

Cobb County

Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court

Participant Handbook

Welcome to the Cobb County Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court (VATC). This Handbook is designed to answer your questions about what is expected of you as a VATC participant. In addition to abiding by the program requirements laid out in the admission paperwork and this handbook, you must also follow the instructions and orders given to you by the judge and or any team members.

Keep all admission documents and this handbook readily available as it will answer most of your questions. If you still have questions after reading this handbook, please contact the

VATC Coordinator Katelyn Parker:

- **Office Number**: (770) 528-7988
- **Work Cell**: (770)-862-8750
- **Email**: Katelyn.Parker@cobbcounty.gov

VATC Case Manager Ramona Burkett:

- **Office Number**: (770) 528-7962
- **Work Cell**: (770)- 862-8328
- **Email**: Ramona.Burkett@cobbcounty.gov

This handbook belongs to:

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Veterans Court Address:	10 East Park Square Building C Floor 2
Sponsor line:	(770) 528-8104

DRUG LAB LOCATION 10 East Park Square Building C Floor 2	
DRUG LAB HOURS	
Monday - Friday:	7:30 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday:	8:00 am to11:00 am
Sunday:	8:00 am to 10:00 am

COURT LOCATION	Superior Court (Main Courthouse) 70 Haynes Street Courtroom 6100 Judge Leonard
TREATMENT FACILITY LOCATION	3830 S. Cobb Dr SE, Smyrna, GA 30082

Introduction

Cobb County Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court (VATC) mission is to divert eligible veteran defendants with substance dependency and/or mental illness that are charged with felony criminal offenses, to a specialized criminal court. The court substitutes a treatment problem solving model for traditional court processing. Veterans are identified through evidence based screening and assessments. The veterans voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan that a team of court staff, veteran health care professionals, and health care professionals develop with the veteran. At regular status hearings, treatment plans and other conditions are periodically reviewed for appropriateness, incentives are offered to reward adherence to court conditions, and sanctions for non-adherence are handed down. Completion of their program is defined according to individualized criteria. Many will have their charges dismissed upon successful completions and others are assured of a non-incarcerative sentence upon completion.

Many veterans are known to have a warrior's mentality and often do not address their treatment needs for physical and psychological health care. Often those who are referred to the VATC are homeless, helpless, in despair, suffering from alcohol or drug addiction, and others have serious mental illnesses. Through this program, the veteran is offered the opportunity to regain stability in their lives, to have their families strengthened, to have housing for the homeless, and to have employment for the employable. (VTC Standard 1.3)

Welcome to the Cobb County Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court

Our program is based on proven national research and program models. Our program is designed to provide you with an opportunity to pursue treatment while productively addressing associated legal problems. The Court is a partnership between the Judge, District Attorney, Defense Counsel, Probation, Law Enforcement, Treatment, and the community.

The program is typically 18 to 24 months in duration and consists of up to five phases. (VTC Standard 4.1) The goal of the program is to link you with mental health, and/or substance abuse treatment in addition to community resources that will allow you to live a healthy, productive life and reduce/eliminate future involvement with the criminal justice system.

You will be expected to participate in and complete numerous treatment-oriented activities. These may include: pro-social community involvement meetings, group and/or individual therapy, case management meetings, weekly court appearances, probation appointments (if applicable), and urine/breath/chemical drug screening.

All program participants can also expect to receive sanctions if they violate program rules or fail to achieve phase requirements. Possible violations include: missed appointments, failed/ missed, adulterated urine drug screens, or new arrests/charges. Sanctions may include community service, incarceration, or termination from the program. Participants who maintain positive participation in the program may receive appropriate incentives as well. (VTC Standard 1.3)

Important Documents

You are bound by your sentence and any exhibits attached to the sentence, any orders that were entered as part of your sentence, the VATC Participant Contract, all paperwork you completed as part of your application for VATC, this handbook, and any memos or other documents you are given by the VATC Team. Keep copies of all your paperwork for your records. All original documents (yellow receipts, requests, etc.) are to be turned into directly to VATC Staff (Katelyn Parker or Ramona Burkett) or placed in the Veterans Court drop box in the drug lab lobby. The drop box will be checked at least twice a day.

Staff Contact

If a Team member calls you, there is a reason they need to speak with you, so you need to answer the phone. If you cannot, you are required to return the call within 3 hours. Failure to do so will result in a sanction. We will do our best to only call during normal business hours and make sure that after-hours contact is only an emergency or surveillance related. Contact with court staff outside of court functions is prohibited. No social contact with any member of the court team is allowed.

Judge's Role

In the courtroom, the Judge develops a personal, working relationship with each participant while monitoring participant's progress. The Judge has many responsibilities beyond Veterans Court; therefore, his time is limited. Direct contact with the Judge and his office is ***prohibited*** beyond the courtroom setting. The Judge is not your case manager, personal attorney, or your legal advisor. The Judge attends non-court settings such as staffing to discuss participant

progress, treatment and, when necessary, appropriate incentives or sanctions.

Before your court hearing, the Judge will be given a progress report. The progress report will discuss your drug screen results, attendance, participation and cooperation in the treatment program, employment or other requirements that may have been imposed. The Judge may ask questions about your progress and discuss any problems you may be having. If you are doing well, you may be rewarded with incentives. If your progress reports show that you are not doing well, the judge will discuss this with you and determine future action, which may include a sanction, in order to help you remember your goals in the program.

Court Team Members

(VTC Standard 1.1)

In addition to the Judge, other members of the VATC Team include the:

- **Program Coordinator:** Manages the VATC under the supervision of the Judge and Cobb County Superior Court Administration.
- **Case Manager:** Primary contact person, attends staffing and court sessions, maintains participant records.
- **Prosecutor**: Represents the state, attends staffing and court sessions, evaluates your progress through the program, and recommends appropriate sanctions and incentives.
- **Defense Attorney:** Attends staffing sessions to evaluate your progress through the court and to recommend appropriate sanctions and incentives. When you enter the program, the obligations of your former attorney end, and it is the VATC defense attorney who speaks on your behalf at court staffing sessions; however, this person does *not* represent you in the traditional sense.
- **Sheriff's Deputy:** Ensures accountability in the program by conducting unannounced field visits to your home and job and by participating in staffing sessions. (VTC Standard 6.4)
- **Probation Officer**: Provides reports on compliance matters to the team and attends court sessions.
- **Veteran Justice Outreach Specialist**, the Veterans Administration representative, who attends staffing and court sessions, provides the team with your treatment progress, coordinates veteran and treatment services, and recommends appropriate sanctions and incentives.

Fraternization Rules

The following rules apply to participants in any of the Cobb County Accountability Court programs (Drug Treatment Court, Mental Health Court, Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court). The term “participant," as used below, shall apply to any participant in any of said programs. These rules also apply as between participants and any member of court staff, which includes not only program staff members but also courthouse administrative and security employees, drug lab employees, Sheriff’s Office employees, and any other individuals who are brought into contact with participants through their employment. The term “staff,” as used below, shall apply to any such individuals.

Any sexual involvement with any participant or current or former staff member is prohibited under any circumstances. In addition to physical contact, this includes any communication of a sexual nature by phone, internet, social media, or otherwise. Participants shall not exchange or display sexually explicit photographs amongst themselves or with current or former participants or staff members.

Any romantic relationship with a current participant, or current or former staff is prohibited. Contact between participants and current or former staff of a romantic nature, or that is intended to encourage a romantic or "dating" relationship, is not allowed. This includes physical contact as well as any communication by phone, internet, social media, or otherwise. Participants must avoid persons and places of disreputable or harmful character. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding romantic relationships with convicted felons. Social contact between participants of a non-romantic, non-sexual nature may, in some cases, be a beneficial part of the recovery process, and is therefore not prohibited. However, any social contact between participants outside of a treatment or court setting must be disclosed to treatment staff at the earliest opportunity.

Participants may not be employed by the same employer or work together, whether paid or unpaid. without prior approval of the court. Participants may not provide transportation for one another, give or loan each other money or items of value, or perform services for one another without prior approval of the court. Relationships of any sort that are shown to be harmful to a participant's recovery process may not be compatible with the participant's treatment plan, and will be addressed by the treatment staff and, if necessary, the court.

Harassment, as defined here, of any participant or staff is prohibited. The term

"harassment" includes offensive verbal, written, or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, color, sex (which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation and gender identity), religion, national origin, citizenship, age, or disability. Communications that are harassing include, but are not limited to, those conveyed verbally or through gestures and body movements, in writing, or via email, text message, social media, or any other form of electronic communication.

The term “harassment" also specifically includes sexual harassment. "Sexual harassment" includes engaging in speech or conduct of a sexual or romantic nature which is known or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome. It includes, but is not limited to, sexual or romantic advances, requests for sexual favors or dates, sexual or romantic remarks, comments or gestures, the display of sexually suggestive pictures or other media, offensive physical contact or touching, and any other verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual or romantic nature. Violations of this policy may subject the participant to sanctions up to and including termination from any respective program.

Courtroom Behavior and Rules

- Do not bring minors/children to the courtroom without adult supervision.
- Do not talk in the courtroom during court proceedings.
- Do not bring food or drink into the courtroom.
- Do not chew gum/candy in the courtroom.
- Please be respectful when addressing the Judge.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets.
- Remain in the courtroom until excused by the Judge. Do not leave the courtroom for **any** reason (including the bathroom), without permission.
- Dress appropriately for Court appearances. Appropriate dress means:
    - Do not wear shorts (even during summer);
    - No torn or ripped jeans; No hats, caps, or bandanas; No gang attire of any kind;
    - Turn off phones in Court;
    - No sagging pants that hang below the waist;
    - No tank tops, T-shirt, muscle shirts, or crop-tops.
    - All shirts must have a sleeve **(Including females).** All male’s shirts must have a collar;
    - No clothing advertising tobacco or alcohol products, drug paraphernalia, or attire

with obscene words or pictures anytime while in the program;

- Have shirt tails tucked into pants;
- No facial or tongue piercing of any kind;
- No flip flop or "thong" footwear;
- No tight, short or low cut at the bust clothing.

COBB TREATMENT COURTS – FACILITY AND GROUP RULES

Treatment Facility Location: 3830 S. Cobb Dr SE, Smyrna, GA 30082

1. **Security**: Security cameras are located inside and outside the building and are monitored at all times.

• Do not prop doors open. Participants may only be let in by staff.

• Participants are not allowed to let other participants in under any circumstances.

2. **Entry and Arrival**: Participants will be allowed inside by a staff member:

• If you arrive earlier than your allowed entry time, wait outside in your car or in the designated chairs until a staff member lets you in.

• Arrive on time. Late arrivals will not be allowed inside, resulting in a missed session.

3. **Facility Access:**

• Participants are not allowed in the staff breakroom or supply rooms under any circumstances.

• No children are allowed in the building.

4. **Food, Drinks, and Smoking:**

• No food or drinks in group rooms. Eating and drinking is only allowed in the main room at the tables. Clean up after yourself and throw away your trash.

• Smoking is only allowed in the designated outdoor area. No smoking at the entrance.

• Vape pens, e-cigarettes, and similar devices are not allowed inside the building. If you have a car, you may leave them there. If you do not have a car, you cannot bring them into the building.

5. **Cell Phone Use and Noise:**

• Cell phones must be silenced and put away during group sessions.

• In the main room, keep noise to a minimum to respect others in group or individual sessions. Headphones must be used if listening to anything on your phone. You may be asked to leave if this rule is not followed.

6. **Group Room Etiquette:**

• Keep group rooms tidy and return chairs to their proper place after sessions.

• No leaning back in chairs.

7. **Respect and Conduct:**

- • Show respect to everyone in the building. Disrespectful language, rude behavior, or physical aggression will not be tolerated.
- ***Violation of any facility or group rules may result in sanctions by the court. If you have any questions about the treatment facility guidelines, contact your Program Coordinator.

8. **Treatment Expectations:**

- Attend all required and recommended treatment from all providers.
- Do not tell a treatment provider that you were ordered to engage in treatment by Judge or a member of the court staff.
- Attend all treatment appointments on time, seated and ready to begin treatment at the start time.
- Any treatment appointment changes should be made 24 hours in advance by contacting the treatment provider.
- Bring all documentation to treatment and turn in all treatment documentation to your case manager at your next case management session.
- Engage appropriately in treatment. Bullying, belittling or joking will not be tolerated, and you will be asked to leave.
- No sleeping, eating or cell phones are allowed in the treatment setting.
- Breach of confidentially is a serious offense. Do not talk about treatment discussion out of the treatment setting.
- Courtroom dress attire applies to the treatment setting also.

Community Support Group Requirement:

An important part of recovery is connecting with others in the community who can not only give guidance as you start your sobriety but who will also give you support as you continue into a lifestyle of recovery. Community recovery support comes in many different forms and should be a choice that is made by you with help from the VATC treatment providers. The

VATC treatment providers will assist you in the process and will make sure that your connections will make a positive influence on your recovery. As a participant in VATC, you are required to follow all recommendations of the treatment providers. Your involvement in community recovery support is part of your treatment plan. The following are requirements for community support court for VATC:

- A minimum of three community support group meetings are required every week.
- One meeting must be in person and two can be virtual.
- Community support groups include for example AA/NA, Double Trouble, DBSA, etc.
- Meeting sheets are to be sent to your treatment provider weekly via email to Conrad.Valcy@cobbcounty.gov.
- If a participant does not have sponsor contact and has not turned in their AA sheets then then the participant will not be eligible for court incentives that week (fishbowl, spin the wheel)
- Must have a sponsor 4 weeks into Phase 2.
- If everyone in the program across all phases has sponsor contact and turns in their community support group sheets for the week and does not have any sanctions, they will earn a pizza or donut party.
- For phase 4 attending an alumni group counts as two community support groups for that week.
- If you have a sponsor and are going to meetings, then you are eligible for a court incentive that week (fishbowl/spin the wheel). If after two weeks no response from your sponsor via phone call sponsor line, then you are moved back to no sponsor status and you are no longer eligible for court incentives until a new sponsor is obtained.
- Engaging in self-help meetings at your place of employment is prohibited.

Participant Responsibilities

Once accepted into VATC, you need to follow **all** program guidelines. Each phase and each individual will have specific requirements. The general guidelines are as follows:

- Participants have 45 days from plea date to produce consistent negative screens.

- Attend all Court appearances, doctor's appointments, treatment sessions, and any other appointments as assigned.
- Drug screens will be a MIMIMUM of twice a week. Number of drug screens a week varies by participant and phase. (VTC Standard 5.1)
- Must maintain employment of 32 hours a week unless you get approval from VATC staff. If you are unable to work 32 hours a week appropriate community service options can be identified and approved by the VATC staff. Community service cannot take place at your place of employment unless approved by the court.
- Be prepared at all times by being early and bring something to write in and on to record any important notes.
- Must turn in pay stubs and a list of current medications by NOON every first Thursday of the month unless instructed differently by your case manager.
- Be on time for all appointments, treatment sessions, and court appearances.
- Take medications as they are prescribed.
- Participate in and successfully complete all recommended treatment.
- Abstain from using any illegal drugs, unapproved medications, or alcohol.
- Complete all random alcohol and drug screens.
- Comply with all education and employment requirements.
- Bring all assigned treatment materials to every group session.
- Do not enter any business whose primary function is the sale of alcohol.
- Do not associate with people who use or possess drugs.
- Immediately report any contact you have with any form of law enforcement.
- Do not possess any weapons while in VATC, and do not carry any weapons on your person or in your vehicle.
- All community service hours need to be approved by the court.
- Inform all medical persons that you come in contact with that you are a participant in the VATC Program.
- Free expression of your thoughts and feelings is encouraged; however, violence, threats, or intimidation will not be tolerated. Extreme use of profanity is not acceptable.

- You must keep the staff informed of your current address, phone number, and schedule.
- Do not enter restricted staff areas without being escorted by a member of the staff.
- No application or consumption of any CBD/Hemp Products.
- Consumption of poppy seeds is NOT permitted in this program.
- Do not consume non-Alcoholic Beer and Wine. Although legally considered non-alcoholic, NA beers (e.g. O'Douls®, Sharps®) do contain a residual amount of alcohol that may result in a positive test result for alcohol, if consumed.

PROGRAM PHASES:

Phase 1 Requirements: Minimum of 2 months (VTC Standard 1.3, 4.1, 7.7)

- Stay clean and sober; do not drink alcohol or use drugs unless prescribed and Confirmed on your treatment plan.
- Phase 1 curfew is 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. unless told otherwise by VATC staff.
- Attend weekly court sessions on Tuesday.
- Attend group sessions per phase requirements as arranged by your treatment provider.
- Attend Highland Rivers or VA appointments as scheduled.
- Meet face to face with your mentor weekly.
- Maintain safe and adequate housing.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Meet with you case manager once a week.
- Phase up is not determined by the amount of time in the phase but your individual progress in the program and is ultimately determined by the Judge based on staff recommendations. However, you must have a minimum of two months in Phase One and a minimum of 30 days sobriety and 30 days without a jail sanction to be eligible to be considered to phase up to 2. (VTC Standard 5.7, 5.8).

Phase 2 Requirements: Minimum of 4 months (VTC Standard 7.7)

- Stay clean and sober; do not drink alcohol or use drugs unless prescribed and confirmed on your treatment plan.
- Attend weekly court sessions on Tuesday.
- Attend group sessions per phase requirements as arranged by your treatment provider.

- Attend Highland Rivers or VA appointments as scheduled.
- Meet face to face with your mentor weekly.
- Find employment, enroll fulltime in college or trade school while working to fulfill requirements of a degree program. Or enroll in a vocational rehabilitation program. If you are deemed unable to work an appropriate application for assistance will be made and a productive use of your time will be established.
- Maintain safe and adequate housing.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Meet with you case manager once a week.
- Participants in a residential facility are unable to phase up to III until discharged from the residential facility.
- Phase 2 curfew is 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. unless told otherwise by VATC staff.
- Phase up is not determined by the amount of time in the phase but your individual progress in the program and is ultimately determined by the Judge based on staff recommendations. However, you must have a minimum of four months in Phase Two and a minimum of 60 days sobriety and 60 days without a jail sanction to be eligible to be considered to phase up to 3. (VTC Standard 5.7, 5.8).

Phase 3 Requirements: Minimum of 5 months (VTC Standard 7.7)

- Stay clean and sober; do not drink alcohol or use drugs unless prescribed and confirmed on your treatment plan.
- Attend court sessions on the first and third Tuesday of each month.
- Attend group sessions per phase requirements as arranged by your treatment provider.
- Attend Highland Rivers or VA appointments as scheduled.
- Meet face to face with your mentor weekly.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Maintain safe and adequate housing.
- Maintain employment, enrolled/attending school, be actively involved with Vocational Rehabilitation or perform community service as directed.
- Meet with your case manager every other week.
- All fees must be caught up and have a zero balance before phasing up.

- Phase 3 curfew is 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. unless told otherwise by VATC staff.
- Phase up is not determined by the amount of time in the phase but your individual progress in the program and is ultimately determined by the Judge based on staff recommendations. However, you must have a minimum of five months in Phase Three and a minimum of 60 days sobriety and 60 days without a jail sanction to be eligible to be considered to phase up to 4. (VTC Standard 5.7, 5.8).

Phase 4 Requirements: Minimum of 6 months (VTC Standard 7.7)

- Stay clean and sober; do not drink alcohol or use drugs unless prescribed and Confirmed on your treatment plan.
- Attend weekly court sessions second and fourth Tuesday of each Month.
- Attend group sessions per phase requirements as arranged by your treatment provider.
- Attend Highland Rivers or VA appointments as scheduled.
- Meet face to face with your mentor weekly.
- Maintain safe and adequate housing.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Maintain employment, enrolled/attending school, be actively involved with Vocational Rehabilitation or perform community service as directed.
- Meet with your case manager every other week.
- Phase 4 curfew is 12 a.m. to 5 a.m. unless told otherwise by VATC staff.
- Phase up is not determined by the amount of time in the phase but your individual progress in the program and is ultimately determined by the Judge based on staff recommendations. However, you must have a minimum of six months in Phase Four and a minimum of 120 days of sobriety and 120 days without a jail sanction to be eligible for phase 5.

Phase 5/ Pre-Graduation Phase: Minimum of 1 month (VTC Standard 7.7,5.8)

- Stay clean and sober; do not drink alcohol or use illegal drugs.
- Maintain consistent attendance at all medical appointments, treatment groups as directed.
- Attend court sessions on 2nd Tuesday of each month.
- Attend group sessions per phase requirements as arranged by your treatment provider.

- Meet with your mentor weekly.
- Meet with your case manager once a month.
- Provide urine samples as required for drug screens.
- Maintain safe and adequate housing.
- Complete a program completion packet 1 month before ceremony.
- Submit to your last drug screen no later than 8:30 am on graduation day.
- All fees must be caught up and have a zero balance before graduation.
- The participant must have 120 days sober and 120 days without a jail sanction to be eligible to graduate (VTC Standard 5.7, 5.8).
- Complete a program completion packet 1 month before your graduation ceremony that will be provided by the program coordinator, and you will be given a deadline for submission.
- Phase 5 curfew does not have a curfew unless told otherwise by VATC staff.
- Schedule your exit interview 1 month before the ceremony.

***If there is a 5th Tuesday in the month then only Phase 1 and 2 reports to court**

Graduation

- Upon completion of phase 5 and treatment requirements you will be eligible for graduation.
- You be required to attend alumni group meetings in phase five.
- The program coordinator will notify you when you graduation date has been set.
- You will be asked to complete a packet of assignments include a discharge planning workbook prior to graduation.
- You will be required to attend an exit interview prior to you graduation from VATC. Participants are given the opportunity to discuss positives and negatives of the program and provide suggestions for improvement.
- Cobb County Veterans Court graduations are public ceremonies and are a requirement. Every effort is made to keep your name private and information out of the media.

Alcohol and Drug Screening Information:

(VTC Standard 5.1, 5.2)

Lab hours:

DRUG LAB HOURS	
Monday - Friday:	7:30 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday:	8:00 am to11:00 am
Sunday:	8:00 am to 10:00 am

Location: Drug screening will take place in the drug lab at 10 East Park Square Building C Floor 2

Drug Screening:

Program rules require that all participants produce TESTABLE urine drug screens. A computerized randomizer will be used to select participants for weekly drug screening. Those selected will receive notification by text message and the selected participants are required to report to the Cobb County Drug Lab for screening within the day of selection. Non-compliance will be sanctioned. **Notice: The lab may adjust hours due to training or holiday schedules. Please read all posted notices and adjust your schedule accordingly.**

You will be alcohol and drug screened randomly throughout every phase of the program. Methods of screening will include portable alcohol detection devices (such as a Breathalyzer), sweat patches and urine analysis. Sweat patch and breathalyzer results are deemed final and confirmed.

When giving a urine sample, you will be observed by someone of the same sex. (VTC 5.5) If you have a positive screen in any phase, the Judge, based on recommendations from the VATC Team, will apply immediate sanctions, including, but not limited to, jail time to help you refrain from alcohol or drug use. (VTC Standard 5.3, 6.7)

All diluted samples with a creatinine of 19 mg or below or 400 mg and above will be counted as a positive screen. If you miss a screen, it will count as a positive screen. The drug lab will test you one time and if you cannot produce you will have 20 minutes of wait time before you can screen again. If you still cannot produce it will be flagged as failure to produce. You

must remain in the drug lab until you provide a testable sample and provide that sample within two hours of the original testing time and before the closure of the lab.

Failure to submit a specimen within 25 minutes of screen closing time will count as a positive screen. You must be punctual and be prepared to submit a specimen when requested. **Tampering with or diluting an alcohol/drug screen can be grounds for termination from the VATC. Honesty is a crucial component for recovery and for participation in the Veterans Court program. Admitting that you have used drugs and/or alcohol will be considered by the Court when sanctions are imposed.**

If you have a medically diagnosed kidney disease, inform the VATC Team. This should be done prior to admission into the program and may be a reason to exclude you from participation in the program. You are responsible for monitoring all products that you use for alcohol ingredients or medications that could cause a false positive drug screen. Check all labels for alcohol or prohibited substances as discussed by VATC. (VTC Standard 1.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3)

In addition to abstaining from drugs and alcohol, participants are held responsible for all substances that are consumed by mouth, intravenously, inhalation or using vaping machines, e-cigarettes, or any other device used for smoking. This includes but is not limited to herbal supplements (pills, powders or liquids), teas, diet aids, muscle-building substances, power/energy drinks, CBD oil, synthetic marijuana, bath salts, incense, natural opiates (Kratom), poppy seeds or any other over-the-counter or online-purchased substance for consumption. The use of ANY substance other than medications approved by VATC is strictly prohibited and anyone taking these substances will be sanctioned accordingly.

Drug Screen Confirmations

If a participant tests positive on a UDS and denies use, the participant may request a separate confirmation test be performed on the sample and agrees to pay half the cost for confirmation if the final result is positive. If the confirmation screen indicates a negative result, the participant will not be charged.

MEDICATION GUIDELINES

All medications must be reported to the case manager at intake and when a prescription is added or changed. The participant is asked to bring all written prescriptions or medication bottle for documentation in their record.

All participants will be asked to inform their physicians that they are in the VATC. Each participant should provide any medical professional with the "Notice to Medical Professional" and submit the completed form to the case manager immediately following the appointment. If a participant is prescribed a new medication, he/she is to report it to coordinator or case manager immediately. Failure to report prescriptions to the VATC, to follow medication policies of the VATC, or to take medications as prescribed will result in sanctions. If unreported medications cause a positive test result, the participant will be sanctioned. Testing positive for non-approved over the counter medications will also be counted as a positive drug screen.

Any and all medications, prescription or over the counter, must be approved by VATC Team. Participants are required to notify any treating physician, nurse practitioner, dentist or any other practitioner of your status by presenting the "Notice to Medical Professionals" document and DO NOT accept prescriptions for narcotics or any other addictive medication. Participants must notify the VATC team of emergency situations where pain management is required including surgeries or any other procedures as soon as possible to receive approval for medication management.

Do not eat poppy seeds. Do not take herbal supplements and teas, diet aids, muscle building substances containing creatine, power drinks, etc. while enrolled in the program unless prescribed by a medical professional. These items sometimes contain chemicals that may cause positive drug screens for certain individuals. Some over-the-counter products, cold/allergy and cough medications also contain phenylephrine, pseudoephedrine or dextromethorphan (DM). All these products may cause positive screens and must be avoided while in this program, unless medically necessary.

Most antibiotic medications may be taken without resulting in a positive drug screen. However, some stronger antibiotic medications (i.e., Levaquin) may cause a positive screen. Many pain medications can also lead to positive screens, as well. You must consult with your physician about whether alternatives such as higher-dose NSAIDs (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs) may work in place of these drugs. Because of the high risk for cross-reaction as THC, use of Cannabinoid oil/CBD oil/Hemp products where not medically necessary should also be avoided while in this program. **If your prescribing physician believes that no alternative medications will adequately address your medical needs, you must have him/her**

document this opinion in writing and you must provide that documentation to the Program Coordinator immediately.

Schedule

The VATC Team meets for staffing every Tuesday at 8:00 a.m. to prepare for Court that morning. Court convenes at 9:30 a.m. Please keep in mind that Court sessions are open to the public, but staffing is not. Group treatment schedules vary depending on what phase you are in and your treatment plan. The Treatment provider will communicate with you directly about the treatment schedule. (VTC Standard 7.7)

Treatment Schedule

Your group and individual therapy session may vary depending on phase however, in general the schedule below is when treatment will take place. Location may vary as well-confirm with your treatment provider.

Thursday: 3:45 pm to 7:45 pm

Emergencies

Participants may experience emergencies from time to time. When an emergency happens, the participant will be required to call the Case Manager as soon as possible and bring in official documentation of the emergency.

Residency

You are required to maintain residency in Cobb County during the duration of your time in Veterans Court unless otherwise approved by the Court. Before moving to a different address within the county, you must complete a change of residence request form and get approval for such change from the Veterans Court Team. Veterans court participants are prohibited from residing with or renting from anyone currently on probation, parole, or another accountability court participant in ANY court in the State of Georgia.

Curfew

While you are in Veterans Court, you will be placed under a curfew. During the hours of your curfew, you will be expected to be at your primary residence. Violating curfew will result in sanctions. Special requests to be out after curfew, whether for work or other purposes, must be

approved by the Veterans Court Team. Please refer to the phase requirements. (VTC Standard 6.4)

Connexis Mobile Check In

In addition to random curfew checks by the Cobb County Sheriff's deputies assigned to the VATC team we also can utilize the Connexis Mobile Check-In service.

1. You all will receive a text message to your phone from Connexis Cloud IMS at 478-285-5602 with detailed instructions on how to check-in.
2. Follow the prompts provided in the text message.
3. You will have a time window of our choosing to respond to the check-in message.
4. Once the check-in has been completed it will report back to VATC staff.
5. It is also encouraged to screen shot your check in response.

This is to help us verify you are at your place of residence during the required curfew times.

***Please make sure your location services are on and your correct address and phone number are reported to the VATC staff.**

*** Reminder you are to be at your place of residence during your approved curfew hours.**

Incentives Program

Incentives reward participants for making positive steps toward attaining a drug free and crime free lifestyle. The most powerful incentive is the dismissal of the felony charge or probation violation. This in and of itself is a great incentive for successful completion of VATC. Other incentives are available and are determined on individual basis by the VATC staff.

Examples of Incentives include:

An extra vacation day, curfew extension, fishbowl drawing, incentive wheel spin, verbal praise, reduction in fees, etc. ***Any jail sanction may result in a forfeit of all incentive vouchers earned. (VTC Standard 1.3, 6.2)

Punch Card Incentive

Provided to every participant at orientation and any team member can award a punch on the punch card.

10 punches for a completed punch card with award of the participants choosing.

Awards can include:	➢ Behaviors that qualify for a punch on the punch card:
• One-time reduction in weekly fee • One-day curfew extension • One-day virtual court reporting • One-day leave court early and/or called first • One vacation day	• Sobriety milestones • New job • Health goal accomplished • Positive behavior • Treatment goal accomplished • Phase up • Attendance • Task completion • Honesty • Helping others

Sanctions

Sanctions will be imposed by the Judge if you violate program rules. Examples of the types of behaviors that can result in sanctions include, but are not limited to:

- Positive alcohol/Drug test results;
- Submitting a tainted or diluted urine sample;
- Failure to take a scheduled urine screen;
- Failure to take medications as prescribed;
- Unexcused absences from Court and/or treatment;

- Failed curfew check;
- Bad attitude/Disrespectful to staff and/or other participants;

- Failure to appear in Court or for other scheduled appointments; Tardiness to Court, treatment, or scheduled appointments; and/or other non-compliance issues.

The severity of the sanction will depend on the severity of your offense and your prior history of violations. Examples of sanctions that may be imposed include, but are not limited to:

- A verbal or written reprimand from the Judge;
- Additional community service hours;
- Increased reporting to the Accountability Court Office;
- Home confinement;
- Adjustment in curfew;
- Electronic monitoring (at participant's expense);
- Straight confinement time.
- Other sanctions as deemed appropriate.

Sanctions can include jail time. In the event that jail time is required for your program violation, **you must make sure that your children, if you have any, will be supervised while you are in custody**. Child neglect will not be tolerated, and the Veterans Court Team will involve the Department of Family and Children Services when necessary. If you know you will be going into custody, be sure to bring your properly labeled prescription medications with you when you appear in Court. Also, if you drove to Court before being taken into custody, make arrangements to have your vehicle retrieved for you. Do not leave your vehicle unattended while you are in jail.

Treatment will not be used as a sanction; however, it is possible that your violation of program rules indicates that a treatment adjustment is needed. Examples of treatment adjustments include, but are not limited to:

- Increased case management with your treatment clinician;
- Increased treatment attendance and/or individual sessions (at participant expense);
- Placement in a recovery residence or in-patient treatment facility (VTC Standard 6.1, 6.7)

Termination from Veterans Court

Generally, termination from the Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court Program occurs only after other sanctions have been imposed, and the participant continues to violate established program rules. Other grounds for termination may include, but are not limited to, any new arrest and/ or conviction for any criminal charge, tampering with urine samples, possession of drug paraphernalia, or selling, buying or possession of alcohol or illegal drugs. A termination hearing will be held after appropriate notice is given to the participant and his/her legal counsel. However, certain violations may lead to immediate incarceration or suspension from the program pending such a hearing.

If a participant is voluntarily absent (AWOL) from the program for 30 days or more, the State may make a motion to terminate that participant. Notice of such motion will be sent to the participant's last known address as well as to their attorney of record, if any. If the participant does not appear on the date set for the termination hearing, they may be terminated from the program even if they are not present.

Participant Fees:

$25 Per Week

As a condition of participation in Veterans Court, you are required to pay a program fee. Accepted forms of payment are cash, money orders, or cashier's check. Personal checks or credit cards are not permitted. If you would like to pre-pay your program fees, you are free to do so. Prior to making your first payment, you will be given a fee card that shows your name and case number. To ensure that your payment is properly credited towards your Veterans Court program fee (as opposed to your fines), you must present this fee card to the clerk when making your weekly payment. There will be a $5 charge for a lost fee cards. Failure to pay program fees will result in sanctions.

If the participant is in custody at the time of the plea, the collection of this fee will begin when the participant is released. The yellow copy of the receipt is given to the Case Manager or Coordinator in order for the participant to get credit for each payment. Payments are made to the Cobb County Clerk of Superior Court located at 70 Haynes Street. Clerk's office is open Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Please work with your case manager if you are unable to pay your weekly fee due to a hardship. You can complete a fee waiver form and provide the required documents to your case

manager for the fee waiver to be considered. Fee waivers are for a set period of time and are not guaranteed to be granted. A detailed budget is required that includes the last time you were employed, any other sources of income you may have and estimated date of when you can start paying your fees.

All Veterans Court program fees must be paid in full one week before graduation in order to be eligible for graduation from the program.

Vacation Vouchers and Requests

Vacation days from the program are very similar to job polices and must be earned. No vacation request will be approved prior to Phase 2. You may be ordered to obtain an out-of-town drug screen at your expense and or to attend local Veteran Court programs while on vacation. Vacation requests must be approved in advance by the entire team and must be submitted in writing. You must appear for Court on the day your request is being considered. The Judge will inform you at that time whether your request has been granted. (Even if your Phase is not required in Court on that date, you must be present in Court to receive the decision.)

Phase One: No vacation days or incentive vouchers awarded in phase one

Phase Two: 1 Voucher for one day of vacation when you phase up

Phase Three: 1 Voucher for one day of vacation when you phase up

Phase Four: 1 Voucher for one day of vacation when you phase up

**Up to two additional Vouchers may be earned when you achieve a significant milestone. It is your responsibility to complete the "Milestone Special Request Form" and list the reason for the request. No milestone vouchers will be awarded in Phase One.

Examples of milestones that could result in a vacation voucher being awarded:

- Receive GED or higher degree diploma
- Sobriety for 6 months
- Sobriety for 1 year
- Completion of TRP treatment programs
- Making a significant contribution in group
- Significant assistance to another participant or the program
- Any additional accomplishments the Judge deems are worthy of an incentive card

It is the participants' responsibility to keep up with their Vacation Day Incentive Vouchers-5 total to potentially be received throughout the program. To use the Vacation

Day Incentive vouchers the participant will complete a "participant special request form" and attach the Vacation Day Incentive Voucher and present it to the VATC Case Manager for the Judge to approve by Monday before court on Tuesday **at least a week in advance** of when the vacation day will be used. If the request is approved, then the case manager will keep the incentive voucher. If the request is denied, then the incentive voucher will be given back to the participant to use at another time. (VTC Standard 6.2)

Policy Changes/Handbook Revisions

From time to time, this handbook will be revised, and policies will change. In between handbook revisions, you will receive memos updating you regarding such changes. Please feel free to ask questions if you are ever unsure about a rule or policy. It is always best to err on the side of caution instead of guessing and later finding out the hard way that you were wrong.

Sick Policy

If you are unable to attend court or group due to sickness, you must have a doctor's note or be approved by VATC. You must speak directly with staff 2 hours prior to group or court starting in order to be excused. If you have a doctor's excuse it must be obtained **before** your group/court time is scheduled to begin. You must always present the "Letter to the medical professional" to any medical personnel prior to medical treatment. If you fail to do so, you will be sanctioned.

Request and Phase Change Process

All requests must be in writing on a "Special Request" or "Phase change" form and turned into the Coordinator or Case Manager by Thursday.

As a participant in Veterans Court, you are required to attend all assigned court sessions, case management and treatment sessions (group, individual, and/or family). Failure to attend as required will result in progressive sanctions including, but not limited to, a warrant being issued for your arrest.

Special requests to be excused from Court sessions and/or treatment sessions must be approved in advance by the VATC.

The following procedure must be followed:

1. **All** requests are to be submitted in writing by Thursday to the coordinator/case manager. **It is your responsibility to submit the request in time to have it considered at the next regular staffing session.**

2. You must be present in court for your request to be approved.
3. Only ***legitimate*** excuses will be considered. Birthdays, anniversaries, vacations, and concerts are not considered legitimate reasons for missing Court or treatment. In the event of a sudden life-threatening illness and/or death in the immediate family ("Immediate family" includes your spouse, children, siblings, parents, and grandparents **only**) contact the VATC Coordinator Katelyn Parker by phone immediately, and obtain proof of relationship, medical records, or an obituary to be submitted.

Transportation to Court

Parking near the courthouse complex is always a challenge. Please make sure that you pay attention to where you are parking because most lots are reserved with a hefty violation fine. Please also note that it is common to have train delays on or near the court complex. Please also allow time for challenges as this will **NOT** be a valid excuse to be late.

Inclement Weather Policy

During the winter months, some participants may experience difficulty attending a session due to ice/snow conditions. Participants should listen to radio/TV to determine whether the Cobb County Court Systems will be closed that day. If the courts are closed, then participants are excused from attending scheduled court sessions that day. Treatment providers(s) will make decision about inclement weather based upon their own internal policies.

BRAVO VICTOR FUND

Participants who are active with the Cobb County Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court (VATC), fully compliant with VATC requirements, and not incarcerated may request funds. Funds can be provided as a GRANT which does not have to be repaid. Funds may also be provided as an ADVANCE when provided for a necessity while the "Mentee" is waiting for a paycheck, disability payment, or other income source.

Ancillary Services Offered and How to Access them:

(VTC Standard 1.6, 1.10, 4.7, 10.3)

The Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) includes health screening, assessment and counseling for co-occurring mental health issues, case management, trauma counseling, crisis intervention services, educational resources to apply for such as Vocational Rehabilitation, medical care, medication management, dental care, housing assistance through the Homeless Domiciliary, assistance with applying for VA benefits. To access these services participants are referred to our Veteran's Justice Outreach Specialist who assists each participant in taking advantage of the above-mentioned services through the VA system. These services are delivered to participants who need such services and are eligible to receive VA benefits.

Parenting classes are offered through the local Marietta Vet Center (apart of the VA network) to combat veterans that receive VA benefits that are a part of our VATC program. These typically consist of 10 group sessions with a counselor. Each participant that has children under the age of 18 is able to attend these sessions. The referral for this program is arranged by the VATC case manager.

Worksource Cobb provides access to a system of employment and education services for the Cobb County community such as interviewing skills, assistance with writing a resumes and assistance with finding a job. Every VATC participant is eligible for this service and is identified by the treatment team. Worksource Cobb works with each participant that needs employment by assisting with the above-mentioned services they offer. Worksource Cobb is a part of our treatment team staffing and is in the courthouse. Each participant in need of employment has direct access to the Worksource Cobb services and can report to the office at any time to receive employment assistance.

Capital City Bank offers free financial planning classes to our participants on a quarterly basis that consists of money management, credit building, etc. Each participant is eligible for these free classes arranged by the VATC coordinator. Typically, one class every quarter that takes place as a group seminar in the courthouse. This service is available through VATC program however, each participant can request further information for the Regions Bank officials after each seminar.

Transportation assistance is offered through MARTA, CCT. Each participant can take advantage of this assistance for treatment and VATC related appointments. The transportation cards are given to participants by the case manager or coordinator. Each participant can simply request transportation assistance by mentioning it during a case management session. Each participant is required to sign out a transportation card and turn it back in once it no longer has money on it.



Toxicology Topics

Preventing a High Creatinine Specimen

Creatinine is a blood chemical waste product generated when you use your muscles. Eating lots of protein may also produce small amounts.

Your bloodstream transports creatinine to your kidneys, where your body filters it out through your urine. But if your kidneys aren't working properly, the level of creatinine in your blood can build up. This can lead to uremia, a life-threatening disorder.

Your body needs clean blood to function optimally. The best way to lower your creatinine levels is to treat the underlying cause.

To avoid submitting a high creatinine sample, the following action is suggested:

(1) Cut back on vigorous exercise. Exercise is usually a good thing, but overdoing it may spike your creatinine levels. Since muscle metabolism produces creatinine, overusing muscle groups through strenuous activity might raise levels.

(2) Don't take supplements, (workout supplements, vitamins, shakes, powders, energy drinks, etc..) as they may contain ingredients that will increase creatinine levels. Please see a staff member if you have any questions or concerns. It is your responsibility to have it approved by a staff member prior to consumption.

(3) Reduce your protein intake. Research shows eating large amounts of protein can increase creatinine levels, at least temporarily. Cooked red meat in particular can affect creatinine. The heat from cooking causes creatine found in meat to produce creatinine.

It is the responsibility of the donor to provide an adequate specimen as part of the process. Failure to provide an adequate specimen may result in this being considered a refusal to provide a specimen.



Richard E. Struempler, MS, MA, NRCC
Directory of Toxicology

Toxicology Topics

Preventing the "Dilute" Specimen

Periodically in anticipation of providing a urine specimen for a urine drug screen a donor may drink an excessive amount of liquid prior to arriving at the collection site to ensure they will be able to provide the required specimen.

In some cases this may result in over-hydration of the individual and the production of a "dilute" specimen. A dilute specimen is generally defined as a specimen that fails to meet a minimum concentration as determined by measurement of urine creatinine and specific gravity. A specimen that is determined to be "dilute" is not acceptable for evaluation for drug use and must be re-collected.

To avoid submitting a "dilute" urine sample, the following action is suggested:

(1) When possible provide the specimen in the morning. (Afternoon specimens tend to be more dilute than a morning specimen)
(2) If you feel it is necessary to "prime the pump" by drinking liquid prior to coming to the laboratory, limit the volume to 8-12 ounces, consumed an hour prior to providing the specimen.
(3) Do not drink large amounts of water or other beverages (i.e., "Big Gulp") prior to coming to the collection site.
(4) Wait at the collection site until you feel the urge to urinate, before attempting to provide the urine specimen.

It is the responsibility of the donor to provide an adequate specimen as part of the process. Failure to provide an adequate specimen may result in this being considered a refusal to provide a specimen.

Doctors Laboratory, Inc.
Toxicology
2906 Julia Drive
Valdosta, GA 31602
Telephone: (800) 342-7552 Ex. 2225

List of Approved Medications:

These are Safe Medications to Take but MUST STILL BE APPROVED BEFORE TAKING

Pain/Headaches	
Ansaid	Arthrotec
Cataflam	Celebrex
Clinoril	Daypro
Dolobid	Feldene
Indocin	Lodine
Mobic	Motrin
Naproxen	Orudis/Oruvail
Ponstel	Relafen
Tolectin	Toradol
Voltaren	
Migraine	
Amerge	Axert
Frova	Imitrex
Maxalt	Relpax
Pain Medications	
Actron	ActivOn

Advil	Advil LiquiGels
Advil Migraine	Aleve
Aleve Arthritis	Aleve Liquid Gels
Anacin	Anacin Aspirin Free
Anacin-3	Aspirin
Bayer Aspirin	BC Aspirin Strength
BC Headache Powder	Bufferin
Doan’s Backache	Excedrin
Ecotrin	Excedrin Migrain
Excedrin Tension Headache	HeadOn
Motrin IB	Orudis KT
Tylenol 8 Hour	Tylenol Arthritis Pain
Tylenol Extra Strength	Tylenol Go Tabs
Tylenol Menstrual Relief	Tylenol Rapid Release
Tylenol Regular Strength	Rimantadine
Tamiflu (Oseltamivir)	Valtrex (Valacyclovir)

Zorirax (Acyclovir)	
Allergy- Over the Counter	
Claritin (Loratadine)	Tavist-1 (Clemastine Fumarate)
Alavert (Fexofedadine)	Zyrtec (Cetirizine)
Allergy- Prescription Only	
Allegra (Fexofedadine)	Beconase/Beconase AQ
Vancenase/Vancenase AQ (Beclomethasone)	Clarinex (Desloratadine)
Flonase (Fluticasone)	Nasacort/Nasacort AQ (Triamcinolone)
Nasarel (Fluisolide)	Nasonex (Mometasone)
Rhinocort (Busesonide)	
Allergies/Cough/Cold/Flu	
Airborne	Cepacol Sore Throat
Lozenges	Cepacol Sore Throat Spray
Chloraseptic Daily Defense	Chloraseptic Spray
Cold Eze Zinc Lozenges	Fisherman's Friend Cough Drops
Halls Cough Drops	Mucinex

N'ICE	Ocean Nasal Spray (Saline Mist)
Ayr Nasal Spray (Saline Mist)	Ricola Cough Drops
Robitussin Chest Congestion (Alcohol Free)	Robitussin Cough Drops
Robitussin Honey Cough Drops	Sucrets Cough Drops
Sucrets Defense	TheraFlu Chest Congestion
Tylenol Chest Congestion (Alcohol Free)	Vicks 44 Sore Throat
Lozenges	Vicks 44 Throat Spray
Vicks Casero	Vicks Cough Drops
Vicks VapoRub	Zicam
Antivirals	
Amantadine	Famvir (Famciclovir)
Rimantadine	Tamiflu (Oseltamivir)
Valtrex (Valacyclovir)	Zovirax (Acyclovir)

Oral Care/Mouthwash

Mouthwash/Dental Care	
Crest Pro Health Mouthwash	Gly-Oxide

Oral-B Alcohol Free Mouthwash	Peridex (Chlorhexadine)
PerioGard (Chlorhexadine)	

Stomach Problems/Nausea/Dizziness

Diarrhea/Upset Stomach/Heartburn/Constipation	
Alka Seltzer	Beano
Colace	Correctol
Daisorb	Donnagel
Dulcolax	Ex-Lax
Fiber Con	Gas-X
Imodium AD	Imodium Advanced
Lactinex	Maalox
Mylanta	Mylanta Gas
Pepcid AC	Pepcid Complete
Pepto-Bismol	Phazyme
Prilosec OTC	Rolaids
Tagamet HB	TUMS

Zomig (Zolmitriptan)	
Nausea/Vertigo	
Emetrol	Nauzene
Pepto-Bismol	
Sedatives/Anxiety Agents	
Warm Milk	Melatonin
L-Tryptophan	