

# J. Sauter Veteran Treatment Court

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## MENTOR HANDBOOK



***“Leave no veteran behind and honor their service”***



**Presiding Judge  
Honorable Janice K. Cunningham**

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## **1.1: Mission**

The Mission of the Eaton County Veterans Treatment Court is to enhance public safety by rehabilitating justice-involved Veterans. This is accomplished through a partnership with the Court, the Department of Veterans Affairs, community based-treatment providers, and the community.

## **1.2: How it Works**

The Eaton County Veterans Treatment Court (J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT) serves participants in the 56A District Court, and the 56<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court. It seeks eligible veteran defendants with substance use disorders and/or mental illnesses that are charged with *non-violent* misdemeanor or felony criminal offenses. Participation in the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT is subject to approval initiated by the prosecuting attorney. Eligible veteran candidates must be identified through evidence-based screening and assessments. Once veteran candidates are found to be eligible for the program, participation in the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT may be offered by the prosecuting attorney as a plea. At the time of plea, veteran defendants formally enter the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT and voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan. At regularly scheduled status review hearings, other conditions are typically reviewed for appropriateness, incentives can be offered to reward adherence to court conditions, and sanctions for non-compliance can be handed down.

## **1.3: Admission to the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT**

Final approval for admission into the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT lies solely at the discretion of the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT presiding judge. No candidate will be denied admission on the basis of gender, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation, cultural and/or religious beliefs. An individual that is not accepted into the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT will continue through the traditional criminal justice process in the original jurisdiction where the alleged crime occurred. If admitted at the time of plea, the veteran will be ordered to appear for sentencing where the presiding judge will place the veteran into the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT.

## **1.4: Meet the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Team:**

The J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT is comprised of a unique team of individuals committed to enhancing public safety by rehabilitating justice involved veterans. Similar to drug treatment and mental health courts, a Veterans Treatment Court uses a team-centered approach to sufficiently address the many needs of veterans who find themselves involved in the criminal justice system. This approach involves the cooperation and collaboration of traditional stakeholders found in drug treatment and mental health courts with the addition of representatives from the Veterans Administration, community-based treatment, veterans support organizations, and volunteer veteran mentors. The J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT team consists of:

- Presiding J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Judge
- Alternate J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Judge
- Prosecuting Attorney
- Defense Attorney
- J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Program Case Manager
- District Court Probation Officer
- Circuit Court Probation Officer
- Community-Based Treatment Providers
- VJO (Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator)
- Eaton County Veterans Services Officer
- Volunteer Veteran Mentor Coordinator
- Volunteer Veteran Mentor(s)
- Eaton County Sheriff

## **1.5: J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Participant Handbook**

Upon entry into the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT program, each veteran participant will receive a Participant Handbook detailing J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT program requirements, policies, and procedures that he/she must adhere by. Included in the Handbook is a Participation Waiver & Agreement each participant must read and sign.

## **1.6: Participant Conduct**

Each veteran participant is expected to respect themselves, other participants in the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT, the treatment team, service providers, the court, and court staff. It is expected that every participant will be on time and prepared for regularly scheduled court review hearings. Participants are expected to attend court review hearings in their entirety; *only under special circumstances will participants be excused*. Violence, threats, dishonesty and inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Participants are expected to dress appropriately for all court appearances.

## **1.7: Failure to Appear**

J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Review Hearings are held on the **1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month**. Review Hearings begin promptly at **3:30pm**. Participants are expected to report at 3:30pm to the assigned courtroom. Failure to appear and/or tardiness for regularly scheduled Court Review Hearings on the date and time ordered may result in receiving a sanction. If the participant is unable to appear in Court on his or her scheduled review date, he or she must notify their Probation Officer and veteran mentor *before* the court date. In the event of an emergency, the veteran shall provide their assigned Probation Officer with written proof, within 24 hours, that an emergency occurred and that he or she was unable to attend because of the emergency.

## **1.8: Graduation**

Participants who successfully complete all Phase requirements of the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT will be eligible for Graduation and discharge from probation. The J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT schedules graduation ceremonies as part of its regularly scheduled review hearing sessions as they are earned by participants. The J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT team, key service provider(s), mentors, sponsors, and family members are all invited to attend. Along with a certificate attesting the completion of all requirements of the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT, each veteran will be presented with a challenge coin to commemorate his or her success.

## **1.9: J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Phases**

The Eaton County Veterans Treatment Court program takes a minimum of Eighteen months to complete and is comprised of Five Phases. In addition to Phase requirements, the team reserves the right to set specific individual goals that participants are expected to accomplish prior to the next scheduled court date. Completion of the goals will be reviewed with the assigned Probation Officer prior to the next court appearance.

### **Phase Outline**

#### **Phase I: (2 months minimum)**

- Have contact weekly with your Probation Officer or Case Manager
- Attend Court Review Hearings before the Judge twice per month
- Submit drug screens as directed
- Submit alcohol testing as directed
- Follow all treatment and supervision recommendations
- Meet your assigned mentor
- **Advancement Criteria:**
  - Fourteen consecutive days of sobriety and sanction free behavior
  - Attend treatment sessions
  - Have met your mentor
  - \$25.00 will be deducted from fines, costs, and fees when advanced to the next phase

#### **Phase II: (2 months minimum)**

- Have contact weekly with your Probation Officer or Case Manager
- Attend Court Review Hearings before the Judge twice per month
- Submit drug screens at directed
- Submit alcohol testing as directed
- Follow all treatment and supervision recommendations
- Contact your assigned mentor weekly
- Secure stable housing
- Establish stable income

- **Advancement Criteria:**
  - Thirty consecutive days of sobriety and sanction free behavior
  - Engage in treatment
  - Secure stable housing
  - Establish an Action Plan or Treatment Plan
  - \$25.00 will be deducted from fines, costs, and fees when advanced to the next phase

### **Phase III: (7 months minimum)**

- Have contact twice per month with your Probation Officer or Case Manager
- Attend Court Review Hearings before the Judge one time per month.
- Submit drug screens as directed
- Submit alcohol testing as directed
- Follow all treatment and supervision recommendations
- Contact your assigned mentor weekly
- Work toward completing assigned Community Service Work
- Establish and engage in a productive activity
- **Advancement Criteria:**
  - Sixty consecutive days of sobriety and sanction free behavior
  - Demonstrate progress on your Action Plan or Treatment Plan
  - \$25.00 will be deducted from fines, costs, and fees when advanced to the next phase

### **Phase IV: (4 months)**

- Have contact once per month with your Probation Officer or Case Manager
- Attend Court Review Hearings before the Judge once per month
- Contact your assigned mentor weekly
- Submit drug screens as directed
- Submit to alcohol testing as directed
- Follow all treatment and supervision recommendations
- Complete all assigned Community Service Work
- Continue to engage in a productive activity
- **Advancement Criteria:**
  - Ninety consecutive days of sobriety and sanction free behavior
  - Completion of assigned Community Service Work
  - Develop a Relapse Prevention Plan or Discharge Plan
  - Fines and Costs must be paid in full
  - \$25.00 will be deducted from fines, costs, and fees when advanced to the next phase

### **Phase V: (3 months)**

- Have contact once per month with your Probation Officer or Case Manager
- Attend court Review Hearings before the Judge once per month
- Contact your assigned mentor weekly

- Submit drug screens as directed
- Submit to alcohol testing as directed
- Follow all treatment and supervision recommendations
- **Graduation Requirements:**
  - Ninety consecutive days of sobriety and sanction free behavior
  - Implement your Relapse Prevention or Discharge Plan
  - Following successful completion of program, all supervision fees will be waived.

## **SECTION II: Veteran Mentoring Program**

### **2.1: Mentoring**

One vital component of the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT is the volunteer veteran mentor program. In addition to the court's team, a group of volunteers serve the court as veteran mentors. These volunteers are veterans who may have served in Vietnam, Korea, Operation Desert Shield, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. These men and women volunteer their own time to work directly with J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT participants. Mentors serve a variety of roles, including; coach, facilitator, advisor, advocate, and supporter. Mentors listen to the concerns and problems of participants and assist them in finding resolutions. They observe and listen to participants, working with them to help set goals and action plans. Mentors provide feedback to participants and highlight their successes. Most importantly, mentors act as a support for the veteran participant in a way that only other veterans are able. The mentoring program thrives on the premise that behind every successful person, there is one elementary truth: somewhere, somehow, someone cared about his or her growth and development. This person is the veteran mentor.

### **2.2: Participant & Veteran Mentor Relationship**

Each participant in the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT is assigned a veteran mentor when he or she becomes a participant in the program. It is the goal of the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT to match each veteran participant to a mentor who served in the same branch of military service and same conflict, *if possible*. The mentor is expected to encourage, guide, and support the veteran as he or she progresses through the court process.

### **2.3: Goals of the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Mentoring Program**

The goals of the Eaton County Veterans Treatment Court Mentoring Program are as follows:

- 1) Help our fellow veterans receive the services they need to reach their full potential as productive members of society.
- 2) Help our fellow veterans navigate the court system, treatment system, and VA system.
- 3) Assess our fellow veterans' needs and help them adjust to civilian life.

## **2.4: The J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Mentoring Program**

While the veteran defendant is involved in the court process, a veteran mentor is assigned to the veteran and is expected to discuss any ongoing problems or issues of interest with the veteran participant. This mentor/mentee relationship is intended to promote and foster, through individual encouragement, a “can do” attitude in the veteran; the veteran is expected to become motivated to accomplish his or her goals in treatment, and should feel that he or she is not alone and knows that the mentor and the court are there for him or her.

Experience with other veterans courts throughout the country has shown that veterans respond more favorably to other veterans who have served and share similar experiences. Veterans appear to be more comfortable disclosing their situations when talking with fellow veterans. The conversation and interactions between the veteran mentor and veteran participant takes place on the level of peers rather than one person coming from a position of authority. The change in demeanor of the veteran participant becomes an opportunity to make a profound impact on the other veterans who enter the court.

## **2.5: Veteran Mentor Coordinator**

The mentor coordinator is responsible for recruiting prospective mentors, screening mentor candidates, selecting veteran mentors, training the selected candidates and educating them about the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT. The mentor coordinator will also be responsible for individual and group supervision as well as scheduling mentors to be present during the court’s proceedings.

### **Veteran Mentor Coordinator Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Recruit and train volunteer J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT mentors
2. Assist in the retention of veteran mentors
3. Organize and conduct training for veteran mentors
4. Assist in the supervision of mentors
5. Assist in developing specialized training projects
6. Perform duties as assigned by court coordinator and/or the Judge
7. Sustain and evolve the veteran mentor program

## **2.6: Veteran Mentor Role Description**

The veteran mentor acts as a coach, guide, role model, advocate, and a support for the veteran participant. The mentor encourages, guides, and supports the veteran participant as he or she progresses through the court process. The mentor's role includes listening to the concerns of the veteran and making general suggestions, assisting the veteran to determine his or her needs, and acting as a support for the veteran, especially when a veteran participant may be feeling isolated.

### **Veteran Mentor Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Attend court sessions when scheduled
2. Participate in and lead mentoring sessions with veterans when assigned by the Judge



3. Be supportive and understanding of the difficulties other veterans are facing
4. Assist the veterans as much as possible to resolve their concerns around the court procedures
5. Advise veterans on how to access and navigate the Veterans Affairs System
6. Be supportive and helpful to other veteran mentors

### **Veteran Mentor Eligibility Requirements**

1. Be a United States military veteran: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or a corresponding branch of the Reserve or National Guard.
2. Have a genuine concern for veterans in the legal system
3. Be in good standing with the law
4. Adhere to all Eaton County Veterans Treatment Court policies and procedures
5. Commit to program participation for a duration of the assigned veteran.
6. Complete the required training procedures
7. Participate in additional training sessions throughout the time of services in the Court.

### **Veteran Mentor Desirable Qualities**

1. Active listener
2. Empathetic
3. Encouraging & supportive
4. Tolerant and respectful of individual differences
5. Knowledgeable of Veterans Affairs Services
6. Knowledgeable of community resources and services

*\*Note: Interested participants of the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT are permitted (and encouraged) to apply to become mentors following successful completion (Graduation) of the program\**

## **SECTION III: MENTORING PROGRAM POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **3.1: Recruitment Policy**

The veteran mentor coordinator assumes the majority of the responsibility for recruiting new mentors. The J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT team, its collaborative partners and current veteran mentors are strongly encouraged to refer highly respectable and reputable veterans to the veteran mentor program. Additionally, veterans court team members and veteran mentors are strongly encouraged to attend and host informational sessions and training for perspective mentors.

### **3.2: Eligibility Policy**

Each veteran mentor *must* meet the eligibility requirements outlined in **Section 2.6 Veteran Mentor Requirements** to participate in the program. Extenuating circumstances may be reviewed at the discretion of the veteran mentor coordinator and the court.

### **3.3: Knowledge of a Prospective Mentor's Negative History**

Current veteran mentors with knowledge of any prospective mentor's history or background that may jeopardize the integrity of the volunteer mentor program, the court and veteran participants must communicate their knowledge or concerns to the volunteer mentor coordinator, the court coordinator, or the presiding J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Judge.

### **3.4: Screening Policy**

Each prospective volunteer mentor must complete a screening process. The volunteer mentor coordinator is responsible for conducting the screening process. The decision to accept or deny an applicant will be made by the mentor coordinator, the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT Program Case Manager and the Judge. Feedback regarding a prospective mentor's denial may or may not be provided. The right to withhold or give feedback is solely at the discretion of the mentor coordinator, project director and the presiding Judge.

The volunteer mentor screening procedure may include, but not limited to:

1. Completion of a written application form (*See Appendix*)
2. Criminal background check
3. Completion of a personal interview

### **3.5: Training Policy**

Training is crucial and necessary for volunteer mentors and initial training is especially crucial for prospective mentors. All prospective mentors must complete the required initial training or they will not be able to mentor during court proceedings. Training may include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Observation of several court sessions
2. Shadowing mentoring sessions with different mentors
3. Completion of individual supervision with the mentor coordinator.

### **3.6: Assignment Policy**

The mentor coordinator will assign mentors to a veteran participant at each court appearance. As mentors are not always present at each session, the volunteer mentor coordinator may assign any available mentor to the participating veteran. Whenever possible, the volunteer mentor coordinator will assign mentors based on the following criteria:

1. Previous sessions during which a volunteer mentor was assigned to a particular veteran participant.
2. Same branch of service, for example: Air Force-to-Air Force, Marine-to-Marine, etc.
3. Same war time era, for example: Vietnam-to-Vietnam and Iraq-to-Iraq
4. Specific skill of a volunteer mentor that a participating veteran may need
5. Similar age or gender

Additionally, the mentor coordinator will also take into consideration the request of the volunteer mentor or veteran participant. The mentor coordinator retains the right to assign a mentor to a veteran participant.

### **3.7: Confidentiality Policy**

Confidentiality is an essential piece of successful mentoring. Veteran participants must know that their sessions with a mentor are confidential. Veteran mentor training will include a mandatory confidentiality workshop. All veteran mentors must sign a confidentiality agreement.

### **3.8: Unacceptable Behavior Policy**

Unacceptable behaviors will not be tolerated while a veteran mentor is participating in the program. Because of the direct impact a mentor has on a veteran participant, behaviors that are not aligned with the mission, vision, goals, and values of the J. SAUTER VETERAN TREATMENT COURT are unacceptable and prohibited during court proceedings and mentoring sessions.

**APPENDIX**

**Eaton County Veterans Treatment Court Volunteer  
Mentoring Program Application**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MI: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

(Cell): \_\_\_\_\_

(Home): \_\_\_\_\_

Current occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had any issues with the law? If so, please explain

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Branch of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Discharge: \_\_\_\_\_

Combat?: \_\_\_\_\_

Military Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Eaton County Veterans Treatment Court  
Confidentiality Agreement**

To all Veteran Mentors:

All records and information contained in the files and associated with the Eaton County Veterans Treatment Court cases are confidential and not open to the public. Attorneys may review files for which they are appointed or retained, but no document shall be released without the approval of the Chief Probation Officer or the Judge. Information requested by other courts, or police agencies shall only be approved by the Chief Probation Office or the Judge. Always check that the defendant has signed a release of information form before divulging information to anyone.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor Coordinator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_