

Veterans Court Challenges and Adaptations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Can Military Values and Culture help meet the challenge?

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Introductions

- ▶ **APPALACHIAN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT VETERANS COURT**
– ***Selected as a Georgia Model Court for 2021***
- ▶ **PRESENTER**
- ▶ **COUNTIES SERVED**
- ▶ **PARTICIPANTS**
- ▶ **STAFF**



Improvise, Adapt and Overcome

CAN RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY, SUCH AS A GLOBAL PANDEMIC, MAKE A VETERANS COURT PROGRAM MORE EFFECTIVE?

Main Points

- ▶ **Recognize and list COVID-19 Challenges to Veterans Court (VTC) programs**
- ▶ **Describe how Military Culture impacts veterans court participants during normal operations and emergency contingencies**
- ▶ **Discuss the COVID-19 timeline and impact upon the VTC Program**
- ▶ **Describe how Military Core Values build a more cohesive participant group during an emergency**
- ▶ **Explain how Military Tools and Concepts organize participants activities when in-person meetings are not an option**
- ▶ **Summarize what is known about the efficacy of Veterans Court Programs during normal operations and emergency contingencies**

COVID-19 Challenges

- ▶ **Court Reviews**
- ▶ **Drug Screening**
- ▶ **CM Reviews and Sessions**
- ▶ **Individual Sessions**
- ▶ **Group Sessions**
- ▶ **Field Visits / Compliance**
- ▶ **Sanctions and Incentives**
- ▶ **Veteran Classes**
- ▶ **Mental Health Issues**
- ▶ **Relapse Prevention**
- ▶ **Crisis Intervention**
- ▶ **Technology**
- ▶ **Physical Fitness**
- ▶ **Others**

COVID-19 Timeline in the Appalachian Judicial Circuit

- ▶ **Initial notification and shut down – MAR 2020**
- ▶ **Attempts to resume in-person court reviews and treatment classes (MAY 2020)**
- ▶ **Second shut down – JUN, JUL 2020**
- ▶ **Using the smaller veterans court to restart in-person classes before opening classes to other courts (AUG 2020)**
- ▶ **Third shut down – DEC 2020**
- ▶ **Attempts to resume in-person court reviews and in-person classes (MAR 2021)**
- ▶ **Delta Variant – Renewed Restrictions (JUL / AUG 2021)**

Military Culture: Impacts during normal operations and emergency contingencies

- ▶ **Remembering One's Service**
- ▶ **Adjusting to new requirements and rapidly changing conditions**
- ▶ **Coping with stress and uncertainty**
- ▶ **Mental Toughness**
- ▶ **Use of a Common Language and old, but familiar terms and jargon**

What Are Core Values and Why Do They Matter

▶ ARMY:

- ▶ LOYALTY: Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers
- ▶ DUTY: Fulfill your obligations
- ▶ RESPECT: Treat people as they should be treated
- ▶ SELFLESS SERVICE: Put the welfare of the Nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own
- ▶ HONOR
- ▶ INTEGRITY
- ▶ PERSONAL COURAGE

Core Values (Continued)

▶ NAVY:

- ▶ HONOR
- ▶ COURAGE
- ▶ COMMITMENT

▶ AIR FORCE:

- ▶ INTEGRITY FIRST: An Airman is a person of integrity, courage and conviction.
- ▶ SERVICE BEFORE SELF: An Airman's professional duties take precedence over personal desires.
- ▶ EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO

Core Values

- ▶ **US MARINE CORPS:**

- ▶ **HONOR**

- ▶ **COURAGE**

- ▶ **COMMITMENT**

- ▶ **COAST GUARD:**

- ▶ **HONOR**

- ▶ **RESPECT**

- ▶ **DEVOTION TO DUTY**

- ▶ **SPACE FORCE: Pending**

Oath of Enlistment

"I (State Your Full Name) do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So, help me God."

Code of Conduct

- ▶ **ARTICLE I:** I am an American fighting in the forces that guard my country and our way of life, **I am prepared to give my life in their defense.**
- ▶ **ARTICLE II:** **I will never surrender of my own free will.** If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.
- ▶ **ARTICLE III:** If I am captured, **I will continue to resist by all means available.** I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

Code of Conduct (Continued)

- ▶ **ARTICLE IV:** If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information nor take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.
- ▶ **ARTICLE V:** Should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies.
- ▶ **ARTICLE VI:** I will never forget that I am an American fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

Variance Among Veterans

- ▶ **Character of Discharge**
- ▶ **Length of Service**
- ▶ **Military Occupational Skills (MOS)**
- ▶ **Combat verses Peacetime Service**
- ▶ **Incidence of Drug Use while serving**
- ▶ **Incidence of Mental Health issues while serving**
- ▶ **Other**

Similarities Among Veterans

- ▶ **Just how homogenous is this participant group?**
 - ▶ **Pride**
 - ▶ **Oath of Enlistment**
 - ▶ **Code of Conduct**
 - ▶ **Sense of Belonging**
 - ▶ **Subordination of self interests**
- ▶ **Does this make a difference during an emergency contingency?**
- ▶ **For most, service is a life changing experience**

Population Demographics

(01 MAR 2020 to 30 AUG 2021)

Age: Mean: 43.25 Median: 40 Range: 21 to 74

Gender: **Thirty Males / Two Females**

Education: **Thirty-one HS/GED / One Associate Degree**

Income: Mean: \$14.13/hour
(Note: Does not include disabled and/or retired)

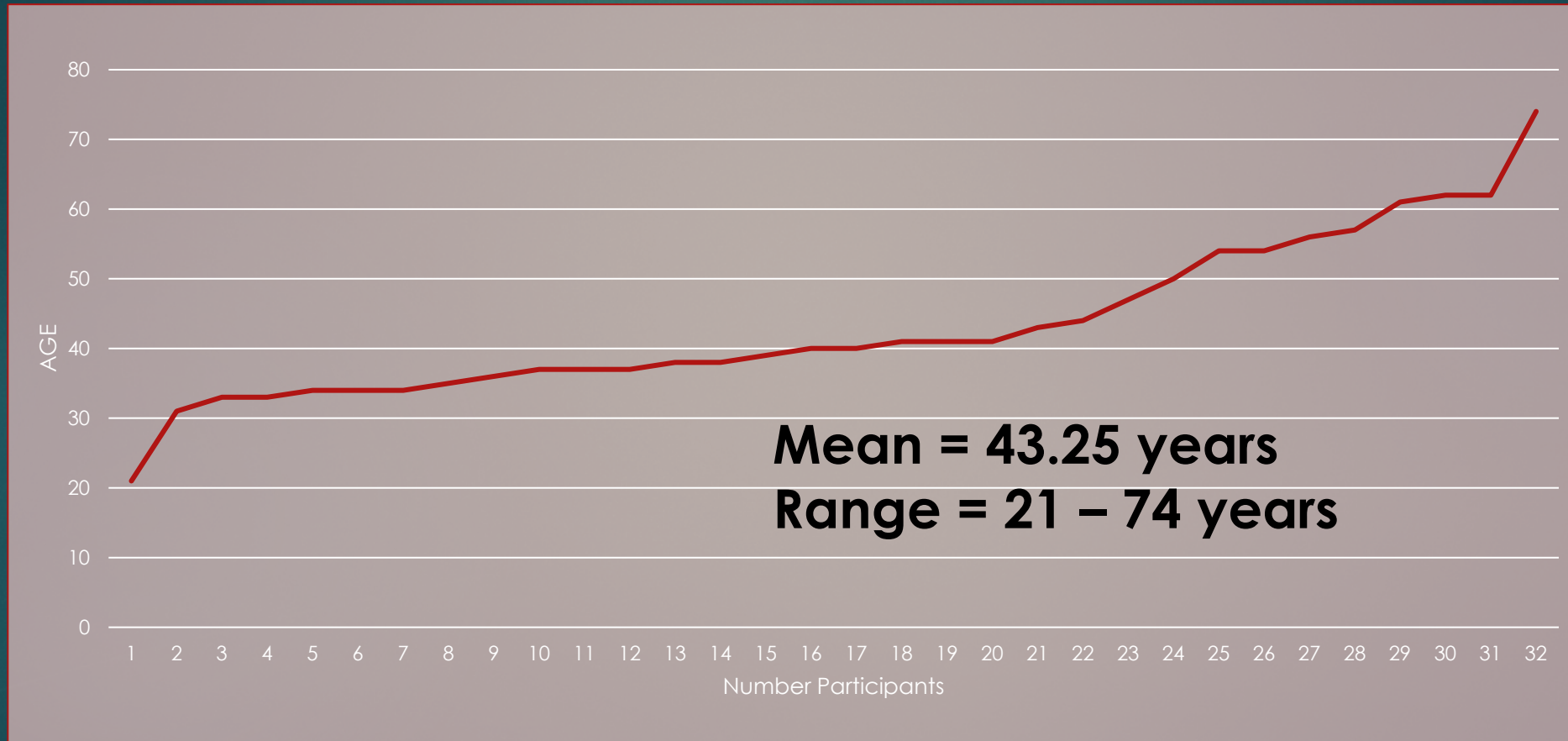
Years Service: Mean: 4.13 years **(Note: Five < 2 years / One > 20 years)**

Service Combat Theater: **Eleven (11) Veterans**

Character of Discharge: **Fourteen Honorable (44%) / Five General (16%) /
Ten OTH (31%) / Three BCD (9%)**

Other: **One (1) Military Retiree**

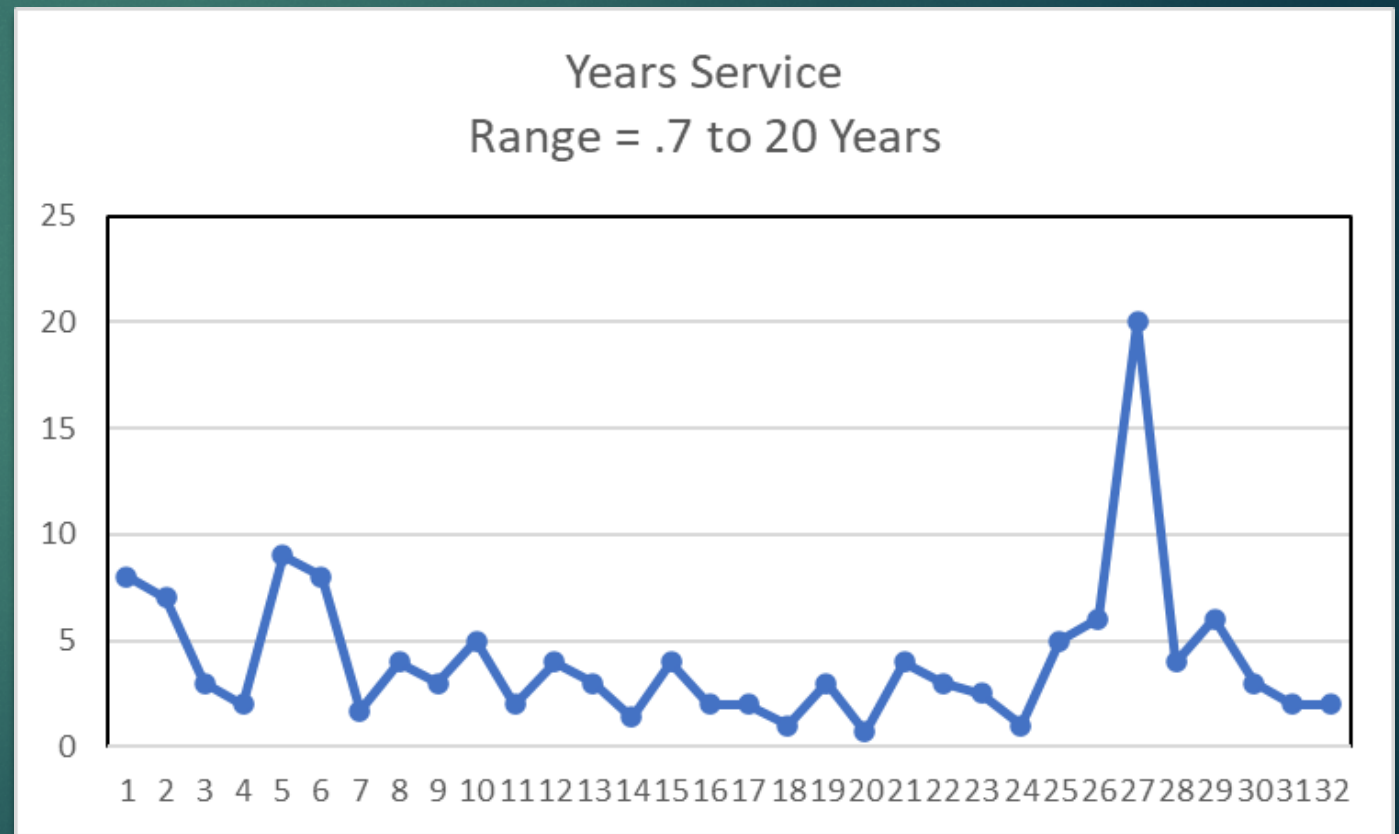
Participants by Age Distribution



Years of Service by Participant

► Mean = 4.13 Years

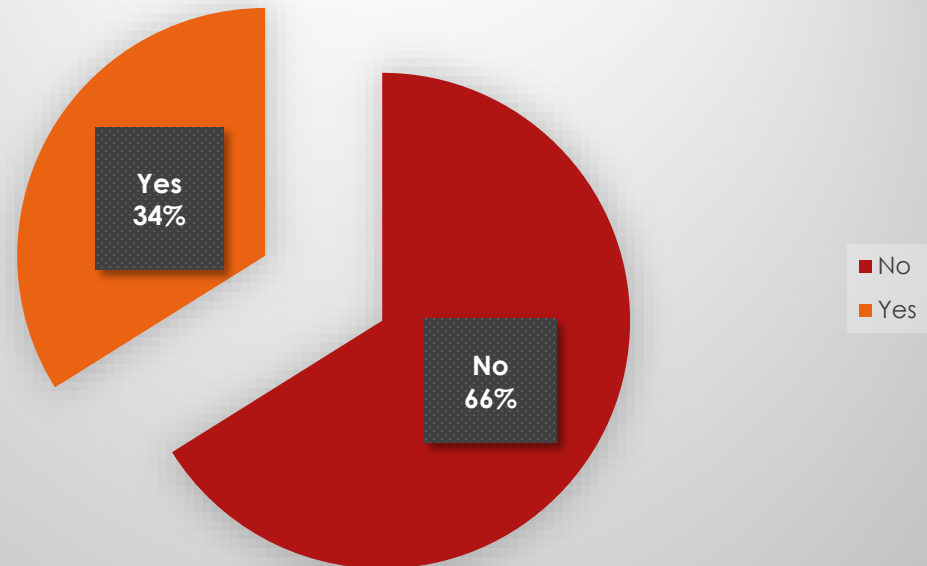
- Five Participants Served Less than 2 Years (16%)
- One Participant Served 20 Years



Service Combat
Theater vs.
Peacetime / Non-
deployed.

Combat Theater

SERVICE - Combat Theater



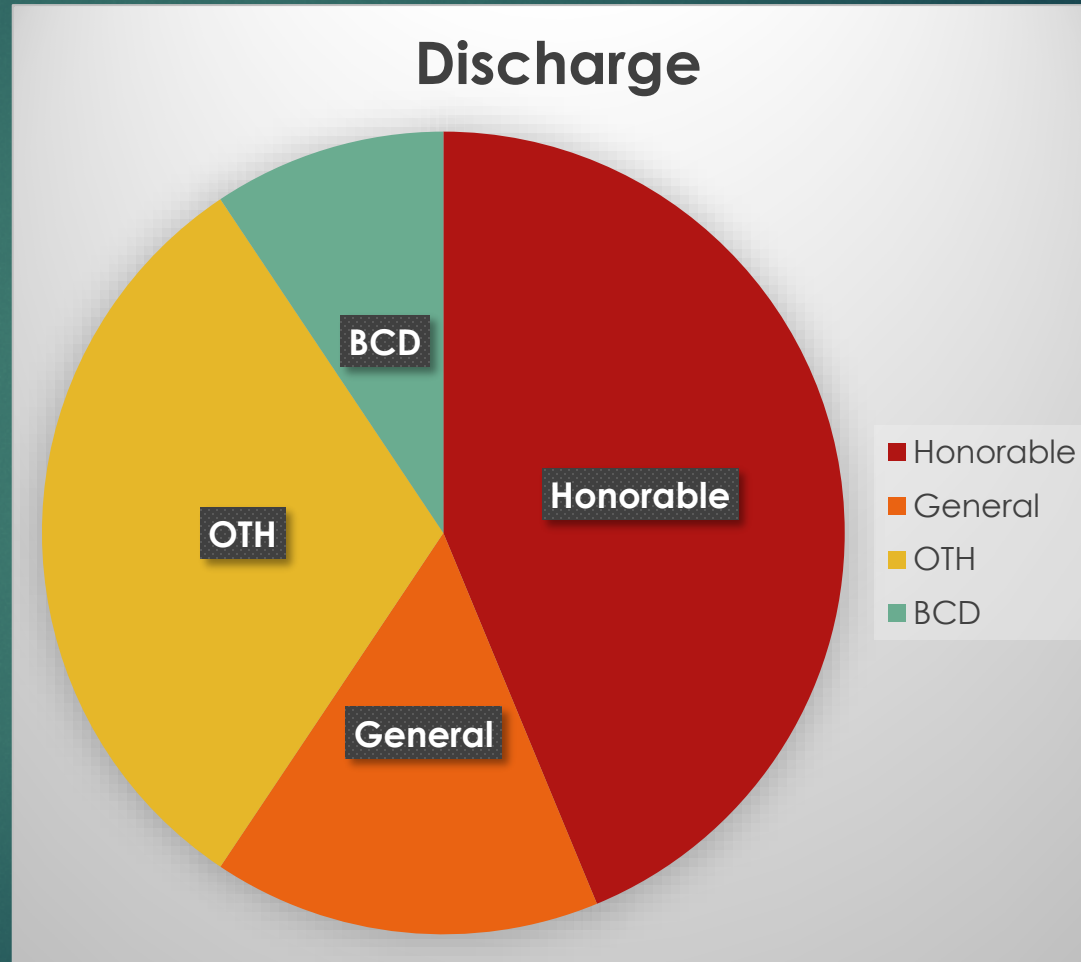
Character of Discharge

Honorable: 44%

General: 16%

Other Than
Honorable: 31%

Bad Conduct
Discharge: 9%



Why use Military Tools and Concepts to organize participants activities when in-person meetings are not an option

- ▶ **Situation Reports (SITREPs).**
 - ▶ Frequency and Quality of Contact.
 - ▶ Building Trust . . . Not just “Marking Time”
 - ▶ Increased SA (Situational Awareness)
- ▶ **Included Individual’s Military History in Staffing Notes – “A Source of Pride”**
- ▶ **The Buddy System (“ I have your six”)**
- ▶ **Using General and Service Specific Motivators**
- ▶ **Recognizing each Veteran's service (e.g., staffing notes and court reviews)**

SITUATION REPORT (SITREP)

Frequency of submission determined by phase

- ▶ **Line 1:** **How are you doing?**
- ▶ **Line 2:** **Health Issues?**
- ▶ **Line 3:** **Work Issues?**
- ▶ **Line 4:** **Court Issues (e.g., Child Support, Restitution, Fees, Etc.)?**
- ▶ **Line 5:** **Meeting Issues?**
- ▶ **Line 6:** **Sobriety, Therapy, Medication Issues?**
- ▶ **Line 7:** **Any Other Issues?**
- ▶ **Line 8:** **Any Assistance You Require?**

Why use Military Tools and Concepts to organize participants activities when in-person meetings are not an option?

- ▶ **Communicating as a Group (Net call, net call . . .)**
- ▶ **Teamwork**
- ▶ **The Role of Mentors**
- ▶ **Contributions from Previous and Recent Graduates**
- ▶ **Support from veteran organizations (e.g., Marine Corps League)**
- ▶ **Creating Opportunities for Veterans to contribute**

Unexpected Positive Outcomes

- ▶ **Dramatically increased contact with veterans**
- ▶ **Increased knowledge of individual situations**
- ▶ **Created an improved ability to respond to each veteran's changing needs**
- ▶ **Built closer CM to Veteran relationship**
- ▶ **Built closer Veteran to Veteran relationships**
- ▶ **Helped Veterans to organize requirements and commitments**

Undesirable Outcomes

- ▶ **Some veterans relapsed**
- ▶ **Some veterans experienced mental health emergencies**
 - **A function of COVID, but also of Real Life**
- ▶ **Increased knowledge of individual situations**

COVID / Pre-COVID Comparison

	COVID	Pre-COVID
Total Drug Screens	1,146 (47% of Pre-COVID Screens)	2,450
Total “Positive” Screens	13	16
Hospitalizations (Crisis Intervention)	4	1
Terminated	2	4
Absconded	3	3
Absconded and Voluntarily Returned	2	0

Review of the Literature

- ▶ **Arno, C. (2015). Proportional Response: The Need for More—And More Standardized—Veterans' Courts. University of Michigan. J. L. Reform.**
- ▶ **Kaiser, K. A., Rhodes, R. (2019). A Drug Court by Any Other Name? An Analysis of Problem-Solving Court Programs. Law and Human Behavior.**
- ▶ **Lucas (P). (2017). Advancing the Line: Increasing Empirical Literature on Justice-Involved Veterans. Criminal Justice Policy Review.**
- ▶ **Tsai, J., Finlay, A., Flatley, B., Kaspro, W. J., Clark, S. A. (2018). National Study of Veterans Treatment Court Participants: Who Benefits and Who Recidivates. Admin Policy Mental Health Services Research.**
- ▶ **Others . . .**

What is known about the efficacy of Veterans Court Programs during normal operations and emergency contingencies

- ▶ **How are Veterans Courts different . . . and is it a significant and meaningful difference?**
- ▶ **Future Research: Determine how Veterans Courts are administered in comparison to other Accountability Courts.**
- ▶ **If a Veterans Court is different, and provides specialized support to Veterans, it must be run like a “Veterans” Court . . . and uniquely identifiable as such by the Veteran.**

Summary

- ▶ **COVID-19 Challenges to Veterans Court (VTC) programs**
- ▶ **Military Culture impacts veterans court participants during normal operations and emergency contingencies**
- ▶ **COVID timeline and impact upon the VTC Program**
- ▶ **How Military Core Values build a more cohesive participant group during an emergency**
- ▶ **How Military Tools and Concepts organize participants activities when in-person meetings are not an option**
- ▶ **What is known about the Efficacy of Veterans Court Programs during normal operations and emergency contingencies**



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Questions and Answers



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