

Who is Eligible?

A defendant can only be accepted into Veterans Court as follows [generally stated]:

1. Must be an honorably discharged Veteran, 18 years or older.
2. Misdemeanor and felony charges are eligible for Veterans Court at the discretion of the State Attorney's Office. Each case is reviewed on an individual basis.
3. Veterans status must be established by a DD-214 and must be eligible for Veterans Administration Health Care benefits.
4. Suffering from a severe persistent mental illness, or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and/or substance abuse issue.
5. Must have been arrested for, or charged with and/or sentenced on one or more crimes.
6. Must be represented by an attorney.
7. Must meet residency requirement [generally 30 days in Lee County prior to application].
8. Must enter a guilty or no contest plea to each charge pending or charges may be deferred by the State Attorney's Office.
9. Must have ability to comprehend and conform to the Veterans Court guidelines.
10. Must be legally competent to proceed.

Lee County Veterans Court is a collaborative effort of:

- Twentieth Judicial Circuit
- Office of the Public Defender
- Office of the State Attorney
- Lee County Veterans Health Care Center
- Coastal Behavioral Healthcare
- Lee County Sheriffs Department
- Veterans Administration
- Lee County Veterans Services
- Lee County Court Administration
- Lee County Clerks Office
- Department of Corrections, State Probation
 - Lee County Probation
 - SalusCare of Florida, Inc.



For additional information on Veterans Court please contact:
Lee County Probation Department
1700 Monroe St, Ft. Myers, FL 33901
(239) 533-9199

For additional information and to download forms visit our website at
<http://www.ca.cjis20.org>
Click on: **Programs > Veterans Court > Lee**
(Forms are under Downloads)

Lee County Veterans Court Program



20th Judicial Circuit of Florida
Administrative Office of the Courts

1700 Monroe Street
Fort Myers, FL 33901

Phone: (239) 533-9199
Fax: (239) 485-2510

What is Veterans Court?

The Lee County Veterans Court Program represents an effort to identify and address the unique needs of veterans living with a mental illness or substance abuse issue who have had an infraction of the law resulting in arrest.

The Program was developed to help veterans improve their quality of life and continue to be productive and responsible members of the community. The program is a voluntary alternative on the part of the defendant to the traditional criminal justice system. The Judge, Court staff, Veterans Administration, Legal Counsel and Treatment Team offer select defendants guidance to successfully complete the program.

Program Objectives

- Increase effective cooperation between the criminal justice system and mental health and substance abuse treatment in our community.
- Assist select defendants struggling with a mental illness or substance abuse issue who have committed misdemeanor or felony crimes.
- More efficient case processing, improved access to public and veterans mental health treatment and substance abuse services.
- Improved well-being and quality of life.
- Reduced chance of recidivism through education.
- Improve public safety for community at large.

Program Criteria

Following arrest, defendants are identified as eligible veterans through contact with the Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator. Eligibility for the program is determined through a series of screenings intended to protect public safety. Legal Counsel explains the program and advises the Defendant in making a decision regarding participation.

An Intervention Plan is developed cooperatively to specifically address the veteran's needs, taking into account existing community resources. The Defendant, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Professionals, and Counsel must together agree to the Intervention Plan. Entry into Veterans Court is voluntary. Defense Counsel continues to provide legal representation throughout the Program.

Successful completion of the Intervention Plan results in closure of the case either through dismissal of the Defendant's charges, successful completion of probation or possible completion of the probation. Following closure of the case the defendant graduates from Veterans Court. Failure to complete the Intervention Plan or discharge from the program results in prosecution on the pending charges.

Veterans will be successfully linked with mental health and substance abuse providers that they can maintain for the future.



Program Rules

Requirements, not limited to:

- Regular court appearances.
- Remain alcohol, substance and non prescribed medication free.
- Random drug and alcohol screens at own expense.
- Regular psychiatric and or substance abuse monitoring typically conducted at the Lee County Veterans Administration Health Care Clinic.
- Participation in the Veterans Mentoring program.
- Groups and treatment recommendations must be followed.
- Take medications as prescribed by a physician.
- Follow all recommendations of the intervention plan.
- Regular contact and home visits with Outreach Specialist.

Program Completion

In diversion cases, with successful completion of the intervention plan, the pending case will be dismissed by the State Attorney's Office. Probation may be terminated or continued on regular supervision. Defendants will be successfully linked with mental health service providers that they can maintain for the future. Family and friends are invited to join the court as the Judge congratulates the participant for successfully completing the intervention plan and achieving his/her goals.