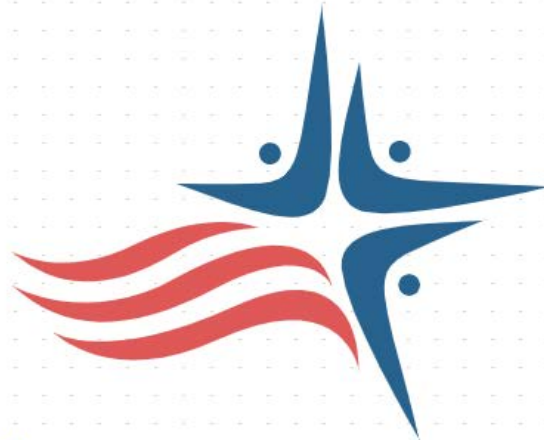


# Centre County Veterans Mentorship Program



*For those who've borne the battle*

CENTRE COUNTY VETERAN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

PROGRAM MANUAL

EST. 2021

## Welcome and Introduction

Welcome and thank you for your interest in serving in Centre County's Veteran Mentorship Program as a Veteran Mentor (VM). This manual is designed to be an overview of what to expect as a participant. It provides a basic outline and general information as a resource to refer to as you participate in the program.

As a VM you are expected to follow the instructions which may be given to you by the legal entity adjudicating your Mentee's case, Program Cadre, and potentially, Treatment Professionals relative to your mentee's condition.

We encourage you to share this resource with friends, family, and anyone you think would be interested in the goals of the program, which are, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, "... to care for him who shall have borne the battle."

## History and Purpose

Started by a group of veterans and legal professionals in 2020 and first implemented in 2021, the Centre County Veteran Mentorship Program (CCVMP) is a working answer to a dynamic and evolving question: how best to serve those who have served our nation and its people? Many veterans have rich and rewarding experiences during their service, but as is the nature of the calling, many are inflicted with wounds that go far beyond the battlefield. When veterans return to the society they sought to defend and serve, they can sometimes be impacted by traumatic events and injuries sustained in their service to those same communities. The result can be problems with substance abuse, mental health conditions, pain management shortcomings, and various other barriers to veterans realizing the peace and prosperity they sought to cultivate and defend both domestically and abroad. There are more than 10,000 active duty, Reserve, National Guard, and family members within Centre County as well as those military elements who transit to and through the jurisdiction from time to time. The active duty, Reserve and NG units are subject to both to the Uniform Code of Military Justice and Centre County justice. Many of the Centre County veterans and military reside within the county when not deployed or are on leave at home.

Centre County District Attorney Bernie Cantorna expressed a desire to create a diversionary track initiative which would seek to help veterans involved with the criminal justice system obtain the help necessary to recovery and reclamation to society. Often times, a veteran's cause for being involved in the criminal justice system can be traced back to conditions sustained in service, to include but not be limited to: physical injuries, PTSD, substance dependencies, etc. DA Cantorna reached out to local veterans groups and other legal professionals to request the creation of a mentorship program – an entity entirely separate from the courts and criminal justice system – which would pair veterans involved in the criminal justice system with other veterans who would be willing to mentor and guide the veteran both through the criminal justice process, as well as connecting the veteran mentee with local resources which often facilitate their recovery and be generally to their and societal benefit.

The mission of the CCVMP is to successfully habilitate Veterans and military members by diverting them from the traditional criminal justice systems and providing them with the tools they will need to lead a productive and law-abiding life. As a program, we will find the Veterans, offer them assistance, assess their needs, manage their care and help them to problem solve as the goal is to reduce the Veteran's inappropriate behavior while helping to make positive lifestyle changes. As a nation, we have invested heavily in Veterans and military members, who in turn invested heavily in us. This program seeks to honor their commitment and help them meet their life goals and help to resolve the issues and strengthening the resilience of the military or veteran member.

### What is a Treatment Track?

Centre County offers a veteran's treatment track for certain criminal charges and offenses and is a legally supervised, mentored and monitored avenue for veterans whose initial, continued, or chronic substance abuse, dependency, and/or mental health issues that appears to have contributed to their current situation, arrest and/or conviction of a crime. The track constitutes an offer to the veteran to establishing and maintaining sobriety, seeking treatment, while and complying with terms and conditions necessary to establishing and maintaining stability necessary to live a law-abiding life. **The track is not a get-out-of-jail-free card.** The Veteran community typically has a high sense of honor and regard for duty – there is no exception here. By voluntarily consenting to a treatment track offer, the Veteran is agreeing to **work hard** to rehabilitate and develop the skills necessary to establish and maintain stability in their lives. The goal of the track is to rehabilitate and provide an opportunity for betterment and correction while avoiding potentially arbitrary or ineffective prison sentences and effect on family.

A veteran may be required to do all or some of the following:

- Outpatient Treatment
- Inpatient Treatment/Residential Treatment
- Halfway House or Transitional housing placement
- Regular and random drug testing
- Counseling
- Mental Health Treatment
- Educational/vocational program participation
- Participation in self-help (AA, NA) sober support meetings

The Mentor will also seek to help the Mentee with other areas of life necessary to cultivating stability and success, according to individual needs within the community. This may include:

- Skills testing and an educational assessment
- Veterans Benefits applications/enrollment
- Treatment referral and resource connection

- Food/Housing insecurity benefit referral
- Life skills development
- Public assistance/Medicaid
- Recreational Activities
- Emotional support

Where it would be improper or implausible for a Mentor to provide services to a Mentee, they will attempt to acquire the resources necessary to connect that Mentee with the appropriate provider/outlet. This may include services such as:

- Mental health treatment
- Substance abuse treatment
- VA disability benefits
- VA claims filing
- Seeking legal representation
- Any other areas the Mentor feels they may benefit or may not be able to address consummately on their own

The CCVMP will include regularly schedules meetings with Mentees, as well as providing accountability for the Mentee. The goal of the Mentor is to help the Mentee process and navigate what can be a bureaucratic and intimidating system for a person facing multiple stressors and concerns.

When a Mentee obtains a treatment plan, it will be the Mentor's role to help support the Mentee in complying with the plan. This may include connecting the Mentee with transportation resources to attend treatment, counseling the Mentee at times of heightened stress or risk, and providing stability and guidance necessary to demonstrate the benefits of living in a law-abiding manner.

### **Eligible Participants**

A Veteran need not be considered a Veteran for legal purposes to qualify for a Mentor. Similarly, the Veteran doesn't need to be involved in the criminal justice system to apply for a Mentor. They need merely have worn the uniform of a service member at some point, and express a bona fide desire to better themselves and so desire guidance in altering behaviors they recognize may be detrimental to their wellbeing. Some may feel that they have been abandoned by the system or community and would be allowed access before a calamity has occurred or may be trying to solve a recurring problem .

The CCVMP **does not** get to decide which criminal offenses may qualify or disqualify a veteran. This discretion is left solely to the Centre County District Attorney. The DA is the arbiter of offers, and it is the DA who decides who may be offered the diversionary track incentive, or not. While the CCVMP may provide a mentor to someone not offered the diversionary track, that **does not**

mean the DA is bound to offer weight or consideration to the mentor/mentee relationship or a Veteran's participation in the program.

### The Mentorship Team

The mentorship team itself is comprised of two individuals, the Mentor, and the Mentee. However, there is a large supporting cast of people interested and invested in the Veteran's outcome, to include Centre County Substance Abuse/Mental Health professionals, legal professionals, veteran support personnel, and more. As more resources become available locally, the Mentoring Team will provide updated lists.

The following list is a non-exclusive repository of resources – any resources which may serve to help the Veteran reach their goals are welcome:

Name	Organization/Role	Contact Info
DA Bernie Cantorna	District Attorney	(814) 355-6735
VJO – Shereen Horton	VJO advocate – (Connects vets to treatment)	(814) 943-8164, ext 4151
Director – Veterans Affairs Centre County	Centre County Veterans Affairs (VA Claims)	(814) 355-6812
Centre Co. Public Defender	Public Defender – Legal representation	(814) 355-6798
Centre Co. Probation and Parole Office	Probation Office	(814) 355-6771
Centre Co. Drug and Alcohol	Treatment for Substance Use Disorders	(814) 355-6744
VA Suicide Hotline	Suicide Prevention	1-800-273-8255
Centre County Mental Health	Connect Individuals to Community Resources and Mental Health Treatment	814-355-6786

### Required Paperwork

All Mentees must apply to the CCVM Program for coordination of services and resources, as may be necessary. The applications will then be processed and a Mentor assigned. From there, the Mentor will “in-process” the Mentee, filling out an intake form, meeting, and begin getting to know each other to identify areas of need in the Mentee's life after interview and analysis.

**The Mentor and Mentee will both sign a confidentiality agreement.** This will be designed to ensure that any information regarding substance abuse and treatment will be kept strictly confidential between the Mentor and Mentee.

**THE VETERAN ACKNOWLEDGES THAT PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION MAY BE SHARED WITHIN THE CCVMP.**

## Program Expectations and Rules

While we recognize that addiction and other conditions are treatable, and stability is attainable regarding mental health symptoms, it is important to remember that the impetus for this Mentorship could be the criminal charge, loss of clearance or other barrier and a desire to avoid prison and punishment.

That said, this program pools resources and structures which – when followed – can provide relief from the cycle of misery brought by addiction and mental health hospitalizations. In order to make successful use of the Mentorship Program and other resources, it is paramount that the Mentee follow the rules and guidelines pursuant thereto – anything less may result not only in prison, but eventually, death.

It is the intent that the Mentor take all reasonable steps to assist the Mentee in following the rules and making the positive changes in their lives they so desire. Similar to many military structures, this will be to help ensure the Mentee is **1) at the right place, 2) at the right time, 3) in the “right uniform.”** If we substitute the third bullet with **“the right attitude and equipment”** then we can see that the program is designed to guide the veteran through a process which provides positive and lasting results.

It is paramount that the Mentee:

- Makes all appointments scheduled for treatment/counseling and mentoring
- Keeps in contact with the Mentor, Probation agent, and defense attorneys as they require
- Completes tasks and objectives given them by mentoring and support personnel
- Keeps open lines of communications and **proactively communicates concerns** before they become untenable or unmanageable
- Communicates openly and freely regarding treatment needs and concerns as they may arise or are discovered

Likewise, the Mentor must:

- Be reachable to the Mentee in time of bonafide crisis this may mean occasional 3:00 AM phone calls
- Assist the Mentee whenever able – this may mean providing guidance, character statements to other entities, the court or attesting to accountability checks
- Provide **guidance and support**, NOT be their Drill Instructor/Sergeant or House Mouse.
- Respect other people within and outside of the program and choices of religion or beliefs which may differ. This is a program that is based on trust and mutual support of veterans and their families.
- Not to denigrate, exploit or inhibit the recovery of the Mentee

While the above guidance is certainly non-exclusive, it serves to illustrate examples of the expectations that both parties to the Mentorship should be able to reasonable foster cooperation and compliance for all.

### **Program Phasing**

The CCVMP will follow a Red – White – Blue phasing structure, where each phase builds a foundation and develops into the next phase, successively.

### **Mentor as Reporting Agent**

If the veteran fails to demonstrate likelihood of success in a diversionary track, the Mentor will begin a violation review process for the veteran.

If after the violation review process the CCVMP deems it is in the best interest of the program to sever ties with the veteran, the veteran will be non-selected for continuation in the program, and the mentor corps will effectively expel the veteran. The CCVMP will submit a statement to the DA informing them the CCVMP is no longer associated with the veteran.

If the violation review process occurs in the white or blue phase, and the CCVMP determines the veteran is not likely to complete the program successfully or is not substantially complying with all aspects of the treatment plan, then the CCVMP may expel the veteran and submit notice to the DA that the CCVMP is no longer associated with the veteran.

**The CCVMP does NOT state the reason for expulsion to the DA, only that the expulsion occurred and when it occurred.**

Violation Review Process: (This is designed as an Article 15 or Captains Mast Process.)

In the event of a violation **self-reported** to the mentor, the mentor will schedule a meeting with the veteran as soon as possible, ideally within twenty-four hours. The mentor will also notify the CCVMP cadre of the violation as soon as possible.

In the event the mentor is unavailable, another mentor may cover down.

During the post violation meeting, a mentor will summarize and record the meeting in the meeting log. They will identify: the stressors present in the situation regarding the violation, the nature of the violation itself, and the veteran's reaction to the violation.

The mentor and veteran will establish a plan to avoid further violations or similar situations which lead to the violation.

Upon completion of the post-violation meeting, the mentor will review the plan with a member of the cadre, and **both the cadre and mentor will sign off on the meeting**. The cadre can also meet with the veteran if necessary.

If the mentor and cadre feel the violation is particularly egregious, they can submit the veteran for expulsion.

If both the mentor and cadre agree, the veteran is expelled. If they disagree, they can seek input from an additional impartial cadre.

Expulsion will require a majority consensus, consisting of no more than three opinions. (i.e., 2-1 is the maximum vote possible).

### Program Structure

The Mentorship program will recognize and provide phase specific guidance throughout each phase. The phases will be tailored to each individual with personalized requirements and conditions, but will generally adhere to the following structure:

#### Red Phase

This is the first phase in the track/program and will therefore likely have the most intensive requirements, restrictions, and oversight.

The purpose of this phase is to **1)** assess the Veteran's risk factors, and **2)** develop a treatment plan, and **3)** evaluate the veteran for likelihood of success in the diversion track. This phase may last anywhere from three weeks to three months and will dependent on factors such as: treatment evaluation availability, cooperation of the Veteran, availability of other necessary resources.

During the **Red Phase**, the Veteran/Mentee will:

- Mentee in-processes the CCVMP with their Mentor and completes the intake form
- Works with Mentor to identify and recognize likely risks to their wellbeing in their life and develop plans to address these concerns
- Set schedules on when to call treatment resources to set up evaluations (Mentor provides this information)
- Set and agree to schedule of check-ins as Mentor deems necessary (daily, weekly, bi-weekly, etc.) – **but no less than one hour per week in person (as public health allows)**
- Develop a plan to attend self-help meetings (AA, NA) as relevant, to include transportation
- Identify and address all other potential barriers to success (housing, cell service, food security, etc.)

Following the successful completion of Red Phase tasks, the Mentor will submit a request to transition to White Phase. White Phase transition will require, at a minimum: 1) successful risk identification practices and strategies employed successfully in Red Phase, 2) no relapse/parole violations for at least thirty consecutive days, 3) veteran has enrolled in and is scheduled to begin or is undergoing treatment and received evaluations from treatment providers, and 4) the mentor is willing to endorse the mentee and believes they've demonstrated a likelihood of success.



The request to transition to White Phase must contain from the Mentor: 1) a statement attesting to the Mentee's performance so far, 2) copies of treatment provider evaluations, 3) proof of enrollment/participation in treatment. It is at this point that the Mentor submits an application with supporting documentation to the DA for acceptance into the Veteran Treatment Track Initiative ("VTTI").

**\*Transition\*** Each phase requires at completion a submission of a "Request to Transition" packet to the DA, prior to transitioning to the next phase. Upon grant of transition, a risk assessment must be conducted between the Mentor and Mentee and the Plan continued or enhanced.

Requests to transition will require signature from at least two mentors (one of which must be the veteran's mentor).

### White Phase

The White Phase is where the bulk of the work is done by the Mentee. This phase will consist primarily of the treatment track – getting well, sober, and stable. The Mentee would continue to attend necessary self-help meetings (AA,NA) as prescribed, in addition to any additional treatment the treatment professionals require and any conditions required by the assigned Judge or Probation and Parole.. **The mentee is in the treatment track at the beginning of this stage.**

The Mentee will:

- Continue self-help and meetings as scheduled with Mentor, Probation Agents, Treatment Professionals, etc.
- The Mentee will continue to process any pertinent VA claims
- Seek to stabilize and acquire positive living and employment conditions as deemed necessary

The Mentor will:

- Continue to provide mentorship and meet with the Mentee as mandated or decided between the two, whichever is greater
- Assist the Mentee in making meetings, meeting obligations, acquire paperwork necessary for VA claims and other treatment

Despite the brevity of this description, this phase could last as long as 6-9 months, depending on the severity of treatment required and accompanying programs. The Mentee may have community service obligations which will depend in large part on other obligations such as work or school. If attending self-help (AA, NA) this would be the period in which the Twelve Steps are completed.

**\*A note on self-help:** In the event the Veteran is attending self-help such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, they would be suggested/required to acquire a sponsor. It is not advisable the Mentor is also the sponsor unless they have extensive experience with the self-help program which applies. In the event the Mentor and Sponsor are not the same person, the two should be apprised of each other – to which the Sponsor would need to positively consent – as they both share a common interest: the Mentee/Sponsored.

**Transition to Blue Phase:** the request to transition to the Blue Phase will follow the same structure as the previous transition. **To transition, at a minimum, the following must be present:** 1) the Mentee has complied with all conditions of the White Phase agreement, 2) the Mentee has completed any prescribed necessary treatment programs or reached a point where the treatment professional managing their case can attest to stability and opine on satisfactory progress which constitutes “graduation” or “completion” of the rehabilitative treatment, 3) **Maintained Sobriety for at least ninety consecutive days prior to applying for transition.** See the above note on “Transition.”

### Blue Phase

The Blue Phase marks the end of an arduous and difficult journey, and the beginning of a second-chance opportunity at a stable, sober, positive life.

The goals of the Blue Phase are:

- Life planning
- Developed and articulated strategies to maintain stable, positive living
- Veteran has acquired employment, stable living conditions, or is enrolled for education at the next available class/semester
- Veteran has developed strategies in their “tool box” for dealing with issues and potential triggers
- Medications and treatment are stabilized and avenues for treatment are known and demonstrably utilized by the Veteran
- The Mentee can show they established a support network
- Mentee has completed “life planning” drafts with the Mentor

The Mentee – who ideally is substantially improved at this juncture – is beginning to enjoy the stability and peace offered from a sober, law-abiding life. The Mentor will work with the Mentee to formulate a plan for their future, where the Mentee will articulate goals, desires, and ideals to which they have a concrete plan of action to achieve.

**Final Transition:** The Mentor and Mentee will submit a final application for their final transition – “out-processing,” where the Mentee will become an official graduate of the CCVMP. This application will, at a minimum, include: 1) **a plan of action for the Mentee’s future (goals, self-monitoring, support network,** 2) a summary by both the Mentor and Mentee of progress made with attention to specific likely risks/triggers and strategies to address them (these are two

separate summaries), **3)** a statement of reflection by the Mentee illustrating what they have learned, how they plan to apply it, and what steps they plan to take to prevent recidivism.

### Graduation

The Graduation of the Mentee is truly a thing to celebrate. In true military fashion, no event can go without some degree of pomp and circumstance. At a mutually agreed upon location, there will be formal acknowledgement of the progress, dignity, honor, and resilience the Mentee has displayed in their journey. The CCVMP community will come together to celebrate this renewal of life, and acknowledge the work of everyone involved.

\*Below are model forms:

#### Request to Transition

I am seeking to transition from:

(RED PHASE, WHITE PHASE, BLUE PHASE) to (RED PHASE, WHITE PHASE, BLUE PHASE, GRADUATE)

I attest I have complied with all tenets of the agreement to this point.

I have attached the following:

- 1) Progress reports from Mentor at Centre County Veteran Mentorship Program.
- 2)
- 4) Statement pertaining to Substance Abuse/Mental Health counseling from Treatment Provider.
- 5) Self-Help (AA,NA) attendance records.
- 6) Proof of employment or enrollment in a degree track or certification program.
- 7) Statement of representation for or filing of Veterans Administration/Veterans Affairs claims.
- 8) Affidavit of sobriety and compliance.
- 9) Risk Assessment (to be signed by Mentor).
- 10) Plan of action for transitioning to next phase.

I do so solemnly swear that all information attached and contained herein is true and I agree to correct any misunderstandings or assumptions I know to be incorrect or should reasonably know to be incorrect, promptly. I further agree to comply with all conditions of my current phase pending grant of transition to the next phase.

Please consider this my application for transition to the next applicable phase of my diversionary track plan.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ On this day: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ On this day: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ On this day: \_\_\_\_\_

Centre County Veteran Mentorship Program Mentor Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Branch of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies & Interests:

Religious: Y / N      Denomination: \_\_\_\_\_



