

Fort Bend County Veterans' Court Program Participant's Handbook



**Presiding Judge
Honorable Jeffery McMeans**

Name: _____

Date Issued: _____

Notes:

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What is the Ft. Bend County Veteran's Court Program?

Modeled after the Harris County STAR drug court and other Veterans' Court programs, it represents a fresh and innovative approach to diverting veterans from incarceration into treatment. The Court relies on the cooperation and collaboration between the criminal justice system, Veteran's Affairs, community agencies and the offenders. The Court requires the Judge, prosecutor and defense counsel to collaboratively pursue a path that help solve the offender's issues.

The Fort Bend County Veteran's Court Program (FBCVCP) handles misdemeanors cases.

Participant Understanding

As participant in the FBCVCP, you will be required to follow the instructions and conditions given to you in court by the Judge, and you will comply with the Participant Contract developed by the FBCVCP team. The purpose of the FBCVCP is to help you 1) get the treatment you have rightfully earned and deserved, 2) help you get treatment quickly and without barriers, 3) stay engaged in treatment and 4) help you regain control of your life; so you can enjoy the quality of life and become a productive citizen. It is important that you review all of the information included in your Participant Contract with your attorney.

What are the expectations of the Participant?

The FBCVCP team will develop treatment recommendations based on an assessment of your needs for treatment, services, resources, housing, case management, VA benefits & services and other needs. To participate in the Court, you will agree to sign all necessary releases, comply with treatment recommendations, and comply with all terms and conditions of probation or pre-trial release. You must agree to sign the Participant Contract, which is an agreement between you and the program.

How long is the term of Ft. Bend County Veterans' Court Program?

The FBCVCP is a minimum 2 year commitment; however, the amount of time you spend in the Court is determined by your plea agreement and your individual progress in treatment. While participating in the Court, the Judge and representatives of the FBCVCP team will closely monitor your participation and progress in the recommended and agreed upon treatment. If you are on probation, you will be expected to meet with your community supervision officer (CSO) and follow all of the terms and conditions of your sentence of probation. Discharge, termination or involuntary withdrawal from the program will result in a sentence in accordance to the full range of punishment for your offense. Participant's successful completion of the program will receive a certificate of completion, given public recognition during graduation and have the opportunity to serve in the Court's Peer Mentor Program.

What's in it for me?

Services

The FBCVCP Team will help you access identified treatment, counseling, case management, supportive housing and other services; services are contingent upon your specific needs, and treatment recommendations.

Recognition of Progress

As you progress through treatment and your involvement with the program, your achievements will be publicly recognized by the Court's Judge and the Court's Team. You will receive a Certificate of Achievement to acknowledge and celebrate your accomplishments.

Opportunities

The program offers you a chance to address your problems or issues and to avoid incarceration on your current charge(s). You will have the opportunity to move forward in your life and potentially increase quality of life for you and your family. The FBCVCP Team is there to assist you and wants to see you succeed. If you take advantage of the assistance offered, you will discover many ways to make a better life for yourself. Change is never easy; it will take commitment, dedication, self-control, perseverance and hard work. The FBCVCP Team will provide you with the support, opportunity, assistance and referrals necessary to help you begin making positive changes in your life.

What are the rules of the Ft. Bend County Veterans' Court Program?

To remain in the FBCVCP, you must follow all recommendations made by the team and the rules contained in your Participant Contract.

Appear in Court as Scheduled

You will be required to appear in front of the FBCVCP Judge on a regular basis; an initial bi-weekly appearance may be required. The Judge and the FBCVCP Team will be given progress reports regarding your attendance and participation in your treatment program and the other components of your treatment plan-housing, case management, VA benefits, etc. The Judge and team will discuss your progress and address any problems that you may have. As you make progress in treatment, your court appearances and treatment appointments will be reduced.

Follow Your Treatment Plan

Your treatment plan will include some or all of the following components (understand that your treatment recommendation may change as your treatment needs change).

- Abstinence from illegal drugs and alcohol
- Medication compliance
- Participation in a substance abuse treatment program
- Participation in a behavioral health treatment program
- Participation in a self-help group or program
- Intensive or Supportive case management services
- Supported or Structured housing
- Education services
- Employment or Vocational Rehabilitation
- Regular appointments with a VA case manager
- Regular appointments with a psychiatrist
- Psycho-social or Recreational program

Specific rules about areas of your treatment plan are outlined below:

Substance Abuse Treatment

If your treatment plan requires that you participate in a substance abuse treatment program, you must follow through with recommendations. While in treatment, your treatment provider will regularly report to the FBCVCP regarding your attendance, level of participation and overall compliance with the program. You must attend all scheduled treatment appointments and follow all rules of your treatment program.

Mental Health Treatment

All participants of the FBCVCP will be evaluated for mental illness. If mental health treatment is recommended, you must attend all scheduled appointments and follow the rules and policy of the program. Your mental health treatment provider will regularly report your status and progress.

Case Management Services

Community based intensive and supportive case managers will help you coordinate treatment services at the VA or the community. You will have a VA case manager and a community supervision officer. The VA case manager will follow up with you weekly (face to face or via telephone), connect you with VA services, monitor your progress in VA treatment and prepare report on your progress for the FBCVCP. Your community supervision officer (CSO) may visit you at your home, place of business or treatment program facility. Your CSO will report back to the court on progress, concerns and accomplishments outside of treatment. Both will assist you in obtaining a variety of VA and community services. The information is used to assist you to stay on the path of treatment and/or recovery.

Housing

Some participants of the FBCVCP will be required to live in a particular type of housing or in a particular housing facility. If you are required to live in a specified residence such as a VA Domiciliary or a halfway house, you must reside there and follow all of the housing provider's rules.

Policy Pertaining to the FBCVCP Participants and the use of Prescribed Addictive Substance

The expectation is that participants in the FBCVCP will remain abstinent from all non-prescribed mood-altering substances while enrolled in the program. It is understood that there may be circumstances in which a participant may need to take addictive substances for medical or psychiatric reasons.

In order to ensure that participants remain in compliance with court and treatment expectations, the Court requires that **prior to** filling the prescription and/or taking the medication the participants do the following:

- Inform their treatment provider.
- Inform the Court's case manager.
- Participants with a substance abuse diagnosis must obtain a note(s) from your prescribing physician(s) verifying their knowledge of your active abuse or dependence diagnosis and your enrollment in an abstinence-based chemical dependency treatment program as well as the FBCVCP.
- Sign a consent form in accordance with the requirements of 42 Code of Federal Regulations Part 2 which authorizes the release of patient identifying information between their case manager, treatment provider(s), physician, physician assistance or nurse practitioner who prescribes the drug or substance to the patient.

Should information be received from the physician which supports the participant's continued use of a control substance, the case manager will consult with the prescribing professional to verify their knowledge and awareness of the individual's history of chemical dependence, and if the prescribing professional is unaware of the individual's history of chemical dependence, inform the prescribing professional accordingly; and after the required information is received, if the prescribing professional believes that the individual should be permitted to continue to use the drug or substance prescribed, the individual must be permitted to continue to use the drug or substance. If there is insufficient information to support

continued use, the participant must safely cease use of that substance(s) and seek alternative treatment options.

What is meant by Infractions and Sanctions?

While in the FBCVCP, if you fail to comply with your treatment recommendations, program regulations or commit a legal offense, you will be sanctioned. Program infractions and sanctions include but are not limited to:

Infractions

- Missed treatment appointments
- Missed probation appointments
- Missed court appearances
- Abuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Refusal to provide urine screens
- Positive urine screens
- Failure or refusal to take prescribed medications
- Violation of rules of the treatment program
- Violation of rules of housing provider, including curfew
- Threatening behavior, including verbal threat of violence
- Other non-compliance with treatment recommendations
- Violation of probation terms and conditions

Sanctions

- Assign you to write an essay
- Verbal warning
- Increase frequency of urine screens
- Increased frequency of court appearances
- Increase frequency of probation and/or Pre-trial reporting
- Increase 12 step or support groups meetings
- Loss of privileges at treatment
- Loss of privileges at housing
- **Serving time in the Ft. Bend County jail**
- Impose a curfew
- Community service
- More restrictive Pre-Trial services program
- **Restarting your current phase**
- **Termination from the program**

The HCVCP team will respond to all infractions. The team wants you to succeed; however, you must be motivated, be in the center of your own treatment or recovery and also want yourself to succeed. Sometimes the team will require you to increase your treatment related activities or will direct you to accept a change in your level of care after consulting with your treatment team. Other examples of responses to infractions include but not limited to the following:

- Journaling
- Mandatory AA/NA/support group attendance
- Mandatory group attendance (Anger Management, Depression, DBT, etc.)

What is Meant by Rewards?

While in HCVCP, if you comply with your treatment recommendations, the terms of the Participant’s Contract and live a crime free life, you will be publicly acknowledged and rewarded in a number of different ways. Rewards can include but not limited to:

- Public recognition
- Fewer court appearances
- Fewer office visits with case manager
- Certificate of Accomplishment
- Phase promotion
- Referrals to vocational and/or educational services
- Immediate release from status hearing
- Less frequent drug testing
- Gift certificates
- Graduation

What else is expected of you?

Other expectations of the FBCVCP include:

- **SHOW UP, BE COMPLETELY HONEST, TRY HARD AND BE ACCOUNTABLE** from the start.
- Treat others with the deepest respect; this includes the opinions and feelings of other participants and the FBCVCP Team.
 - Verbal or physical threats to anyone will not be tolerated.
 - Any inappropriate behavior will be immediately reported to the Court and may result in a severe sanction or your termination from the program.
- Avoid all drugs, related activities and the use of alcohol.
 - You must not possess, sell or use alcohol or illegal drugs.
 - Any relapse involving drug and/or alcohol must be reported to your treatment provider(s) and the Court immediately.
- Be Law Abiding
 - You must refrain from any further violation of the law.
 - Additional offenses may result in additional charges and your termination from the program.

MY IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

My Attorney_____

Phone Number_____

My Court Supervision Officer_____

Phone Number_____

My VA Treatment Provider_____

Phone Number_____

My VA Case Manager_____

Phone Number_____

My AA/NA Sponsor/Mentor_____

Phone Number_____

**My Housing
Provider**_____

**Phone
Number**_____

**Fort Bend County
Veterans' Court Program
1422 Eugene Heiman Circle
Richmond, Texas 77469**

Notes: