



Justice Speakers Institute
PROMOTING JUSTICE WORLDWIDE

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS

REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS,
AND HYPOTHETICALS

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations	4
Mentors In Veterans Treatment Courts: Requirements, Dos & Don'ts, and Hypotheticals	5
Universal and Divergent Requirements of a VTC Mentor	6
<i>Universal Requirements.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Divergent Requirements</i>	<i>11</i>
Dos and Don'ts for Mentors in VTCs	16
<i>Dos</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Don'ts</i>	<i>18</i>
Hypotheticals for Mentors in VTCs	20
Mentor Profile	23
Recommendations for Research.....	25
Conclusion	25
References	26
Appendices.....	29
<i>Appendix A: The GROW Model</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Appendix B: Dos and Don'ts for Mentors</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Appendix C: Hypothetical Situations for Mentors in VTCs.....</i>	<i>38</i>

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
MST	Military Sexual Trauma
OCC	Orange County California
OCC VTC	Orange County California Veterans Treatment Court
SLOC	San Luis Obispo County California
SLOVTC	San Luis Obispo County California Veterans Treatment Court
S.D. CA.	Southern District of California
S.D. CA. VTC	Southern District of California Veterans Treatment Court
YC	Yellowstone County Montana
YC VTC	Yellowstone County Montana Veterans Treatment Court
V.A.	United States Department of Veterans Affairs Administration
VTC	Veterans Treatment Court

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

**MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS**

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REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS**

The role of a mentor in a Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) is not always clear. Further, there are many universal and diverging mentor qualifications and responsibilities specific to each individualized VTC program (Arno, 2015), thus, the mentor's job is essentially a moving target. Serving may be very different for each veteran mentor, as the mentor's role may also evolve during the mentor's relationship with his/her VTC mentee. However, mentors are often left with making difficult decisions related to understood or implied boundaries in reporting mentee issues or concerns. Some VTC programs require mentors to act in the same capacity as well-known Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) sponsors (Douds & Hummer, 2019) who look to assist mentees in making the best decisions individually, while refraining from sharing any illegal behaviors outside of self-harm or harm to others (Lucas, 2018). Other VTC programs have infused strict guidelines in requiring mentors to report all violations of program requirements to the VTC team via their mentor coordinator. Still others allow discretion for mentors to report as they deem necessary, outside of self-harming concerns or harm to others. Research that discusses or studies VTC mentors specifically is limited, though information is slowly emerging (Baldwin, 2013; Douds & Hummer, 2019; Huskey, 2017; Lucas, 2018). Therefore, it is important to understand current practices VTCs are implementing to assist in clarifying requirements, roles, and reporting procedures for mentors. As a position and observation, guided by descriptive and cross analysis type techniques, this article will first discuss some universal and divergent requirements of a VTC mentor within four VTC programs of convenience (i.e., Orange County California Veterans Treatment Court [OCC VTC], 2019; San Luis Obispo County California Veterans Treatment Court [SLOVTC], 2014; Southern District of California Veterans Treatment Court [S.D.Ca. VTC], n.d., and Yellowstone Billings County Montana Veterans Treatment Court [YC VTC], n.d.). Second, the authors list some Dos and Don'ts for mentors who lack or seek direction. Third, through created hypothetical scenarios, the authors provide direction-less mentors recommended actions in response based on the structures of each VTC program. Fourth, the authors, based on the VTC programs viewed, propose a collective mentor profile. Finally, recommendations for research that focuses specifically on the VTC mentor position are delineated.

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

UNIVERSAL AND DIVERGENT REQUIREMENTS OF A VTC MENTOR

Mentors within VTCs are volunteer veterans who are recruited to serve as support personnel to VTC participants as they progress through their mandated diversion programs (Arno, 2015). VTC mentors, through research study discussions, are asked to serve in a myriad of ways to support their mentees positive completion of their perspective programs (see Arno, 2015; Baldwin, 2013; Timko et al., 2016). The non-standardization of VTCs has also unilaterally created a requirement to develop individualized VTC mentor participation requirements (Arno, 2015). These requirements have the potential of limiting mentor participation, possibly due to either a mentor willing to commit to such obligations, or due to program developers' desire to limit their mentor resource pool in lieu of strict guidelines. The terms *eligibility*, *duties*, *responsibilities*, and *requirements* are used interchangeably within the four VTC program manuals and documents examined, which proved confusing during examination. Thus, for the purposes of this article and clarity, information deemed universal and divergent have been labeled collectively as *requirements* and are based upon verified data within one or more sections of the four programs analyzed. Hence, the following subsections display a listing of both *universal* and *divergent requirements* to illustrate the viewed descriptions associated with the mentors within the four VTCs observed.

Universal Requirements

The four VTCs analyzed all expressed the following as *desired qualities* of a prospective VTC mentor:

- Be a willing and active listener
- Be encouraging and supportive (OCC VTC added: “*with a bias towards finding solutions*,” p. 19)
- Be tolerant and respectful of individual differences
- Be knowledgeable of community resources

Further, all, except the OCC VTC, expressed a desire for mentors to be empathetic. The SLOC VTC and YC VTC desired mentors who have knowledge of Veteran's Administration (V.A.) services. Additionally, all, but the S.D. CA. VTC, expressed desires for mentors that have knowledge of

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

**MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS**

community resources. Exclusively, the S.D. CA. VTC program expressed desires for mentors who have a genuine concern for veterans and for those that have positive military service, though not definitively defining the method or standard for meeting such aspirations.

Lastly, the SLOC VTC outlined a desire for mentors who are proactive in making contact with the veteran participant and those who are punctual to both court and mentor meetings. Table 1 is offered as an aide in illustrating the universal requirements of VTC mentors within the four programs; a discussion then follows.

TABLE 1
Universal Requirements for VTC Mentors

Requirements	Veteran Treatment Courts			
	ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA	SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA	YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA
United States Military Veteran (<i>Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or their respective Reserve or National Guard</i>)	✓ ¹	✓	✓	✓ ²
Provide proof of discharge (e.g., DD214)	✓	✓ ³	✓	✓
In person interview	✓	✓	✓	✓
Be sober and drug free	✓	✓ ⁴	✓	✓

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

**MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS**

Requirements	Veteran Treatment Courts			
	ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA	SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA	YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA
Pass a background check	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adhere/support all VTC program policies and procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓
Complete application & initial/additional training as required	✓	✓	✓ ⁵	✓
Act as ally, advocate, & role model	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collective and reciprocal respect for VTC program	✓	✓	✓	✓
Be a law-abiding citizen	✓ ⁶	✓	✓	✓
Commit to at least 1 year	✓	✓ ⁷	✓	✓
Be supportive and understanding of the difficulty's veterans face	✓	✓	✓	✓

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

**MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS**

Requirements	Veteran Treatment Courts			
	ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA	SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA	YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA
Participate in and lead mentoring sessions with mentee	✓ ⁸	✓ ⁹	✓ ¹⁰	✓
Mentor must report illegal behavior, threat to self or others to mentor coordinator	✓ ¹¹	✓	✓	✓

Note: ¹Disqualitifes those with Bad Conduct Discharge; ²Must have served honorably; ³Required to present DD214; ⁴Including any addictive substances; ⁵Provides flexibility for mentors' schedules; ⁶Cannot be on probation for any crime or any convictions for past 5 years; ⁷Mentor must commit for the duration of the term of their mentee participant; ⁸At least four hours per month; ⁹Must meet at each court session and create a contact plan in line with mentees requirement for in-between; ¹⁰Must be in contact at least one hour weekly; ¹¹Requires mentor to openly indicate this obligation to mentee. Sources: OCC, 2019; SLO VTC, 2014; S.D. Ca. VTC, n.d.; YC VTC,n.d.)

Though standardization of VTCs continue to be a moving target, there are ongoing efforts to infuse evidenced based best practices regarding VTC program development and implementation. Organizations like the National Association for Drug Court Professionals, within their Justice for Vets division, are providing VTCs with training and offering what they anoint as best practices (J4V, n.d.). Individual VTCs are also using researchers embedded within their programs to study outcomes to document and report results that could be then utilized as internal best practices and lessons learned (see Douds & Hummer, 2019).

Table 1 reflects that all four VTC program require mentors to be either a veteran of the US Armed Forces, their respective reserves, or of their National Guard component. The OCC VTC levies a requirement that mentors cannot have a Bad Conduct Discharge, while The YC VTC requires

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

mentor to have an Honorable Discharge. One universal requirement, depicted in Table 1, involves the qualifying of veterans of the National Guard, however, it is unclear as to what standard is being imposed. According to the Veterans Administration, some National Guard personnel do deploy overseas, may see combat, and some even earn veteran status if they serve 30 consecutive days in a war zone (VA n.d.). When viewing the basic elements of who VTC programs target in general, it does implore the question of how VTCs established qualifying criteria, as serving in a war zone and transitioning are niche populations. For example, the YC VTC program states:

...veteran mentors act as peer support to veteran participants. *Veterans are better served by having a support system that includes veterans who understand combat experience and the different aspects of military service* (emphasis added). Mentors participate in a supportive relationship with participants to increase the likelihood that they will remain in treatment, attain and manage sobriety, maintain law-abiding behavior and *successfully readjust to civilian life* (emphasis added) (p. 6)....

Consequently, it is unclear if National Guard members, who have not seen combat, but have garnered veteran status, qualify. Further, it also underscores the question whether National Guard veterans, who may have never deployed, experienced any correlated challenges related to military transition.

Additional observations from Table 1 reveal that all VTCs require mentors to undergo an arduous process, from background checks and personal interviews, to not engaging in any drug use or addictive substances, while committing to be a model citizen during their volunteer service. Some added observations revealed that, while all other VTCs required a minimum of 1- year of service, the SLO VTC program requires mentors to commit for the duration of the term of their mentee participant. Additionally, though all VTC programs require mentor-mentee interface, they vary in length and duration. The OCC VTC program requires mentors to meet with their mentees at least four hours per month. The SLO VTC program requires mentors to not only meet mentees at each court session, but also to create a contact plan, in line with mentees program requirements (which fluctuates as the program progresses), for in-between court sessions. The S.D. Ca. VTC program requires mentors to be in contact at least one hour per week. Finally, while not all VTC programs mandate mentors to report all illegal behavior, reporting threat to self or others to the mentor coordinator was a universal requirement.

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Divergent Requirements

As discussed, VTCs are neither universal nor standardized (Baldwin, 2013; Timko et al., 2016). Therefore, VTC program developers are applying their skills and expertise to tailor mentor requirements to needs related to their overall mission. The differences, in the four VTCs examined, creates an opportunity to view and understand how VTCs are deploying mentors, thus, Table 2 is offered as a visual interpretation of some of the data collected; a discussion then follows.

TABLE 2
Divergent Requirements for VTC Mentors

Requirements	Veteran Treatment Courts			
	ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA	SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA	YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA
Assist the Veteran with the V.A. health care/benefits system issues, etc.	✓	✓		✓
Must formulate and submit weekly/monthly written reports on mentees to their mentor coordinator		✓ ¹	✓ ²	✓ ³
Must report all contact/noncompliance behaviors to the VTC team		✓	✓ ⁴	✓
May be past VTC participant		✓ ⁵	✓ ⁵	✓

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

**MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS**

Requirements	Veteran Treatment Courts			
	ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA	SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA	YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA
May need to assist in locating housing and employment, etc.	✓ ⁶	✓		✓
Have a genuine concern for veterans in the legal system		✓	✓	✓
Successfully adapted to civilian life following military service		✓		
Attend court sessions with veteran, when scheduled	✓	✓ ⁷		✓
Confidentiality	✓ ⁸	✓ ⁹	✓ ¹⁰	✓ ¹¹

Note. ¹Documentation is entered on a Veteran Mentor Log form and sent to the mentor coordinator; ²Submits to mentor coordinator directly who then determines what information is shared with the VTC team; ³Requires documentation in a Mentor Logbook at court; ⁴Situational dependent at mentors discretion; ⁵Situational dependent requires Co-Mentor or Mentor Coordinator approval; ⁶Offers general guidance and referrals, participant does the legwork; ⁷Required to notify mentor coordinator of absence so a replacement can be provided; ⁸Strictly required, can only break due to illegal or self-destructive behaviors, but must notify mentee of this obligation; ⁹Applies to all outside the VTC team, can share within; ¹⁰Outside of self-harm, harm to others, and unlawful behaviors, allows for discretion in reporting to the mentor coordinator, who then decides what/if to share; ¹¹In addition to self-harm, harm to others, and unlawful behaviors, allowed to bring issues to the court to assist in problem solving. Sources: OCC, 2019; SLOVTC, 2014; S.D. Ca. VTC, n.d.; YC, n.d.).

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

As depicted in Table 2, VTCs continue to evolve, thus, mentor requirements appear to equally evolve to meet their program needs. VTC program teams are formulated to address and support the success of its program participants (Arno, 2015). As programs emerge, changes to program needs are inevitable. Therefore, it would be natural to accept that having an ability to adapt to emerging models is an important facet within the VTC field (Douds & Hummer, 2019). The ability of any team to recognize *and adapt* to change is critical (Carlock, 2012; de Poel et al., 2012; Dyer et al., 2013). Industry experts on team performance, Dyer, Dyer, and Dyer (2013), in their fifth edition of *Team building: Proven strategies for improving team performance*, outline that, of the four critical elements of team performance (outlined as their four C's), a team's ability to self-monitor and *change as needed* were indispensable (the others being the context, composition, and competencies of the team); thus, VTC programs must promote this ability to keep pace with this inevitability within the field. District Attorneys (Arno, 2015), together with the approval of those Judges within their jurisdiction's, are indispensable to a VTC programs acceptance or denial, consequently, expectations can be a fluid process. Hence, levied by these authorities, VTC programs undoubtedly will look to meet understood requirements through their program structuring or restructuring.

Table 2 data delineates that OCC, SLO, and YC VTCs, require mentors to offer assistance to mentees in locating housing and employment, V.A. benefits and healthcare, and so forth. The SLO VTC and the YC VTC both expect mentors to offer guidance and direct assistance, with strict follow-up and reporting to the mentor coordinator regarding mentee progressions/regressions. However, OCC VTC requires the mentor to offer only general guidance and referrals, while participants are expected to do the *legwork*.

As another observation, much has been depicted regarding mentor confidentiality requirements. Using the data in Table 2 as an example, rooted in their added eleventh key component of their VTC program, OCC VTC appears to require the mentor to step into the role of mentor coordinator of sort, outlining that "*Veterans' mentors will provide ongoing support to the participants during court sessions and in the community*" (page 6, #11). Inferences could be drawn that confidentiality, regarding the VTC participant, is synonymous within the VTC support team. In contrast, the OCC VCT Handbook does not mandate any reporting directly by the mentor (outside of emergencies), rather, relies on in-person meetings outside the court before commencement, and reporting issues at the mentor's

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

discretion, provided they have written signed permission (OCC VTC, 2019). Further, OCC VTC acutely upholds strict confidentiality regarding the mentors and team analogous to that of an AA Sponsor, and outlines that all visitors (e.g., mentors) in staff sessions will sign a confidentiality adherence document (OCC VTC, 2019). As depicted differences, both SLO VTC and YC VTC strictly require mentors to report issues via a report to the mentor coordinator, weekly, or during court sessions (SLOVTC, 2014; YC, n.d.). This requirement could imply that confidentiality applies only to those *outside the VTC team*, thus, all information can be shared within. The SD CA VTC requires a weekly report that is sent to the mentor coordinator but gives mentors some discretion about what to share.

Outside of self-harm, harm to others, and unlawful behaviors, the SD CA VTC allows for discretion in reporting to the mentor coordinator, who then decides what/if to share with the VTC team in staffing sessions; this could imply that confidentiality may rest within the VTC team, with the mentor coordinator, or both (SD CA VTC, n.d.). Thus, information, in relation to confidentiality, is not only shared differently amongst these four VTCs, it is mandated by the mentor differently, in some cases, via written progress or regression to the mentor coordinator, who shares said information with the VTC team.

Additional unique aspects observed of the VTC programs regarding mentors revealed the following:

- OCC VTC: Most significant is the direct verbiage that outlines that mentors are an essential part of their program, serving as part of their support team. Explicitly, the program upgraded their 10 Key Components to 11 *Key Components* to reflect the importance of their mentors. The specific verbiage reads “Veterans’ mentors will provide ongoing support to the participants during court sessions and in the community (page 6, #11). In Addition, the program offers significant and detailed communication techniques for mentors to use with their mentees, to include what was labeled the GROW Model. This model offered mentors a strategy of how to formulate a road map that began with a mentee clarifying their Goal, the Reality of where they currently were in relations to the goal, Options regarding ways to make their journey, and finally to foster their Will towards goal accomplishment (see Appendix A). This model can be akin to the development of SMART goals (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound).

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

- SLO VTC: References, in the mission of their mentoring program, that *age* (quantified by veteran experience not their actual age) may be a positive contributing factor in successful mentoring, while continuing to provide added purpose for elder warriors (Note: The military culture tends to value experience, which is not only depicted by attained rank).
- SD CA VTC: Ask applicants to list spoken languages other than English. The application also asks for a list of past volunteer experience references. Finally, the application, when asking for any criminal background, places the statement *“It is recognized that personal experience with the criminal justice system may help a mentor better relate to a veteran facing criminal proceedings”* (Appendix A). The statement seems to encourage prospective mentors, who may have reservations due to past criminal history, to apply or not give up.
- YC VTC: The mentors are provided with the contact information of support resources in their community which can then be provide to mentees, while also requiring mentors to have the contact information of the Veteran Crisis lines on their person at all times, in case they are needed. Finally, the program does indicate that mentors are part of the VTC team, though not as definitive as the OCC VTC program.

As research and developed programs have universally advocated, mentors are deemed critical to VTC program success (Arno, 2015; Baldwin, 2013; California Courts, 2011; Douds & Hummer, 2019; Knudsen & Wingenfeld, 2015; OCC, 2019; SLOVTC, 2014; S.D. Ca. VTC, n.d.; YC, n.d.). Overall, when considering data similarities and variances, within these four VTC programs, it appears that VTCs, though similar in some areas, are very different. Thus, guidance may continue to be needed for mentors, who may lack clear direction, as they navigate possible shifts in requirements and roles of a seemingly ever evolving VTC field. Furthermore, the VTC program has been understood to support the uplifting of military culture through its structuring. Part of the military culture, VTCs may also want to consider, surrounds unity in support of accomplishing a common mission/goal, and collaboration through collective lessons learned; in this case, successfully rehabilitating and returning veterans to their communities, while leaving no one behind. Subsequently, given the understood variabilities and similarities in the requirements outlined in just these four programs, acute awareness, amongst VTCs, could prove valuable not only to mentors and program developers, but also to VTC leadership structures in advocacy of unified collaboration.

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS: REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Regarding coveted resources, government entities that offer Grant funding opportunities, could also assist in requiring unification in effort amongst VTCs by requiring the sharing of best practices and approaches through one source or centralized point (just like military unit commanders do on the battlefield). Cross sharing and communication could not only assist in centralizing information but could assist in reducing redundancies in effort while breaking up possible VTC program silos. In doing so, VTCs could still garner pride in their individual accomplishments, but also be part of the larger universal VTC mission.

The data offered in this observation points to similarities that could be used to confirm or reinforce effectiveness around understood universal VTC requirements, while variabilities could be used as opportunities to explore gleaned divergent requirements. Through this broadened lens, universally confirmed or refutable data could be extracted regarding *specific impacts* VTC mentors are making on program outcomes and sharing what does and does not work. Until then, perhaps VTC mentors can individually and collectively look to offer guidance, rooted in their personal experiences, to other mentors and VTCs. Next, the authors provide two such installments through offered Do and Don'ts and offered hypotheticals.

DOS AND DON'TS FOR MENTORS IN VTCs

Understanding mentors can be rudderless at times, and to illustrate the sharing of knowledge and experiences universally, an offering of some Do and Don'ts based on shared experiences are provided. This information is also provided in Appendix B. These lists of what mentors should do and should not do are not a substitute for a thorough familiarity with the policies and procedures of their VTC. They are meant only as a quick reminder of proper mentor protocol.

Dos

The following are some offered Dos:

- Do follow the policies and procedures of the court. When in doubt, consult the VTC handbook or the VTC coordinator.

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

- Do take immediate action if you suspect your mentee may be contemplating self-harm or harm to others.
- Do attend court sessions with the mentee.
- Do your best to build a relationship with your mentee and serve as a role model.
- Do follow along with what your mentee is doing so you can provide guidance through the program.
- Do try to build a relationship of trust with your mentee.
- Do make encouraging remarks when your mentee achieves any small or large success.
- Do inform the mentor coordinator if you do not feel you and your mentee are a good fit so the coordinator can try to make a better match.
- Do try to make all your interactions with your mentee meaningful.
- Do show respect to your mentee.
- Do encourage your mentee to engage in reflection, set goals and take achievable steps towards those goals.
- Do assist your mentee with accessing benefits and services.
- Do apply your insight and experience while helping your mentee.
- Do actively listen to your mentee, paying close attention to what is said *and unsaid*.
- Do support your mentee's strengths.
- Do be mindful that your mentee is trying to navigate many things at once: (e.g., transitioning into civilian life; the court system; the treatment system; and possibly the VA system).
- Do be supportive and helpful to other mentors and mentees.
- Do share your relevant experiences, as appropriate, with your mentee

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

- Do seek educational opportunities and tools available to you that can assist you as a mentor (e.g., attend all offered continuing trainings and meetings; share and learn from other mentors on your team, etc.)

DON'TS

The following are some Don'ts:

- Don't preach to your mentee.
- Don't impose your values, lifestyle or beliefs on your mentee.
- Don't appear to be judging or evaluating your mentee, unless it is in a positive way.
- Don't ask a lot of questions or otherwise pry into the veteran mentee's personal life. Wait until your mentee is ready to divulge something to you.
- Don't allow your relationship with your mentee to deteriorate to the point the mentee lacks trust in you, open communication and commitment to the process are key.
- Don't become sexually involved with your mentee.
- Don't hug your mentee without asking permission (i.e., respect boundaries, both stated and implied).
- Don't consume intoxicants when you are with your mentee.
- Don't abandon your mentee. You made a commitment to help, so stick to it and foster a teamwork attitude, while setting the example of resilience.
- Don't try to be the mentee's mental health counselor. The VTC collaborative team will take care of that.
- Don't breach a mentee's confidence, unless keeping the confidence violates VTC policy.
- Don't interrupt when your mentee is speaking (a key to active listening).

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

- Don't get defensive if your mentee is hostile; be patient and tolerant.
- Don't become a source of finances for your mentee (establish boundaries early on to ensure there are no implied expectations).
- Don't try to offer quick solutions. Allow your mentee to vent before trying to get to the root of the situation, and then try to find a solution.
- Don't speak on your phone or read your messages while you are with your mentee (another key to active listening); turn off your phone.

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

HYPOTHETICALS FOR MENTORS IN VTCs

Mentors will face a variety of situations that will require some response. The appropriate response will depend on the rules and procedures of the VTC. These five hypothetical situations, offered in Table 3, demonstrate that each VTC observed is unique in how it wants its mentors to conduct themselves. This information is also provided in Appendix C.

TABLE 3
Hypothetical Situations for Mentors in VTCs

Hypotheticals	Veteran Treatment Courts			
	*ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	*SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,	*SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF	*YELLOWSTONE COUNTY,
1. A mentor smells alcohol on the veteran mentee's breath. What should the mentor do?	Mentors must: "Inform the veteran that you are obligated to report certain illegal or destructive behavior. . . at the discretion of the mentor." The mentor could report or not report. Either way, engage in a positive discussion and warn the mentee any recurrence will be reported.	San Luis Obispo requires: "Documentation of all mentoring sessions is mandatory" and "Report anything of significance regarding progress or problems." Smelling alcohol on a mentee's breath during a mentoring session would probably be required in a mentor's documentation.	The Mentor handbook states: ". . . notify the appropriate member of the veteran treatment team if the participant . . . engages in unlawful activities." A mentor is obligated to report smelling alcohol on the mentee.	The handbook states: "Document all contacts with Veteran client . . ." The mentor could report or not report. Either way, engage in a positive discussion and warn the mentee any recurrence will be reported.

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Hypotheticals

Veteran Treatment Courts

	*ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	*SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,	*SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF	*YELLOWSTONE COUNTY,
<p>2. After the mentee has a clean urine test, the mentee expresses relief, telling the mentor about a lot of drinking the previous weekend.</p> <p>What should the mentor do?</p> <p>Note: In hypo 1, the violation of the court rule is presently occurring while in hypo 2, it is past behavior. Also, the mentee stopped drinking long enough to pass the urine test.</p>	<p>Orange County's rules permit the mentor to use discretion in deciding whether or not to make a report. Either way, the mentor should try to guide the mentee to see how destructive that past behavior was. If no report is made, the mentor should warn the mentee that recurrences of that behavior will be reported.</p>	<p>As noted in 1) above, one of San Luis Obispo County's rules is: "Report anything of significance regarding progress or problems." Even though the mentee's behavior was in the past and the mentee was clean enough to pass the test, drinking while in the VTC is significant, so a report to the mentor coordinator would be required.</p>	<p>The Southern District mentor handbook states: "... notify the appropriate member of the veteran treatment team if the participant ... engages in unlawful activities." The clear intent of the rule is that the team wants the mentor to report this type of conduct, so the mentor is required to report.</p>	<p>Even though Yellowstone County's VTC rules concerning making reports are ambiguous, and even though the mentee's behavior is in the past, the mentor should engage the mentee in discussions that will allow guidance and hopefully lead to no more drinking, and inform the mentee any recurrence will be reported.</p>

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Hypotheticals

Veteran Treatment Courts

	*ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	*SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,	*SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF	*YELLOWSTONE COUNTY,
<p>3. <i>The mentee tells the mentor about plans to take a weekend trip to some place outside the state. The mentor heard the court order the veteran mentee not to leave the state.</i></p> <p>What should the mentor do?</p> <p><i>Note: Here, the behavior is in the future.</i></p>	<p>Orange County's rules permit the mentor to exercise discretion. Here, the violation has not yet occurred. The mentor would probably want to engage in a conversation with the mentee, pointing out the ramifications of violating a court order.</p>	<p>San Luis Obispo County's mentor rules require the mentor to report "anything of significance regarding progress or problems." A report to the mentor coordinator is mandatory.</p>	<p>The Southern District requires reporting if the participant engages in unlawful activities, but since nothing yet happened, the mentor is not required to report, but should speak with the mentee about consequences of plans.</p>	<p>Yellowstone County's rules are ambiguous enough that a mentor would probably not want to document a revelation about future behavior of this sort. But the mentor should speak with the mentee about consequences of violating a court order.</p>
<p>4. <i>The mentor suspects the veteran mentee is contemplating suicide.</i></p> <p>What should the mentor do?</p>	<p>Orange County's mentor rules require reporting in this situation: "... the Mentor must inform the Mentor Coordinator or emergency responders to prevent harm."</p>	<p>San Luis Obispo requires reporting: "Mentor must report any legal offense or threat to self or others, to Co-Mentor Coordinators or his representative immediately."</p>	<p>The Southern District requires reporting if the participant becomes suicidal, wants to harm others, or engages in unlawful activities.</p>	<p>Yellowstone County asks mentors to have the Veterans Crisis Line on hand in case a Mentee is a danger to self or others. Immediate action required.</p>

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Hypotheticals

Veteran Treatment Courts

	*ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	*SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,	*SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF	*YELLOWSTONE COUNTY,
5. While in court during a recess, a group of male mentors and mentees are laughing while talking about a woman's body. A woman mentee victim of MST hears this banter. What should the mentor do?	One of the duties & responsibilities of mentors is to be "supportive and understanding of the difficulties veterans face." The mentor should report the incident to the mentor coordinator.	One of the San Luis Obispo requirements for mentors is to "report anything of significance regarding progress or problems." The mentor should report the incident to the mentor coordinator.	Mentors should "encourage, guide and support each participant through the court process." The mentor should report the incident to the mentor coordinator.	The handbook requires mentors to "bring to the attention of the Court any issues that the Court can assist in resolving." The mentor should report the incident to the mentor coordinator.

Note: *Mentors should be required to engage in both continuous training and with each other. Thus, issues such as these should also be brought out during training platforms and peer-to-peer meetings. This is to ensure that issues are understood by the *entire mentor team* and aide in reducing counter productive behaviors. Offered by Eileen C. Moore and Dr. James Starks Jr.

MENTOR PROFILE

As VTCs continue to replicate across the US, mentors are becoming the subject of increased focus. Mentors' responsibilities and qualifications continue to evolve. Given the gleaned outcomes of the presented data, the following represents what is illustrated as the Mentor Profile. The profile represents a synthesis of gleaned information from the data presented and is offered as one example that VTCs could consider when formulating or adapting their programs. The mentor profile is as follows:

- Have positive military service (to include not having a Bad Conduct Discharge)

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

- Have acute analytical skills for synthesizing information and expectations
- Have high emotional intelligence (e.g., see Bradberry & Greaves, 2009)
- Be able to commit to relationship for the duration of the term of the mentee participant
- Be a willing and active listener
- Be encouraging and supportive with a bias towards finding solutions
- Be tolerant and respectful of individual differences
- Be knowledgeable of community resources, to include the V.A. health care and benefits systems and willing to openly assist mentee
- Be proficient in oral, reading and written communications (e.g., standing and speaking in a court setting; ability to formulate and submit weekly/monthly written reports if required)
- Be empathetic
- Be genuinely concerned for veterans
- Be punctual in all they do
- Be both respectful and supportive of the VTC mission
- Be comfortable navigating ambiguity (e.g., confidentiality and situational awareness, etc.)
- Be sober and drug free, to include any addictive substances
- Be successfully transitioned and adapted to civilian life after military service
- Be flexible enough to meet the fluid needs of the VTC processes and scheduling

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Funding research can be costly and require prioritization when resources are limited. Despite efforts being made, VTCs are still vastly under researched regarding the direct impact mentors have on VTC program outcomes. Many VTCs often assign their court coordinators the responsibility for research, as one of many responsibilities, which may impact VTCs in their ability to attract needed skill sets to capture and analyze program data. This observation, using descriptive cross analysis techniques, was limited in scope in that it compared just four VTCs. Thus, replication on a larger scale (e.g., judicial districts, states, regions, etc.) could prove pragmatic and informative to the VTC field. Additionally, VTC program developers and mentor coordinators deserve empirically rooted research that would result in best practices when it comes to mentors and their eligibility, roles, responsibilities, and duties. Thus, experiential, non-experimental, and analytical studies are needed to glean best practices that support program improvements and the enhancement of safety (i.e., physical and mental) for the VTC mentor position. In addition, in this case, data looked to inform the who, what, and where, we do not offer any information regarding the why or when as it relates to the programs viewed. Therefore, despite universal agreement that mentors are a critically important piece to the overall success of the VTC mission, no research could be uncovered that studied the direct impact of the changing responsibilities and roles mentors are required to fill, or why these changes are taking place.

Finally, not all programs are transparent in their practices, good or bad. Thus, VTCs should consider sharing program development and outcomes data universally. Making information searchable and easy to locate could also assist in best understanding the changing nature of the VTC program and its effects on the VTC mentor and team.

CONCLUSION

In closing, if VTCs are looking to attract *and retain* mentors for their respective programs, it would be pragmatic to ensure that more definitive qualifications and characteristics are established and stated early on in their recruitment processes; not to do so could sorely diminish needed VTC training resources. Those veterans, who aspire to serve as VTC mentors, have a tremendous honor

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

and responsibility. Understanding some common and divergent responsibilities, VTCs are levying on their mentors, and some dos and don'ts, supported by analysis and discussion of hypotheticals that affect mentors, can assist VTC teams in formulating strategies. At the same time, this understanding would aid in training potential volunteer mentors to comprehend and appreciate the overall desired deliverable and outcome of their VTC program—to support veteran participants in ensuring they do not feel left behind!

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(Moore & Starks, 2020)

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REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

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REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE GROW MODEL

Source: Orange County California Veterans Treatment Court. (2019). *Veterans Treatment Court: Volunteer Veteran Mentor Handbook* (May 2019) [Internal Program Document]. (Appendix E, pp. 27-29)

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS: REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

The GROW Model

Mentoring to improve lives

Support your Mentee as they develop

As a mentor you can help your mentee learn how to solve problems, make better decisions, and learn new skills to progress in the court program and in other personal life goals. These skills can be used at any time—individual meetings, in a group, either formally or integrated into any interaction with the mentee.

What is the concept of the GROW Model?

The intent is to be clear with communication, to actively seek to clarify, to be purposeful, to develop mentees' ability to evaluate and clarify their own goals, and to assist them in developing a measurable action plan to accomplish those goals.

This can be accomplished with just a bit of practice and utilizing some easy tips. You will find these skills do not have to be utilized just with your mentee (you might find yourself using them with family too!).

The GROW acronym stands for:

Goal – (What would the mentee like to accomplish? Can that be turned into a measurable goal?)

Reality – (What is the current situation? Discuss both strengths and barriers?)

Options – (This is brainstorming time. Be open-minded and listen for the mentees own ideas.)

Will – (What is the mentee willing to do? Make an action plan using SMART goal model and agree on follow-up!)

The model is a simple yet powerful framework for a mentoring session. The main intent is to keep communication / interaction clear and on target and have the framework to bring it back for clarity and resolution.

A useful analogy for the GROW model is the plan you might make for an important journey. First, you start with a map: With this, you help your mentee clarify where they are going (their Goal) and establish where they currently are (their Reality). Then you explore various ways (the Options) of making the journey. In the final step (establishing the Will), you ensure your mentee is committed to making the journey and is prepared for the conditions and obstacles they may meet on their way.

Know Your Role

In its traditional application, the GROW model assumes that the Mentor is not an expert in the mentees situation, and therefore acts as a guide to help the mentee select the best options that fit with their own, abilities and preferences. While you likely have wise advisement about the direction your mentee should take, you should ALWAYS ask if they are interested in hearing some feedback so that you solicit more "buy in" instead of falling into a "telling them what to do" role. There is GREAT value in the mentee thinking through the process on their own with your guidance to help stay on track.

1

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS: REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Use the following GROW steps to guide your Mentoring session:

1. **G: Establish the Goal:** help the mentee define and agree upon the goal or outcome to be achieved. You should help your mentee define a goal that is specific, measurable and realistic. "I want to do good in this program" "I want to get my life on track" are not examples of measurable goals.
Useful questions include:
 - "How will you know that you have achieved that goal?" "How will you know the problem is solved?" "What benchmarks might you want to see along the way?"
2. **R: Examine Reality:**
Next, ask your mentee to describe their Current Reality. This is an important step. Too often, people try to solve a problem without fully considering their starting point, and are often missing some of the information they need to solve the problem effectively. As the mentee tells you about his or her Current Reality, the solution may start to emerge.
Useful questions include:
 - "What is missing that is needed to achieve that?" "What is happening now?" "What else might be going on that could affect your progress?"
3. **O: Explore the Options:**
Once you and your mentee have explored the Current Reality, it's time to explore what is possible – meaning, all the many possible options for solving the problem. Help your mentee generate as many good options as possible and discuss these. What resources, when, how, who? Time factors? Cost or no cost? Who is needed to assist for a final decision?
Offer your own suggestions. However, let your team/ peer member offer his or hers first, and let him or her do most of the talking.
Useful questions include:
 - "What else could you do?" "What could you do that you have control of?" "What are the benefits and downsides of each option?" "What factors will you use to weigh the options?"
4. **W: Establish the Will:**
By examining Current Reality and the Options, your mentee will now have a good idea of how he or she can achieve their Goal. That is great – but in itself, this may not be enough! Therefore, your final step as a Mentor is to get your mentee to commit to specific action. In so doing, you will help the mentee affirm and bolster their will and motivation.
Useful questions include:
 - "So, what will you do now and when?" "Will this address your goal?" "How likely is this option to succeed?" "What barriers might come up?" "What else will you do?"

Practice by Coaching Yourself

A great way to practice using the model is to address your own challenges and issues. When you are stuck with something, you can use GROW to coach yourself. By practicing on your own challenges and issues, you will learn how to ask the most helpful questions. Write down some stock questions as prompts for future sessions with your mentee.

Ask Great Questions and Listen Well

The two most important skills for a coach/mentor are the ability to ask good questions and effective listening. Avoid closed questions: "Did that cause a problem?" Ask open ones: "What affect did that have?" Be prepared with a list of questions to for each stage of the G-R-O-W process.

Listen well and let your mentee do most of the talking. Remember that silence is valuable thinking time for them to learn problem solving with your guidance!

2

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

GROW Worksheet		
<p>GOAL:</p> <p>-Explore and agree on the topic and the mentee's goal to be accomplished.</p>	<p>Clarify the focus and the goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would you like to discuss? What do you want to achieve in this meeting? Why is this important to you now? How will you know you've achieved this goal? 	<p>NOTES:</p>
<p>REALITY:</p> <p>-Invite mentee's assessment of the current situation -Clarify and reality check perceptions -Verify the facts and feelings around the issue/topic.</p> <p><i>Awareness is defined as perceiving things as they are; self-awareness is recognizing internal factors that distort one's perception of reality.</i></p>	<p>Explore the current situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What actions have you taken already? What impact or effect did that have? How do you know that this is accurate? What are other things that might impact you achieving your goal? 	
<p>OPTIONS:</p> <p>-Identify any past successes with similar goals. -Identify any obstacles -Identify all resources and strengths</p>	<p>Explore all options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o What prevents you from reaching your goal? o What changes do think you would have to make to achieve your goal? o What might hinder you? 	
<p>WILL:</p> <p>-What will the mentee do? -Get a commitment to act -Specify next steps -Identify a plan to address any obstacles</p>	<p>Design a plan of action: (use SMART Goal Format)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o What are your next steps? o What is the timeframe? o What could get in the way? o What support will you need? o How and when can you get that support? 	

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Source: Orange County California Veterans Treatment Court. (2019). *Veterans Treatment Court: Volunteer Veteran Mentor Handbook* (May 2019) [Internal Program Document]. (Appendix E, pp. 27-29)

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

APPENDIX B: DOS AND DON'TS FOR MENTORS

Offered by Eileen C. Moore and Dr. James Starks Jr.

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

These lists of what mentors should do and should not do are not a substitute for a thorough familiarity with the policies and procedures of their VTC. They are meant only as a quick reminder of proper mentor protocol.

Dos. The following are some offered Dos:

- Do follow the policies and procedures of the court. When in doubt, consult the VTC handbook or the VTC coordinator.
- Do take immediate action if you suspect your mentee may be contemplating self-harm or harm to others.
- Do attend court sessions with the mentee.
- Do your best to build a relationship with your mentee and serve as a role model.
- Do follow along with what your mentee is doing so you can provide guidance through the program.
- Do try to build a relationship of trust with your mentee.
- Do make encouraging remarks when your mentee achieves any small or large success.
- Do inform the mentor coordinator if you do not feel you and your mentee are a good fit so the coordinator can try to make a better match.
- Do try to make all your interactions with your mentee meaningful.
- Do show respect to your mentee.
- Do encourage your mentee to engage in reflection, set goals and take achievable steps towards those goals.
- Do assist your mentee with accessing benefits and services.
- Do apply your insight and experience while helping your mentee.
- Do actively listen to your mentee, paying close attention to what is said *and unsaid*.
- Do support your mentee's strengths.
- Do be mindful that your mentee is trying to navigate many things at once: (e.g., transitioning

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

into civilian life; the court system; the treatment system; and possibly the VA system).

- Do be supportive and helpful to other mentors and mentees.
- Do share your relevant experiences, as appropriate, with your mentee
- Do seek educational opportunities and tools available to you that can assist you as a mentor (e.g., attend all offered continuing trainings and meetings; share and learn from other mentors on your team, etc.)

Offered by Eileen C. Moore and Dr. James Starks Jr.

Don'ts. The following are some Don'ts:

- Don't preach to your mentee.
- Don't impose your values, lifestyle or beliefs on your mentee.
- Don't appear to be judging or evaluating your mentee, unless it is in a positive way.
- Don't ask a lot of questions or otherwise pry into the veteran mentee's personal life. Wait until your mentee is ready to divulge something to you.
- Don't allow your relationship with your mentee to deteriorate to the point the mentee lacks trust in you, open communication and commitment to the process are key.
- Don't become sexually involved with your mentee.
- Don't hug your mentee without asking permission (i.e., respect boundaries, both stated and implied).
- Don't consume intoxicants when you are with your mentee.
- Don't abandon your mentee. You made a commitment to help, so stick to it and foster a teamwork attitude, while setting the example of resilience.
- Don't try to be the mentee's mental health counselor. The VTC collaborative team will take care of that.
- Don't breach a mentee's confidence, unless keeping the confidence violates VTC policy.
- Don't interrupt when your mentee is speaking (a key to active listening).

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

- Don't get defensive if your mentee is hostile; be patient and tolerant.
- Don't become a source of finances for your mentee (establish boundaries early on to ensure there are no implied expectations).
- Don't try to offer quick solutions. Allow your mentee to vent before trying to get to the root of the situation, and then try to find a solution.
- Don't speak on your phone or read your messages while you are with your mentee (another key to active listening); turn off your phone.

Offered by Eileen C. Moore and Dr. James Starks Jr.

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

APPENDIX C: HYPOTHETICAL SITUATIONS FOR MENTORS IN VTCs

Offered by Eileen C. Moore and Dr. James Starks Jr.

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Hypotheticals

Veteran Treatment Courts

	*ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	*SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,	*SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF	*YELLOWSTONE COUNTY,
<p>1. A mentor smells alcohol on the veteran mentee's breath.</p> <p>What should the mentor do?</p>	<p>Mentors must: "Inform the veteran that you are obligated to report certain illegal or destructive behavior. . . at the discretion of the mentor." The mentor could report or not report. Either way, engage in a positive discussion and warn the mentee any recurrence will be reported.</p>	<p>San Luis Obispo requires: "Documentation of all mentoring sessions is mandatory" and "Report anything of significance regarding progress or problems." Smelling alcohol on a mentee's breath during a mentoring session would probably be required in a mentor's documentation.</p>	<p>The Mentor handbook states: ". . . notify the appropriate member of the veteran treatment team if the participant . . . engages in unlawful activities." A mentor is obligated to report smelling alcohol on the mentee.</p>	<p>The handbook states: "Document all contacts with Veteran client . . ." The mentor could report or not report. Either way, engage in a positive discussion and warn the mentee any recurrence will be reported.</p>

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Hypotheticals

Veteran Treatment Courts

	*ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	*SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,	*SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF	*YELLOWSTONE COUNTY,
<p>2. After the mentee has a clean urine test, the mentee expresses relief, telling the mentor about a lot of drinking the previous weekend.</p> <p>What should the mentor do?</p> <p>Note: In hypo 1, the violation of the court rule is presently occurring while in hypo 2, it is past behavior. Also, the mentee stopped drinking long enough to pass the urine test.</p>	<p>Orange County's rules permit the mentor to use discretion in deciding whether or not to make a report. Either way, the mentor should try to guide the mentee to see how destructive that past behavior was. If no report is made, the mentor should warn the mentee that recurrences of that behavior will be reported.</p>	<p>As noted in 1) above, one of San Luis Obispo County's rules is: "Report anything of significance regarding progress or problems." Even though the mentee's behavior was in the past and the mentee was clean enough to pass the test, drinking while in the VTC is significant, so a report to the mentor coordinator would be required.</p>	<p>The Southern District mentor handbook states: "... notify the appropriate member of the veteran treatment team if the participant ... engages in unlawful activities." The clear intent of the rule is that the team wants the mentor to report this type of conduct, so the mentor is required to report.</p>	<p>Even though Yellowstone County's VTC rules concerning making reports are ambiguous, and even though the mentee's behavior is in the past, the mentor should engage the mentee in discussions that will allow guidance and hopefully lead to no more drinking, and inform the mentee any recurrence will be reported.</p>

(Moore & Starks, 2020)

MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
REQUIREMENTS, DOS & DON'TS, AND HYPOTHETICALS

Hypotheticals

Veteran Treatment Courts

	*ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	*SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,	*SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF	*YELLOWSTONE COUNTY,
<p>3. <i>The mentee tells the mentor about plans to take a weekend trip to some place outside the state. The mentor heard the court order the veteran mentee not to leave the state.</i></p> <p>What should the mentor do?</p> <p><i>Note: Here, the behavior is in the future.</i></p>	<p>Orange County's rules permit the mentor to exercise discretion. Here, the violation has not yet occurred. The mentor would probably want to engage in a conversation with the mentee, pointing out the ramifications of violating a court order.</p>	<p>San Luis Obispo County's mentor rules require the mentor to report "anything of significance regarding progress or problems." A report to the mentor coordinator is mandatory.</p>	<p>The Southern District requires reporting if the participant engages in unlawful activities, but since nothing yet happened, the mentor is not required to report, but should speak with the mentee about consequences of plans.</p>	<p>Yellowstone County's rules are ambiguous enough that a mentor would probably not want to document a revelation about future behavior of this sort. But the mentor should speak with the mentee about consequences of violating a court order.</p>
<p>4. <i>The mentor suspects the veteran mentee is contemplating suicide.</i></p> <p>What should the mentor do?</p>	<p>Orange County's mentor rules require reporting in this situation: "... the Mentor must inform the Mentor Coordinator or emergency responders to prevent harm."</p>	<p>San Luis Obispo requires reporting: "Mentor must report any legal offense or threat to self or others, to Co-Mentor Coordinators or his representative immediately."</p>	<p>The Southern District requires reporting if the participant becomes suicidal, wants to harm others, or engages in unlawful activities.</p>	<p>Yellowstone County asks mentors to have the Veterans Crisis Line on hand in case a Mentee is a danger to self or others. Immediate action required.</p>

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MENTORS IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS:
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Hypotheticals

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	*ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA	*SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,	*SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF	*YELLOWSTONE COUNTY,
5. While in court during a recess, a group of male mentors and mentees are laughing while talking about a woman's body. A woman mentee victim of MST hears this banter. What should the mentor do?	One of the duties & responsibilities of mentors is to be "supportive and understanding of the difficulties veterans face." The mentor should report the incident to the mentor coordinator.	One of the San Luis Obispo requirements for mentors is to "report anything of significance regarding progress or problems." The mentor should report the incident to the mentor coordinator.	Mentors should "encourage, guide and support each participant through the court process." The mentor should report the incident to the mentor coordinator.	The handbook requires mentors to "bring to the attention of the Court any issues that the Court can assist in resolving." The mentor should report the incident to the mentor coordinator.

Note: * Mentors should be required to engage in both continuous training and with each other. Thus, issues such as these should also be brought out during training platforms and peer-to-peer meetings. This to ensure that issues are understood by the *entire mentor team* and aide in reducing counterproductive behaviors. Offered by Eileen C. Moore and Dr. James Starks Jr.

(Moore & Starks, 2020)