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Fact Sheet

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VETERANS COURT INVENTORY 2016 UPDATE

Characteristics of and VA involvement in Veterans Treatment Courts and other Veteran-focused court programs from the Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist Perspective

Background

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program is a prevention-focused component of VA's Homeless Programs Office (HPO), whose mission is to end homelessness among Veterans. Since the program was founded in 2009, VJO Specialists at every VA medical center have provided outreach and linkage to VA and/or community services for justice-involved Veterans in various settings, including jails and courts. VJO Specialists are essential team members in Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC) and other Veteran-focused court programs, as they connect Veteran defendants with needed VA services and provide valuable information on their progress in treatment.

In 2012, the Veterans Justice Programs (VJP) office began conducting an annual inventory of Veterans Courts from the perspective of the VJO Specialists. The 2016 Veterans Court Inventory collected information on court structure, admission criteria, jurisdiction, and mentor programs, in addition to Veteran defendant and VA court involvement for all VTCs and Veterans dockets of criminal and other problem solving courts that were operational as of the end of June 2016, and under the coverage of VJO Specialists. Inventory forms were completed and electronically submitted describing all court programs covered by a total of 241 VJO Specialists.

The Inventory results represent a snapshot of VTCs and other Veteran-focused courts at a particular point in time—in this report, the end of June 2016. As courts evolve, the structure or admission criteria may change, thus the data presented here may differ from previous Inventories. Additionally, the information was provided solely by the VJO Specialists who work in these courts as one member of their treatment teams. As such, it reflects their perceptions and interpretations. Another inventory, using identical questions but conducted among these courts' probation officers or prosecutors, for example, may have yielded different results.

Finally, the Inventory highlights the continued rapid growth in the number of VTCs and other Veteran-focused court programs across the United States. From the collection of information for the 2012 Veterans Court Inventory to that of June 30, 2016, the number of identified operational VTCs and Veterans dockets within drug, mental health, or criminal courts grew dramatically from 168 to 461.

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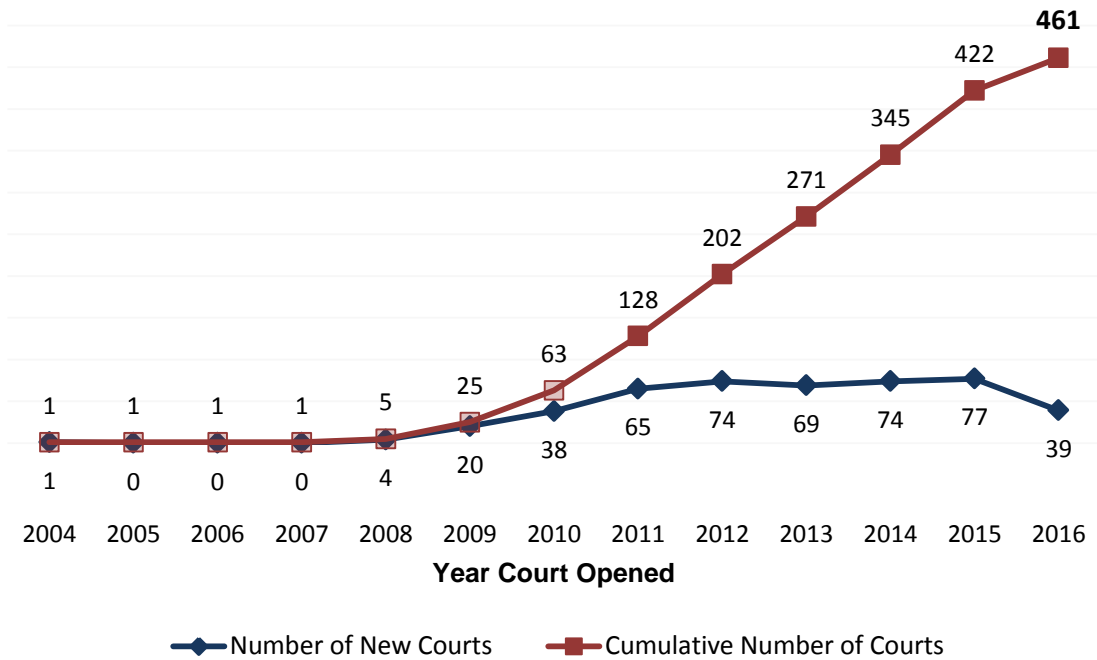
VETERANS COURT INVENTORY 2016 UPDATE
RESULTS SUMMARY

A. COURT CENSUS

COURTS OPERATIONAL AS OF JUNE 30, 2016

- Total number of courts: **461**
- New courts in 2015 to June 30, 2016: **116**

VTCS AND OTHER VETERAN-FOCUSED COURT PROGRAMS
 2004 – June 30, 2016



B. COURT STRUCTURE

COURT TYPE	
Separately designated Veterans Treatment Court	75.1%
Veterans Docket	24.9%
Docket Type	
Drug court	10.4%
Mental health court	3.9%
Hybrid drug/mental health court	5.2%
Criminal court	5.4%

JURISDICTION	
County	53.6%
City	7.8%
Mixed city/county	22.6%
Regional	8.7%
Statewide	5.2%
Federal	2.2%
Will consider cases outside of defined jurisdiction	44.1%

MENTOR COMPONENT	
Mentor Program is under development	9.5%
Mentor Program is operational	68.8%
Average number of mentors	8 mentors
Most common coordinator of operational programs	
Volunteer Mentor Coordinator	58.7%
Treatment Court Coordinator	15.6%
Paid Mentor Coordinator	12.1%

C. COURT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

VETERAN/MILITARY	
<u>Only Accepts</u>	
Veterans with military related mental health conditions ¹	20.2%
Combat Veterans	5.6%
OEF/OIF/OND Veterans	2.2%
<u>Allows</u>	
Active Duty Military	71.3%
Reserve/Guard	66.8%
VA Health Care ineligible Veterans	67.5%

¹ This is not restricted to “service-connected” mental health conditions as determined by VA

PLEA/OFFENSE	
Pleas accepted	
Pre-plea only	17.2%
Post-plea only	30.6%
Both pre- and post-plea	52.2%
Charges accepted	
Summary only	0.7%
Misdemeanor only	20.0%
Felony only	13.7%
Both misdemeanor and felony	65.7%
Violent offenses considered	
Domestic violence only	17.9%
Violent offenses, excluding domestic violence	3.9%
All violent offenses	61.9%

D. COURT INVOLVEMENT

HOW OFTEN COURT MEETS	
One or two times a week	38.6%
Two or three times a month	40.8%
Every three weeks or monthly	18.4%
Every two or three months	0.4%
Other ²	1.7%

DEFENDANT LENGTHS OF STAY	
Average length of court involvement for misdemeanor defendants	14 months
Average length of court involvement for felony defendants	18 months

VJO PARTICIPATION IN COURT	
VJO participates in court sessions	
Always in person	75.3%
Almost always in person	12.4%
Sometimes in person	5.9%
Mostly by telephone	3.7%
Average amount of time VJO spends interacting with the court team by any means in court sessions and staffing on days other than court days	17.5 hours per month

² Includes: 3 times total; yearly; as needed; whenever Judge is available; and unspecified

VBA PARTICIPATION IN COURT	
VBA Representative participates in court sessions	
Always in person	7.2%
Almost always in person	5.0%
Sometimes in person	6.3%
By telephone	0.4%

VET CENTER PARTICIPATION IN COURT	
Vet Center Representative participates in court sessions	
Always in person	5.6%
Almost always in person	3.0%
Sometimes in person	9.1%
By telephone or provides written progress reports	0.6%

TELEHEALTH	
Utilizes teleconferencing (“Telehealth”) for	
VJO virtual staffing	2.6%
Other team member virtual staffing	2.0%
Defendant court appearance	5.2%

Suggestion Citation: Flatley, B., Clark, S., Rosenthal, J., & Blue-Howells, J. (2017). Veterans Court Inventory 2016 Update: Characteristics of and VA involvement in Veterans Treatment Courts and other Veteran-focused court programs from the Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist Perspective. Washington, DC, US Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, March 2017.

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