



## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

### NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **Early Identification of Pennsylvania Veterans Key to Success for Justice-Involved Veterans**

**HARRISBURG** – Pennsylvania’s Veterans Treatment Courts have launched an outreach campaign to encourage all justice-involved veterans to promptly notify the court, attorney or law enforcement officer that they served in the military.

Pennsylvania veterans may be eligible for a Veterans Treatment Court or other programs to help them with service-related issues involving posttraumatic stress disorder, brain injuries and substance use disorder or if they were the victim of sexual or physical abuse while in military service.

“Our goal is to help support our veterans -- to help them find their way back home -- and early identification as veterans is critical to their success,” said Pa. Supreme Court Justice Debra Todd. “Courts encourage veterans who become involved with the criminal justice system to report their veteran status. Some may not report their status because they are embarrassed that they have been charged with a crime or they do not understand that serving in combat is not a requirement for recognition as a veteran.”

As part of the campaign, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts developed several posters encouraging [early identification for justice-involved veterans](#) and for Magisterial District Court [judges and court staff](#) to help determine if someone is a veteran and if they may qualify for support and services.

Improving communication of services and programs for justice-involved veterans is a critical component of the campaign by connecting veterans with their local Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) specialist. The VJO can help veterans identify support options and VA benefits. Participation in Veterans Treatment Court is not required to receive their support.

Veterans Treatment Courts assist veteran defendants who are struggling with addiction, mental illness or co-occurring disorders, who come in contact with the criminal justice system. Using the drug court model, these courts combine treatment and personal accountability, with the goal of breaking the cycle of addiction and criminal behavior.

Pennsylvania currently has 25 Veterans Court programs, the first of which opened in [Lackawanna County in Nov. 2009](#).

More information about Pennsylvania’s Veterans Treatment Courts is available on the PA Courts’ [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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