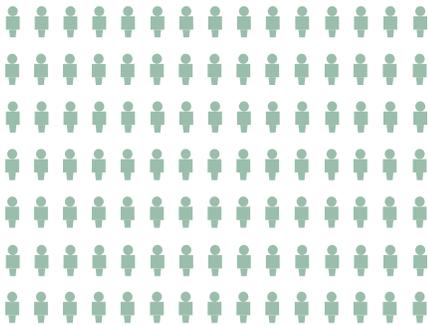


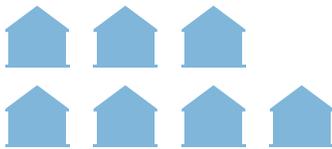
BREAKING BARRIERS

Enhancing Responses in Veterans Treatment Courts and Domestic Violence Courts

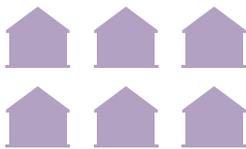
IN THE UNITED STATES, THERE ARE...



...**18,931,395** veterans.



...over **350** veteran treatment courts.



...over **300** specialized domestic violence courts.

There are an estimated 18,931,395 veterans living in the United States.¹ Along with growing recognition of domestic violence in the justice system, communities across the nation are also increasing their awareness towards domestic violence perpetrated by veterans. As courts and communities strive to respond to domestic violence across all populations, responding to violence in the veteran community remains a challenge.

Problem-solving courts have proliferated throughout the country in direct response to the complex issues which they address. Upon realizing the significant role that military service has in relation to veterans' cases within drug treatment courts and mental health courts, jurisdictions began to establish veterans treatment dockets and courts that could respond to veterans' needs with the appropriate cultural competency. Similarly, domestic

violence courts have a specialized response to incidences of domestic violence through their prioritization of both victim safety and offender accountability during the entire court process. Both veterans treatment courts and domestic violence courts have tailored their protocols and procedures based on their nuanced understanding of the dynamics of the issues they address.

Currently, there are over 350 veterans treatment courts and over 300 specialized domestic violence courts in the United States, however they are often siloed within the same community despite the possible overlap between the populations. This fact sheet discusses ways in which veterans treatment courts and domestic violence courts can enhance information gathering protocols and collaborate to best address domestic violence in the communities they serve.

1 "Veteran Population," Department of Veteran Affairs, accessed August 15, 2013, https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Profile_of_Veterans_2015.pdf

Adapted from *Veterans and Intimate Partner Violence: Bridging the Gaps in Specialized Court Responses* which was supported by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women (Grant No. 2011-WE-AX-0067). The opinions, findings, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice.

COURT MODELS: AT A GLANCE

Problem-solving courts follow individualized key principles that allow them to best serve the unique populations which they serve. The similarities and differences between the key principles of veterans treatment courts and those of domestic violence courts are shown below.

Key Principles of Problem-Solving Courts

	Veterans Treatment Courts	Domestic Violence Courts
• Coordination with Veterans Affairs Office	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Connecting court participants to resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Mentoring	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Promoting offender accountability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Coordinated community response	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Screening and identification of cases	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Victim services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Trained court staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Key Differences Explained:

Coordination with Veterans Affairs Office

Veterans treatment courts coordinate with Veterans Affairs Office and local service providers in order to refer participants to appropriate services. The VA provides the courts with a veteran justice outreach specialist, who will refer eligible veterans to VA services. These services often address issues including drug addiction and mental health services.

Mentoring

Veterans treatment courts often have a volunteer veteran mentoring program to foster peer support for participants, based on shared experience. Different courts vary in the training that they provide, as well as the frequency/type of contact between mentors and mentees.

Coordinated Community Response

Domestic violence courts are key players in a coordinated community response to domestic violence, as they connect offenders to programs via mandates, and connect victims with services and support. Coordinated community response is crucial for reducing recidivism and the likelihood of re-offense, and requires the involvement of many partners including victim services, community corrections, law enforcement, and abusive partner intervention programs.

Victim Services

Domestic violence courts prioritize victim safety inside and outside of the courtroom. In addition to implementing courtroom safety measures, these courts provide victims with services, generally with the help of on-site advocates.

REDUCING INFORMATION GAPS

Veterans treatment courts and domestic violence courts can improve their response to domestic violence by implementing promising practices that enhance courts' understanding of the complex issues they address. This may involve cross-court coordination, depending on whether jurisdictions have both veterans treatment courts and domestic violence courts, but could also involve courts bolstering their own practices and protocols. Here are some recommendations for reducing information gaps:

Veterans Treatment Courts

Domestic Violence Courts

Screen for...

...defendants' domestic violence history.

...military service.

Veterans treatment courts should screen defendants to determine whether there is violence occurring in the home and/or whether the defendant has a history pertaining to domestic violence. Such history can inform court staff's understanding of the context around the defendant's case.

Even if a jurisdiction is not near a major military installment, there is still a possibility that a litigant has a history of military service. Domestic violence court staff should ask litigants about any history of military service and discharge in order to make appropriate service referrals and have awareness of benefits eligibility.

Enhance protocols to provide...

...victim safety.

...appropriate treatment for veterans.

Many veterans treatment courts hear cases involving domestic violence, which calls for consultation with domestic violence advocates during the pendency of the case. Court staff should identify local domestic violence advocates and develop a relationship with them to understand their services, as well as how best to collaborate with one another so advocates can provide support and services to victims.

Domestic violence court staff should develop a relationship with services for veterans in order to provide appropriate treatment for litigants with a military history. Depending on availability, this includes establishing a point of contact within the local veterans treatment court, Veterans Affairs Office, and treatment programs, especially programs with military and veteran competency.

Provide staff training on...

...domestic violence.

...veterans and military understanding.

Veterans treatment court staff should seek training from local domestic violence experts to ensure awareness of the dynamics of domestic violence within the military context, knowledge of domestic violence court best practices, and knowledge of available service providers within the community.

Domestic violence court staff should seek training for court staff and stakeholders on the military/veteran context to ensure awareness of domestic violence within the military context and knowledge of the local Veterans Affairs Office and veterans treatment courts, if applicable.