

# Virginia Board of Veteran Services

## Point of Contact Report

### Veterans Treatment Dockets Update

1. Date of Report: 11/23/2020
2. BVS POC(s): Senator Bryce Reeves
3. Service Area/Program: VVFS JIS program and Veterans treatment dockets/courts
4. VDVS Director/Program Manager: Donna Harrison
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):

The VVFS Justice Involved Services (JIS) program provides services and resource connections for justice-involved veterans across the continuum of the criminal justice system from diversion to incarceration to community supervision. Each VVFS region has a Veteran Justice Specialist (VJS) that assists justice-involved veterans with connections to housing, employment, benefits, and other community resources.

The VVFS VJS provide support to the veterans treatment dockets/courts in their respective areas. They are key members of the veteran treatment docket teams.

The VDVS Criminal Justice Director provides technical assistance to jurisdictions interested in starting veterans treatment dockets/courts. The CJ Director also provides training opportunities and grant information to existing veterans treatment dockets/courts.

6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)?

Veterans involved in veteran treatment court dockets, incarcerated in jail or prison, and on community supervision (probation and/or parole).

The program also serves jurisdictions interested in starting veterans treatment dockets/courts.

7. How is the service/program delivered?

VVFS VJS are key team members of the veterans treatment dockets/courts. They provide input to treatment docket/court team members and resource connections for veterans going through the veteran treatment docket/court program. The VVFS VJS connect veterans to treatment, housing, employment, and other community resources. The VVFS VJS work in collaboration with the VA Justice Outreach staff to provide services to the veterans going through the veteran treatment docket/court program.

*As an example, the North Region VVFS VJS Veteran Justice Specialist (VJS) assisted an honorably discharged Army veteran. The veteran was referred to VVFS from the Prince William Veteran Treatment Docket for connection to behavioral health services to address stressors related to military and combat experience. The VJS received approval*

*of Veteran Service Foundation (VSF) funding for individual counseling for the veteran and was provided multiple options for behavioral health treatment. The veteran agreed to participate in counseling for PTSD with a VVFS-contracted clinician. The veteran successfully completed the requirements to graduate from the Prince William Veteran Treatment Docket and all of his criminal charges were dropped. The VVFS VJS continued to work with the veteran until he completed all of his current treatment goals.*

8. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?

Providing assistance to veterans in veterans treatment dockets/courts helps connect veterans to treatment and services to prevent further involvement and future incarceration in the criminal justice system. The VVFS VJS work in collaboration with the veteran treatment docket/court team to connect veterans and families to community resources in order to promote emotional and physical health.

9. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?

Connecting justice-involved veterans to housing, employment, treatment, benefits, and other resources can help veterans become productive members in the community. It can also help prevent recidivism and promote public safety.

10. What is the statutory authority for the service area/program? N/A

11. Where do the resources for the service area/program come from (general fund, non-general

fund, donations, etc.?)

The JIS program is a core component of the VVFS program and is funded through the VVFS general fund budget.

12. How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of services? What service adaptations have been made or are planned?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most courts suspended their services and conducted certain emergency procedures virtually. Some treatment court programs were temporarily suspended during that time. Later as restrictions were lifted, some veteran treatment dockets chose to meet virtually while others resumed in-person meetings. The VVFS VJS have been participating in veterans treatment dockets/courts virtually, when available. Most veterans treatment dockets/courts have now resumed in-person meetings.

13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area/program at present?

- Lack of veteran identification at multiple intercept points of the criminal justice system
- More veterans treatment court dockets needed; there are currently only seven veterans treatment dockets/courts in Virginia
- Veterans treatment docket information void for some Judges, Commonwealth Attorneys (CA), and Defense Attorneys (DA)
- Need for increased veterans treatment court docket education/marketing
- Limited veterans treatment docket data

14. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

- Identification of veterans at multiple intercept points of the criminal justice system via training, outreach, marketing, VA's Veteran Reentry Search Services (VRSS) implementation
- Legislation related to veteran identification (i.e. mandatory VRSS in jails)
- Pre-adjudication veteran treatment courts (misdemeanor courts)
- VDVS training and marketing to Judges, CAs and DAs
- Peer-to-peer training for Judges, CAs, and DAs to address information void
- Outreach to specific Judges, CAs and DAs
- Address equity, diversity, and inclusion in veteran treatment court dockets

15. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?

In 2019, Virginia was selected as one of five states to receive Veterans Treatment Court Statewide Strategic Planning Technical Assistance (TA) from the Center for Court Innovation. The technical assistance was accompanied by a \$200,000 sub award to the Virginia Supreme Court Office of the Executive Secretary (OES). Out of this technical assistance, the Virginia Veteran Treatment Court Statewide Strategic Planning team was created to address the goals of the strategic plan. The strategic plan goals are centered on identifying veterans, broadening eligibility criteria, VRSS training, training and technical assistance to veteran treatment court docket teams, marketing, mentor boot camp training, and a standardized referral form for service coordination. One of the main goals of veteran identification is to help spark the creation of veterans treatment dockets/courts in Virginia. VDVS is a part of the Veteran Treatment Court Statewide Strategic Planning team and will be a key player in conducting statewide VRSS training to local and regional jails to increase veteran identification.

The Virginia Supreme Court OES submitted a grant application to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) for 2020 Adult Drug Court and Veteran Treatment Court Category 3 funding. This funding provides support for **statewide** strategies to enhance or expand adult drug courts and veteran treatment courts. VDVS provided a support letter and statewide strategic plan to increase veteran identification to the Virginia Supreme Court OES in support of their grant

application to BJA. The Virginia Supreme Court OES was awarded the grant funding in October 2020.

For more information on Virginia Veterans Treatment Dockets visit

<http://www.courts.state.va.us/courtadmin/aoc/djs/programs/sds/programs/vtd/home.html>.