

Veteran Courts

History

The first Veteran Court was started in 2008 in Buffalo, N.Y. by Judge Robert Russell in response to the growing number of veterans with addictions and service-related mental illness who were entering the court system. Russell's model has been adopted nationwide, and 220 Veteran Courts are now established.

North Carolina

A Veteran court opened in 2013 in Harnett County with help from a governor's grant, but one court is clearly not enough to provide care to our veterans and more are needed in this "Most Military Friendly State."

General Info

Most veterans are strengthened by their military service, but many are not. Many suffer from addictions, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, moral injury, depression, military sexual trauma and other harmful mental illnesses. Sadly, the Department of Veterans Affairs has not kept up with the demand for quality veteran mental health care, and many veterans end up facing a judge.

There are about 23 million veterans in the U.S. -- approximately 1.7 million from the recent conflicts in the Middle East. Veteran courts include mentors and an interdisciplinary team that coordinates mandatory follow-up sessions. Often, the judge is also a military veteran. The purpose is to connect veterans to veterans as this reduces future recurrences of the problems that brought them to court and helps them become stable members of society. It works by re-instilling that undervalued concept of military camaraderie and uses a bit of structure similar to the military. It can be a "one-stop shop" to get the veterans the help they need from many available resources, both those that are specific to veterans and those also available to the general public.

With two huge military installations in our state, and only one (Ft. Bragg) near a Veteran court, clearly more are needed. Recommendations would ideally have one in every county but for now the areas around military installations and larger cities need Veteran courts.

Useful web site for further information

www.justiceforvets.org