



Superior Court of California
County of Orange
News Release

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Orange County Veterans Treatment Court Designated as National Mentor Court

Santa Ana, CA – The Orange County Veterans Treatment Court, which is convened at the Community Court in Santa Ana, has been designated a Mentor Court, one of only four in the country, by Justice for Vets and the National Drug Court Institute (NDCI), in collaboration with the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the U.S. Department of Justice. The Veterans Treatment Court, which is under the direction of Superior Court Judge Joe Perez, is an intensive therapeutic program designed to treat military service veterans who are involved in the criminal justice system, and who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, substance addiction, or other psychological problems arising from their military service.

Based on the Drug Court model, the Veterans Treatment Court leverages the substantial resources of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in a partnership which also includes the Orange County Probation Department and the offices of the District Attorney and Public Defender. The program was established by Superior Court Judge Wendy Lindley in 2008 as the first of its kind in California, and the second in the nation. Since its inception, 53 participants have graduated and only 6 have been re-arrested; and more than 11,700 jail bed days have been saved, for a cost savings of more than \$465,000.

As a Mentor Court, the Veterans Treatment Court will offer guidance and training to court administrators and justice partners from other states interested in establishing Veterans Courts in their own jurisdictions. On Tuesday, March 18, a ceremony will be held at the Community Court at which Melissa Fitzgerald, the Senior Director of Justice for Vets, will present the Mentor Court plaque to Judge Joe Perez and the Veterans Treatment Court team.

“Our society has a moral duty to help our veterans overcome the challenges they face as a result of their military service, and the Veterans Treatment Court is an effective, cost-efficient way to provide that help. We are honored to be able to assist other courts in this endeavor,” said Kim Parsons, the program coordinator.

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