



Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF VENTURA
Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Michael D. Planet
*Executive Officer/Clerk
and Jury Commissioner*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Colleen Toy White, Judge
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Veterans Court Hosts Stakeholder Meeting with Veterans Groups to Launch Mentors for Veterans Program

The judges of the Ventura Superior Court are pleased to announce the addition of the Mentors for Veterans Program to join with the efforts of the existing Ventura Veterans Court, established in 2010. The court is working with the Gold Coast Veterans Foundation and representatives of the 146th Air National Guard on the operation of the program to provide peer-to-peer mentors for defendants in the Veterans Court.

On September 22, 2011, the Ventura Superior Court held a *Mentors for Veterans* stakeholders meeting at the Ventura Hall of Justice. Guests included military and community representatives from over thirty agencies that serve veterans. The participants discussed how their agencies assist veterans and how a court and community collaborative called Mentors for Veterans Program can address the needs of troubled veterans.

The mentors are all volunteers, former United States Military personnel who understand veterans and their issues. Veterans that work with peer mentors are more likely to comply with court orders, benefit from mental health treatment and other services, maintain their sobriety and not reoffend. The Veterans Court is a collaborative court that connects veterans to needed treatment and services. These services may include mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment and vocational rehabilitation. Treatment alone may not be enough to ensure an individual's success. Veterans with court cases may have complex problems and enduring psychological injuries from military service. Peer mentors encourage mentees to work with service providers and veteran groups in the community to overcome these challenges.

The Ventura Superior Court Veterans Court hearings are held every Monday at 3:00 P.M. at the Hall of Justice, Courtroom 35, 800 South Victoria Avenue, Ventura, California 93009.

ATTACHMENT #1

The Mentors for Veterans Program guidelines include: Mentors attending all Veterans Court criminal calendars with the veteran as a support person. Mentors are not mental health counselors or legal advisors and will not interfere or replace a veteran's work with a legal or mental health professional. Mentors are trained in their responsibilities as a peer mentor and these include; assisting veterans access and navigate the VA Affairs and VA health care system, support and advise other mentors regarding their clients' needs and work closely and communicate with the court coordinator and judge as needed. Persons with a military background are the preferred recruits for being a mentor, because mentors/mentee pairings will be matched based on their branch of service. (Marine paired with a Marine for example). In some cases, mentors may not need to have military experience, especially if the mentee veteran requests a non-military mentor. Mentors/Mentees pairings will share the same gender. Pairing will be based on life experience and background of the mentor/mentee. In some cases the veteran mentee may have the opportunity to work with several mentors to address a veterans needs.

Mentors for Veterans Program advisory panel:

Ventura Superior Court

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