

# **Participant Handbook**

## **Guadalupe County, County Court Veterans Treatment Court**



**Presiding Judge:  
The Honorable Kyle Kutscher, County Judge**



# **Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court Participant Handbook**

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### **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. During your program commitment, you will also be required to reside in Guadalupe County or a contiguous county.

### **History and Purpose**

The Guadalupe County VTC became Texas's sixth Veterans Treatment Court 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, the 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 an 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 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.



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### **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 the 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 the prosecution of this case.** However, your statements and information about your treatment will be shared with the VTC Team, including the Judge, Court Coordinator, Assistant County Attorney, defense attorneys, probation officers, and VA and Mental Health representatives. 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 service delivery. 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 regardless of 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 the 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 scheduled 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 information releases so that your providers can communicate with the VTC Team. The VTC Team will closely monitor your progress and participation to make decisions regarding your advancement through the program.



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### **Court Reviews**

You are required to attend the 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. Before 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 must 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. Depending on your situation, VTC supervision officers will also make home and work visits randomly or as needed. You must 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 by your supervision officer. REQUESTS FOR TRAVEL PERMITS MUST BE SUBMITTED AT LEAST TWO WEEKS BEFORE 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. It will be denied if you submit your request late (within two weeks of departure). Emergency situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

### **Alcohol and Drug Testing**

VTC's goal is to help you maintain sobriety so that you can succeed in the program and 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 conduct drug/alcohol tests. If the test indicates a positive result, and you disagree 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 that have not been prescribed by a doctor. You are responsible for reading all labels before taking any medication. The court will not accept an excuse of ignorance for a positive drug test.



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### **Medications**

All medications must be pre-approved by your treatment provider before taking them. When visiting the doctor or dentist, please bring the *Medical/Dental Medications Form* (see Appendix) for your physician to sign. If an emergency room visit is necessary, you must identify yourself as a VTC participant and request non-narcotic and non-alcoholic medications. You must 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 must also sign any necessary information releases so that your prescribing doctors can communicate with the VTC team and the supervision officer regarding the prescribed medications.

### **Other Products**

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 group and individual counseling and in-patient or out-patient treatment. The schedule will be determined by the treatment provider, and attendance is required. Depending on your treatment plan, you may be required to attend more groups or individual sessions. Each treatment plan is individualized to meet your particular needs best.

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 counselor if you cannot attend or will be late for a scheduled session. Unexcused misses could result in sanctions.

### **Fees**

You are responsible for paying a \$1000 VTC program fee, which may be paid upfront 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.



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### **Housing and Employment**

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

Unemployed participants must provide proof of enrollment in school, a disability that prevents employment, OR verifiable documentation of seeking employment. Special circumstances should be discussed with your supervision officer.

### **Community Service**

To graduate from VTC, you must complete 48 hours of community service. The hours can be done through any non-profit organization. Still, they 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 to successfully complete Phase 3, but they may be started sooner. All hours must be completed before graduation.

### **Incentives and Sanctions**

VTC provides incentives to encourage progress. For example, you may receive incentives for excellent participation, a new job, driver's license reinstatement, etc., to recognize your successes in the VTC program.

You may be sanctioned if you fail to comply with the Veterans Treatment Court Program rules. 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 the current phase
- Jail commitment
- Any other sanction deemed appropriate for the participant's actions or lack thereof





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### **Program Structure**

The VTC Program offers a five-phased structured approach. The first phase focuses on stabilization, orientation, and engagement, and the last focuses 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 that must be completed to advance to the next phase.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Weeks in Phase</b>	<b>Court Review</b>
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**

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 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 AT LEAST TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE COURT REVIEW YOU WISH TO ADVANCE IN. If you submit your petition late (within two weeks before the next court date), it will be denied and carried over to the next month for consideration.

The VTC Team will review progress, sanctions, and completion of required conditions and verify that you have met the requirements and 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 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.

If a sanction is imposed during the month that you were scheduled to advance, any paperwork submitted for that advancement is void, and you will be required to submit new paperwork, complete with updated documentation, including a new statement/essay, to be considered for advancement following the sanction. The new paperwork may not be a copy of previously





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submitted paperwork, nor may any previously submitted materials be re-submitted. Such new paperwork must be submitted two weeks prior to the date for your projected advancement following the sanction.

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



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### **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



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# Appendix





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**Contacts**

**Veterans Crisis Hotline..... Dial: 988, OR text to 838255**

VTC Court Coordinator – Doreen Luehlifing ..... (830) 303-8867

Guadalupe County Probation:

Kevin Serna ..... (830) 303-9712

Veronica Day..... (830) 303-9727

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

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

Defense Attorneys:

Sheila Old..... (830) 303-6900

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

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

Schertz Location..... (210) 945-9708

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

DAV ..... (830) 379-3299

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

Veteran Legal Services: San Antonio Legal Services Association (SALSA)

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

(These contacts were updated as of 4/2/2025)



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### **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!

Please contact your supervision officer or treatment provider for clarification if you have any questions. Each drug listed below must be taken as listed and without 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



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**Medical/Dental Medication Form**

<hr/>			
<b>MEDICAL FACILITY / CLINIC</b>			
<hr/>			
<b>PHYSICIAN'S NAME (PLEASE PRINT)</b>			
<hr/>			
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	<b>CITY</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>ZIP CODE</b>
<hr/>			
<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b>	<b>FAX NUMBER</b>		
<hr/>			

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

If necessary, 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



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### **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 who 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 the requirements of Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations governing the Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records.





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### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

The Guadalupe County Veterans Treatment Court does not discriminate based on 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 noted in 28 CFR 38. This program does not discriminate against participants based on 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](mailto:OCRComplaint@hhs.gov)

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