **Meditation and Yoga.**

# Mentor Application Process

- **Application form: military service, mentor experience, treatment experience, 2 references.**
- **Background check.**
- **Criminal background reviewed – not automatically ineligible.**
- **Substance use background reviewed – not automatically ineligible.**
- **New mentors matched with an experienced mentor.**

# Montana State Veterans Service Organizations

- **Montana's statewide service offices: Belgrade, Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Havre, Helena, Kalispell, Lewistown, Miles City, and Missoula.**
- **Claims services provided to Native American Veterans in all state offices and by staff traveling to reservations.**
- **Nationally, distance between reservations and state offices often seen as a limiting access to claims services for some Native American Veterans.**



# Examples of State VSO Services

- **Prepare and file benefit claims for veterans and their families.**
- **Represent veterans and their families in the claims and appeals process of the VA.**
- **Provide regularly scheduled veterans outreach services throughout the state.**
- **Advise veterans and their families on veterans benefits, and assist in obtaining legal and medical documentation to support claims.**
- **Obtain military service records and awards.**

# **Tribes and Tribal Organizations Recognized for purposes of Claims Representation**

- **On January 19, 2019, the federal regulations on VA claims representation, were amended to authorize tribal organizations to provide claims services.**
- **The new rule allows a tribe or a tribal organization established and funded by one or more tribal governments to be recognized for the purpose of providing assistance on VA benefit claims.**
- **The new rule also allows an employee of a tribal government to become accredited through a recognized State organization in a similar manner as a County Veterans' Service Officer (CVSO) may become accredited through a recognized State organization.**



# Missoula Veterans Court Schedule

- **Monday – weekly.**
- **Court team meeting 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.**
- **Participant Alumni group - 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.**
- **Veterans Court session: 2:30 – 3:15.**
- **Meditation: 3:30 – 4:30.**



# Contact Information

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