

SEBASTIAN COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Client Handbook

Revised 6-16-17

You have been arrested for a felony offense and been identified as a person who may benefit from treatment for drug addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder (“PTSD”) or other issue which may be related to your military service. You are being offered an opportunity to be considered for participation in the **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court**. This program is designed to help you overcome the issues which led to your arrest. If you successfully complete the program, the Court may dismiss the charges against you, based on your plea agreement.

This handbook is designed to answer questions, address concerns and provide information about the **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court** program. As a participant, you will be expected to follow the instructions given in Court by the Judge and to comply with the treatment plan developed for you by your treatment team. This handbook will detail what is expected of you as a **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court** participant and review general program information. You are welcome and encouraged to share the information contained within these pages with your family and friends.

Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court was established as a demonstration of gratitude for your service to your country and as an effort to enable you to overcome obstacles so that you may enjoy the best possible life available to you, free of addiction and arrests. Every member of the treatment team has your best interest at heart. Please remember that as you receive direction toward reaching your goals.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court** is a court-supervised, comprehensive treatment program for eligible offenders. An eligible offender is defined as one charged with a felony offense in Sebastian County who qualifies for Veterans Administration (“VA”) benefits and is approved for participation by their attorney, the Prosecuting Attorney and the presiding Judge. This is a voluntary program which includes:

1. Regular court appearances before the presiding Judge,
2. Supervision by an officer of Arkansas Community Correction (probation officer),
3. Treatment, as determined by the treatment team, tailored to address your individual needs. Treatment may include, but is not necessarily limited to, attendance at 12-step meetings (NA/AA) or a secular equivalent, individual/group counseling sessions, and in-patient treatment as required,
4. Drug testing

Entry into the **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court** is voluntary. However, you should be aware that entry into the program requires that you enter a guilty plea. Prior to your plea you will undergo an intake process during which you will be required to meet with Court personnel, your probation officer and counselor, and VA representatives. The intake procedure allows the Court an opportunity to complete relevant paperwork, allows the treatment team to assure that you are a person who will benefit from participation in the program, and allows you to gain an understanding of the expectations placed on you before you commit to

entering the program. **Once the intake process begins, you are subject to sanctions for prohibited conduct - even if the conduct occurs prior to your plea and you decide to opt out of participation.**

While a participant in **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court** you will be required to conform to probation rules and guidelines as well as a performance contract which contains specific terms and conditions designed to govern your actions and responsibilities while in the program. Your treatment team, including your probation officer, will provide supervision and enforcement of these terms and conditions. Supervision will include unannounced home visits during which your person and residence will be subject to search. Probation officers have arrest power for purposes of enforcement.

The program length is determined by the participant's progress, but in no instance may it be completed in less than twenty (20) months. The program consists of four (4) phases and Aftercare. Phase 1 requires a minimum of 60 days to complete. Phases 2-4 require a minimum of 120 days to complete. Aftercare requires a minimum of 6 months to complete. Time spent in each phase is primarily determined by the compliance of the participant with the program's rules and regulations. Successful completion of the program will result in the dismissal of the charges to which you enter a plea to enter the program. Failure to complete the program or termination from it, on the other hand, will result in the filing of a Petition to Revoke being filed against you and a likely penitentiary sentence.

While entry into the program is voluntary, after you have entered your plea of guilty and begun the program, you **do not** have a right to opt out of the program at any time. Your continued participation is at the discretion of the treatment team.

SUPERVISION

As a Veterans Treatment Court participant, you be required to appear in court on regularly scheduled dates. Missing a court date will result in a warrant being issued for your arrest. Prior to each appearance the Judge will be given a progress report prepared by your treatment team regarding your progress, including drug test results and information regarding your attendance at and participation in counseling sessions.

During the Court sessions the Judge will speak with you about your progress, matters touching on your personal life and discuss any specific problems you might be experiencing. If you are doing well, you will be encouraged to continue to work with the program and work with your treatment team toward success. If you are not doing well, the Judge will discuss this with you and the treatment team to determine what steps should be taken. If you commit program violations such as a positive or missed drug test, failure to attend any counseling session or 12-step meeting, the Court **will** impose sanctions. Repeated violations of program requirements or a failure to progress satisfactorily, the Court may discharge you from the program and direct the Prosecuting Attorney to file a Petition to Revoke against you.

Sanctions administered by the Judge include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Increased drug testing
2. Writing an essay related to the topic which led to the sanction
3. Increased participation in counseling sessions
4. Increased 12-step meetings
5. Fines
6. Community Service
7. Incarceration in the Sebastian County Adult Detention Center
8. Rephase to an earlier phase of the program
9. Extended term in the program
10. Residential treatment
11. Commitment to the Arkansas Department of Correction Regional Correctional Facility

Arrests for new charges while a participant could result in your termination from the program. Commission of the offense of Driving While Intoxicated while a participant **will** result in either termination from the program or commitment to the Regional Correctional Facility.

To receive the maximum therapeutic benefit from the VTC program, it is important for participants to be present and on time for all appointments, sessions and court appearances. The following sanctions will be imposed for failure to comply with that aspect of the program. In determining the sanction called for a tardy violation, the Court will count each previous tardy and each previous absent. For example, if a participant has been previously tardy once and absent once, the current tardy would be treated as a 3rd violation. In determining the sanction for an absence, the Court will only consider previous absences. It should be noted by the participant that appearing for any VTC appointment, session or court appearance more than 15 minutes after it was scheduled to begin shall result in the participant being considered absent for that event.

Tardy

- 1st violation - Verbal warning and write a paper to be read at a court appearance
- 2nd violation - Letter of apology to clinician and/or group and two weeks daily activity log
- 3rd violation - 8 hours community service, 1 month daily activity log, 24 hours jail suspended
- 4th violation - 24 hours jail, 8 hours community service, 2 weeks journaling
- 5th violation - 3-5 days Sebastian County Jail work crew

6th violation - 3 days jail, 8 hours community service
7th violation - 5 days jail, 16 hours community service
8th and subsequent violations - discretion of the Court

Absent

1st violation - Apology letter to clinician and/or group, write paper to be read at court appearance, 4 hours community service
2nd violation - 8 hours community service, two weeks daily activity log, 24 hours jail suspended
3rd violation - 24 hours jail, 8 hours community service, 1 month daily activity log
4th violation - 3-5 days Sebastian County Jail work crew, 2 weeks journaling
5th violation - 3-5 days jail, 16 hours community service
6th and subsequent violations - discretion of the Court

When a participant promotes to Phase III, and if he/she has not been tardy or absent for any VTC activity within the previous 60 days, any sanctions received by the participant in Phase I for being tardy or absent will be removed from their VTC record and will not be considered in the event of future sanctions. When a participant promotes to Phase IV, and if he/she has not been tardy or absent for any VTC activity within the previous 60 days, any such sanctions received in Phases I and II shall be removed from the participant's VTC record and will not be considered in the event of future sanctions. When a participant promotes to Aftercare, and if he/she has not been tardy or absent for any VTC activity within the previous 60 days, any such sanctions received in Phases I, II and III remaining on the participant's record will be removed and will not be considered in the event of future sanctions. After a participant has been in Aftercare for 90 days, and if he/she has had no violations during that period for being tardy or absent, any remaining records of such violations shall be removed from their record. This mechanism exists to allow participants to demonstrate improvement and the ability to adapt as well as an opportunity for the Court to acknowledge that while participants often struggle with the structure of the program in the early stages, they also often prove they are capable of adjusting and overcoming this issue. It also allows a participant the opportunity to achieve a "clean slate" despite having to vanquish difficulties.

RULES

As a Veterans Treatment Court participant, you will be required to abide by the following rules:

1. Do not use or possess alcohol or illegal drugs. This includes a prohibition from going into bars or clubs where the sale and consumption of alcohol is promoted.
2. Do not use controlled substances unless prescribed as part of your treatment plan. If you are prescribed medication for the treatment of a condition outside your treatment plan, it is your responsibility to provide confirmation of the reasons for the prescription to the treatment team. The treatment team will provide you with a list of

approved over the counter medications for common illnesses that will not trigger a positive drug test result.

3. Attend all mandated treatment sessions, including individual and group counseling sessions, 12-step meetings, and educational sessions.
4. Be on time for all Veterans Treatment Court activities, including Court, counseling sessions and 12-step meetings and stay until the activity has concluded.
5. Do not make threats toward other participants or staff or behave in a violent fashion. Violent or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and will be reported to the presiding Judge. Such behavior **will** result in termination from **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court**.
6. Dress appropriately for all Court and treatment sessions. Clothing bearing drug or alcohol related themes or promoting or advertising the use of drugs or alcohol is considered inappropriate. Shoes must be worn at all times. Sunglasses are not to be worn in Court or in treatment centers unless medically necessary.
7. While in Court, remain seated and quiet at all times unless addressed by the Judge, court personnel or a member of the treatment team.
8. Cell phone usage, including texting, is prohibited during all program activities. Violation of this rule will result in the assessment of a \$10 fine for the first violation with the possibility of increased fines for further violations.

PROGRAM FEES

The following fees are required for participation in **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court**:

1. \$35.00 per month for probation supervision fee.
2. \$20.00 per month VTC fee

TREATMENT PROCEDURES

Your treatment will be provided through a team approach with the combined resources of the Court, your assigned probation officer and the Veterans Administration. The treatment team will assess the types and levels of treatment that will best address your needs. If you are admitted to a residential treatment facility, your treatment plan will include the requirements of that facility. While not in a residential treatment facility, you will participate in a multi-component, outpatient program designed around your individual needs, which will include some or all of the following:

Treatment Plan

A treatment plan will be developed by you and your treatment team following an assessment of your problems and needs. The treatment plan will serve as a guide for you during your participation in **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court** and will allow you, along with your treatment team, to set goals, choose methods for meeting those goals, and develop target dates for achieving those goals. The plan will be maintained by your treatment team and will be updated as you progress through the program.

It is important to remember that the program will have participants with a variety of treatment issues. Therefore, you should expect differences in treatment plans among participants. Your plan may be, of necessity, more vigorous than that of some participants and less vigorous than that of some others. Also, behavior tolerated in some participants may not be tolerated in others. For example, a participant whose primary issue is drug addiction will under no circumstances be allowed to use controlled substances. However, a participant whose primary issue is mental health related may be allowed to use such substances with medical supervision. Likewise, sanctions may vary depending on the participant because of the individual circumstances. You must understand **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court** cannot function with a "cookie cutter" approach. As a result, complaints about a lack of consistency in treatment plans and sanctions will not be viewed with favor.

Drug Testing

You will be drug tested throughout your entire time in the program. The presiding Judge will have access to all drug test results including any failures to test. The Judge or treatment team may require you to take a drug test at any time, regardless of the existence of good cause for such a test. Tampering with a sample to avoid a positive test may result in your expulsion from the program. A positive or missed test will subject you to sanctions as set forth above.

Counseling

Counseling will be tailored to address your individual needs and will likely consist of both individual and group counseling sessions. The sessions are designed to develop self-awareness, realize self-worth, and develop tools to practice self-discipline. Your attendance and attitude toward the sessions will be reported to the presiding Judge as part of your progress report.

12-Step Meetings

If your individual treatment needs indicate an alcohol or substance abuse component you will be required to attend 12-step meetings such as Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholic Anonymous, or secular equivalent. The frequency of your attendance will be determined by your progress in the program and your phase level. Your treatment team will provide you with information regard the time and location of 12-step meetings and may assist you in becoming aware of special interest and recovery events in the community. You must provide proof of meeting attendance to the treatment team at each appointment or Court appearance.

TREATMENT PHASES

PHASE I - Orientation, Assessment and Stabilization

Duration: Minimum 60 days

Requirements: As decided by the treatment team
Weekly court appearances

Advancement Criteria: Develop treatment plan
Comply with treatment plan
No unexcused absences
Obtain employment (unless disabled)
Begin effort to obtain GED (if applicable)
Establish stable living arrangement
Sanction free for at least two weeks
Fees paid up to date

PHASE II - Intensive Treatment and Stabilization

Duration: Minimum 120 days

Requirements: As decided by the treatment team
Court once every two weeks unless otherwise directed

Advancement Criteria: Continued compliance with treatment plan
No unexcused absences
Maintain employment (unless disabled)
Progress toward GED (if applicable)
Maintain stable living arrangement
Sanction free for at least two weeks
Fees paid up to date

PHASE III - Maturation and Transition

Duration: Minimum 120 days

Requirements: As decided by the treatment team
Court once per month unless otherwise directed

Advancement Criteria: Continued compliance with treatment plan
No unexcused absences
Maintain employment (unless disabled)

Progress toward GED (if applicable)
Maintain stable living arrangement
Sanction free for at least two weeks
Fees paid up to date

PHASE IV - Transition to Graduation

Duration: Minimum 120 days

Requirements: As decided by the treatment team
Court once per month unless otherwise directed

Advancement Criteria: Continued compliance with treatment plan
No unexcused absences
Maintain employment (unless disabled)
Progress toward GED (if applicable)
Maintain stable living arrangement
Sanction free for at least two weeks
Fulfillment of treatment plan goals
Fees paid in full

AFTERCARE

Upon completion of Phase IV, you are considered to have graduated from **Sebastian County Veterans Treatment Court**. However, you will remain under the supervision of the Court for an additional six (6) months (unless extended by sanction) as a member of the Aftercare program. While in Aftercare you will remain subject to drug testing and will be required to continue in counseling as well as any other conditions the treatment team deems necessary to insure your success. You will also attend Court on the last Friday of those months containing five Fridays (four per year). Incurring a sanction while in Aftercare may result in an extension of the Aftercare period or re-phase to Phase IV.

PROMOTION/GRADUATION

Once you have successfully completed the criteria for each phase you will promote to the next phase. At that time you will be recognized for your achievement and receive a token representing your accomplishment. Your graduation into Aftercare will be given special recognition both at the time it occurs and at a special yearly ceremony recognizing all those participants who have graduated in the previous year.