

# Guadalupe County



## Veterans Treatment Court



## Peer Mentor Program

# **Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Peer Mentor Program**

## **Mission Statement for the Peer Mentor Program**

The Mission Statement of the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Peer Mentor Program is to ensure that every participating Veteran in the Veterans Court has a fellow Veteran that acts as a mentor, advocate, and ally.

## **Goals of the Peer Mentor Program**

To act as an ally and friend, and help fellow Veterans successfully readjust to civilian life.

## **The Peer Mentor Program**

The Veterans Treatment Court relies on cooperation and collaboration among the criminal justice system, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans service organizations, and community treatment agencies to provide comprehensive treatment for Veterans. In addition to these entities, the Court also relies on Peer Mentors. Peer Mentors are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces who volunteer their time to assist the Court. Peer Mentors provide advice, personal experiences, recommendations, and guidance to Veterans. Many of our Peer Mentors are drawn from a number of Veteran's Service Organizations and community and government organizations. Peer Mentors include, but are not limited to, those who have served in peacetime, Vietnam, Desert Storm/Shield, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Afghanistan.

The Peer Mentor relationship promotes and fosters, through encouragement, a "can do" attitude in the Veteran; the Veteran becomes motivated to accomplish his or her goals in treatment, feels that he or she is not alone, and knows that the mentor and the court are there for them.

Experience with other Veteran's courts has shown that Veterans respond more favorably to other Veterans who have served and share similar experiences. Observations have shown that Veterans are more comfortable when talking with a fellow Veteran who has been there.

The conversation and interactions between the Peer Mentor and Veteran Participant are on the level of peers rather than from a position of authority. The change in demeanor of the Veteran Participant becomes an opportunity to make a profound impact on the Veterans who enter the Court. Based on other courts' observations, it has become clear that Peer Mentors will be a part of the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court. We anticipate that the active and supportive relationships maintained throughout treatment will increase the likelihood that a Veteran will remain in treatment and improve their chances of maintaining sobriety and law-abiding behavior.

### **Peer Mentor Role Description**

The Peer Mentor acts as a coach, a guide, a role model, an advocate, and a support for the Veteran Participant. The mentor encourages, guides, and supports the Veteran Participant as they progress through the court process. This includes listening to the concerns of the Veteran and making general suggestions, assisting the Veteran in determining their needs, and acting as a support for the Veteran, especially when a Veteran participant may be feeling isolated.

### **Peer Mentor Duties and Responsibilities**

- Meet with the Veteran Participant.
- Be supportive and understanding of the difficulties the Veteran is facing.
- Assist the Veteran as much as possible in resolving their concerns regarding the court procedures.
- Be supportive and helpful to other Peer Mentors.

### **Peer Mentor Requirements**

- Have a genuine concern for Veterans in the legal system.
- Be in good standing with the law.
- A veteran of one of the branches of the United States Armed Forces, including the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air force, Coast Guard or their corresponding Reserve and Guard branches. **(Must provide a copy of DD214)**
- Adhere to all of the Guadalupe County Veterans Court Treatment Court Program's policies and procedures.
- Commit to participation for a minimum of one (1) year or until the participant graduates from the program.
- Complete the required initial training as required by the court prior to participation in the Program.
- Participate in any required additional training that may be required by the court.
- Do not engage in any drug use, alcohol use, sexual activities, or any other unlawful activities with the participants.
- Notify the Veteran Court Judge's Coordinator if the participant becomes suicidal, wants to harm others, or engages in unlawful activities.

### **Peer Mentor Desirable Qualities**

- Active Listener
- Empathetic
- Encouraging and supportive
- Tolerant and respectful of individual differences
- Knowledge of community resources and services

For more Peer Mentor information or an application, please contact the Veterans Court Coordinator.

### **Recruitment Policy**

The Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Mentors and Court Staff assume the majority of the responsibility for recruiting new mentors. The Court team, its collaborative partners and current Peer Mentors are strongly encouraged to refer highly respectful and reputable veterans to the Court Staff. Additionally, Court Team members and Peer Mentors are strongly encouraged to attend and host informational sessions and training for new mentors.

### **Inquiry Policy**

All inquiries about participating as a Peer Mentor will be directed to the Veterans Court Coordinator. The Veterans Court Coordinator will respond to any prospective mentor inquiries within two weeks.

### **Eligibility Policy**

Each Peer Mentor must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in section "Peer Mentor Requirements" to participate in the Program. Current Mentors with knowledge of any prospective mentor's history or background that may jeopardize the integrity of the Court's Mentor Program must communicate this knowledge or concern to the Veterans Court Coordinator.

### **Screening Policy**

Each prospective Peer Mentor must complete a screening process conducted by the Veterans Court Coordinator. The decision to accept or deny an applicant will be made by the Veterans Court Coordinator. The final decision will be made by the VTC Judge. Feedback regarding the prospective mentor's denial may or may not be given. The right to withhold or give feedback is solely at the discretion of the VTC Judge.

The Peer Mentor screening procedure will include, but not limited to:

- Completing a written application form
- Completing a personal interview
- Completing a background check

### **Training Policy**

Training is crucial and necessary for Peer Mentors and initial training is especially crucial for prospective mentors. All prospective mentors must complete the required initial training or they will not be able to mentor during court proceedings.

## Peer Mentor Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, attest that I am a veteran of one of the branches of the United States Armed Forces, including the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or their corresponding Reserve components.

In order to be a mentor in the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court, I agree:

1. To adhere to all of the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court policies and procedures.
2. To commit to participation for a minimum of one (1) year or until the court participant graduates.
3. To complete the required initial training as specified by the Court prior to participation in the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court.
4. To participate in any additional training as specified by the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court.
5. To visit with the participant.
6. Not to engage in any drug use, alcohol use, sexual activities, or any other unlawful activities with the court participants.
7. To notify the Veterans Court Coordinator if the participant becomes suicidal, wants to harm others, or engages in unlawful activities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Background Check Permission Form

(Please print)

Full Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: Texas Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: Male / Female

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby consent to the Guadalupe County Courts Programs to perform a background check, including:

- Criminal Records
- Volunteer Experience
- Military Service
- Personal References

I understand that all information collected during the background check will be kept confidential.

I understand that I do not have to agree to this background check, but refusal to do so may exclude me from consideration as a Veterans Court Peer Mentor.

I hereby also extend my permission to those individuals or organizations contacted for the purpose of this background check to give their full and honest evaluation of my suitability for the mentor position, and other such information as they deem appropriate to this role.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

State of Texas

County of \_\_\_\_\_

Before me, on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, personally appeared \_\_\_\_\_, known to me/or proved to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing document and, being by me first duly sworn, declared that the statements therein contained are true and correct.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public's Signature



## Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Application

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 1: \_\_\_\_\_  Home  Work  Cell

Phone 2: \_\_\_\_\_  Home  Work  Cell

Branch of Military Service: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Discharge: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the days you are available to mentor: S M T W TH F S

Time Available: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you speak a language other than English?  Yes  No

If yes, list languages: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you previously served as a mentor?  Yes  No

If yes, in what capacity and where? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to submit to a background investigation?  Yes  No

Are you willing to submit to a drug and alcohol test?  Yes  No

How did you learn about the Mentor Program? \_\_\_\_\_

What does being a mentor mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_

What skills and experiences do you bring to the mentoring program that will be helpful to the veterans in the program and the other mentors? \_\_\_\_\_

What are you hoping to take away from volunteering with the Veterans Treatment Court mentoring program? \_\_\_\_\_

Mentors will be expected to participate in court observation, attend ongoing training and be supervised by a mentor coordinator.