



Veterans Treatment Court Enhancement Initiative Application for Pilot Courts

Project Overview

The National Institute of Corrections and the Bureau of Justice Assistance have partnered with the Center for Court Innovation (the “Center”) to develop the first set of specialized screening, assessment, and case planning tools for Veterans Treatment Courts. By incorporating the latest research on trauma, substance use disorders, and other issues affecting veterans, these tools are designed to help Veterans Treatment Courts meet the special needs of justice-involved veterans.

The Veterans Treatment Court Enhancement Initiative will produce three new tools.

1. **Short screener:** A short pre-adjudication screening tool will identify veterans as they enter the justice system and measure their risk of re-offending. This tool will help justice system officials identify suitable candidates for Veterans Treatment Court and refer them for a full assessment.
2. **Comprehensive risk-need assessment:** A comprehensive risk-need assessment tool will enable Veterans Treatment Court staff to learn more about individuals’ criminogenic risks and needs. This information will help Veterans Treatment Courts confirm participant eligibility and understand each participant’s risk-need profile for case planning purposes.
3. **Case planning protocol:** A set of case planning guidelines will help Veterans Treatment Courts develop individualized supervision and case plans for each participant based on their risk-need profiles.

These tools will be tested in two pilot courts, which will be selected by the Center and the National Institute of Corrections based on criteria outlined in this Application. After being tested and refined in the two pilot courts and validated through rigorous research, the tools will provide Veterans Treatment Courts across the country with the first evidence-based resources designed specifically to serve the needs of justice-involved veterans.

Pilot Courts

Center for Court Innovation staff will train the two pilot courts in the use of the tools and will work with each pilot court to integrate the tools into existing court procedures and practices. The pilot courts will also receive ongoing technical assistance to address any implementation issues that arise and to ensure that the tools are used as intended.

Pilot jurisdictions must agree to use the short screener at arraignment, or at the earliest possible stage in case processing, with the greatest possible number of defendants. The short screener will identify potential Veterans Treatment Court participants, who will then be referred to the Veterans Treatment Court for a more detailed assessment. Using the comprehensive assessment

tool, Veterans Treatment Court staff will confirm eligibility and establish a risk and needs profile for each potential participant. Finally, the case planning protocol will guide court staff in translating a participant's risk and needs profile into an appropriate case plan and to link participants to the most appropriate treatment and support services in the community.¹

The Center will also work with the pilot courts to develop performance measures and data collection procedures to enable the courts to track key indicators related to screening, assessment, case planning, and case outcomes. This information will later be used to improve and validate the new tools. Once validated, these tools will be made available to Veterans Treatment Courts around the country.

Benefits of Becoming a Pilot Court

Research has consistently shown that justice system interventions are most effective when they are based on risk-need-responsivity principles, which hold that the type and intensity of treatment and supervision services should be proportional to an offender's risk of re-offending and should target their specific criminogenic needs. However, there are currently no evidence-based tools designed specifically to assess risk and need among court-involved veterans.

Pilot courts will be the first in the country to have access to the only specialized screening, assessment, and case planning tools for Veterans Treatment Courts. When used correctly, these tools will enhance pilot courts' ability to accurately assess participants' risk and needs and develop appropriate case plans. In addition, the pilot court will receive no-cost training and technical assistance from experts at the Center for Court Innovation. The Center will provide onsite training to court teams on risk-need responsivity theory and on the use of the new tools. Ongoing technical assistance, both onsite and remote, will also be provided to address implementation challenges and collect data related to the project. It is anticipated that the pilot courts will have the opportunity to present on their experience at a future national conference and may be featured in national publications to be developed as a result of this project.

Please note that pilot courts will not receive direct financial assistance.

Responsibilities of Pilot Courts

Pilot courts must make all relevant staff members available for three consecutive business days in spring 2016 for onsite training by the Center for Court Innovation. Following this initial training, sites can expect regularly scheduled check-ins by phone, and further onsite assistance from Center staff as needed.

Pilot courts will be expected to implement the short screener (anticipated length: 15-20 minutes) with as many defendants as possible at an early stage in the processing of criminal cases. Center staff will work with pilot court staff to determine the optimal point in case processing for administration of the short screener. Pilot courts must strive to utilize the results of the short

¹ The comprehensive assessment tool is not intended to replace any of the assessments that other agencies, such as the Veterans Health Administration or community-based treatment providers, use to diagnose and treat clients. Ultimately, treatment decisions must be made by qualified treatment professionals. Rather, the comprehensive assessment tool is designed to help Veterans Treatment Courts make preliminary determinations of participants' needs and refer them to the most appropriate services as quickly as possible. Treatment providers will continue to make their own independent determination of clients' needs.

screeners in accordance with risk-need-responsivity training by referring primarily moderate- and high-risk defendants to the Veterans Treatment Court. Depending on the capacity of the Veterans treatment court, low-risk defendants should be considered for other, less intensive diversion programs or alternative case dispositions.

Pilot courts must implement the comprehensive assessment (anticipated length: 30-60 minutes) with each participant referred to the Veterans Treatment Court. Court staff will then use the resulting risk-need profile to confirm eligibility for the Veterans Treatment Court and to develop an appropriate supervision and treatment plan for each participant consistent with the case planning protocol.

Pilot courts must also agree to use a secure website to record all screening and assessment results and allow the Center to access all data on this system for research purposes. Center staff will provide training on the use of the website. Pilot courts will also be required to track relevant performance measures with the assistance of Center staff.

Pilot courts are expected to commit to the project for 18 months and agree to use the tools consistently throughout this period. Following the pilot project, courts may choose to continue using the tools at their discretion.

Tentative Project Timeline:

Solicitation release date: November 16th, 2015

Application due date: December 11th, 2015

Announcement of successful applicants: January 2016

Initial planning conference calls: February 2016

Anticipated initial site visit: April 2016

Length of pilot phase: 18 months

Selection Process

Applications will first be reviewed and scored by Center staff. The Center, in collaboration with a multi-disciplinary committee of project advisors and the National Institute of Corrections, will then conduct an in-depth review of the highest ranked projects and select two pilot sites.

Applicants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Length of operation (Veterans Treatment Court must be operational for at least two years)
2. Sufficient enrollment and referral numbers
3. Court operations and protocols
4. Data collection capacity and willingness to share case data with Center staff
5. Demonstrated commitment from all stakeholders, *including arraignment courts and partner agencies that may be needed to administer the short screener.*
6. Adherence to the ten key components of Veterans Treatment Courts (see attached).

Application Process

Veterans Treatment Courts interested in applying must complete the attached application form. In addition, applicants must include a Letter of Interest not exceeding 2 pages, double spaced,

using 12-point Times Roman font with 1-inch margins. The letter must outline the court's intention to be considered as a pilot site, explain why the court wishes to participate in this initiative, identify any obstacles to implementation that the court anticipates, and outline support systems in place to help address stated obstacles.

Completed applications should be sent to Annie Schachar at aschachar@nycourts.gov, with the subject line: VTC Enhancement Initiative Pilot Court Application. Hard copies of proposals may also be mailed to Center for Court Innovation, ATTN: Annie Schachar, 520 Eighth Ave., 18th Floor, New York, NY 10018, and must be received by the submission deadline.

A complete application must include:

- Completed Application Form
- Letter of Interest
- Demonstration of commitment from key stakeholders, including arraignment courts and partner agencies that may be needed to administer the short screener. This commitment should be reflected in the Demonstration of Support from Relevant Stakeholders section in the Application Form.

Submission Deadline

Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. EST on December 11th, 2015.

Questions

For questions about this application process, please email Annie Schachar at aschachar@nycourts.gov.



Veterans Treatment Court Enhancement Initiative Application Form for Pilot Courts

Instructions: Answer all questions in as much detail as possible. Use extra pages if necessary.

1. Name of court:

2. Jurisdiction:

3. Address:

4. Point of contact for application process:

5. Title:

6. Organization:

7. Email address:

8. Phone number:

Veterans Treatment Court General Information

9. Length of operation:

10. Current active caseload:

11. Current capacity:

12. Average annual caseload:

13. Average annual referrals:

14. Graduation criteria:

15. Graduation rate (divide the number of participants who successfully completed the program by the number of admitted participants, over the lifetime of the court):

16. Eligibility criteria, including both legal and clinical requirements for admission:

17. Frequency of status hearings:

18. Five most common criminal charges admitted into the court (indicate for each charge if it is a felony or a misdemeanor):

19. Describe the demographics of your jurisdiction and indicate where your court is located—in an urban, rural, or suburban jurisdiction:

20. Describe the demographics of your participants, including branch of service:

21. Describe what proportion of your participants have been in combat, and if so, when and where:

Referral and Assessment Process

22. Identify the point(s) at which cases are eligible for your court (for example: pre-charge/prosecutor diversion, pre-plea, post-plea and pre-sentence, part of a probationary sentence, entry in lieu of probation violation or jail/prison from other court or same court):

23. Describe your court's referral process, including how and when potential participants are identified, and any screening or assessment tools used:

24. Describe whether your court currently uses any evidence-based tools to determine eligibility, and if so, which ones:

25. Indicate whether your court considers a defendant's risk and needs profile when determining eligibility:

26. Indicate whether your court excludes some justice-involved veterans, and if so, describe the circumstances:

27. Indicate whether cases are ever referred directly from another treatment court or alternative-to-incarceration program and describe the process:

28. Describe your court's readiness to replace or supplement any existing tools:

Program Design and Services

29. List all members of your court team and their affiliation:

30. Indicate the frequency of team meetings:

31. Describe the clinical assessment process, including any tools used to assess participants:

32. Indicate which primary services your court offers to participants, and what agencies and community based organizations provide these services:

33. Indicate what percentage of your court's participants has a substance use disorder:

34. Describe the most commonly used substances:

35. Describe other common clinical needs among your court's population:

36. Indicate what percentage of your court's participants have a history of trauma:

37. Describe your court's approach to trauma-informed care:

38. Describe your court's approach to alcohol and other drug testing:

39. Indicate if your court has a mentor program. If so, describe:

40. Describe any additional types of clinical and supportive services are available to participants:

41. Describe how your court monitors compliance. Include frequency of contact with participants, and agency for supervision:

42. Describe your court's approach to judicial interaction with participants:

Information Management and Technology

43. Describe any internal data collection and performance measurement systems:

44. Describe any technology currently used by the court for purposes of screening, assessment, provision of services, or data collection:

Demonstration of Support from Relevant Stakeholders

Identify a point of contact within each relevant stakeholder group. The point of contact must sign this form to demonstrate their support for this initiative and their commitment to making staff available for training and implementation of this project. Signature also indicates that the signatory has read the Application Guide. If you do not provide contact info/signature from one group, use the allotted space to explain why it is not applicable.

<p><u>Judiciary</u> Name:</p> <p>Title:</p> <p>Contact Information:</p> <p>Signature:</p>

<p><u>Prosecution</u> Name:</p> <p>Title:</p> <p>Contact Information:</p> <p>Signature:</p>

Defense

Name:

Title:

Contact Information:

Signature:

Treatment

Name:

Title:

Contact Information:

Signature:

Probation

Name:

Title:

Contact Information:

Signature:

Local VA

Name:

Title:

Contact Information:

Signature:

Law enforcement

Name:

Title:

Contact Information:

Signature:

Corrections

Name:

Title:

Contact Information:

Signature:

Court administrative staff

Name:

Title:

Contact Information:

Signature: