

A Process and Outcome Evaluation of a Veterans Treatment Court Program in Western Pennsylvania

ELIZABETH KUHN

DR. SARAH KUEHN

DR. REBECCA RIDENER

Butler County Veterans Treatment Court

Mission and Goals

“To promote public safety and reduce recidivism in a cost-effective way by providing veteran offenders with intensive court supervision and a comprehensive, Veterans Administration driven treatment program.”

Goals:

- Improve public safety
- Reduce criminal recidivism
- Improve quality of Veterans' lives
- Connect Veterans with Pre-existing services
- Reduce costs

Admission Process

Referral:

- Can come from several sources
- Given to ADA and VJO
- Intake/Assessment, Treatment Plan
- Vote to Approve/Disapprove Application
- Court Session: Client is informed about practices
- Defendant appears before VTC, enters plea
- Assigned mentor

Eligibility Criteria:

- Current or former member in good standing of any branch of the military (need Form DD214)
- Resident of Butler Co and 18+
- Committed any offense (except homicide or certain sex offenses)
- Have a clinical diagnosis

Exclusionary Criteria:

- Certain offenses automatically denied (e.g., rape, murder, and manslaughter)
- Too serious medical or mental health issue
- Unresolved out-of-state or county charges
- Inability to provide form DD214

Treatment Program

Four Phases

- Minimum of 3 months
- Characteristics across phases:
 - Individualized treatment plans
 - Meetings with PO; Veteran's Mentor
 - Active participation in medical treatment plan; following treatment recommendations
 - Attending AA/NA meetings; treatment court sessions
 - Complete community service requirements
 - Compliance: drug/alcohol testing

Veterans Court: Participants

	N (%)
Gender	
Male	52 (94.5%)
Female	3 (5.5)
Average age (range 26-78)	34.0 years
Race	
Caucasian	51 (92.7%)
African American	4 (7.3%)

Process Evaluation: 10 Key Points

Key Point	Fulfilled	Not Fulfilled
1. Integration of treatment services	✓	
2. Non-adversarial approach	✓	
3. Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed		✓
4. Access to a continuum services	✓	
5. Frequent alcohol and other drug testing	✓	
6. A coordinated strategy	✓	
7. Ongoing judicial interaction	✓	
8. Monitoring and evaluation		✓
9. Continuing interdisciplinary education		✓
10. Forging partnerships		✓

Collaboration

- Recognition of team members' roles/approaches
 - But a preference for team members "staying in own lane"
- Communication as a solution
 - Training

Impact: COVID-19

	Same Period Year Prior	3 Months Prior	3 Month Shutdown	3 Months After
	(3/16/19- 6/15/19)	(12/16/19- 3/15/20)	(3/16/20- 6/15/20)	(6/16/20- 9/15/20)
Total # Tests Administered	220	365	59	152
# Positive Results	4	4	8	4
% Positive Tests	1.82%	1.11%	13.56%	2.63%

Future Research

Outcome Evaluation:

- Compare treatment court participants vs. offenders processed through the traditional criminal justice system

Questions?
Feedback?

sarah.kuehn@sru.edu

rebecca.ridener@sru.edu