

Guadalupe County County Court

Judge Kyle Kutscher

Veterans Treatment Court



Participant Handbook



**Guadalupe County
Veterans Treatment Court
Participant Handbook**

Table of Contents

Welcome and Introduction 3
History and Purpose..... 3
Goals 3
Confidentiality..... 4
Participant Rights 4
Participant Expectations 4
Court Reviews 5
Supervision..... 5
Alcohol and Drug Testing 5
Medications 6
Other Products..... 6
Treatment 6
Fees 6
Housing and Employment..... 7
Community Service 7
Incentives and Sanctions 7
Program Structure 8
Phase Advancement 8
Phase I 9
Phase II 10
Phase III 11
Phase IV 12
Phase V 13
Graduation 14
Termination..... 14
Handbook Receipt Acknowledgement 15

Appendix

Contacts A-1
Approved Over-the-Counter Medication List A-2
Medication Form..... A-3
Confidentiality Statement and Agreement..... A-4
Non-Discrimination Policy..... A-5



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC). This handbook is designed to be an overview of what to expect as a participant in VTC. It provides a basic outline of the program and is a resource to turn to for the many questions you may have as you move through the program. You are expected to read the handbook and review it often so that you can easily comply with VTC's expectations and requirements.

As a participant in VTC, you will be required to follow the instructions and conditions given to you by the judge and the VTC Team and complete the treatment plan developed by you and your assigned treatment provider. You will also be expected to follow all supervision and program rules and comply with the participant contract. You will also be required to reside in Guadalupe County or a contiguous county during your program commitment.

History and Purpose

The Guadalupe County VTC became the sixth Veterans Treatment Court in the State of Texas when it opened its doors in January 2011. VTC 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 Administration, community agencies, and the offenders who meet the eligibility requirements for participation in VTC. The mission of VTC is:

To provide justice-involved veterans and active military personnel accountability and a well-rounded approach to recovery by providing and individualized, intensive treatment-based alternative to incarceration, thereby enhancing public safety while restoring participants to their families and community.

VTC is designed to reduce arrests, promote self-sufficiency through sobriety, employment and education, and to help you remain in the community as a productive and responsible member of society. VTC strives to assist you in making positive changes in your life. It is your dedication to the VTC's goals and rules that will enable you to effect that change.

Goals

1. Get participants the treatment they need quickly and without barriers.
2. Help participants stay engaged in treatment and focused on long-term goals.
3. Help participants regain control of their lives and achieve a sustainable and positive quality of life.
4. Help participants abstain from the abuse of alcohol and other substances.



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Confidentiality

All VTC participant records are protected by federal and state laws regarding confidentiality. We cannot release written or verbal information without your written, signed consent. However, you cannot participate in VTC without a "Release of Information" which allows the VTC Team to discuss your case and progress. Team members sign confidentiality statements and are bound by such. Persons outside the VTC Team will not be provided information about you or your progress unless there is an emergency or legal circumstance that requires release of information, such as:

- The disclosure is allowed by a court order or for an audit.
- The disclosure is made to medical personnel in a medical emergency.
- The participant commits or threatens to commit a crime.
- The participant is suspected of child abuse or elder abuse.
- The participant is threatening suicide or homicide.

Anything you say concerning your prior or current drug use while in the Veterans Treatment Court program cannot be used against you in prosecution of this case. However, your statements and information about your treatment will be shared with the VTC Team, which includes the Judge, Court Coordinator, Assistant County Attorney, defense attorneys, probation officers, and representatives from the VA and Mental Health. This information may be used to evaluate your current compliance with the program and to determine appropriate treatment or other actions.

Participant Rights

All participants have the right to courteous, dignified and reliable delivery of service. Participation in VTC is voluntary. Participants will be informed of changes in the program, rules and policies as early as possible. Equal treatment and services will be delivered without regard to age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, ancestry, or physical disability.

Participant Expectations

It is your duty to comply with your responsibilities as a participant in VTC. Violations of any of rules may result in sanctions, including your termination from the program. You will be expected to comply with treatment recommendations, attend appointments, meetings, and sessions as indicated by your treatment plan, attend schedule meetings with your community supervision officer, follow all the terms of your participant contract, treat others with respect, and be completely honest with both your providers and the VTC Team. You must provide the VTC Team with a copy of your treatment plan and sign any required releases of information so that your providers can communicate with the VTC Team. The VTC Team will closely monitor your progress and participation in order to make decisions regarding your advancement through the program.



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Court Reviews

You are required to attend monthly VTC court docket to discuss your progress. Dockets are typically held on the first Wednesday of each month at 3:30 p.m. on the 3rd floor of the Justice Center, located at 211 W. Court St., Seguin, TX 78155. You are expected to be on time and be dressed appropriately. Prior to each court review, the Team will meet to discuss participants' progress in the program and make recommendations to the Judge regarding any action that needs to be taken.

Supervision

You are required to meet with your assigned community supervision officer as directed in addition to court appearances. The frequency of these visits depends on your progress in the program. Your probation officer will discuss the conditions of your supervision with you initially and as you advance through the program. VTC supervision officers will also make home and work visits on a random schedule or as needed based on your individual situation. You are expected to be on time for all appointments and communicate openly with your supervision officer. In the event of a relapse, you are expected to be open and honest with the VTC Team and your supervision officer. You should report any relapses immediately to your treatment provider and supervision officer. You may also be required to have an alcohol monitoring device. These devices are typically either attached to your car or portable. In certain circumstances, an ankle monitor may also be required.

While in VTC, any travel must be approved ahead of time by your supervision officer. REQUESTS FOR TRAVEL PERMITS MUST BE SUBMITTED AT LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR TRAVEL. All travel requests must include the dates of your travel, the address where you'll be staying, your mode of transportation, who you're traveling with, and the purpose of the travel. If you submit your request late (within two weeks of departure), it will be denied. Emergency situations will be handled on a case by case basis.

Alcohol and Drug Testing

It is the goal of VTC to help you maintain sobriety not only to succeed in the program but also to succeed in life after the program. Therefore, we use frequent and random drug/alcohol testing to promote this goal. You may be required to pay all fees associated with testing.

The Guadalupe County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (Probation) will direct the drug/alcohol tests. If the test indicates a positive result, and you don't agree with it, your specimen will be forwarded to the laboratory under contract with Probation to verify the result. Positive lab tests may result in additional fees. You may also be required to undergo hair follicle testing or wear a drug patch which can also incur additional fees.

Participants are expected to abstain from alcohol and any other controlled substances or drugs which have not been prescribed by a doctor. You are responsible for reading all labels prior to taking any medication. The court will not accept an excuse of ignorance for a positive drug test.



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Medications

All medications must be pre-approved by your treatment provider prior to taking them. When going to the doctor or dentist, please make sure to bring the *Medical/Dental Medications Form* (see Appendix) for your physician to sign. If an emergency room visit is necessary, it is important that you identify yourself as a VTC participant and request non-narcotic and non-alcoholic medications. It is your responsibility to know what is contained in the medications you consume. The only exceptions to the pre-approval rule are the over-the-counter medications listed on the *Approved OTC Medication List* (see Appendix). You will also be required to sign any necessary releases of information so that your prescribing doctors can communicate with the VTC team and the supervision officer regarding the prescribed medications.

Other Products

Use of the following products can potentially provide false positives on alcohol monitoring devices or drug tests. Participants are encouraged to refrain from using these products and are warned that use of them will not be accepted as an excuse for a positive drug or alcohol test.

- Cough syrups or other liquid medicines
- Non-alcohol beer and wine
- Any food or drink containing ethyl alcohol
- Mouth wash and breath strips
- Solvents and lacquers
- Hygiene products containing ethyl alcohol

Treatment

Substance abuse and mental health treatment is provided by state-funded treatment agencies or the federally funded Veterans Health Administration. The treatment agency to which you are assigned will coordinate your treatment and may refer you to additional treatment and/or mental health services if needed. Most treatment providers charge a fee based on your income. After your intake session, you and your counselor will develop a treatment plan that may involve both group and individual counseling as well as either in-patient or out-patient treatment. The schedule will be determined by the treatment provider, and attendance is required. You may be required to attend more groups or individual sessions depending upon your treatment plan. Each treatment plan is individualized to best meet your particular needs.

You are responsible for attending all scheduled appointments. Treatment misses must be excused by your treatment provider and made up later. Your attendance and level of participation at counseling sessions will be reported to the team as part of your weekly progress reports. You must contact your case manager or your counselor if you are unable to attend or will be late to a scheduled session. Unexcused misses could result in sanctions.

Fees

You are responsible for paying a \$1000 VTC program fee, which may be paid up front or on a payment plan. Inability/failure to pay will not automatically result in termination from the program, but you need to make sure you are communicating about any financial difficulties.



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Housing and Employment

Participants who reside in special housing such as a VA domiciliary, halfway house, or other housing facility while in treatment must remain in the requisite housing until released by the treatment provider or the VTC Team and must abide by all the rules of said housing.

Participants who are unemployed must provide proof of enrollment in school, a disability which prevents employment, OR verifiable documentation of seeking employment. Special circumstances should be discussed with your supervision officer.

Community Service

In order to graduate from VTC, you must successfully complete 48 hours of community service. The hours can be done through any non-profit organization, but should be approved ahead of time by your supervision officer or another person designated by the VTC Team to oversee community service hours.

These hours must be started in order to successfully complete Phase 3, but may be started sooner. All hours must be completed prior to graduation.

Incentives and Sanctions

VTC provides incentives to encourage your progress. Incentives maybe received for excellent participation, a new job, driver's license reinstatement, etc. Incentives are given to recognize successes you have achieved in the VTC program.

If you fail to comply with the Veterans Treatment Court Program rules, you may be sanctioned. Sanctions are progressive and become stiffer for repeat violations. In higher phases, the expectation is that you will have fewer or no sanctions, therefore, the sanctions imposed may be stiffer than for lower phases. Sanctions are individualized to your situation and should not be compared against sanctions given to other VTC participants.

Sanctions may include:

- Verbal admonishment
- Increased supervision
- Written assignments
- Additional community service hours
- Curfew
- Extension of time in current phase
- Jail commitment
- Any other sanction deemed appropriate for the participant's actions or lack thereof



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Program Structure

The VTC Program offers a five-phased structured approach with the first phase focusing on stabilization, orientation and engagement, and the last focused on participant independence and community reintegration. There is a minimum time commitment of 14 months, but participants are expected to complete the program in no more than 24 months.

Each phase includes supervision requirements and addresses specific treatment and recovery goals to be completed in order to advance to the next phase.

Phase	Weeks in Phase	Court Review
Phase I: Orientation and Stabilization	2 months minimum	Every month
Phase II: Intensive Treatment	3 months minimum	Every month
Phase III: Recovery Skills Development	3 months minimum	Every month
Phase IV: Transition	3 months minimum	Every month
Phase V: Maintenance	2 months minimum	Every other month
Graduation		Attend & graduate

Phase Advancement and Promotion

In order to advance to the next phase, you have the primary responsibility of completing all phase requirements and requesting permission to phase up. The time it will take to complete VTC depends upon your progress through the phases. If you do not complete all of the components of a phase, you will spend more time in that phase. Each phase will be specifically tailored to you, but all participants will have the same basic components.

To be considered for phase advancement, you must submit a request in writing to the Supervision officer. ALL REQUESTS TO ADVANCE TO THE NEXT PHASE MUST BE SUBMITTED TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE COURT REVIEW YOU WISH TO ADVANCE IN. If you submit your petition late (within the two weeks before court), it will be denied and carried over to the next month for consideration.

The VTC Team will review progress, sanctions, completion of required conditions, and verify that you have met the requirements as well as progressed sufficiently to advance to the next phase. The final decision on phase advancement is made by the Judge after considering the input of the Team. Merely showing up for the required number of court reviews does not guarantee advancement. You must show progress in achieving goals while being attentive to your treatment plan.

As part of your request for phase advancement, you must write a short statement. This statement is a personal reflection on what you have learned during your current phase, the goals you have achieved, the progress you have made, and what you will continue to do to achieve your goals.



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Phase I: Orientation and Stabilization (minimum 2 months)

Phase Requirements

- Attend VTC Court Reviews each month
- Meet with your supervision officer each month and as required
- Meet with the VJO as required
- Undergo any necessary assessments or screenings
- Develop a treatment/goal plan
- Enroll in and attend treatment as recommended
- Attend all required appointments and be on time
- Submit to random Urinalysis (UA)
- Maintain a calendar with all appointments
- Create a personal budget

Advancement Criteria

- Substance free for 14 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Sanction free for 14 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Employed or enrolled in school or actively seeking either or exempt
- Secured or actively seeking stable and sober housing
- Compliant with treatment/counseling
- Up to date with required fees
- Phase Petition turned in to supervision officer at least two weeks prior to court



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Phase II: Intensive Treatment (minimum 3 months)

Phase Requirements

- Attend VTC Court Reviews each month
- Meet with your supervision officer each month and as required
- Meet with the VJO as required
- Attend treatment/counseling in accordance with treatment plan
- Attend Seeking Safety
- Attend all required appointments and be on time
- Submit to random Urinalysis (UA)
- Review and update your treatment/goal plan
- Review and update calendar and budget

Advancement Criteria

- Substance free for 30 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Sanction free for 30 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Demonstrated positive adjustment to treatment
- Employed or enrolled in school or actively seeking either or exempt
- Secured or actively seeking stable and sober housing
- Compliant with treatment/counseling
- Up to date with required fees
- Phase Petition turned in to supervision officer at least two weeks prior to court



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Phase III: Recovery Skills Development (minimum 3 months)

Phase Requirements

- Attend VTC Court Reviews each month
- Meet with your supervision officer each month and as required
- Meet with the VJO as required
- Attend treatment/counseling in accordance with treatment plan
- Attend peer support groups as directed (AA, NA, etc.)
- Complete Seeking Safety
- Begin working on community service hours
- Attend all required appointments and be on time
- Submit to random Urinalysis (UA)
- Review and update your treatment/goal plan
- Review and update calendar and budget

Advancement Criteria

- Substance free for 60 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Sanction free for 60 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Demonstrated positive adjustment to treatment
- Employed or enrolled in school or actively seeking either or exempt
- Secured or actively seeking stable and sober housing
- Compliant with treatment/counseling
- All required sessions of Seeking Safety completed
- Up to date with required fees
- Phase Petition turned in to supervision officer at least two weeks prior to court



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Phase IV: Transition (minimum 3 months)

Phase Requirements

- Attend VTC Court Reviews every month or as directed
- Meet with your supervision officer each month and as required
- Meet with the VJO as required
- Attend treatment/counseling in accordance with treatment plan
- Attend peer support groups as directed (AA, NA, etc.)
- Continue working on community service hours
- Attend all required appointments and be on time
- Submit to random Urinalysis (UA)
- Review and update your treatment/goal plan
- Review and update calendar and budget

Advancement Criteria

- Substance free for 90 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Sanction free for 90 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Employed or enrolled in school or actively seeking either or exempt
- Secured or actively seeking stable and sober housing
- Compliant with treatment/counseling
- All fees paid in full
- Phase Petition turned in to supervision officer at least two weeks prior to court



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Phase V: Maintenance (minimum 2 months)

Phase Requirements

- Attend VTC Court Reviews every other month; or as directed
- Meet with your supervision officer every other month; or as directed
- Meet with the VJO as required
- Attend treatment/counseling in accordance with treatment plan
- Attend peer support groups as directed (AA, NA, etc.)
- Complete community service hours
- Attend all required appointments and be on time
- Submit to random Urinalysis (UA)

Graduation Criteria

- Substance free for 90 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Sanction free for 90 consecutive days prior to advancement
- Employed or enrolled in school or actively seeking either or exempt
- Secured or actively seeking stable and sober housing
- Compliant with treatment/counseling
- All fees paid in full
- All community service hours completed
- Graduation Petition turned in to supervision officer at least two weeks prior to court



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Graduation

Once all requirements for VTC have been met, including payments, treatment, and sobriety, you will graduate from VTC with a sense of pride knowing that you have completed a rigorous program to enable yourself to make healthy decisions in your life. You will have achieved the goal of remaining substance free and essentially starting your and your family's lives over again.

At your graduation, you will be recognized by the VTC Team and presented with a token of your success. You will also be given the opportunity to speak to the other participants about your journey and what you've experienced and learned throughout the course of the program.

If you were admitted to VTC on a pre-trial diversion basis, your case will be dismissed and you will be eligible to have the charge expunged from your record. If you were on deferred adjudication probation, your case may also be dismissed (subject to statutory limitations), and you can seek to have it non-disclosed from your record. If you were on regular probation, you will be released from all conditions of probation.

Termination

Warrants, new arrests, or noncompliance could result in you being terminated from the Veterans Treatment Court Program and returned to a normal docket to be sentenced on your pending charge(s).

Noncompliance violations which could result in termination include consistently missing drug tests or testing positive, missing treatment or supervision appointments, repeatedly breaking the program rules, and violence or threats of violence directed at other participants, treatment staff, or other VTC team members.

Participants are entitled to hearing before a termination decision is finalized. In that event, one of the defense attorneys associated with VTC will counsel and represent the participant.



**Guadalupe County
Veterans Treatment Court
Participant Handbook**

Receipt and Review of Participant Handbook

Name: _____ Cause No.: _____

I, _____, acknowledge the receipt of the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook. By my signature below, I attest that I have been provided with a copy of the Participant Handbook and that I have reviewed it prior to agreeing to participate in the Veterans Treatment Court. Furthermore, I acknowledge that I have been made aware of the Veterans Treatment Court program rules and my responsibilities.

Participant Signature

Participant Printed Name

Date

Defense Attorney Signature



Appendix





**Guadalupe County
Veterans Treatment Court
Participant Handbook**

Contacts

VTC Court Coordinator – Doreen Luehlfing(830) 303-8867

Guadalupe County Probation – Veronica Day(830) 303-9727

Veteran Justice Outreach Specialist – Stacey Adams(210) 243-1752

Teddy Buerger Center – Melissa Walker(830) 401-1367

DAV(830) 379-3299

Defense Attorneys

 Sheila Old(830) 303-6900

 Shawn Vandenberg.....(210) 658-7799

Guadalupe County Veterans Services – Nancy Russell.....(830) 303-8870

 Schertz Office(210) 945-9708

Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Hospital(210) 617-5300

San Antonio NE Vet Center(210) 650-0422

San Antonio NW Vet Center(210) 688-0606

Austin Vet Center(512) 416-1314

Recovery Healthcare (SCRAM).....(210) 229-1495

Self-Check (Interlock, portable device).....(210) 865-0622

Legal Services: SALSA: San Antonio Legal Services Association..... (210) 678-8100

 Email Joe Pina, J.D., Major (Retired) USAR: Joep@sa-lsa.org

Veterans Crisis Hotline Dial: 988, OR text to 838255

(These contacts were updated as of 1/10/2024)



**Guadalupe County
Veterans Treatment Court
Participant Handbook**

Approved Over-the-Counter Medications

The following medications are approved for VTC participants to take without prior permission. These medications must be taken at the appropriate dosage listed on the drug's label or a positive urine test could result. Do not take more than the dosage indicated on the label!

If you have any questions, please contact your supervision officer or treatment provider for clarification. Each drug listed below must be taken as listed and without any other additives (i.e. no Tylenol Cold or Tylenol Nighttime).

PAIN (not PM formula)

Acetaminophen 500 mg
Ibuprofen 200-800mg
Aspirin
Excedrin Migraine
Tylenol Arthritis
Ben Gay muscle rub & thermal patches
Icy Hot muscle rub & thermal patches

STOMACH

Pepto-Bismol
Zantac
Pepcid
Prilosec
Tums/Roloids

ALLERGIES (not D or DM)

Claritin
Allegra
Benadryl

FLU SYMPTOMS

Theraflu
Mucinex (not D or DM)

COUGH/COLD

Delsym (non-alcoholic/pediatric)
Alka-Seltzer

Medications to Avoid

The following medications can cause a cross-reaction with the drug testing methods used by the probation department. Participants should discuss an alternative with their doctor if one of these is to be prescribed.

Effexor
Lamictal
Protonix
Sustiva
Zantac
Zoloft
Clarithromycin



**Guadalupe County
Veterans Treatment Court
Participant Handbook**

Medical/Dental Medication Form

MEDICAL FACILITY / CLINIC			

PHYSICIAN'S NAME (PLEASE PRINT)			

STREET ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE

TELEPHONE NUMBER	FAX NUMBER		

This is to inform you that I am currently working an abstinence-based treatment program. **I should not have controlled substances prescribed to me.**

If necessary, the use of such medication should be very short term, administered by a second party, monitored closely, and no refills given without a new prescription.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have been presented with this form and understand my patient is involved in a treatment program.

SIGNATURE OF PHYSICIAN

DATE



**Guadalupe County
Veterans Treatment Court
Participant Handbook**

Confidentiality Statement and Agreement

I, _____, as a participant, team member, or guest of the Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC), duly recognize my responsibility to the confidentiality of all of the information, data and findings derived as a function of or on behalf of VTC and its activities. Accordingly, I hereby agree that:

1. Any information discussed at a VTC staffing shall remain confidential and will not be revealed or disseminated to anyone who is not a member of the VTC Team;
2. Names, addresses, contact information, and/or other identifying information of program participants shall remain confidential and will not be revealed or disseminated to anyone who is not a member of the VTC Team;
3. Unless the information reasonably relates to the commission of a new or different offense, any information garnered, obtained, or derived as a function of or on behalf of VTC and its activities shall remain confidential and will not be revealed or disseminated to anyone who is not a member of the VTC Team;
4. All information, data, and findings contained in VTC files shall remain confidential and will not be revealed or disseminated to anyone that is not a member of the VTC Team; and
5. It is understood that arrest warrants, supporting affidavits, or other information required by law to be public information or to be maintained for statistical purposes is not confidential.

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Printed Name: _____

This form is intended to comply with requirements of Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations governing Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records.



Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or age in the delivery of services.

The Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court complies with the Equal Treatment for Faith-Based Organizations guidelines as noted in 28 CFR 38. This program does not discriminate against participants on the basis of religion or religious belief.

If you feel that you have been discriminated against, you may file a complaint with the Federal Office for Civil Rights. Complaints may be filed online or by mail, fax, or email.

Office for Civil Rights – Region VI
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Jorge Lozano, Regional Manager
1301 Young Street, Suite 1169
Dallas, TX 75202

(800) 368-1019 Phone
(800) 537-7697 TDD
(214) 767-0432 Fax

OCRComplaint@hhs.gov

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/complaints/index.html>