

# The Critical Role of Mentors in Veterans Treatment Courts

Scott Tirocchi, MA, MS, LPC, USA Ret

Mark Kammerer, MS, LCPC

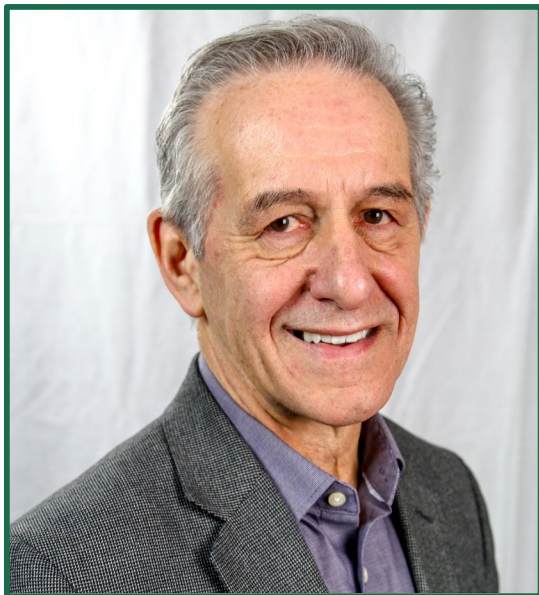
Timothy Wynn, CPS (*Sergeant, USMC*)

April 21, 2020  
12:00pm – 1:30pm ET



**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

# Welcome and Housekeeping



Dan Abreu, MS, CRC, LMHC  
*Senior Project Associate*  
*Criminal Justice Division*  
*Policy Research Associates, Inc.*

# Disclaimer

The views, opinions, and content expressed in this presentation and discussion do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

# Agenda

<b>Welcome</b>	<b>Dan Abreu, MS, CRC, LMHC</b> <i>Senior Project Associate, Policy Research Associates, Inc.</i>
<b>Opening Remarks</b>	<b>Jon Berg</b> Senior Public Health Advisor, <i>SAMHSA</i>  <b>Scott Tirocchi, MA, MS, LPC, USA, Ret</b> Division Director, <i>NADCP's Justice For Vets</i>
<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Scott Tirocchi, MA, MS, LPC, USA, Ret</b> Division Director, <i>NADCP's Justice For Vets</i>  <b>Mark Kammerer, MS, LCPC</b> Project Director, <i>NADCP's Justice For Vets</i>  <b>Timothy Wynn, CPS (Sergeant, USMC)</b> Mentor Coordinator, <i>Philadelphia Veterans Treatment Court</i>
<b>Questions Closing Remarks</b>	<b>Dan Abreu, MS, CRC, LMHC</b> <i>Senior Project Associate, Policy Research Associates, Inc.</i>

# Opening Remarks—1



**Jon Berg**

*Senior Public Health Advisor  
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment  
SAMHSA*

# Opening Remarks—2



**Scott Tirocchi, MA, MS, LPC, USA, Ret**  
*Division Director, Justice For Vets*  
*National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP)*

# Introducing Today's Presenters: Scott Tirocchi, MA, MS, LPC, USA, Ret



- Serves as the Division Director of Justice For Vets, a division of NADCP.
- Served in the US Army Reserves and the Rhode Island Army National Guard for a combined total of 21 years; his occupational specialty was a 31A (military police officer).
- Served as Commander for the training and doctrine component of Training Assistance Group II to the Afghan National Army while deployed to Afghanistan in 2003-2004.
- Is a licensed behavioral health clinician and has an employment background rooted in treatment and criminal justice.
- Has served as a behavioral health clinician in correctional and hospital settings and in various community behavioral health agencies located in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

# Introducing Today's Presenters: Mark Kammerer, MS, LCPC



- Is a Project Director for the Veterans Training/Technical Assistance and Mentor Professional Development Projects of Justice For Vets, a division of NADCP.
- Was Director of Court Diversion, Cook County, Illinois State's Attorney's Office from 2000-2017.
- Oversaw more than thirty alternative prosecution/sentencing programs that addressed approximately 4,000 cases in any given month at CCSAO.
- Represented the CCSAO at numerous national and international conferences addressing the concept of diversion and the future direction of that aspect of the prosecution field.
- Has been a faculty member of the National Drug Court Institute's Veterans Treatment Court Planning Initiative since 2010, as well as providing technical assistance and grant monitoring to Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA's) grant-funded jurisdictions.



# Introducing Today's Presenters: Timothy Wynn, CPS (*Sergeant, USMC*)



- Is a Veterans Certified Forensic Peer Specialist in the City of Philadelphia.
- Is Coordinator of the Philadelphia Veterans Court Mentor program, providing peer-to-peer support to veterans involved in the criminal Justice system.
- Is a United States Marine Corps veteran who served from 1999-2003.
- Served in Iraq during the initial invasion in 2003 with the 2nd Military Police Battalion.
- Was Honorably Discharged as a Sergeant (E-5).
- Is a Certified T.R.E.M. (Trauma Recovery Empowerment Model) facilitator, working with veterans who are incarcerated to help them manage the emotions from the trauma they have been exposed to and divert them from returning to prison upon their release.
- Is a crisis intervention team instructor for the City of Philadelphia and instructs Philadelphia police officers on military culture, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

# The Critical Role of Mentors in Veterans Treatment Courts

Scott Tirocchi, MA, MS, LPC, USA, Ret  
Division Director  
NADCP's Justice For Vets

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# Justice For Vets – Our Mission is Simple:

We will not rest until a Veterans Treatment Court is within reach of every veteran in need.



# Veterans Treatment Courts: Historical Context



2004 – 2008: There was an increased influx of veterans into our legal system.



The need concomitantly surfaced in multiple areas of our country.



Something was different. Responsivity would be tailored to meet the needs of the population.

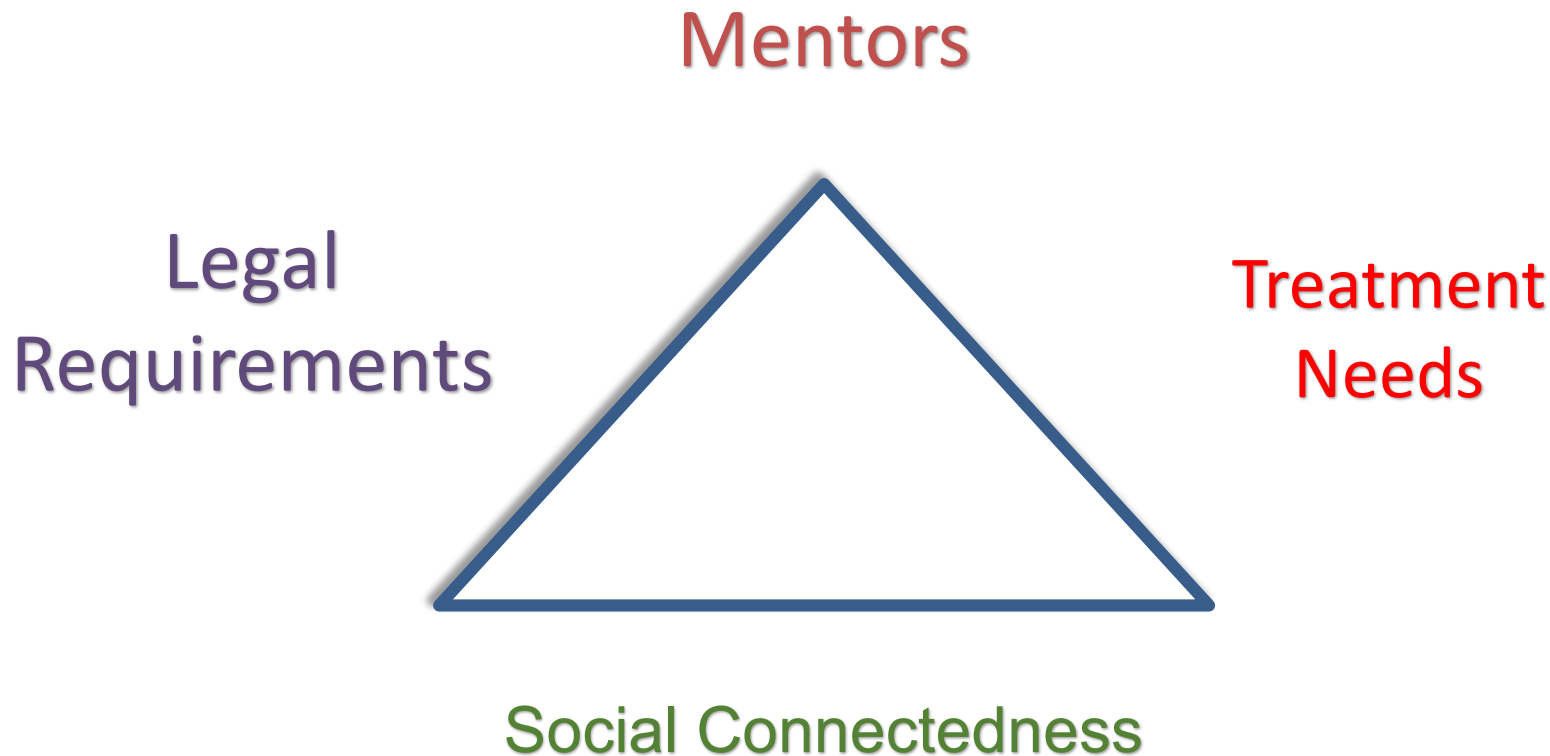
# Statistics

- **15,000** are currently served by Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs).
- **5,700** volunteer as Veteran Mentors (VM) in VTCs.
- **407** is the approximate number of recognized VTCs.
- **460,000** is the approximate number of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or major depressive disorder (MDD).
- **345,000** is the approximate number of veterans with substance use disorders (SUD).
- **181,500** veterans are currently incarcerated.

# Discipline-Specific Expertise



# VTC Three Vital Parts: Mentors, Legal, and Treatment



# The Mentoring Component

- It is not a formal structure of the court.
- It is a separate entity which the court allows to be part of its VTC Program.
- The component has an identified leader (mentor coordinator) who is a liaison between the mentoring component and the VTC Program.
- It maintains its integrity by ensuring there is never the practice, impression, or perception that it, or its individual volunteers have any influence on legal proceedings or outcomes in regard to individual mentees.



# Bottom Line Up Front

- *Volunteers* from the local community who have prior military service or are currently serving and provide **MORAL SUPPORT** to the mentee.
- Women and men who are empathetic
- Women and men who are essential to the VTC's continued success.
- Role models who are vetted, trained, and supervised.



# Successful Mentors

- Are always empathetic, non-judgmental, positive, and optimistic.
- Have realistic goals and expectations.
- Are always working to build rapport and enhance their mentoring skills.
- Practice active listening skills.
- Respect the trust mentees place in them.
- Have a solid understanding of boundaries.

# Mentors Develop Community Partnerships

- Community partners provide resources and referrals to veterans who are justice-involved.
- They provide opportunities for mentees to engage with their community in a healthy and productive manner.

# VTCs Have a Veteran-Centered Approach



# Mentors Practice the Three E's

- ENGAGE
- ENCOURAGE
- EMPOWER

# Role of the Mentor: ENGAGE

## Engage with the Mentee

- Be available.
- Be dependable.
- Actively listen and answer questions.

## Engage with the Community

- Use appropriate pro-social activities.
- Advocate for the VTC program.

## Engage with the Court

- Understand the program.
- Participate in group activities.
- Present with a professional demeanor.

# Role of the Mentor: ENCOURAGE

“Don’t be afraid to fail. Be afraid not to try.”

## Encourage the Mentee

- To participate in court.
- To participate in treatment.
- To participate in pro-social activities.

## Encourage the Community

- To support the court.
- To support an obligation and duty.
- To support the mentees

## Encourage the Court

- To understand the veteran.
- To understand the military culture.

# Role of the Mentor: EMPOWER

## Empower the Mentee

- To participate in treatment.
- To connect with resources.
- To connect with pro-social activities.

## Empower the Community

- To support the court.
- To support the mentees.

## Empower the Court

- To understand the veterans.
- To connect with Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) and the veteran community.



# Mentor Professional Development: A National Structured Approach

Mark Kammerer, MS, LCPC  
Project Director  
NADCP's Justice For Vets

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# Unique Nature of Mentor Programs and Mentors



- Only role in VTC which should not be filled by non-veterans
- Requires specific training beyond that of the court-based team members
- Unique position within the overall VTC, in terms of:
  - Communication
  - Responsibility
  - Duration

# Areas of Proficiency

- Military culture
- Medical/Psychological impact of service
- Veterans Administration resources/system navigation
- Veteran Service Organizations (VSO's)
- Diverse relationships of veterans within their service branch
- Unique nature of the shared, past military experience

# Mentor Coordinator Curriculum

## The Essentials:

- Navigating Your Journey to Success
- Communicating Effectively with your Mentoring Component
- Strategies for Community Engagement
- Recruiting Mentors for your VTC
- Ensuring the Wellness of your Mentoring Component

# The Foundation

1. What is a Veterans Treatment Court?
2. The Role of the Veteran Mentor
3. A Trauma-Informed Approach
4. Mentoring a Participant with Substance Use Disorder
5. Communication Skills

# The Foundation, continued

6. Boundaries and Confidentiality
7. Risk Factors for Repeated Justice Involvement
8. Empowering Wellness and Recovery
9. Mentor Self-Care
10. Suicide Awareness and Preventions

# Resources

## Professional Development – Justice for Vets

<https://justiceforvets.org/mentorcorps/resources>

- Mentor refresher online courses
- Mentor Coordinator online courses (coming in summer, 2020)
- Trauma Awareness online course
- *An abundance* of resources!

## Online Training for Engaging the Military Community – PsychArmor Institute

<https://psycharmor.org>

- Military Culture
- Accessing Benefits
- Employment and Education
- Understanding the VA
- The Military Family
- Many more!

# The Critical Role of Mentors in Veterans Treatment Courts

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Mentor Coordinator  
Philadelphia Veterans Treatment Court

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# First Person Perspective - VTC Lived Experience



# VTC Graduate/Mentor Coordinator: Point of View

- I had been here before.
- This time it was different.
- Remember what it was like walking into a Veterans Treatment Court and being greeted by another veteran.
- The benefits of lived experience.
- The importance of a “Battle Buddy”.
- Remaining “plugged in”.

# My Time to Give Back and the Lessons I Learned

- No two veterans are the same.
- Everybody's recovery is different.
- Teach self-advocacy and empower the veterans to participate in their own recovery.
- My personal story is important.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Remain nonjudgmental.
- Meet them where they are.

# The Role of a Mentor Coordinator (MC)

- The importance of a Mentor Coordinator.
- Duties of a Mentor Coordinator include:
  - Recruiting
  - Game planning
  - Providing structure
  - Training



# Challenges we face as Mentor Coordinators (MCs)

- Recruiting
- Sustainability
- Boundaries
- Resources
- Mentor contract

# Every Court is Different.

- Improvise, adapt, and overcome.
- Use your network.
- Build lasting relationships with resources, community, and local government.

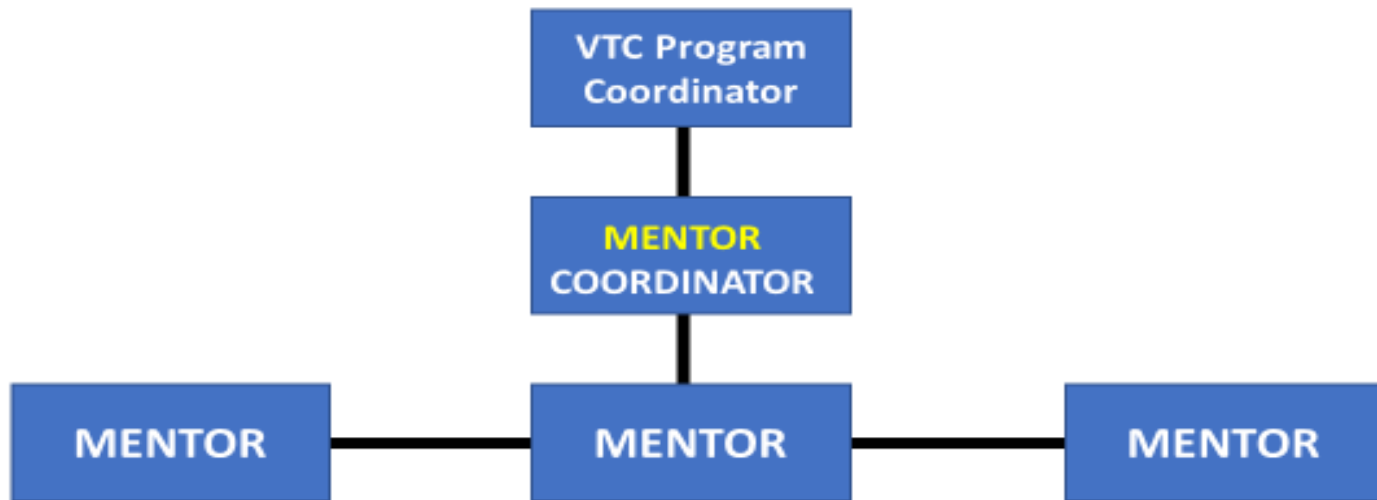
# Leader of the Mentoring Component

## The Mentor Coordinator:

- Establishes a Hierarchy of Communication.
- Role models the *Veteran Centered Approach* and encourages others to do the same.
- Oversees all aspects of mentor engagement.
- Co-develops the mentor handbook.
- Constantly strives towards improving/enhancing the component.



# Hierarchy of Communication



Mentors have the unique opportunity to offer moral support to the mentee and provide them with hope. The Mentor Coordinator provides them with direction.



# Long Lasting Impact



## THE MENTORING COMPONENT OF THE VTC: SUMMARY POINTS

# Policy and Procedure Handbook

## There must be infrastructure:

- Overview of the VTC program and its guiding principles
- The role of the Mentor Coordinator
- The role of the mentor
- Mentor responsibilities and expectations
- A defined screening process for mentors
- Expectations around boundaries and confidentiality
- Ongoing Mentor Professional Development (i.e., training)
- **Maintaining, recruiting, and innovating**

# Principles of Sustainment



- A. Maintaining
- B. Recruiting
- C. Innovating

# A. Maintaining

- Vetting
- Training
- Supervision



# Ensure Mentors Receive:

- **Vetting** = For all the right reasons
- **Training** = No “going on your gut”
- **Supervision** = Critical need

# B: Recruiting

## Mentors are typically from:

- Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Veterans (AMVETS), the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Team Red White and Blue (RWB).
- Student veterans associations.
- Community non-profit organizations.
- Individual connections while visiting gyms, restaurants, coffee shops, schools and faith-based organizations.



## C. Innovating

- The mentor component is ever evolving and it requires constant proactive scrutiny by its dedicated volunteers.
- Innovative changes that are more comprehensive in addressing the needs of mentees will be driven by the mentor/mentee relationship.
- Ongoing support from other VTC team members will foster an environment that is conducive to innovation; a win-win for all involved.



# Justice for Vets Mentor Resource



<https://justiceforvets.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/JFV-Flyer.pdf>



# COVID-19 Resources

The screenshot shows the SAMHSA website's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Newsroom. At the top, it says "U.S. Department of Health & Human Services" and "SAMHSA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration". There is a search bar with "Search SAMHSA.gov" and a "Search" button. A navigation bar includes links for "Home", "Site Map", and "Contact Us". Below this is a dark blue bar with links: "Find Treatment", "Practitioner Training", "Public Messages", "Grants", "Data", "Programs", "Newsroom", "About Us", and "Publications". The main content area has a red header "Newsroom" and a sub-header "Coronavirus (COVID-19)". A sidebar on the left lists: "Coronavirus", "COVID-19 Information for SAMHSA Discretionary Grant Recipients", "Media Guidelines for Bullying Prevention", "Press Announcements", "SAMHSA in the News", "Speeches and Presentations", and "Infographics". The main text states: "SAMHSA recognizes the challenges posed by the current COVID-19 situation and is providing the following guidance and resources to assist individuals, providers, communities, and states across the country. SAMHSA stands ready to assist in any manner possible." Below this is a section titled "SAMHSA Resources and Information" with links: "Emergency Grants to Address Mental and Substance Use Disorders During COVID-19 CLOSED", "COVID-19 Information for SAMHSA Discretionary Grant Recipients", "COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Response and 42 CFR Part 2 Guidance (PDF | 168 KB)", and "TAP 34: Disaster Planning Handbook for Behavioral Health Treatment Programs".


SAMHSA's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Newsroom

<https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus>

The screenshot shows the NADCP website's COVID-19 Resources page. At the top, it says "NADCP National Association of Drug Court Professionals". There is a navigation bar with links: "ABOUT", "ADVOCACY", "JOIN", "NEWS", "PRESS", and "CONTACT". A search icon is on the right. A red button says "COVID-19 RESOURCES". Below this is a red bar with the text "Home / COVID-19 Resources". The main text states: "During this crisis, NADCP will, to every extent possible, continue providing treatment court practitioners with the best in training, technical assistance, and advocacy. Over the last several days, we have received inquiries from the field for more information in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage all practitioners to consult with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization, relevant local, state, and federal authorities, and all professional organizations with which you are affiliated." Below this is a section titled "To assist, we offer the links below and will regularly update this page with new resources as they become available." At the bottom, a blue banner says "COVID-19 Resources for Treatment Courts" and "Updated April 16, 2020".

NADCP's COVID-19 Resources

<https://www.nadcp.org/covid-19-resources/>

A wooden desk with a laptop, a white mug of coffee, a pen, a notepad, and a smartphone.

Join the GAINS Center's listserv  
and receive our eNews!

<http://bit.do/GAINSenews>  
(Link is case sensitive)

# Thank You

## Justice for Vets

Justice For Vets' Mission: *We will not rest until there is a veterans treatment court in reach of every veteran in need.*

<https://justiceforvets.org/mentorcorps>; <https://justiceforvets.org/resources>

### For mentor professional development contact:

Mark Kammerer, Project Director: [mkammerer@justiceforvets.org](mailto:mkammerer@justiceforvets.org)

**For all other veterans treatment court training and technical assistance contact:** Scott Tirocchi, Division Director: [stirocchi@justiceforvets.org](mailto:stirocchi@justiceforvets.org)

# Thank You

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)

## **GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation**

The GAINS Center focuses on expanding access to services for people with mental and/or substance use disorders who come into contact with the justice system.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/gains-center>

1-800-311-4246