

Williamson County
Veterans Treatment Court



**VETERAN PEER MENTOR
PROGRAM**

"Leave No Veteran Behind and Honor Their Service"

Williamson County Veterans Treatment Court

Veteran Peer Mentor Program

Mission Statement for the Peer Mentor Program

The Mission of the Williamson County Veterans Treatment Court Peer Mentor Program is to make certain to the best of our abilities that no veteran is left behind. The Program strives to ensure that every participating Veteran in the Veterans Court has a fellow Veteran that acts as a mentor, advocate, and ally.

Goals of the Peer Mentor Program

To act as an ally and friend, and help fellow Veterans successfully readjust to civilian life.

The Peer Mentor Program

The Veterans Treatment Court relies on cooperation and collaboration among the criminal justice system, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans service organizations, and community treatment agencies to provide comprehensive treatment for Veterans. In addition to these entities, the Court also relies on Peer Mentors. Peer Mentors are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces who volunteer their time to assist the Court. Peer Mentors provide advice, personal experiences, recommendations, and guidance to Veterans. Many of our Peer Mentors are drawn from a number of Veteran's Service Organizations and community and government organizations. Peer Mentors include, but are not limited to, those who have served in peacetime, Vietnam, Desert Shield/Storm, and combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

By encouraging and empowering the Veteran to take the lead in solving their own problems, the Peer Mentor promotes and fosters a "can do" attitude in the Veteran, and the Veteran becomes motivated to accomplish his or her goals in treatment, feels that he or she is not alone, and knows that the mentor and the court team are there for them. Experience with other Veteran's courts has shown that Veterans are more comfortable talking with and respond more favorably to other Veterans who have served and share similar experiences.

The conversation and interactions between the Peer Mentor and Veteran Participant are on the level of peers rather than from a position of authority. The change in demeanor of the Veteran Participant becomes an opportunity to make a profound impact on the Veterans who enter the Court. Based on our and other courts' observations, it has become clear that Peer Mentors are a critical part of the Williamson County Veterans Treatment Court. The active and supportive

relationships maintained throughout treatment increase the likelihood that a Veteran will remain in treatment and improve their chances of maintaining sobriety and law-abiding behavior.

Peer Mentor Role Description

The Peer Mentor acts as a coach, a guide, a role model, an advocate, and a support for the Veteran Participant. The mentor encourages, guides, and supports the Veteran Participant as they progress through the treatment court program. This includes listening to the concerns of the Veteran and making general suggestions, assisting the Veteran in determining their needs, and acting as a support for the Veteran, especially when a Veteran participant may be feeling isolated. Since many of the Court participants will be unfamiliar with and/or wary of the justice system, it is important for the Peer Mentor to facilitate an understanding of courtroom procedures and a positive attitude towards the Court.

Peer Mentor Duties and Responsibilities

- Be supportive and understanding of the challenges the Veteran is facing.
- Assist the Veteran as much as possible in resolving their concerns regarding court procedures.
- Maintain regular contact with the participant (at least once per week) during the program.
- Be supportive and helpful to other Peer Mentors.
- Attend scheduled Court sessions to the best of their ability
- Be honest with the Court participant, the Veterans Treatment Court staff and the Court at all times.

The Peer Mentor should understand that it is the participant's prerogative if he or she does not want to communicate with the mentor. If this situation develops, the mentor will inform the Peer Mentor Coordinator.

Peer Mentor Prohibitions

Unacceptable behaviors by Peer Mentors include:

- Engaging in any drug use, alcohol use, sexual activities (including sexual harassment), or any other unlawful activities with the participants.
- Exploiting a participant or the mentor/mentee relationship for agency or personal advantage.
- Accepting a fee, gratuity, or gift from a participant for the mentor's participation in the program.

- Inappropriately extending the boundaries of a mentor/mentee relationship, including lending money, loaning vehicles, providing housing.
- Making clinical recommendations, providing psychotherapy, or providing legal advice.

Peer Mentor Requirements

- Have a genuine concern for Veterans in the justice system.
- Be in good standing with the law.
- A veteran of one of the branches of the United States Armed Forces, including the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard or their corresponding Reserve and Guard components.
- Complete and submit a Peer Mentor application form.
- Be willing to submit to a background check (to be performed by the Williamson County Attorney's office).
- Adhere to the Williamson County Veterans Treatment Court Program's policies and procedures.
- Maintain contact with the participant for the duration of his or her participation in the Court.
- Complete initial training as specified by the court prior to being certified as a Peer Mentor by the Court.
- Participate in additional training that may be provided by the Court.
- Immediately notify the Peer Mentor Coordinator if the participant becomes suicidal or has an intention to harm others.
- Communicate with the Peer Mentor Coordinator regarding issues that could affect a participant's successful completion of the program, including knowledge of a participant's engagement in unlawful activities.

Peer Mentor Desirable Qualities

- Most importantly: be available and ready to support the Veteran participant
- Active Listener
- Empathetic
- Encouraging and supportive
- Tolerant and respectful of individual differences
- Knowledge of community resources and services

The mentor application is included at the end of this program description. For more information or questions about being a Peer Mentor, please contact the Williamson County Veterans Court Peer Mentor Coordinator, whose information is provided below.

Recruitment Policy

The Williamson County Treatment Court Peer Mentors and Court Staff assume the majority of the responsibility for recruiting new mentors. The Court team, its collaborative partners and current Peer Mentors are strongly encouraged to refer reputable veterans to the Court Staff. Additionally, Court Team members and Peer Mentors are strongly encouraged to attend and host informational sessions and training for new mentors.

Inquiry Policy

All inquiries about participating as a Peer Mentor will be directed to the Peer Mentor Coordinator. The Peer Mentor Coordinator will respond to any prospective mentor inquiries as quickly as possible.

Eligibility Policy

Each Peer Mentor must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in section “Peer Mentor Requirements” to participate in the Program. Current Mentors with knowledge of any prospective mentor’s history or background that may jeopardize the integrity of the Court’s Mentor Program must communicate this knowledge or concern to the Peer Mentor Coordinator.

Screening Policy

Each prospective Peer Mentor must complete a screening process conducted by the Peer Mentor Coordinator. A recommendation to accept or deny an applicant will be made by the Peer Mentor Coordinator, and the final decision will be made by the Judge. Feedback regarding the prospective mentor’s denial may or may not be given. The right to withhold or give feedback is solely at the discretion of the Court.

The Peer Mentor screening procedure will include, but not be limited to:

- Completing a written application
- Completing a personal interview
- Completing a background check

Training Policy

Training is crucial and necessary for Peer Mentors and initial training is especially crucial for prospective mentors. All prospective mentors will complete initial training prior to being certified as a peer mentor by the Court.

Peer Mentor Coordinator

The Peer Mentor Coordinator is essential in maintaining the success of the Williamson County Veterans Treatment Court Peer Mentor Program. The Peer Mentor Coordinator is responsible for recruiting prospective mentors, screening candidates, selecting Peer Mentors, and educating them about the Court process. The Peer Mentor Coordinator will also be responsible for individual and group supervision as well as scheduling mentors to be present during the Court's proceedings, and the Peer Mentor Coordinator will coordinate activities with the Veterans Treatment Court Team, Veterans Court Coordinator, and the Judge.

Peer Mentor Coordinator Duties and Responsibilities

- Recruit and train volunteer Peer Mentors.
- Assist in the retention of Peer Mentors.
- Organize and conduct training for Peer Mentors.
- Assist in supervision of Peer Mentors.
- Assist in developing specialized training projects.
- Perform duties as assigned by the Court Coordinator and the Judge.
- Sustain and evolve the Peer Mentor Program.
- Pair Court participants with Veteran Peer Mentors.

Peer Mentor Coordinator Contact Information:

Name: Kevin Ross

Phone: 240-543-2073

E-mail: kevin.d.ross@vtcfoundation.org

Please feel free to contact Mr. Ross with any questions, comments, or Peer Mentor referrals.

Peer Mentor Agreement

I, _____, attest that I am a Veteran of one of the branches of the United States Armed Forces, including the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, or their corresponding Reserve and Guard components.

In order to be a mentor in the Williamson County Veterans Treatment Court, I agree:

1. To adhere to the Williamson County Veterans Treatment Court Program's policies and procedures.
2. To complete initial training as specified by the Court.
3. To participate in additional training provided by the Court.
4. To maintain contact with the Veterans Treatment Court participant for the duration of his/her participation in the Court.
5. Not to engage in any drug use, alcohol use, sexual activities (including harassment), or any other unlawful activities with the Veterans Treatment Court Veteran participant.
6. To notify the Veterans Treatment Court Mentor and Court Coordinator if the Veteran participant becomes suicidal or has an intention to harm others.

Signature

Date

Background Check Permission Form

Full Legal Name _____

SSN # _____ Date of Birth _____ Sex _____

I hereby allow the Williamson County Courts Programs to perform a background check, including:

- Criminal Records
- Volunteer Experience
- Military Service
- Personal References

I understand that all information collected during the background check will be kept confidential.

I understand that I do not have to agree to this background check, but refusal to do so may exclude me from consideration as a Veterans Court Peer Mentor.

I hereby also extend my permission to those individuals or organizations contacted for the purpose of this background check to give their full and honest evaluation of my suitability for the mentor position, and other such information as they deem appropriate to this role.

Signed _____

Date _____

Volunteer Application

Personal Information

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: __ Zip: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Past Volunteer Experience (include organization/agency and position)

Agency / Organization	Position/Responsibilities	Dates

A) Why do you want to volunteer with Veterans Treatment Court? _____

B) How would you like to help Veterans Treatment Court? _____

C) What skills and experiences do you bring to mentoring? _____

D) What are you hoping to take away from volunteering with the Treatment Court mentor program?

Do you speak a language other than English? **Yes** **No**

If yes, list language(s): _____

Have you previously served as a mentor? **Yes No**

If yes, in what capacity and where? _____

Are you willing to submit to a background investigation? **Yes No**

Please circle the preferred docket: **2:00 pm 4:00 pm**

References: Provide the name and phone number or e-mail address of two non-family references.

1. _____

2. _____

Military Experience

Branch of Service (check one): Army ____ Navy ____ Marines ____ Air Force ____ Coast Guard ____
Active Duty ____ Reserve ____ Air National Guard ____ Army National Guard ____

Dates of Service: From: _____ To: _____

Type of Discharge: _____

Have you served in a combat zone? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, in what combat zone did you serve? _____

What was your job in the Armed Forces? _____

What type of special training did you receive in the Armed Forces? _____

Criminal History

Have you ever been arrested and/or convicted of a crime? Yes _ No____

Date: _____ Charge: _____

Do you have any pending criminal charges? Yes No ____

If yes, what charge(s)? _____

Email or provide completed application to:

Kevin Ross at kevin.d.ross@vtcfoundation.org or Casey Wade at casey.wade@twc.state.tx.us