



## **Mentor Program Description**

The VC relies on cooperation and collaboration among the criminal justice system, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, veteran's service organizations, and community treatment agencies to provide comprehensive treatment for veterans. In addition to these entities, the Court also utilizes veteran mentors. Veteran mentors are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces who volunteer their time to assist the Court, providing advice, personal experiences, recommendations and guidance to veterans.

Many of our veteran mentors come from a number of veteran's service organizations, the Memphis community and government organizations. Veteran mentors include but are not limited to those who have served in peacetime, Vietnam, Desert Storm/Shield, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The veteran mentor relationship promotes and fosters, through encouragement, a "can do" attitude in the veteran. The veteran becomes motivated to accomplish his or her treatment goals, feels that he or she is not alone, and knows that the mentor and the Court are there for them.

Experience has shown that veterans respond more favorably to other veterans who have served in the military and share similar experiences. The veterans appear to be more comfortable when talking with a fellow veteran. The veteran mentor converses and interacts with the veteran participant as a peer rather than as an authority figure.

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 these observations it became clear that veteran mentors would be an essential part of the VC. We anticipated that these active and supportive relationships maintained throughout treatment would increase the likelihood that a veteran would remain in treatment and improve his or her chances of maintaining sobriety and law-abiding behavior

Veteran Mentor Duties and Responsibilities include:

- Meet and/or speak once weekly with veteran participant
- Offer support and understanding regarding the difficulties the veteran is facing
- Assist the veteran in resolving resource needs
- Maintain a supportive and helpful attitude towards other veteran mentors

Veteran Mentor Requirements include:

- Have a genuine concern for veterans
- Maintain good standing with the law
- Be a veteran of one of the branches of the US Armed Forces, including the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or their corresponding Reserve and Guard branches
- Adhere to all of the Davidson County Veterans Court policies and procedures
- Commit to a minimum of one year participation, or until the assigned veteran graduates
- Complete the required initial training as specified by the VC prior to participation
- Attend any additional trainings as required
- Do not engage in any drug use, alcohol use, sexual activities or any other unlawful activities with the veteran participant
- Notify the Mentor Coordinator if the veteran participant becomes suicidal, homicidal, or engages in unlawful activities