

RESOLUTION 12-26

SOURCE: Department of Ohio

SUBJECT: Establish Veterans Treatment Courts

WHEREAS, 2010 marks the ninth straight year of America at war and there are now more than 23 million U.S. veterans including two million from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, the men and women of our military shoulder the burden of safeguarding our freedom; and

WHEREAS, the United States military instills a sense of honor, duty, leadership, commitment and respect, evident in the millions of veterans who have returned home to their communities as productive citizens, strengthened by their military experience; and

WHEREAS, one in five veterans has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment (1), one in six veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom suffers from substance abuse issues (2), and research continues to draw a link between substance abuse and combat-related mental illness (3); and

- (1) RAND Ctr. For Military Health Policy and Research, Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery iii (Terri Tanielan & Lisa H. Jaycox eds., 2008)
- (2) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. (November 1, 2007). The NSDUH Report: Serious Psychological Distress and Substance Use Disorder among Veterans. Rockville, MD.
- (3) Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health, An Achievable Vision: Report of the Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health, at ES-1 (2007)

WHEREAS, unprecedented numbers of veterans nationwide are appearing in the courts to face charges stemming directly from these issues; and

WHEREAS, many jurisdictions do not currently track veterans in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, Drug Courts evolved out of the necessity for a solution-based approach to an influx of drug abusing offenders before the courts; and the Drug Court model and the Mental Health Court model are the nation's most successful, cost effective, and scientifically validated tool to deal with substance abuse and mental health issues in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts are hybrid Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts and have evolved out of the growing need for a treatment court model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans to maximize efficiency and economize resources while making use of the distinct military culture consistent among veterans; and

WHEREAS many veterans have access to exclusive access to exclusive economic benefits and health services through the US Department of Veterans Affairs, State Departments of Veterans Affairs, County Departments of Veterans Affairs, and a variety of additional programs for veterans operated through Veterans Service Organizations at federal, state, and local levels; and

WHEREAS, grouping justice-involved veterans into a specific court docket significantly expedites access to veteran-specific resources, including benefits and treatment, earned through military service; and

WHEREAS, veterans deeply value their military experience and share an inimitable bond among their peers; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts build upon this camaraderie by allowing participants to go through the treatment court process with people who are similarly situated and have common past experiences; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts have captured national attention as a critical tool for ensuring veterans in the criminal justice system do not fall through the cracks: now therefore be it

RESOLVED That all Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts have an obligation to assess the level of veteran involvement within their programs to determine:

1. If there is a present need to develop a Veterans Treatment Court to best serve this specialized population; and
2. What steps can be taken to better serve veterans within the existing Drug Court or Mental Health Court model.