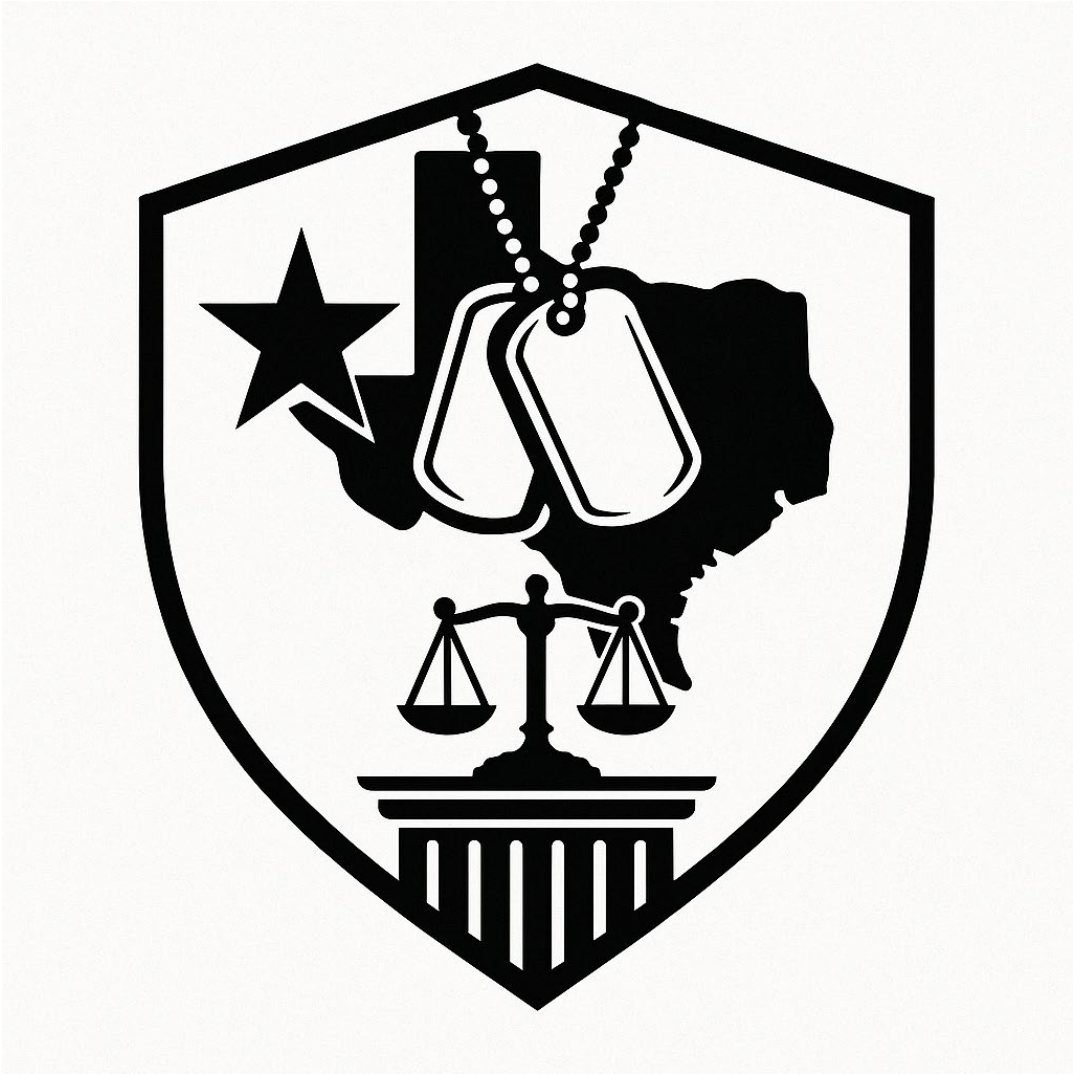
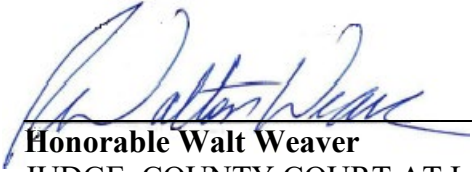


# Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court Policy & Procedures Manual



THIS IS THE POLICY MANUAL OF THE VETERANS TREATMENT COURT. IT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND DISCUSSED. I APPROVE THIS MANUAL AND IT WILL BE USED AS THE GUIDELINES OF THIS COURT.

Signed this 12 day of March, 2026.



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**Honorable Walt Weaver**  
JUDGE, COUNTY COURT AT LAW #1  
POTTER COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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# Policy Sections

## Program History

In early 2016, the 47th District Attorney's Office partnered with the Amarillo VA Health Care System to launch a District Attorney-led diversion program for Potter County Veterans facing felony charges. The first Veteran participant entered in June 2016.

From 2016 through 2018, program capacity was intentionally limited to three Veterans at a time in order to establish program structure, staffing procedures, and a consistent treatment framework. During this formative period, one Veteran successfully graduated in 2017 and two graduated in 2018.

In late 2018, Potter County expanded its support by appointing a Program Coordinator to oversee program operations and ensure fidelity to emerging best practices. That same year, the program received its first Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) grant, which provided transportation assistance for Veterans accessing treatment services.

By 2019, the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) began admitting additional Veterans, including those referred from the Potter County Attorney's Office (misdemeanor cases) and from Randall County (both misdemeanor and felony cases). Three Veterans graduated that year.

In 2021, the Director of Specialty Courts was added to take over the role of program operations oversight, ensuring fidelity to emerging best practices, and identifying, securing, and managing grant funding.

As of 2026, the Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court has celebrated the successful graduation of 37 Veterans who have completed the program. These graduates represent the program's commitment to justice, accountability, and rehabilitation, and reflect the effectiveness of evidence-based specialty court practices.

# Steering Committee

The Veterans Treatment Court is guided by a **Steering Committee**, which provides leadership, oversight, and sustainability for the program.

The Steering Committee:

- Approves the mission and objectives of the program.
- Executes Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) among partner agencies.
- Assigns sustainable personnel and resources.
- Reviews program performance and outcomes.
- Authorizes policy and procedural adjustments.
- Secures political, community, and financial support.

## Current Steering Committee Members

- Judge Nancy Tanner, Potter County Judge
- Jason Herring, District Attorney, 47th District Attorney's Office
- John Board, Director, Potter & Armstrong County Public Defender Managed Assigned Counsel
- Natalie White, Director, Potter County Probation Department
- Dr. Rodney Gonzales, Medical Center Director, Amarillo VA Health Care System
- Brandi Reed, CEO, Veterans Resource Center, Family Support Services
- Libby Moore, Executive Director, Texas Panhandle Centers

## Mission Statement

The mission of the **Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC)** is to promote justice and public safety by providing a **judicially supervised alternative to incarceration** for justice-involved service members.

Building upon the core values instilled through military service, the PRVTC provides **structure, accountability, and evidence-based treatment** to assist Veterans in achieving recovery, restoring stability for themselves and their families, and reintegrating as productive members of the community.

The court embodies the principles of **honor, service, and resilience**, ensuring that no justice-involved Veteran is left behind when rehabilitation and treatment can be safely and effectively offered.

The **Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court** operates under the authority of and in full compliance with:

- **Texas Government Code §124.002**, establishing authorization for the operation of Veterans Treatment Courts and prescribing statutory requirements for program structure and participant eligibility.
- **Texas Best Practice Standards for Specialty Courts (2025)**, as adopted by the **Texas Judicial Council** and **Specialty Courts Advisory Council**, specifically *Standard: Target Population*, guiding objective eligibility criteria, assessment, and referral procedures.
- **All Rise Adult Treatment Court Best Practice Standards (2025)**, providing evidence-based national benchmarks for treatment court design, operations, and outcomes.

All court policies, procedures, and operational practices shall remain consistent with these authorities and subject to periodic review to ensure ongoing compliance with state law, judicial policy, and best practice standards.

## Goals & Objectives

The primary goals of the **Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC)** are to enhance justice, improve outcomes for justice-involved Veterans, and strengthen community safety. The court pursues these goals through the following objectives:

### **Improve coordination and access to treatment**

- Ensure justice-involved Veterans receive timely access to evidence-based mental health, substance use, and trauma treatment services.
- Strengthen collaboration between the court, Veterans Justice Outreach, probation, treatment providers, and community agencies.

### **Provide an alternative to incarceration**

- Resolve felony and misdemeanor charges related to substance use disorders, mental illness, and traumatic brain injury (TBI) through a structured, court-supervised, diversion program.
- Use judicial oversight as an alternative to jail or prison where appropriate.

### **Support long-term recovery and reintegration**

- Monitor therapy attendance, drug testing, case management, and court compliance.
- Assist Veterans in achieving stable housing, employment, education, and family reintegration.

### **Reduce drug use, criminal activity, and recidivism**

- Require intensive and comprehensive treatment that addresses criminogenic risk factors.
- Use incentives and sanctions to reinforce accountability.
- Provide opportunities for job training, volunteerism, and community service.

### **Reduce taxpayer costs**

- Reduce incarceration costs by supervising Veterans in the community whenever safely possible.
- Maximize the use of VA and federal benefits to reduce local expenses.
- Prevent future justice system costs through sustained recovery.

### **Protect victims and the community**

- Mandate evidence-based interventions that address risk to victims and public safety.
- Monitor compliance of existing protective orders.
- Promote accountability through rehabilitation rather than continued criminal involvement.

## Program Structure

The **Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC)** accepts a range of eligible cases, including:

- **Pre-plea** referrals
- **Post-plea** referrals
- **Pre-adjudication** cases
- **Probation violation** cases

For justice-involved Veterans with more serious offenses, participation may be ordered as a **condition of community supervision at sentencing**, offering an evidence-based alternative to incarceration.

The program operates on a **phased model** of treatment, supervision, and judicial monitoring. Each phase gradually reduces court involvement as participants demonstrate progress toward recovery, stability, and accountability.

# Target Population

The **Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC)** serves **justice-involved Veterans and current members** of the United States Armed Forces, Reserves, National Guard, or State Guard who are experiencing a **diagnosable and treatable behavioral health condition**.

## Eligibility by Service Status

- **VA-Eligible Veterans:** Must meet eligibility requirements for the Amarillo VA Health Care System and may access VA-funded treatment, case management, and recovery resources.
- **Non-VA-Eligible Veterans:** The Veterans Resource Center, Texas Panhandle Center, or other approved community providers will assist in arranging appropriate treatment and recovery services.

## Risk/Need Level

- The program **prioritizes high-risk/high-need participants**, as defined by **Texas and All Rise Adult Treatment Court Best Practice Standards (2025)**
  - **High Risk:** Individuals at significant risk of reoffending or failing less intensive supervision.
  - **High Need:** Individuals with a moderate to severe substance use disorder, serious mental illness, or co-occurring conditions requiring structured treatment.
- The court may also serve **moderate-need Veterans** on a case-by-case basis through **alternative program tracks**, provided that participants of different risk/need levels are **not mixed** in the same treatment groups, recovery housing, or court dockets.

## Referral Sources

- Eligible felony and misdemeanor cases, including pre-plea, post-plea, pre-adjudication, and probation violations.
- Transfers may be accepted from other courts if eligibility is confirmed and all parties agree.

# Eligibility, Exclusions, and Reconsideration Criteria

## Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for participation, the applicant must:

- Be a **Veteran, active-duty service member, National Guard, State Guard, or Reserve member** who has served in the U.S. Military.
- Have a **pending eligible felony or misdemeanor offense**.
- Be a **U.S. citizen or legal resident**.
- Have a **mental health disorder, substance use disorder, or traumatic brain injury that occurred during or resulted from military service and materially affected the criminal conduct**. (*Texas Gov't Code §124.002 as amended by HB 3882, 88R*).
- Be eligible for **VA services** or have access to identified community-based treatment and recovery services.
- Have available treatment resources to address the identified diagnoses.
- Complete the **application packet** and sign all required Veterans Treatment Court and Veterans Health Administration releases of information.

## Exclusion Criteria

A Veteran is not eligible if they:

- Have a **serious and persistent mental illness** that renders them unable to participate in structured programming.
- Are **formally excluded** by the prosecuting attorney (District or County Attorney).

## Reconsideration Process

If a relevant party (e.g., defense counsel, prosecutor, Judge, treatment provider, probation officer, or law enforcement officer) believes the Staffing Committee failed to consider significant factors, they may submit a **Reconsideration Request**.

- Requests must be submitted in writing to the **Director of Specialty Courts** within **30 days** of the initial rejection.
- Requests must include **supporting documentation**, such as mitigating circumstances, psychological/psychiatric reports, or service records establishing a nexus between military service and the offense.

# Entry Process

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) follows a structured entry process.

## Step 1 – Identification of Veterans

- Any party (attorney, Judge, probation officer, law enforcement officer, or treatment provider) may identify a potential participant.
- The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) officer verifies military service (e.g., DD-214 or official records) and notifies the Trial Defense Attorney and the Director of Specialty Courts.

## Step 2 – Application and Evaluation

- Applications are available on the Potter County website or through the Director of Specialty Courts.
- Defense counsel submits the completed application packet to the Director at [SpecialtyCourtDirector@pottercscd.org](mailto:SpecialtyCourtDirector@pottercscd.org) within 60 days of discovery filing.
- The Director notifies the VJO to schedule a VA evaluation. For non-VA-eligible Veterans, the Veteran Resource Center coordinates an evaluation through Texas Panhandle Center or another approved community provider.

## Step 3 – Prosecutorial Agreement

- The District Attorney or County Attorney's agent reviews the case and formally approves participation.
- Defense counsel finalizes the plea agreement, deferred prosecution, or transfer paperwork as required.
- Application submitted for acceptance to PRVTC.

## Step 4 – Staffing Committee Review

- The Veteran's application appears before the Staffing Committee.
- The committee reviews eligibility criteria, evaluations, and case history, then makes a determination regarding program admission.
- The decision is communicated to referring Judge of the underlying offence.

## Step 5 – Judicial Approval

- The Veteran appears before the PRVTC Judge, who confirms eligibility and orders entry into the Veterans Treatment Court.

## Step 6 – Program Engagement

- The Veteran immediately begins all aspects of their individualized treatment plan, including counseling, case management, probation supervision, and court appearances.

# Team Member Roles & Ethical Considerations

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) is operated by a multidisciplinary team representing the judiciary, prosecution, defense, probation, treatment providers, and community stakeholders. Each team member plays a defined role within their professional scope of practice. Team members coordinate responsibilities, share appropriate information, and avoid crossing professional boundaries.

## PRVTC Judge

- Leads the Veterans Treatment Court team.
- Presides over staffing meetings and court hearings.
- Approves admissions, sanctions, incentives, phase promotions, graduations, and discharges.
- Relies on input from treatment and supervision professionals for clinical and case management decisions.
- Attends specialized training on Veterans issues, mental health, and substance use disorders.
- **Does not** act as case manager, personal attorney, or counselor.

## Court Coordinator

- Provides administrative support to the Judge and team.
- Schedules staffing meetings and hearings; agendas, and case files.
- Ensures smooth court operations and communication.
- **Does not** serve as counselor, mentor, or case manager.

## Director of Specialty Courts

- Prepares and distributes the docket to team members.
- Tracks participant progress and maintains program data and compliance.
- Reviews applications and forwards them for prosecutorial review.
- Acts as liaison among the Judge, prosecution, defense, probation, treatment providers, and community partners.
- Reviews policy and best practice concerns and advises the Judge and team on compliance with state and All Rise best practices.
- Manages grants and reporting requirements.
- **Does not** serve as case manager, mentor, or counselor.

## **Country/District Attorney (Prosecutor)**

- Reviews cases for eligibility and ensures public safety and victim interests.
- Advocates for community protection and provides input on sanctions and incentives.
- Prepares dismissal paperwork for eligible cases upon successful graduation.
- **Does not** serve as case manager, mentor, or counselor.

## **Defense Counsel**

- Represents the Veteran throughout program participation.
- Prepares the application packet and negotiates plea agreements as required.
- Protects the Veteran's due process rights at all stages.
- Provides legal advice related to program participation and completion.
- **Does not** serve as case manager, mentor, or counselor.

## **Community Supervision Officer (Probation Officer)**

- Monitors compliance with court-ordered conditions.
- Conducts drug and alcohol testing and home/workplace visits.
- Recommends sanctions or incentives based on participant behavior.
- Provides written compliance updates to the Director for docket preparation.
- **Does not** serve as case manager, mentor, or counselor.

## **Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO)**

- Verifies military service.
- Coordinates VA evaluations, treatment, and case management.
- Ensures HIPAA and 42 CFR Part 2 compliance.
- Provides updates on treatment attendance and compliance to the Director for docket preparation.
- **Does not** serve as defense counsel.

## **Veteran Resource Center Liaison (VSO Partner)**

- Assists Veterans not eligible for VA services in obtaining treatment.
- Provides peer support and connects Veterans to housing, benefits, and community resources.
- Monitors progress in non-VA treatment plans.
- **Does not** serve as defense counsel, case manager.

## **Peer Support Specialist (PSS)**

- Provides lived-experience support to Veterans in recovery, drawing on personal experience with mental health or substance use recovery.
- Assists participants in developing coping strategies, building resilience, and engaging with recovery supports.
- Encourages participants in their treatment goals and connects them to additional community-based recovery resources.
- Supports Veterans in building independent recovery networks.
- **Maintains confidentiality:** PSS staff do **not disclose confidential participant statements** to the team, except in limited circumstances involving immediate safety risks (consistent with All Rise Best Practices and ethical guidelines).
- **Does not** act as defense counsel, probation officer, or treatment provider.

## **Community Representatives (e.g., housing, counseling, recovery partners)**

- Provide support services including transitional housing, case management, and employment assistance.
- Report on service availability and program capacity.
- **Does not** provide confidential treatment details without participant consent.

## **Law Enforcement Liaison**

- Serves as a liaison between local detention facilities and the court.
- Provides advice concerning public safety goals by monitoring community risk factors.
- **Does not** serve as case manager, mentor, attorney, or counselor.

# Phase Structure & Commencement Criteria

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) operates on a **three-phase model** designed to last **12–24 months**. Each phase gradually decreases supervision intensity as the participant demonstrates accountability, stability, and recovery progress. Advancement requires meeting phase requirements listed below.

## Phase I – Orientation & Stabilization

**Focus:** Introduction to Court, Stabilization, and Early Recovery.

- **Court Requirements:** Appear weekly (every Monday); demonstrate understanding of the Four Pillars (Communication, Treatment, Honesty, Motivation).
- **Treatment Requirements:** Treatment plans are individualized and must include attendance, participation, homework/assignments, and medication adherence. Initial goals are designed to be achievable within 30 days.
- **Supervision Requirements:** Meet with the Community Supervision Officer (CSO) at least monthly outside of court or as directed. Home visits may occur at any time. Changes in contact information must be immediately reported.
- **Support Requirements:** Identify personal assets and barriers (employment, education, housing, relationships) and begin engagement with referred services.
- **Drug Testing & Abstinence:** Random, observed testing at least once per week (including weekends/holidays if necessary). 30 consecutive days of negative tests required to advance.
- **Sanction-Free Requirement:** Must be sanction-free for at least **30 consecutive days** prior to advancement.
- **Promotion:** Submit “Request for Promotion to Next Phase” at least 7 days prior to requested hearing.

## Phase II – Treatment & Recovery

**Focus:** Active Recovery, Relapse Prevention, and Accountability.

- **Court Requirements:** Appear at least the first and third Mondays of each month (and the fifth when applicable), unless otherwise ordered.
- **Treatment Requirements:** Develop new treatment goals with provider; maintain medication adherence; complete goals designed to be achievable within 60 days.
- **Supervision Requirements:** Meet with the CSO twice per month or as directed; unannounced home visits may occur; request approval before travel.
- **Support Requirements:** Demonstrate progress toward stable housing, employment/education, and family involvement.
- **Drug Testing & Abstinence:** Continue random, observed testing as directed; must demonstrate 60 consecutive days of negative results to advance.
- **Sanction-Free Requirement:** Must be sanction-free for at least **60 consecutive days** prior to advancement.

- **Promotion:** Submit “Request for Promotion to Next Phase” at least 7 days prior to requested hearing.

### **Phase III – Reintegration & Continuing Care**

**Focus:** Reintegration, Community Stability, and Relapse Prevention.

- **Court Requirements:** Appear at least once per month (first Monday that the court is open).
- **Treatment Requirements:** Establish continuing care goals with provider; demonstrate insight and accountability for problem behaviors; complete long-term assignments. Goals are designed to be achievable within 120 days.
- **Supervision Requirements:** Meet with CSO at least monthly; report any changes in contact information; request and obtain travel approval prior to leaving service area.
- **Support Requirements:** Maintain stable housing and employment/education; appropriately involve family and supports.
- **Drug Testing & Abstinence:** Continue random, observed testing as directed; minimum 120 days of continuous sobriety prior to graduation.
- **Sanction-Free Requirement:** Must be sanction-free for at least **120 consecutive days** prior to commencement.
- **Graduation:** Submit the Commencement Request Form (Appendix) once all requirements are satisfied.

### **The PRVTC Judge retains sole and final authority to:**

- Approve or deny any participant’s advancement between program phases;
- Modify, defer, or deny phase promotions based on participant performance, compliance, or sanction history; and
- Approve final program completion or termination.
- While recommendations regarding phase advancement may be made by the treatment team, case manager, or probation officer, all phase promotions, demotions, incentives, and sanctions remain subject to the Judge’s final decision.

# Graduation Criteria

The goal of the Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) is for all participants to successfully graduate. A Veteran is considered eligible for graduation when all of the following conditions are met:

## Phase Completion

- The Veteran has successfully completed all treatment goals for **Phases I–III**.
- A **Graduation Packet** has been submitted at least **10 days prior** to the scheduled ceremony.

## Verified Sobriety

- The Veteran has at least **120 consecutive days of verified negative drug and alcohol tests**.
- Days earned in Phase II may count toward the total if Phase II and Phase III goals were completed and the negative streak is continuous.

## Supervision Compliance

- The Veteran has been compliant with all supervision conditions.
- No missed appointments with probation, VJO, or treatment occurred within **60 days prior** to the graduation request.

## Productive Activity & Stability

- The Veteran demonstrates stable housing.
- The Veteran is engaged in employment, education, or approved programming consistent with their treatment plan.

## Team Review & Judicial Approval

- The PRVTC Team reviews the Graduation Packet and provides a recommendation.
- The **Judge makes the final determination** regarding graduation.

## Ceremony & Aftercare

- Graduations are scheduled quarterly, typically on the first Monday of the month.
- The Veteran must be present in court to graduate to celebrate their achievements.
- Graduates must implement their Continuing Care Plan, developed with their treatment provider (relapse-prevention strategies, support meeting schedule, and points of contact).
- Graduates are encouraged to participate in alumni and peer support activities to remain engaged in the recovery community.

## Termination Criteria

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) recognizes that not all participants will graduate; however, termination is considered a **last resort**. The Court prioritizes therapeutic adjustments and progressive sanctions before discharge.

### Requirements Before Termination

Termination may only occur after:

1. Progressive written sanctions have been applied and documented.
2. The participant has had an opportunity to be heard with counsel, if requested.
3. An **evidentiary hearing** has been held if material facts are disputed.
4. The evidentiary hearing will consist of the Judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, and director.

### Illustrative Grounds for Termination

Termination may result from, but is not limited to, the following circumstances:

- **Persistent absconding** or repeated failures to appear.
- **Credible threats or acts of violence** during court, supervision, or treatment.
- **New offense** that the prosecuting attorney does not approve for entry into PRVTC.
- **Repeated willful non-compliance** with program requirements after documented therapeutic adjustments.

**Note:** A **clinical relapse, by itself, does not automatically result in termination**. Instead, relapse should trigger reassessment and potential modification of the treatment plan.

### Post-Termination

- If terminated, the participant's case is returned to the referring Judge for traditional criminal proceedings.
- The referring Judge may consider participant's termination when determining sentencing or other judicial outcomes.

# Incentives and Sanctions

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) employs a system of graduated, predictable, and individualized responses to participant behavior. Responses are designed to be swift, certain, and proportional, while also supporting therapeutic engagement and long-term recovery.

## Principles

- Incentives and sanctions are applied consistently.
- Responses are individualized, considering the participant's clinical needs, risk level, and stage of recovery.
- The Court prioritizes therapeutic adjustments before punitive sanctions, especially in response to relapse or treatment struggles.
- Sanctions are never used in lieu of treatment.

## Incentives

Examples of incentives include:

- Specific judicial praise and acknowledgment in court.
- Applause or verbal recognition by the team.
- Challenge coins, recognition tokens, or certificates for milestones.
- Reduced frequency of court appearances or probation check-ins.
- Expanded travel privileges.
- Gift cards or similar tangible rewards.
- Phase promotion.
- Case dismissal or expunction for eligible diversion participants upon successful graduation.

## Sanctions

Examples of sanctions include:

- Written assignments (essays, journaling, reflection tasks).
- Increased reporting to probation or the court.
- Curfew restrictions or schedule changes.
- Verified community service hours.
- Day-reporting requirements.
- Enhanced drug/alcohol testing.
- Temporary loss of privileges (e.g., travel).
- Electronic monitoring (GPS, SCRAM, in-car breathalyzer).
- Jail commitment, used only when necessary and never in place of treatment.
- Demotion in program phase (without loss of coin).
- **Termination** if all other measures fail.

## **Due Process for Sanctions**

- If a sanction may result in jail commitment, the Veteran may request an **evidentiary hearing** to establish the factual basis.
- The evidentiary hearing will consist of the Judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, and director.

# Treatment Protocol

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) requires that each participant receive a **comprehensive, individualized treatment plan** designed to address their unique needs, barriers, and recovery goals. All treatment is delivered in accordance with **evidence-based practices** and is monitored by the Court to ensure accountability and clinical progress.

## Treatment Planning

- Each Veteran must have a written treatment plan developed in collaboration with qualified treatment providers.
- Plans must address substance use disorders, mental health conditions, trauma, and co-occurring needs as clinically indicated.
- Plans are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect progress, setbacks, or new needs.
- Phase advancement requires documented progress toward treatment goals.

## Minimum Treatment Expectations

- Veterans participate in at least three counseling sessions per week, unless otherwise clinically indicated.
- Counseling may include individual therapy, group therapy, trauma-focused interventions, peer support, or family counseling.
- Veterans are expected to comply with medication management (including MAT and psychiatric medications) as prescribed.
- Non-attendance must be reported to the Court by the treatment provider.

## Evidence-Based Practices

Treatment provided within PRVTC is:

- Trauma-informed and culturally competent.
- Evidence-based, incorporating approaches such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Seeking Safety, Motivational Interviewing, and Relapse Prevention Therapy.
- Supportive of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) when clinically appropriate, with equal access to all FDA-approved medications.

## Court Integration

- The Judge uses **incentives, sanctions, and phase progression/demotions** to reinforce treatment compliance and accountability.
- Treatment providers regularly update the Court through written progress reports shared at staffing meetings.
- The team ensures treatment is delivered in a manner that protects confidentiality under **HIPAA and 42 CFR Part 2**.

# Supervision Protocol

Supervision in the Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) is provided by the **Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD)** for Potter, Randall, and Armstrong Counties. The supervision model balances **accountability with rehabilitation**, ensuring that participants are monitored for compliance while receiving structured support for long-term success.

## Probation Officer Role

- Each participant is assigned a **Community Supervision Officer (CSO)** who monitors compliance with court-ordered conditions.
- The CSO reports regularly to the Court on participant progress, sanctions, and compliance issues.
- The CSO participates in weekly staffing meetings, providing updates for docket preparation.

## Reporting & Monitoring Requirements

- Participants must attend all scheduled office visits with their CSO, with frequency determined by phase.
- The CSO conducts unannounced home or workplace visits to verify compliance.
- Participants must immediately report changes in residence, employment, or contact information to the CSO.
- Travel outside of the service area requires **advance approval** from the CSO and the Court.

## Supervision Conditions

- Participants must remain law-abiding and comply with all probation terms.
- Curfews, electronic monitoring, or day-reporting may be imposed when necessary.
- The CSO ensures participants attend treatment, peer support, and other services as ordered.
- Violations are documented and addressed with **graduated sanctions** before termination is considered.

## Accountability and Support

- The supervision protocol is designed to balance enforcement with encouragement, supporting participant recovery while protecting public safety.
- The CSO works closely with treatment providers, the Court, and peer support staff to provide a unified supervision plan.

# Drug and Alcohol Testing Protocol

Drug and alcohol testing is a **core accountability measure** in the Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC). Testing verifies abstinence, promotes honesty, and provides immediate feedback for both progress and relapse.

## Testing Frequency & Methodology

- Random, observed testing is required throughout program participation.
- Minimum frequency: at least once per week, increasing as clinically indicated or in response to noncompliance.
- Observed collection: All specimens must be directly observed, with temperature and creatinine checks to ensure validity.
- Testing may occur on **weekends and holidays** to prevent predictable schedules.

## Testing Administration

- **Primary site:** Testing is conducted through the **CSCD Probation Office**.
- **Weekend/after-hours testing:** Conducted at the **Randall County Detention Center** to ensure continuous availability.
- **Alternative arrangements** may be made if a participant is VA-eligible and requires confirmatory or additional testing through the **Amarillo VA Health Care System**.

## Substances Tested

- Panels include common illicit substances, alcohol, and prescription medications with abuse potential.
- Expanded testing may be ordered as clinically or judicially indicated (e.g., synthetic drugs, inhalants).

## Confirmatory Testing

- If a Veteran disputes the results of a positive drug screening, the **positive screen** must be verified by a **confirmatory laboratory test** before sanctions are imposed.
- The participant is presumed compliant until confirmatory results are returned.

## Missed or Tampered Tests

- **Missed tests** are treated as positive unless the participant demonstrates good cause.
- **Diluted, substituted, or tampered tests** are treated as noncompliance and may result in sanctions.

## Integration with Court Responses

- Testing results are provided to the Court and reviewed at weekly staffing meetings.
- **Positive results trigger therapeutic adjustments** when clinically indicated, with sanctions considered only after treatment reassessment.
- Documented periods of sobriety are used to determine **phase advancement, graduation eligibility, and recognition incentives.**

# Substance Responsibility Policy

## Purpose

To uphold the integrity of recovery and ensure participant accountability, this policy establishes expectations regarding the use of **any product—commercial, herbal, or otherwise—capable of producing intoxication or a positive drug or alcohol test result**. The Court recognizes that these products evolve rapidly and may include substances not explicitly listed in program materials.

## Policy Statement

Because of the continually changing nature of commercially available products, it is not possible for the PRVTC to specifically identify or list every beverage, supplement, or consumable item that may contain alcohol, cannabinoids, opioids, or other intoxicating substances.

**Participants are solely responsible for any substance they ingest.**

Any product—whether labeled or marketed as *non-alcoholic, THC-free, CBD, Delta-8, Delta-9, kratom, tianeptine, hemp-derived, herbal relaxant, pain reliever*, or otherwise—**that produces a positive drug or alcohol test will be treated as a positive test** under PRVTC policy. Program sanctions and responses will apply accordingly.

## Directive

Participants **shall not consume or possess any product** that:

- Contains or is derived from alcohol, cannabis, hemp, opioids (natural, synthetic, or analog), or any psychoactive or intoxicating compound;
- Is marketed as a “non-alcoholic,” “herbal,” or “natural” alternative capable of producing intoxication; or
- May interfere with or compromise drug and alcohol testing accuracy.

Ignorance of a product’s contents or labeling does not excuse a positive test result. Participants are expected to verify product ingredients before consumption and consult their supervision officer or treatment provider when uncertain.

# Staffing Meetings & Status Hearings

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) relies on **weekly staffing meetings and status hearings** to ensure accountability, transparency, and coordinated decision-making. These sessions are central to monitoring participant progress and applying consistent program responses.

## Weekly Staffing Meetings

- Staffing meetings are held weekly prior to status hearings.
- The multidisciplinary team reviews each participant's progress, compliance, and needs.
- Updates for staffing are prepared by the **Director of Specialty Courts** based on reports from probation, treatment providers, VJO, and community partners.
- Staffing meetings are **confidential** and not open to the public or participants.
- The Judge summarizes key issues in open court but final decisions on contested matters are made during status hearings.

## Status Hearings

- Veterans appear in court according to phase:
  - **Phase I:** Weekly
  - **Phase II:** First and third Mondays (and fifth when applicable)
  - **Phase III:** First Monday of each month
- The Judge interacts directly with participants, providing judicial praise, encouragement, sanctions, or incentives as appropriate.
- Team members may provide input when requested or preplanned, but all comments must remain **within their professional scope**.
- Defense counsel raises any legal or due process concerns during hearings.
- Status hearings are open court proceedings, except when confidentiality requires a closed session.
- **Participants uncertain about their required court appearance**, including potential schedule changes related to holidays or other closures, shall contact the Specialty Courts Director **no later than 5:00 p.m.** on the **Friday preceding the scheduled status hearing**.

## Team Communication and Decision-Making

- Team members articulate their positions in a **collaborative, non-adversarial manner** consistent with their ethical obligations.
- The Judge makes all final decisions, informed by team input.
- Disputed factual or legal issues are resolved through **due process hearings** (e.g., evidentiary hearings).

## Sanctions in Staffing & Hearings

- The multidisciplinary team may **recommend sanctions** during staffing, but final decisions rest with the Judge.
- Sanctions must be:
  - **Graduated** (progressive and proportional),
  - **Individualized** (based on participant risk, need, and progress),
  - **Swift and certain** (delivered as close to the behavior as possible).
- Sanctions are **not punitive substitutes for treatment**. When relapse occurs, the team prioritizes **therapeutic adjustments** to correct a behavior before punitive measures.
- If a sanction involves a **loss of liberty** (e.g., jail commitment), the participant can request an **evidentiary hearing** with counsel present.
- All sanctions are documented in writing and included in the participant's program record.

# Confidentiality Protocol

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) protects the **confidentiality of participant information** in accordance with federal and state law, including the **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)** and **42 C.F.R. Part 2**. Confidentiality safeguards are critical to protect participants' privacy, promote trust, and ensure ethical program operations.

## General Rules

- Information about participants is shared only with authorized team members and only for the purpose of treatment and case management.
- Participants must sign **informed consent releases of information** prior to any disclosure of treatment, supervision, or medical information.
- All team members are required to sign confidentiality agreements as a condition of program participation.

## Federal & State Laws

- **HIPAA**: Protects the privacy of personal health information.
- **42 C.F.R. Part 2**: Specifically governs the confidentiality of substance use disorder treatment records. Rediscovery is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by law, participant consent, or court order.
- **Texas Gov't Code §124.002**: Requires Veterans Treatment Courts to maintain written confidentiality protocols consistent with federal and state law.

## Limits of Confidentiality

Confidential information may be disclosed only under the following circumstances:

- **Emergency situations** where disclosure is necessary to protect the health or safety of the participant or others.
- **Court orders** that comply with HIPAA and 42 C.F.R. Part 2 requirements.
- **Audit or evaluation purposes** by authorized oversight agencies, provided that individual identities remain protected.
- **Participant consent** that is knowing, voluntary, and informed.

## Rediscovery Prohibition

- Team members receiving confidential information may not rediscover it to outside entities without specific participant consent or court authorization.
- Peer Support Specialists and mentors are specifically prohibited from sharing confidential statements made by participants, except in cases of imminent safety risks.

## **Protections for Self-Incrimination**

- Statements made by participants about substance use **cannot be used to prosecute them for their original offense.**
- Such statements may, however, be considered in determining program compliance and appropriate therapeutic or judicial responses.

# Participant Rights & Grievance Procedure

Participants in the Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) retain all constitutional, statutory, and program-specific rights. The program is committed to ensuring **fair treatment, due process, and dignity** for all Veterans.

## Participant Rights

Each participant has the right to:

- **Voluntary participation:** Entry into the program is voluntary and requires informed consent.
  - **Non-discrimination:** Equal treatment regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, or Veteran status.
  - **Humane treatment:** To be treated with dignity and respect by all staff and team members.
  - **Confidentiality:** Protection of personal health and treatment information under **HIPAA** and **42 C.F.R. Part 2**.
  - **Individualized treatment plan:** A plan tailored to their specific needs, reviewed and updated as appropriate.
  - **Access to counsel:** Legal representation by defense counsel at all critical stages, including hearings involving sanctions, termination, or program dismissal.
  - **Due process:** A right to be heard at hearings involving contested facts or sanctions affecting liberty.
  - **Continuity of care:** Coordination of services between VA and community providers to ensure uninterrupted treatment.
- 

## Grievance Procedure

Participants may file grievances regarding program operations, treatment, or supervision.

**Step 1 – Informal Resolution:** Participants are encouraged to first address concerns with their treatment provider, probation officer, or program staff, when appropriate.

**Step 2 – Formal Grievance:** If the issue is not resolved, participants may submit a written grievance to the Director of Specialty Courts.

- The Director will review the grievance, investigate, and provide a written response within **10 business days**.

**Step 3 – Escalation:** If unsatisfied, participants may request review by the **PRVTC Judge**, whose decision is final for internal program matters.

**Step 4 – External Remedies:** Participants may also file complaints with outside agencies as appropriate, including:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office for Civil Rights (for HIPAA or discrimination concerns).

- Texas Health and Human Services Commission (for licensed treatment provider issues).
- State Bar of Texas (for complaints involving defense counsel).

All grievances and resolutions will be documented and maintained in the participant's confidential program file.

## Disparate Impact Statement

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) is committed to ensuring **equitable access, treatment, and outcomes** for all Veterans. The program prohibits discrimination and takes steps to monitor and address any **disparate impacts** that may arise in the administration of services or sanctions.

### Equal Treatment Commitment

- The PRVTC treats all Veterans equitably regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, or Veteran status.
- The program complies fully with federal and state anti-discrimination laws, including:
  - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
  - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
  - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - Equal Treatment for Faith-Based Organizations Guidelines

### Program Practices

- Screening and eligibility decisions are based solely on program criteria established in **Texas Gov't Code §124** and the PRVTC Policy Manual.
- Sanctions, incentives, and treatment responses are applied consistently and are individualized based on participant needs, not demographic factors.
- Data is regularly monitored for racial, gender, and socioeconomic disparities in program entry, sanctions, graduation, and termination.

### Faith-Based Services

- Faith-based organizations may provide services; however, participation in faith-based programming is **voluntary**, and secular alternatives are always available.
- The Court ensures compliance with **federal faith-based neutrality guidelines** to protect participant choice.

### Corrective Action

If evidence of disparate impact is identified, the PRVTC will:

- Review policies and practices to identify potential sources of bias.
- Consult with the **Steering Committee** to implement corrective action.
- Report findings and corrective steps in the Court's annual evaluation.

## Documentation

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) maintains accurate, timely, and confidential documentation of all program activities. Documentation ensures **accountability, transparency, and compliance** with state and federal requirements.

### Case Documentation

- Each participating agency (Probation, VA, Texas Panhandle Center, treatment providers, etc.) maintains its own records consistent with **HIPAA** and **42 C.F.R. Part 2**.
- The **Director of Specialty Courts** maintains central program records, including:
  - Docket preparation notes
  - Participant status updates
  - Sanction and incentive records
  - Phase promotion and commencement forms
  - Graduation or termination decisions

### Confidentiality Compliance

- Records are stored in compliance with **HIPAA** and **42 C.F.R. Part 2**.
- Shared documentation between agencies is governed by participant **releases of information** and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).
- Access is restricted to authorized team members and oversight entities.

### Reporting of Program Status

- External reporting is limited to **program outcomes** (e.g., graduation, discharge, or termination).
- No confidential treatment details are shared publicly.
- Anonymized data may be used for evaluation, reporting to grant agencies, and research purposes, provided participant identities are protected.

### Record Retention

- The PRVTC retains core participant program records for a minimum of **five (5) years** after program completion, consistent with state recordkeeping requirements.
- Records may be retained longer if required by grant funding conditions or oversight agencies.

## Data Reporting

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) collects and reports data to ensure accountability, monitor outcomes, and comply with grant and oversight requirements. Data reporting is coordinated by the **Director of Specialty Courts**.

### Oversight and Responsibility

- The **Director of Specialty Courts** is responsible for collecting, managing, and reporting program data.
- Reports are compiled from records maintained by probation, treatment providers, the VA, and other partner agencies.

### Reporting Requirements

The PRVTC provides data to:

- **County Commissioners Court** and other local governing bodies, as required.
- **Granting agencies** (e.g., Texas Veterans Commission, Bureau of Justice Assistance) to meet funding requirements.
- **Texas Specialty Court Advisory Council** or other oversight bodies, as directed by statute or state policy.

### Data Types Collected

Data collected includes, but is not limited to:

- Participant demographics (non-identifiable in public reporting).
- Admission, graduation, termination, and recidivism rates.
- Program compliance data (sanctions, incentives, treatment attendance).
- Service utilization (housing, mental health, substance use treatment, peer support).
- Cost avoidance or taxpayer savings measures.

### Confidentiality in Reporting

- All data reported is **aggregated and anonymized** unless specifically required otherwise by law or grantor conditions.
- No participant-identifying information is disclosed in public reports.

# Evaluation Design

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) conducts regular evaluations to assess program performance, outcomes, and fidelity to best practices. Evaluation is designed to ensure accountability, guide continuous improvement, and demonstrate effectiveness to stakeholders and funders.

## Purpose of Evaluation

- To measure the Court's impact on recidivism, sobriety, employment, housing stability, and community reintegration.
- To assess the cost-effectiveness of the program compared to incarceration and traditional probation.
- To identify barriers to success and recommend policy or procedural adjustments.
- To ensure fidelity to **Texas Best Practice Standards for Specialty Courts** and **All Rise Best Practice Standards**.

## Evaluation Schedule

- The PRVTC conducts a **formal annual evaluation**.
- Interim reviews may be conducted as required by grant funders or the Steering Committee.

## Evaluation Methods

- **Quantitative Data:** Admission numbers, graduation rates, terminations, rearrest rates, drug/alcohol test results, and taxpayer cost savings.
- **Qualitative Data:** Participant and staff surveys, exit interviews, and focus groups where appropriate.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Outcomes compared to similarly situated justice-involved Veterans who do not participate in the program.
- **Best Practices Review:** Annual cross-check against Texas Best Practice Standards for Specialty Courts All Rise and Texas Specialty Court Standards to ensure fidelity.

## External Review

- When feasible, independent evaluators (e.g., university partners or research organizations) will be engaged to provide objective analysis.
- Findings will be incorporated into program planning and grant applications.

## **Fees and Fiscal Management**

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) maintains transparent and fair financial practices, ensuring that program costs are not a barrier to participation. PRVTC does **not** charge program fees.

### **Program Fees**

- In accordance with **Texas Best Practice Standards for Specialty Courts** and, fees must never create a financial barrier that prevents otherwise eligible Veterans from participating.

### **Fiscal Oversight**

- The **Director of Specialty Courts** is responsible for ensuring compliance with fiscal requirements of grants, county policies, and state law.
- Program funds are tracked in accordance with county financial procedures.
- All expenditures are documented, and periodic fiscal reviews are conducted by the **County Auditor** or designated oversight body.

### **Grants and External Funding**

- The PRVTC may apply for and manage grants to reduce financial burdens on participants and expand services.
- All grant funds are used in compliance with grantor requirements and county financial management policies.

# Community Resources and Ancillary Services

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) connects participants to a broad network of **community resources and ancillary services** to address the diverse needs of justice-involved Veterans. These resources support recovery, reintegration, and long-term stability.

## Community Resource Coordination

- The Director of Specialty Courts compiles and maintains a directory of available services, updated annually.
- The Court partners with both **Veterans Affairs (VA)** resources and **local community organizations** to ensure services are accessible to all participants, including those not eligible for VA benefits.

## Types of Services Available

Participants may be referred to the following community and ancillary services:

- **Mental Health Treatment** – individual counseling, psychiatric care, trauma-focused therapies.
- **Substance Use Disorder Treatment** – intensive outpatient programs, residential treatment, recovery housing.
- **Medical Services** – primary care, traumatic brain injury (TBI) support, chronic condition management.
- **Employment & Education** – vocational training, job placement, GED/college support.
- **Housing Assistance** – transitional housing, recovery housing, supportive housing programs.
- **Family Support** – parenting classes, family therapy, couples counseling.
- **Peer Support** – certified Peer Support Specialists, Military & Veteran Peer Network mentors.
- **Faith-Based & Community Services** – voluntary, with secular alternatives always available.

## Partnerships

Key community partners include:

- **Amarillo VA Health Care System**
- **Veteran Resource Center (Family Support Services)**
- **Another Chance House**
- **Texas Panhandle Centers (TPC)**
- **Local recovery housing providers**
- **Military & Veteran Peer Network (MVPN)**
- **Faith-based organizations** (voluntary participation only)

## Oversight

- All referrals are documented in the participant's treatment or case plan.
- The **Director of Specialty Courts** ensures resource partners meet professional standards and do not impose barriers to participation.

# Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

The Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC) formalizes its partnerships with key agencies and service providers through **Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)**. These agreements define roles, responsibilities, and information-sharing practices to ensure program consistency and accountability.

## Purpose of MOUs

MOUs are used to:

- Establish each partner agency's responsibilities to the PRVTC.
- Acknowledge and record the value of any resources, services, or personnel contributed by the **Steering Committee** member or their agency when making commitments on behalf of the program.
- Clarify confidentiality and information-sharing protocols under HIPAA and 42 C.F.R. Part 2.
- Ensure partners commit appropriate staff, resources, and services to the program.

## Required Partners

MOUs are executed with the following agencies and service providers, at a minimum:

- **Potter County Court at Law #1 (PRVTC Judge)**
- **Amarillo VA Health Care System (Veteran Justice Outreach, treatment providers)**
- **Texas Panhandle Centers (mental health services)**
- **Veteran Resource Center (Family Support Services)**
- Other **community-based service providers** (e.g., recovery housing, employment, peer support) as identified by participant needs.

## Review & Renewal

- All MOUs shall be reviewed annually to ensure continued compliance and adequacy of services. Each MOU shall be signed by the **Steering Committee** member representing the agency or department whose personnel, resources, or services are being committed for use in the court.
- Updates are required whenever laws, best practices, or agency policies change.

## 26.4 Confidentiality Provisions

- MOUs must specify compliance with **HIPAA, 42 C.F.R. Part 2, and Texas Gov't Code §124**.
- Redisclosure of participant information is prohibited without proper consent or legal authorization.

# Appendix

The following standardized forms are included in the Appendix to support consistent application of program requirements. Each form must be completed fully and maintained in the participant's confidential program file.

## Acknowledgment of Sanction

Used when a participant receives a sanction during the program. This form documents:

- The sanction imposed
- The reason for the sanction
- The participant's current phase
- The required sanction-free period for future promotion
- Participant and Judge signatures

## Request for Promotion to Next Phase

Used when a participant requests advancement to the next program phase. This form documents:

- Dates of program entry and current phase entry
- Treatment, probation, and program compliance progress
- Employment, education, or other stability measures
- Sanction-free and sobriety status
- Participant signature and date

## Request for Commencement (Graduation)

Used when a participant has met all program requirements and seeks graduation. This form documents:

- Phase completion
- Verified sobriety period (minimum 120 days)
- Supervision compliance status
- Employment, education, or housing stability
- Aftercare plan
- Participant signature and date

## Form Storage

- All forms are completed at the time of request or sanction.
- Forms are stored securely in the program file maintained by the **Director of Specialty Courts**.
- Completed forms are not redisclosed outside of the PRVTC team except as required by law.

## Acknowledgment of Sanction

### Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court Acknowledgment of Sanction

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby acknowledge that I have been issued the following sanction by the Veterans Treatment Court:

Sanction(s) Imposed:

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Reason for Sanction:

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I am currently in Phase \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that I will not be eligible to phase up until I have been sanction-free for the following period:

- **Phase I – 30 days sanction-free**
- **Phase II – 60 days sanction-free**
- **Phase III – 120 days sanction-free**

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Request for Promotion to Next Phase

### Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court Request for Promotion

I, \_\_\_\_\_, having started this program on \_\_\_\_\_ and started my current Phase on \_\_\_\_\_, hereby request that I be promoted to the next Phase of the Veterans Treatment Court.

#### Progress Report – Current Phase

- I attended VTC court sessions as directed. If I missed a session, the reason was:

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- I met with my probation officer and VJO as directed. If I missed a session, the reason was:

- 
- I am attending the following treatment/counseling programs:

- 
- I attended all treatment and counseling sessions as directed. If I missed a session, the reason was:

- 
- I created a supervision plan. My goals are:

- Short-term: \_\_\_\_\_
- Short-term: \_\_\_\_\_
- Long-term: \_\_\_\_\_
- Long-term: \_\_\_\_\_

- I achieved the following short-term goal: \_\_\_\_\_
- I have not missed a drug/alcohol test or had a positive result for \_\_\_\_\_ days. Dates of any positive or missed tests during this phase:

- 
- I have received no sanctions in the past \_\_\_\_\_ days. Dates of any sanctions during this phase:

- 
- I am currently working/going to school at: \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, the reason is: \_\_\_\_\_
  - I have paid \$ \_\_\_\_\_ probation fees, fines, or court costs.

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Request for Commencement (Graduation)

### Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court Request for Commencement (Graduation)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, request to graduate from the Veterans Treatment Court. In support of this request, I affirm that I have met all graduation requirements.

#### Graduation Criteria:

1. **Phase Completion:** I have successfully completed Phases I–III and submitted this request at least 10 days before the scheduled ceremony.
2. **Verified Sobriety:** I have maintained at least 120 consecutive days of verified negative tests.
3. **Supervision Compliance:** I am fully compliant with supervision conditions and have had no missed appointments for at least 60 days.
4. **Productive Activity & Stability:** I have stable housing and am engaged in employment, education, or other approved activity consistent with my treatment plan.
5. **Aftercare Plan:** I have developed a continuing care plan with my treatment provider, including relapse-prevention steps, support meetings, and points of contact.
6. **Relapse Plan:** I have included my relapse plan and early warning checklist.

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_