

Veteran Justice Programs

OKC VAMC

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Veteran Justice Outreach Specialists (VJO)

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Veterans We Assist



- A majority of the Veterans we assist joined the military with no history of legal, mental health, or substance abuse issues.
- Due to trauma experienced during their service they typically have PTSD symptoms. They tend to start self-medicating (worse than medicine) without seeking professional help due to pride, ego, etc. As they self-medicate they soon start having legal issues. Anger/aggression is a PTSD symptom, often leading to domestic violence or assault and battery charges.
- Charges we typically cannot help with: sexual assault, violent offenses, municipal offenses. We normally help with county misdemeanor and felony charges.
- Once PTSD is adequately treated, self-medicating and legal issues fade away. We must treat the root of the problem. Incarceration, like self-medication, is not a good treatment for PTSD.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



- **A:** Exposure to actual or threatened death (directly experiencing trauma, witnessing as it occurs to others, learning about a violent/accidental trauma to a family member, experiencing repeated exposure to aversive details of trauma like police and child abuse).
- **B:** 1 or more intrusive symptoms (memories, dreams, flashbacks as if they are currently occurring, something resembling an aspect of trauma).
- **C:** Avoidance of at least 1 thing resembling trauma (avoiding memories, thoughts, feelings, external reminders-places, people, etc.)
- **D:** 2 or more negative changes in cognition/mood (not remembering important aspects of trauma, negative beliefs about self/world, distorted thoughts of cause/consequences of trauma (blame self), negative emotional state (anger/shame guilt), anhedonia, detachment/estrangement, no interest in activities).
- **E:** 2 Arousal/reactivity to trauma: Irritable/angry outbursts with physical violence, reckless/destructive behavior, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, concentration issues, sleep disturbance.
- Above symptoms last for more than 1 month.

Traumatic Brain Injury



- **Mild TBI:** May remain conscious or may lose consciousness for a few seconds or minute. Symptoms: headache, vomiting, nausea, lack of motor coordination, dizziness, difficulty balancing, lightheadedness, blurred vision or tired eyes, ringing in the ears, bad taste in the mouth, fatigue or lethargy, and changes in sleep pattern.
- **Cognitive and emotional symptoms:** behavioral or mood changes, confusion, trouble with memory, concentration, attention, or thinking. Mild TBI symptoms may also be present in moderate and severe injuries
- **Moderate or severe TBI:** Chronic headache, repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions, an inability to awaken, dilation of one or both pupils, slurred speech, aphasia (word-finding difficulties), dysarthria (muscle weakness that causes disordered speech), weakness or numbness in the limbs, loss of coordination, confusion, restlessness, or agitation. Common long-term symptoms of moderate to severe TBI: changes in appropriate social behavior, deficits in social judgment, and cognitive changes, problems with sustained attention, processing speed, and executive functioning. Alexithymia, a deficiency in identifying, understanding, processing, and describing emotions occurs in 60.9% of individuals with TBI.

VJO Mission Statement and Goals

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- **Mission:** To partner with the criminal justice system to identify Veterans who would benefit from treatment as an alternative to incarceration.
- VJO Specialist will ensure access to exceptional care, tailored to individual needs, for justice-involved Veterans by linking each Veteran to VA and/or community services that will address mental health and substance abuse needs, homelessness, employment needs, improve social and clinical outcomes, facilitate recovery, and hopefully end a Veteran's cyclical contact with the criminal justice system.

VJO Mission Statement and Goals

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- **VJO Goals**

- Increase the identification of justice involved Veterans and promote their engagement with VA healthcare, benefits, and other services.
- Collaborate with the justice system and other community entities to develop opportunities for identifying justice involved Veterans.
- Conduct outreach directly to justice involved Veterans and link them to the appropriate VA and community services.

Role of Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialist

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- VJO Specialist is to act as a liaison and point of contact between the criminal justice system and the VAMC to help increase access of care for Justice involved Veterans and decrease barriers to treatment.
- VJO Specialists conducts outreach to jails and court systems to advocate on behalf of veterans that are involved in the criminal justice system.
- VJO provides case management services to veterans while they are involved in the criminal justice system, which may include having pending criminal charges, being in custody in a county jail, or facing a probation revocation.

Role of Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialist Continued

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- VJO Specialists assist justice involved Veterans in several ways:
 - Screen Veterans and their legal issues to determine if they may be appropriate for a referral to a diversion program, drug treatment court, or mental health treatment court within the county they have charges in.
 - Assess Veterans for unmet treatment needs that are impacting their current involvement in the criminal justice system.
- VJO Specialist is a member of the Treatment Team for the OK County Veteran's Diversion Program
- VJO Specialist is a member of the Treatment Team for the Cleveland County Drug Court

Why Use Treatment Courts?



- National average of recidivism rates for typical probation is approx. 38%. Parole recidivism: 54%. OK Drug court graduates: 24%. OK County Diversion graduates: 14%.
- Yearly prison cost in OK: \$19,000 (\$23,000 with mental health needs). Yearly drug courts participant cost: \$5000.
- OK prison population: Approx. 55% have a history of mental health diagnosis. Over 50% have a substance abuse diagnosis.

OK County Veteran's Diversion Program

- The OK County Veterans Diversion Program has been established since July 2011, and is a treatment driven diversion program to incarceration.
- It is approximately a 3 year program.
- The Goal of the OK County Veteran's Diversion Program is to reduce recidivism by addressing unmet treatment needs that are directly influencing a persons involvement in the criminal justice system.
- The OK County Veteran's Diversion Program is a collaboration of Criminal Justice System Partners, which include the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, North Care Community Mental Health Center, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, and the Veteran's Justice Outreach Specialist from the OKC VAMC.
- 22 O.S. 305.1-305.6 is the Deferred Prosecution Statute. This statute allows the state of Oklahoma to enter into an agreement with the accused to defer the filing of criminal charges in order to give the defendant an opportunity to successfully complete a program.

OK County Veteran's Diversion Program

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- **Process to apply be referred/accepted:**
 - Attend OK County Veteran's Diversion Program Orientation on Mondays at 1pm at the OKC Downtown Library
 - Make application at the Orientation, at the OK County DA's Office, or the OK County Public Defender's Office
 - Attend interview with the DA's Office to determine program appropriateness
 - Be issued a probationary contract with additional requirements prior to official contract and dismissal.
- **Current Census: 73 veterans**
- **Total number of graduates: 128 (13 total in 2016)**

Cleveland County Drug Court

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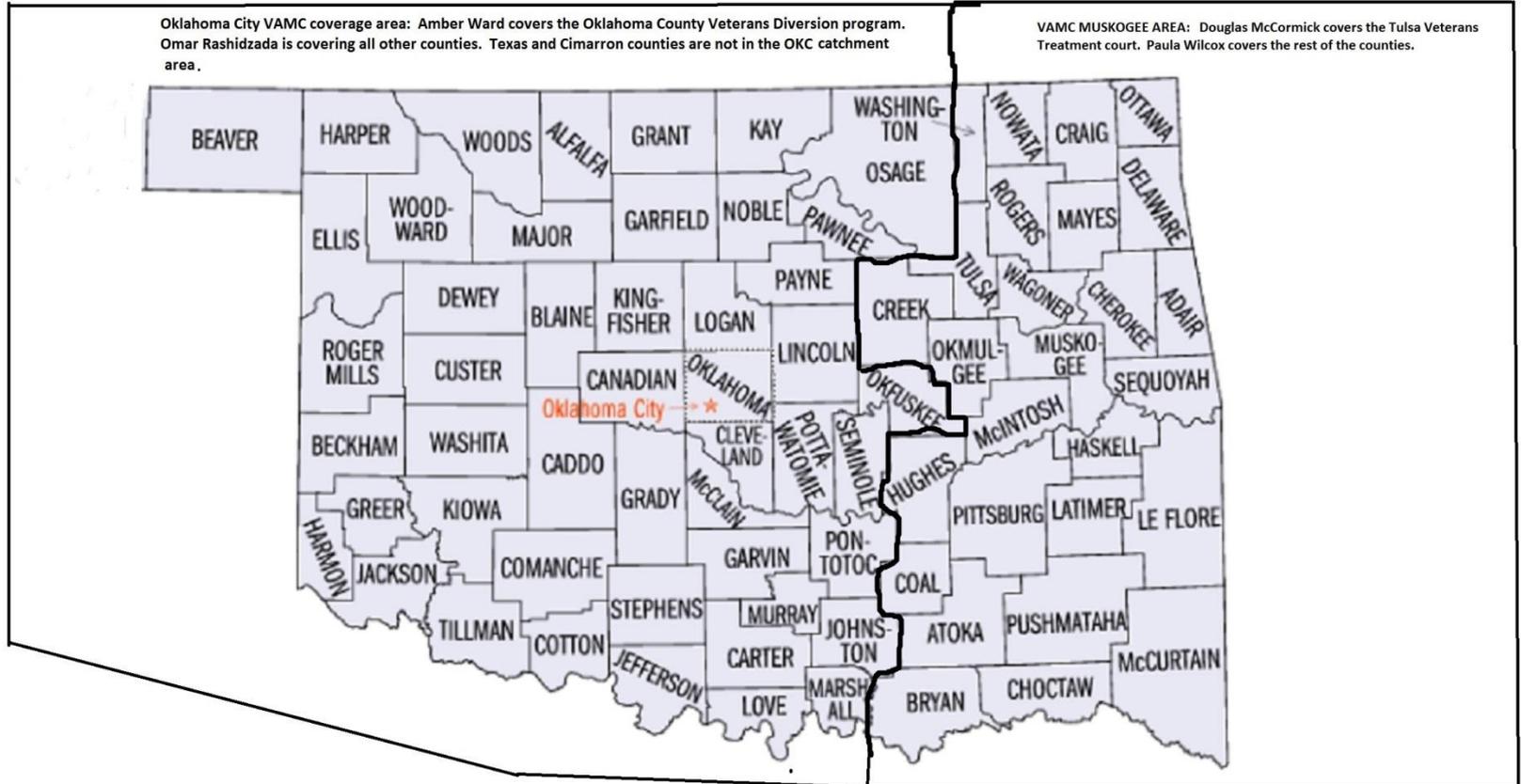
- Cleveland County Drug Court was awarded a grant from BJA (Bureau of Justice Assistance) to begin targeting veterans to be referred and accepted into the current Cleveland County Drug Court
- Intention of the BJA Grant and Cleveland County is to form a separate Veteran Treatment Court Docket
- Current Census: 7 veterans
- Regular outreach to Cleveland County Jail as they screen for Veterans.

Other Courts/Jail Outreach Efforts



- Comanche County Drug Court has 4 Veterans.
- Seminole County has a separate Veteran's docket with approximately 7 Veterans.
- Kay County Jail Outreach (screen Vets in software).
- VJO outreach to drug courts in over 40 counties in Oklahoma. Total outreach to 50 counties.
- VJOs encouraging county jails to screen inmates and determine if they have served in the military, and to notify VJO when a Veteran is identified. Many county jails currently do not screen for Veterans.
- In the past year approximately 30 Veterans have been released from jail to engage in treatment through PR bond.

County map coverage



Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans (HCRV)

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MISSION STATEMENT

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Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans promotes an effective and efficient nationwide approach of outreach to incarcerated Veterans through both direct outreach service provision as well as coordination and liaison with multiple facilities and systems within and outside the VA

HCRV PROGRAM

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Services include:

- Outreach to private, State, and Federal prisons within the State of Oklahoma
- Pre-release assessment services to target veterans eligible for release within 6 months
- Enrollment in VA using the 10-10 EZ form if veteran has never registered for VHA services
- Referrals and linkages to VA and Community Resources
- Transition case management services for housing, employment, and treatment needs to coordinate care as a veteran is released from DOC custody

Homeless Programs at VA medical center



- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: 1-877-424-3838.
- Homeless Program Walk in Services Monday-Friday 0830 to 1200 Room 3A 161.
- **Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV):** Conducts outreach to places homeless veterans gather including; shelters, meal sites, camps etc. Assists homeless veterans in accessing VA services. Manages fourteen emergency beds, through contracted providers, three of which are solely for female veterans.
- **Grant and Per Diem Program:** A 31 bed program that partners with grant-funded residential facilities in OKC that provides transitional housing for homeless veterans with a psychiatric or substance use disorder diagnosis. Vets typically are housed until they can establish income, save money, and move into permanent housing, but no more than two years.
- **Housing and Urban Development/VA Supported Housing (HUD/VASH):** a long-term intensive case management program for homeless veterans. Eligible veterans receive case management services designed to resolve current homelessness and prevent future episodes of homelessness. In addition, veterans receive access to a Section 8 voucher, which can substantially subsidize housing rental costs. HUD section 8 vouchers are provided to eligible veterans who agree to participate in this case management program. Veterans must be homeless to participate in this program. (over 300 Vets permanently housed).
- **Transitional Residence (Friendship House):** A sober group-living facility where veterans reside for up to a year while pursuing permanent employment and long term housing. Veteran must be homeless and have a therapeutic need for transitional living. Veterans must be able to work in a compensated work therapy job at the VAMC.

Employment Programs at VAMC



- **Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Work Experience (CWT/TWE):** Provides therapeutic vocational assistance, by engaging in work experience for pay at the OKC VAMC. All residents of the TR, must participate initially in the CWT/TWE program.
- **Compensated Work Therapy/Homeless Veterans Supported Employment (CWT/HVSE):** Therapeutic vocational assistance to veterans participating in one of the Homeless programs at the OKC VAMC. Goal is to obtain competitive employment.
- **Compensated Work Therapy/Supported Employment (CWT/SE):** Therapeutic vocational assistance to veterans who have been diagnosed with a severe mental illness (SMI). This vocational rehabilitation specialist is dedicated and embedded with the OKC VAMC MHICM program.

Conclusion

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- Questions and Comments