

2013 SLC STAR PROGRAM APPLICATION

Program Details

1. How long has this program operated (month and year of initiation)? (Note: the program must be between 9 months and 3 years old as of May 31, 2013.)

Answer: This program began in July, 2010.

2. Describe the program:

- a) Why was it created? What problem(s) or issue(s) was it designed to address?

Answer: As large numbers of military personnel returned home from combat, the need to assist them upon their return was glaring.

Approximately 40 percent of the United States' fighting force in the Global War on Terror has been National Guard or Reserve who return from combat to their home communities often far from a military installation, far from on-post experts in their special physical or psychological needs, and far away from people who shared similar experiences.

Similarly, many Vietnam veterans had undiagnosed and untreated Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms that have caused them to run afoul of the law in lieu of seeking services in the years since their return home.

In a somewhat rural state, with larger numbers of National Guard and Reserve in rural areas, there was particular concern about combat veterans who need assistance. It was necessary to find a way to identify veterans who may suffer from undiagnosed Traumatic Brain Injury, PTSD, or other combat stress disorders, and who are experiencing particular difficulties with drug or alcohol abuse or other issues as a result.

In this program, every person who is arrested is asked if he/she is a veteran and whether he/she served in combat.

Services for veterans exist. The issue Kentucky faced was how to identify veterans who needed these specialized services and how to connect those veterans to the services. If a combat veteran is arrested, there is an implication that the veteran may be suffering from PTSD or other combat stress disorders.

In particular, the need for assistance to combat veterans who may be suffering from undiagnosed traumatic brain injury, PTSD, or other combat stresses compelled us to look for a way to create a program statewide to identify those who may be exhibiting symptoms and put them together with available services.

- b) Why is it a new and creative approach or method?

Answer: If a combat veteran is arrested, for example for substance abuse related issues, that veteran is now identified and is immediately offered specialized veterans' services.

Prior to this program, thousands of combat veterans were arrested each year without acknowledgment of their status or indication that an arrest may indicate combat stress disorders. This program honors their service with respect and action to bring existing services to their aid.

- c) What are the specific activities and operations of the program (please list in chronological order, if applicable)?

Answer: Pretrial Services Officers, under this program, routinely ask every arrested person whom they interview, "Are you a veteran?" and "Have you been in combat?" If the answer to these questions is "yes," the Pretrial Services Officer arranges for the arrestee to make a call during the interview to one of the available veterans' services or the Pretrial Services Officer will make the call on behalf of the arrestee. That information becomes a part of the record and is also given to the judge.

The Pretrial Services Officers have been given information about whom to call. The Veterans' Administration and state specific agencies have 800 numbers/hotlines for crisis veterans' assistance.

The Pretrial Services Officer does not have to test the veracity of the arrestee's claims of veteran status. The organization providing the service (Veterans' Administration, National Guard, etc.) will confirm status and eligibility.

The Kentucky General Assembly passed House Bill 377, in conjunction with the Administrative Offices of the Courts, to establish this program which began in July 2010.

- d) What equipment, technology, and software are used to operate and administer the program?

Answer: The program required amendment of the form used by Pretrial Services Officers during their initial interview. The Administrative Office of the Courts also collects and maintains data from these intake forms.

No additional equipment or software was needed. What was required was the willingness of the Pretrial Services Officers to do the extra work to identify and assist veterans.

The Pretrial Services Officers' supervisors also conducted training for the new program online at no or minimal cost.

- e) What are the annual operational costs of the program? How is it funded?

Answer: There are no additional operational costs. Additional work done by the Pretrial Services Officers was what was required. Kentucky Pretrial Services Officers have displayed a willingness and enthusiasm to perform this service for those who have served our country.

- f) Has the program been effective at addressing the problem or issue? (Please provide tangible results and examples.)

Answer: Yes. From July 1, 2010 to March 31, 2013, over 19,000 veterans and nearly 8,000 combat veterans have been arrested in Kentucky. Each of those has had the opportunity to be connected to veterans' services. (The veteran can decline services.) In each instance, the judge has been given the information on combat veteran status. Thousands of Kentucky veterans have received services, many for the first time. The program also brought to light the tremendous numbers of veterans in the state's court system. (See answer to "g.")

- g) What measurable impact has the program had? Has it created a significant change in your state?

Answer: In addition to the direct impact of assistance and services to veterans/combat veterans who had been arrested, this program has had impact far beyond our initial expectations. The data revealed the large number of combat veterans being arrested in Kentucky. Once their need was documented and realized, the Legislature and the court system have worked tirelessly to connect veterans to the available services which they have earned. Partly as a result of the data generated by this program:

- Kentucky's Chief Justice created a Veterans Task Force within the Administrative Office of the Courts' Kentucky Access to Justice Commission.
- Warrants now have a check-off box for veteran status.
- A Veterans' Court pilot project was established.
- A Veterans' Diversion program was created.
- The Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts is now producing a program which will add a notice of veterans status to the eCitation system and enable court staff and Kentucky State Police to know of veteran status and create a daily report for distribution to the Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators at the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

3. Did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate innovator's name, present address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

Answer: Yes.

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4. Are you aware of a similar program in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

Answer: No. Kentucky's Pretrial Services supervisors are not aware of any similar programs in any other states.

5. Is the program transferable to other states? What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter when attempting to adopt this program?

Answer: Yes, this program is absolutely transferable to other states even in these times of very tight state budgets. In Kentucky, the court system employee who interviews a person who has been arrested is called a Pretrial Services Officer. In other states, the job title is different, for example booking officer, but this program can be adopted and used by any court or jail employee (or similar) who interviews persons arrested.

The standard intake interview can be amended to include questions regarding veteran and combat veteran status and the information on whom to call in each state can be made available to the interviewers.

The willingness of the interviewer to do this additional work to honor veterans is the primary requirement.