

The entire Veterans Court team appreciates your military service and looks forward to helping you successfully complete your Veterans Court mission.

CAMERON COUNTY VETERANS COURT

OVERVIEW

The Cameron County Veterans Court Program is a pre-trial diversion program for Veterans who are charged with misdemeanor or felony offenses that may be related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or other mental health problems resulting from their military service. Participants in this program will be given an evaluation for psychological, chemical dependency and other issues that can be addressed through various types of treatment and supportive services. The Veterans Court Program may also assist participating veterans with obtaining employment, education, health and housing services. Additionally, the program offers veterans an opportunity to avoid prosecution and a criminal conviction. The Veterans Court Program utilizes a non-adversarial approach in which a team that includes the judge, the defense attorney, the prosecutor, the program manager and a Veterans Administration outreach specialist work together with the veteran to guide him/her toward successfully attaining goals.

A Strategic Action Plan (SAP) will be developed by the program manager and the veteran will be provided with referrals for services needed to begin implementation of the SAP. The veteran will be scheduled for a series of court appearances to monitor and reinforce their progress toward meeting the objectives of their SAP. Once the objectives have been successfully met, the case will be dismissed from prosecution.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION

Veteran or current member of the United States Armed Forces, including a member of the Reserves, National Guard, State Guard or Coast Guard. Discharge from the military must be Honorable or General Under Honorable Conditions. Also, the veteran must have or receive a clinical diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a traumatic brain injury (TBI), or mental disorder that resulted from military service, and materially affected the veteran's criminal conduct for which they are being charged.

PROCESS

Applications for admission must be submitted to the Veterans Court Manager by the defense attorney representing the veteran. Once a referral is received, the Veteran's Court Manager will screen the applicant for eligibility, schedule the veteran for assessment and staff the case with the County Attorney's Office. If the veteran meets the program criteria and is accepted into the program, their case will be transferred to the Veterans Court docket. If the attorney is Court-appointed, the case will be turned over to the Veterans Court contract defense attorney. If the attorney is retained, then the attorney will have the option of remaining on the case for the duration of the program.

PROGRAM LENGTH

The Veterans Court Program is a 12 to 24 month program. The exact length of time in the program is determined by each participant's needs, progress toward successful implementation of the SAP, nature of the offense and arrest history.