

# **LOWNDES COUNTY ACCOUNTABILITY COURT**

## **VETERAN'S COURT PROGRAM**



### **PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK**

Lowndes County Superior Court  
Southern Judicial Circuit

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The Lowndes County Accountability Court (VET/SA/MH Court Program) is 18-24 months in length and consists of 4 phases. The Court's mission is to promote public safety and to support and assist veterans and their families. The Court will link you with mental health treatment, and/or substance abuse treatment in addition to community resources that will put you on the path to wellness, recovery, and rehabilitation. The program is designed to promote self-sufficiency and to return you to the community as a productive and responsible member. The Court's ultimate goal is to reduce criminal recidivism, through treatment intervention with judicial review that supports addressing potential co-occurring substance abuse and trauma issues for veterans.

## **VET/SA/MH COURT SUPERVISION**

As an Accountability Court participant, you will be required to appear in Court on a regular basis. The Judge will receive a progress report prepared by the Accountability Court Team regarding your drug test results, attendance, and participation in the program. The Judge may ask you questions about your progress, and discuss any specific problems you have been experiencing.

The goal of the VET/SA/MH Court Program is to help you achieve total abstinence from illicit and illegal drugs while helping you overcome and deal with any trauma and/or mental health issues you may be facing. While a positive, dilute or adulterated drug test does not automatically disqualify you from participating in the program, it is a sanctionable offense. If you should produce a positive, dilute or adulterated sample, you may receive increased jail time, testing, counseling, increased meeting attendance, intensive residential treatment or any other sanction deemed necessary.

Failure to appear in Court on the date and time you are scheduled could result in a warrant being issued for your arrest and you being placed into custody. If you cannot appear in VET/SA/MH Court as scheduled, you must notify the Accountability Court Coordinator and/or the Accountability Court Probation Officer as soon as possible. If you have any questions regarding your court appearances, you may contact the Lowndes County Accountability Court Coordinator between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday at: 229-616-7445.

A warrant and/or new arrest(s) could result in your termination from the VET/SA/MH Court Program. You could also be terminated from the program for any of the following: continuously missing drug tests, failing to cooperate with the VET/SA/MH Court Team and/or committing acts of violence or threats of violence directed towards treatment staff or other participants.

## VET/SA/MH COURT PROGRAM RULES

As a VET/SA/MH Court participant, you will be required to abide by the following rules:

**1. Attend all treatment sessions.**

This includes individual and group counseling, educational sessions, as well as 12-step meetings. If you are unable to attend a scheduled session you must personally contact your treatment counselor immediately. The treatment counselor will then determine if you will be excused.

**2. Be on time.**

If you are late, you may not be allowed to attend treatment sessions and will be considered non-compliant. You must personally contact your treatment counselor immediately if you are going to be late.

**3. Do not make threats towards other participants or staff, or behave in a violent manner.**

Violent or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and will be reported to the Court. This may result in termination from the Drug Court Program.

**4. Dress appropriately for Court and treatment sessions.**

Each participant must dress appropriately for Court and treatment sessions. No shorts, tank tops, or flip flops are allowed in the courtroom. Clothing with drug or alcohol related themes is not appropriate. Sunglasses are not to be worn inside unless medically necessary.

**5. Pay all Drug Court Fees in a Timely Manner**

Each participant shall pay a **monthly VET/SA/MH court fee of \$50.00**. Participants are also responsible for any and all educational books and materials given to them. If a participant loses his or her MRT book, the participant will be assessed a replacement fee of \$25 and a new book will not be issued until the payment is made. Failure to pay program fees may result in a sanction.

## **TREATMENT PROCEDURES**

Following your acceptance into the VET/SA/MH Court Program, you will be given the opportunity to engage in out-patient treatment services provided by *Behavioral Health Services*. These out-patient programs will include, but are not limited to: group counseling, individual therapy sessions, educational classes, and case management services.

### **Treatment Plans**

An “initial” treatment plan will be developed by you and your counselor following an overall assessment of your needs. The plan will act as a guide for your first 45 days of treatment, during which a more permanent “master” treatment plan will be developed. Your permanent plan will help you set goals, select methods for meeting those goals, and develop target dates for achieving those goals. The plan will be kept in your treatment file for regular review and necessary updates as you progress through the program. Any revisions to the plan will be made by you and your counselor.

### **Drug Tests**

You will be tested at least twice a week, throughout the entire program. These tests may consist of urine screens, blood draws, and/or hair analyses. You will be subject to random drug screens on a weekly basis. As you progress through the program, testing may be done on a less frequent basis. The Judge will have access to all drug test results including any failures to test, and may order a drug test at any time. A dilute or adulterated test will be considered a positive/failed urinalysis. Also, if you are unable to provide a sample in the time-frame given, this too will count as a positive test.

### **Counseling**

Substance abuse and Mental Health counseling are comprised of three separate formats; individual, group and educational sessions. As part of your treatment plan, you will be required to participate in all three types of counseling. Together they are designed to develop self-awareness, realize self-worth, and practice self-discipline. The individual and group counseling sessions will include problem identification and alternative solutions. Your attendance at counseling sessions will be reported to the Judge as part of your progress report. You must immediately contact your counselor if you are unable to attend or will be late to a scheduled session.

During treatment, your counselor may determine the need for additional counseling. This additional counseling may focus on areas of family, marital or mental health issues. If the VET/SA/MH Court Team makes a determination that you require additional counseling, your Treatment Provider will work with you to arrange such counseling.

## **Educational Classes**

As part of your program, you may be required to attend additional educational classes, including classes that deal with subjects such as: domestic violence, anger management, budgeting and finance, and parenting skills.

## **Twelve-Step Meetings**

Attendance will be required at 12-step meetings such as Narcotics and/or Alcoholics Anonymous. Frequent attendance is particularly important at the beginning of your recovery process to help familiarize you with the 12-step philosophy and help you develop a level of trust with the Drug Court team. **As part of Phase 1 you will be required to attend 90 meetings in days (at least 1 meeting per day, for 90 consecutive days).** Your counselor and/or probation officer will provide you with information regarding the time and location of 12-step meetings and will also direct you to special interest and recovery events in the community.

## **MEDICATIONS**

It is extremely important that you take any medications prescribed to you by your Doctor and/or Psychiatrist. The Judge and VET/SA/MH Court Team recognize many medications have unpleasant side effects, do not work equally well for all patients, and that it can be very difficult for a doctor and a patient to find the best combination of medications for that patient. For some participants in VET/SA/MH Court, medications may be essential for managing symptoms of illness and living successfully in the community.

If you have complaints about your medications, you must communicate with your Doctor and/or Psychiatrist and the VET/SA/MH Court Team. Your Doctor may be able to prescribe a different medication or additional medications to treat side effects. If you continue to have complaints or feel that your concerns are not being addressed, please talk to the VET/SA/MH Court Coordinator so that you can work on it together. If you refuse or repeatedly fail to take your medications as prescribed, you may be sanctioned.

***You may take the following medications as directed:***

Advil	Aleve	Aspirin	Ecotrin Tylenol	Ibuprofen
Toradol	Clinoril	Feldene	Nalfon Neclomen	Medipren
Motrin Naprosyn	Seldane	Hismonal	Zyrtec	

***For cough:***

Robitussin DM, Claritin, Tessalon, or Perles

***You may also take the following antihistamines:***

ActifedAfrin	OrnadeAllerest	AlkaSelzerPlus	Polarmine
Benadryl	Comhist	Teldrin	Comtrex
Contac	Pyribenzamine	Corcidin	Dimetane
Triaminicin	Dimetapp	PBZ	Dramamine
Triaminic	Dristan	Histadyl	

**Other medications may be appropriate to take, but you MUST check with the VET/SA/MH Court Team PRIOR to taking them.**

Please note that many common products including hairspray, perfume, mouthwash and medications contain ALCOHOL. If at any time an alcohol test is performed on your sample and is returned with a positive result, this will be considered a sanctionable offense.

**You must notify the VET/SA/MH Court Team of all medications and provide a copy of all prescriptions to the Treatment Court Coordinator.**

### **SANCTIONS**

If you fail to comply with the VET/SA/MH Court Program, the Judge may impose sanctions, including but not limited to the following:

- Termination from Drug Court
- Jail
- House arrest (Electronic Monitoring)
- Phase Demotion
- More frequent drug testing
- Additional community service
- Curfew
- Writing Essays
- Or other sanctions determined by the Drug Court Judge

### **INCENTIVES**

If you comply with the VET/SA/MH Court Program, the Judge may reward you with any of the following:

- Progression to next phase
- Reduction of Fees/Fines
- Reduction of Community Service Time
- Opportunity to leave Court sessions early
- Certificates
- Gift Cards

## **EDUCATION, VOCATION, AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS**

Recovery from substance addiction means developing self-sufficiency and becoming a productive and responsible member of the community. Prior to graduation, you will be expected to be employed, or involved in an educational or vocational training program. A member of the VET/SA/MH Court Team will work to assist you in obtaining an assessment of your needs and skills, and will refer you to the proper agencies for education, training and job placement.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES**

Upon your entry into the VET/SA/MH Court Program, a member of the VET/SA/MH Court Team will assess your housing, transportation, family and general living needs, and when appropriate, refer you to a local state and/or county agency for assistance.

## **GRADUATION**

Once you have successfully completed all Phases of the VET/SA/MH Court Program (as outlined in your Phase Chart), you “graduate” from the VET/SA/MH Court Program. Advancement from each phase and graduation from the Program shall be determined by the VET/SA/MH Court Judge. At graduation, your family may be invited to join you in Court as the Judge congratulates you on successfully completing the VET/SA/MH Court Program and achieving your goal of establishing and maintaining a drug-free life.

## **TERMINATION FROM THE PROGRAM**

Decisions on whether or not to terminate a participant from the Accountability Court Program will be made on a case by case basis, by the Judge, after considering the input received from all VET/SA/MH Court Team members. However, certain actions will warrant immediate expulsion from the program and they are as follows:

- Assaulting a team/staff member
- Participant’s request to leave the program
- Arrest for a new, violent offense
- Inadequate progression through the phases - as reported by team/staff members

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

State licensing requires that your identity and privacy be protected. In response to these regulations, policies and procedures have been developed to guard your confidentiality. You will be asked to sign a statement releasing information to the VET/SA/MH Court Judge. When you graduate or if you should be terminated from the VET/SA/MH court program, information regarding your treatment will be sealed.

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We hope this Handbook has been helpful to you and answers most of your questions. If you have any additional questions or concerns about the VET/SA/MH Court Program, please feel free to contact your defense counsel, treatment counselor or any member of the VET/SA/MH Court Team.