

MIDD Briefing Paper

BP 5 Existing MIDD Program/Strategy or New Concept Name: 5 Veterans Court Mentor Program

Existing MIDD Program/Strategy Review ☐ MIDD I Strategy Number _____ (Attach MIDD I pages)

New Concept ☒ 5 (Attach New Concept Form)

Type of category: New Concept

SUMMARY:

This concept provides a mentor coordinator to recruit, train, and supervise a pool of volunteer veteran mentors. This pool of volunteer mentors will provide support to court-involved veterans participating in the King County Regional Veterans Court, the Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court, and the Veterans Track of the King County Department of Judicial Administration/Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court. The mentor coordinator will work with court staff, court managers, the King County Veterans Justice Coordinator, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators to develop the courts' volunteer veterans mentor program, design a mentor handbook, and design and implement a mentor orientation

Collaborators:

Name	Department
Judge Johanna Bender	Judge, King County Superior Court (previously, Judge with KCDC RMHC/RVC)
Judge Ketu Shah	Judge, King County District Court Regional Mental Health Court/Regional Veterans Court
Judge Cheryl Carey	Judge, King County Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court
Judge Willie Gregory	Judge, Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court
Callista Welbaum	Program Manager, King County District Court Regional Mental Health Court/Regional Veterans Court
Mary Taylor	Program Manager, King County Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court

Subject Matter Experts and/or Stakeholders consulted for Briefing Paper preparation. List below.

Name	Role	Organization
Kevin Devine, LICSW	Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Diana Belletti, LICSW	Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

The following questions are intended to develop and build on information provided in the New Concept Form or gather information about existing MIDD strategies/programs.

A. Description

1. Please describe the New Concept or Existing MIDD Strategy/Program: Please be concise, clear, and specific. What is being provided to whom, under what circumstances? What are the New

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Concept Existing MIDD Strategy/Program goals? For New Concepts, does it relate to an existing MIDD strategy? If so, how?

This concept provides a mentor coordinator to recruit, train, and supervise a pool of volunteer veteran mentors. This pool of volunteer mentors will provide support to court-involved veterans participating in the King County Regional Veterans Court, the Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court, and the Veterans Track of the King County Department of Judicial Administration/Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court. The mentor coordinator will work with court staff, court managers, the King County Veterans Justice Coordinator, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators to develop the courts' volunteer veterans mentor program, design a mentor handbook, and design and implement a mentor orientation.

Use of a veterans mentor program is recognized as an essential component of the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) model. According to a national survey of such models, a majority of VTCs implemented throughout the country have incorporated a veterans' mentor program in accordance with the essential tenets of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Justice for Vets publication entitled "Ten Key Components of Veterans Treatment Court".¹ Mentors in a VTC mentor program are veterans themselves and draw on their shared experiences in the United States armed forces to engage with and provide emotional support and encouragement to veterans participating in VTC. Mentors understand the acquired psychological issues associated with military service and the "warrior" mentality instilled in our armed forces that prevent many service members from addressing their treatment needs. Veteran mentors are able to connect with court-involved veterans in a way that the court and treatment team is unable, and can serve as a guiding influence toward recovery.² The mentor relationship, maintained throughout court participation, "increases the likelihood that a veteran participating in the therapeutic court will remain in treatment and improves the veteran's chances for maintaining sobriety and law-abiding behavior."³

In addition to providing sober and pro-social support to court-involved veterans, volunteer mentors can assist court-involved veterans in navigating the court, treatment, and local, state and federal veteran service systems. Mentors are also able to support court-involved veterans through the numerous transitions they experience, including readjustment to civilian life after military separation and readjustment to the community upon re-entry from jail. The supportive services mentors offer court-involved veterans are critical to the veterans' achievement of stability in the community.

Hiring a mentor coordinator has been identified as a critical lesson learned through implementation and research of volunteer mentor programs within the criminal justice arena.⁴ Programs that did not have a mentor coordinator experienced challenges in getting their mentoring components operating effectively. As retention and recruitment of mentors are the primary mentoring challenges facing VTCs

¹ Baldwin, Julie M. "Executive Summary: National Survey of Veterans Treatment Courts." [2012].

² "Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court Program Mentor Guide." Available:

http://www.buffaloveteranscourt.org/sites/g/files/g283702/f/Mentor%20Handbook_0.pdf

³ The National Clearinghouse for Veterans Treatment Courts at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Justice for Vets Division. "The Ten Key Components of Veterans Treatment Court." [2012]. Available: <http://ndcrc.org/content/10-key-components-veterans-treatment-courts>

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor. "Mentoring Ex-Prisoners: A Guide for Prisoner Re-entry Programs." [2007].

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with mentor programs, it is critical for King County's VTCs to have a mentor coordinator to ensure a strong and effective mentor program across the three courts.⁵

2. Please identify which of the MIDD II Framework's four Strategy Areas best fits this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program area (Select all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Diversion | <input type="checkbox"/> Prevention and Early Intervention |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recovery and Re-entry | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> System Improvements |

Please describe the basis for the determination(s).

This New Concept is both a system improvements strategy as well as a recovery and re-entry strategy within the MIDD II Framework. The Veteran Mentor Program is a system improvements strategy because preliminary research indicates there are positive outcomes associated with mentoring programs used with adults in the criminal justice system.⁶ Specifically, misdemeanor courts utilizing volunteer mentors found that only 15 percent of probationers recidivated within five years (as opposed to 50 percent of the probationers supervised by courts without mentoring components), and prison re-entry programs that incorporated mentoring demonstrated reduced likelihood of recidivism in participants receiving mentoring (6.9%) relative to the national average (10.4%).⁷ In addition to impact on recidivism, mentoring has been demonstrated to increase retention in supportive services and has been associated with increased likelihood of job attainment and job retention, all of which are critical to successful re-entry. Finally, since the Veteran Mentor Program will coordinate closely with all three VTCs in King County for implementation and ongoing operations of the mentor program, this New Concept will result in closer collaboration of the VTCs and allow for potential collective influence on local, state, and federal initiatives and policies that impact veterans being served in the courts.

The Veteran Mentor Program is a recovery and re-entry strategy because the purpose of the program is to provide pro-social support and engagement in the community to court-involved individuals who are lacking in the supports and services necessary for successful re-entry. This New Concept proposes mentoring as a component of a comprehensive re-entry effort in accordance with research demonstrating the positive impact of mentoring on maintenance of community tenure in previously incarcerated adults.

B. Need; Emerging, Promising, Best, or Evidence Based Practices; Outcomes

1. Please describe the Community Need, Problem, or Opportunity that the New Concept Existing MIDD Strategy/Program addresses: What unmet mental health/substance use related need for what group or what system/service enhancement will be addressed by this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program? What service gap/unmet need will be created for whom if this New Concept Existing MIDD Strategy/Program is *not* implemented? Provide specific examples and supporting data if available.

Veterans participating in the King County Regional Veterans Court, the Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court, and the Veterans Track of the King County Department of Judicial Administration/Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court experience behavioral health disorders, many of whom also experience homelessness and poverty. The aim of these therapeutic courts is to address the underlying issues contributing to criminal justice involvement by providing veterans access to behavioral healthcare, housing, benefits, and other supportive services. While the VTCs currently

⁵ Ibid, Baldwin, Julie M. [2012].

⁶ Center for Effective Public Policy. "Building Offenders' Community Assets through Mentoring." [2009].

⁷ Ibid, Center for Effective Public Policy [2009].

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partner with state and federal VA service providers to ensure tangible needs are met (behavioral health treatment, stable housing, employment resources, VA benefits), court-involved veterans have intangible needs associated with their military service, behavioral health disorders, and criminal justice involvement (a sense of belonging, community ties, pro-social relationships/supports) that are also critical to address in order to support their health and recovery and reduce recidivism.

Specifically, veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and other psychiatric conditions often face extreme withdrawal and isolation. This isolation can be particularly profound for veterans, many of whom have internalized the message that it's a sign of weakness to acknowledge and seek help for mental health or substance use disorders. Isolation from family and community may be further compounded as a result of court-imposed protection orders and incarceration. Many court-involved veterans are newly sober and struggling to establish pro-social sober support networks.

Mentor programs allow for community-building and development of feelings of usefulness and belonging.⁸ "Social relationships with other law-abiding individuals and groups are a primary factor in desistance from crime".⁹ Additionally, mentoring as a component of a comprehensive re-entry strategy is associated with increased retention in re-entry services critical to achieving stability in the community.¹⁰ A veterans mentor program would provide veterans participating in King County VTCs with supportive relationships and community ties, thus increasing the likelihood of pro-social behaviors, treatment retention, and successful completion of court obligations.

Veterans may also experience ambivalence about their time in the military. A veterans mentor program would reconnect court-involved veterans with positive aspects of their military service, restoring a sense of self-worth and a code of conduct that embodies a life where integrity, loyalty, honor, selflessness, and courage are of paramount importance. This New Concept aims to assist participating veterans in regaining these life skills and values while supporting their health and recovery, and reducing recidivism and promoting community.

Without a mentor program, King County VTCs are operating out of alignment with established practice, failing to provide a comprehensive re-entry strategy that addresses the tangible needs of court-involved veterans and the intangible needs of a sense of community, belonging, and pro-social relationships and supports. These intangible needs, if left unattended, can result in serious ramifications for veterans and their family and community, and may significantly increase the veterans' risk for further involvement with the criminal justice system.

2. Please describe how the New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program Addresses the Need outlined above.

The mentor coordinator and participating volunteer mentors will provide emotional and logistical support to court-involved veterans who are striving to maintain sobriety and/or to address the symptoms of PTSD and other psychiatric conditions. The mentor program will also provide court-involved veterans with an opportunity to build community ties and increase pro-social activities and supports critical to recovery. Because the military experience is so unique, fellow veterans are uniquely situated to connect with, and support, one another. Volunteer mentors can tap into military values and tenets (e.g., "Always place the mission first," "Never accept defeat," and "Victory with honor"), as well

⁸ Maruna, S. & Immagrigion, R. "After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to Offender Reintegration." [2004]

⁹ Johnstone, G. & Van Ness, D. "Handbook of Restorative Justice." [2007]

¹⁰ Ibid, Center for Effective Public Policy [2009].

as shared experiences to enhance motivation and support behavioral change, pro-social goal achievement, and law-abiding behavior.

3. What EVIDENCE exists that the approach of this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program will successfully address the identified need? Please cite published research, reports, population feedback, etc. Why would this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program be expected to work? If this is an existing MIDD I strategy, please provide evidence of the results from existing MIDD evaluation reports, including who has/has not benefited from this strategy.

VTC is a relatively recent adaptation of existing therapeutic court programs (i.e., drug court and mental health court), with the first VTC implemented in Buffalo, New York in 2008. While VTCs have not been in operation long enough to collect significant data on the impact of key components of VTC, including the volunteer mentor program component, a recent study published in 2015 reveals promising preliminary data.¹¹ Specifically, Knudsen and Wingenfeld (2015) found that VTC participants demonstrated the most improvement in clinical outcomes, quality of life, and law abiding behavior when provided a combination of trauma-specific treatment, mentor services, and psychiatric medication. Multivariate analysis revealed that mentoring, in particular, positively predicted improvements in social connectedness and emotional limitations.¹² In another study, misdemeanor courts utilizing volunteer mentors found that only 15 percent of probationers recidivated within five years (as opposed to 50% of the probationers supervised by courts without mentoring components)¹³.

There is a wealth of research demonstrating the positive impact of mentoring on social, behavioral, and academic outcomes for at-risk young people and a growing body of literature supporting the use of such programs to support community re-entry of adults involved in the criminal justice system¹⁴. Specifically, the Ready4Work prison re-entry initiative, which incorporated mentoring to strengthen the social networks and supports for individuals reentering the community, demonstrated reduced likelihood of recidivism in participants receiving mentoring (6.9%) relative to the national average (10.4%)¹⁵. In addition to impact on recidivism, program participants who received mentoring demonstrated increased retention in supportive services relative to those who did not receive mentoring; were more than twice as likely to find a job than those who didn't have a mentor; and were more likely to stay employed than those who didn't meet with a mentor—all factors critical to successful re-entry and stability in the community.

The Boston Re-entry Initiative (BRI) is another multi-faceted re-entry program utilizing mentoring (among other services) to help previously incarcerated adults transition to the community. Those adults participating in the BRI exhibited significantly lower rates of recidivism relative to the comparison group across all three years following release.¹⁶ Specifically, the re-arrest rate for BRI participants was 31 percent lower than the comparison group, which met statistical significance.

¹¹ Knudsen, K. & Wingenfeld, S. "A Specialized Treatment Court for Veterans with Trauma Exposure: Implications for the Field." *Community Mental Health Journal*. [2015].

¹² Ibid, Knudsen and Wingenfeld [2015].

¹³ Ibid, Center for Effective Public Policy [2009].

¹⁴ The Council of State Governments, Justice Center. Available: <https://csgjusticecenter.org/re-entry/issue-areas/mentoring/>

¹⁵ Ibid, Center for Effective Public Policy [2009].

¹⁶ Braga, A., Piehl, A., and Hureau, D. "Controlling violent offenders released to the community: An evaluation of the Boston Re-entry Initiative." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* [2009].

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All Women's Prison Association (WPA) programming incorporates aspects of mentoring in re-entry services, particularly role modeling and promoting personal development. The WomenCare Program, created by WPA with mentoring as the primary vehicle for supporting women transitioning to the community, was evaluated in 2007. Women participating in the WomenCare program demonstrated a recidivism rate of less than seven percent in the last 12-24 months after initiation of the mentoring relationship.¹⁷

In addition to empirical data suggesting the positive impact of mentoring on a range of outcomes for adults in the criminal justice system, a growing social movement known as restorative justice promotes engagement of justice-involved individuals and their "affected communities in search of solutions that promote repair, reconciliation, and the rebuilding of relationships."¹⁸ A significant component of the restorative process is "to involve and include community members who can serve as personal and professional mentors" for justice-involved individuals.¹⁹ This is critical to rehabilitative efforts as evidence suggests relationships with other law-abiding individuals are a "primary factor in desistance from crime."²⁰

4. Please specify whether this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program is a/an: Promising Practice Please detail the basis for this determination. Please include a citation or reference supporting the selection of practice type.

The National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Justice for Vets publication entitled "Ten Key Components of Veterans Treatment Court" has established veteran mentor programs as an essential component of veterans treatment courts.²¹ A recent study published in the Community Mental Health Journal demonstrates that receiving mentoring as a part of veterans treatment court participation is correlated with positive clinical outcomes, in particular improved social connections and reduced emotional limitations.²²

While VTCs have not been in operation long enough to collect significant data on the impact of VTC volunteer mentor programs, there is a wealth of research supporting the use of mentor programs with at-risk youth and a growing body of literature supporting use of mentoring as a comprehensive re-entry strategy for adults in the criminal justice system (e.g., Ready4Work Prison Re-entry Initiative, Boston Re-entry Initiative, Women's Prison Association WomenCare Re-entry Program).

Data in support of mentoring as a component of a comprehensive re-entry program for court-involved adults is promising. However, it is important to exercise caution in inferring a causal relationship between mentoring and positive outcomes.

5. What OUTCOMES would the County see as a result of investment in this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program? Please be as specific as possible. What indicators and data sources could the County use to measure outcomes?

Successful implementation of a Volunteer Veterans Mentor Program, with the assistance of a mentor coordinator, may result in the following:

- Increased retention in behavioral health services ,

¹⁷ Women's Prison Association. "Mentoring Women in Re-entry: A WPA Practice Brief" [2008].

¹⁸ Boyes-Watson, C. (2014) Suffolk University, College of Arts and Sciences, Center for Restorative Justice

¹⁹ Ibid, Johnstone & Van Ness [2007].

²⁰ Ibid, Johnstone & Van Ness [2007].

²¹ Ibid, Baldwin, Julie M. [2012].

²² Ibid, Knudsen and Wingenfeld [2015].

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- Increased retention in the therapeutic court program,
- Improved program outcomes, including successful completion of court obligations,
- Reduced use of emergency service systems during court participation,
- Increased referrals and linkage to other supportive services (e.g., employment/vocational resources, educational resources, support groups),
- Reduced recidivism, and
- Collaboration across King County VTCs to collectively influence policies and initiatives that impact veterans in our community.

All VTCs in King County currently track the outcome of each participating veteran's case. With the addition of a Veterans Mentor Program, the courts will partner with King County's Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division (MHCADSD) to modify respective tracking protocols. Data sources that may be utilized include internal data that the therapeutic courts collect on program participants; internal data that MHCADSD collects on referrals, linkages and treatment admissions; booking and length of stay data already available to MHCADSD from municipal jails, county jails, and the WA State Department of Corrections; and possibly, data available through negotiated agreement with the VA. New data collected might include the extent to which mentor time is used, the correlation between mentor utilization and positive program outcomes, and the types of services provided by mentors.

C. Populations, Geography, and Collaborations & Partnerships

1. What Populations might directly benefit from this New Concept/Existing MIDD

Strategy/Program: (Select all that apply):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All children/youth 18 or under | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Racial-Ethnic minority (any) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children 0-5 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Black/African-American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children 6-12 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teens 13-18 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Asian/Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transition age youth 18-25 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First Nations/American Indian/Native American |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant/Refugee |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Older Adults | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Veteran/US Military |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Families | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Homeless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anyone | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GLBT |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Offenders/Ex-offenders/Justice-involved | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Women |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other – Please Specify: | |

Please include details about this population such as: individuals transitioning from psychiatric hospital to community; individuals judged incompetent by the court; children of drug users who are in foster care, etc.

Table 1

Demographics of veterans referred to the King County Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court, Veterans Track

	King County Superior Court Adult Drug
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	Diversion Court, Veterans Track
Gender	
Male	97%
Female	3%
Race	
Asian/Pacific Islander	5%
Black/African American	42%
Hispanic/Latino	5%
White/Caucasian	47%
American Indian	--
Unknown	--
Age	
18-25	8%
26-30	13%
31-35	3%
36-40	11%
41-45	11%
46-50	26%
51-55	16%
56-60	5%
61-65	3%
66-70	3%
71-75	3%
Sexual Orientation	
GLBTQ	3%
Heterosexual	87%
Choosing Not to Disclose	3%
No Data	8%
Homelessness Status at Drug Court Entry	
Homeless currently	53%
Homeless within past 6 months	8%
Not Homeless within past 6 months	32%
No Data	8%

Note. Data obtained from KCDC DDC for the period of 11/1/2011-12/11/2015.

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Table 2

Demographics of veterans referred to the King County District Court Regional Veterans Court & Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court

	King County District Court Regional Veterans Court & Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court
Gender	
Male	69%
Female	3%
Transgender/Other	21%
Unknown	7%
Ethnicity	
Hispanic, Latino Ethnicity - Yes	4%
Hispanic, Latino Ethnicity - No	70%
Unknown	24%
Race	
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Asian, Asian-American	2%
Black, African American, Other African	17%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3%
White or Caucasian	37%
Other Race	7%
Mutli-Racial (2+ identified)	1%
Unknown	18%
Age	
18-24	1%
25-34	15%
35-54	36%
55-59	13%
60-64	7%
65-74	6%
75-84	2%
85 and over	1%
Unknown	21%
No Data	8%
Homelessness Status at Screening for Entry	
Homeless- Yes	31%
Homeless- No	37%
Unknown	32%

Note. Data obtained from the Veterans Court Clinician for the period of 1/1/2012-6/30/2015.

Veterans participating in the VTCs in King County will be the direct recipients of mentor services. Veterans participating in the courts are diverse, varying in age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and race. A significant portion of veterans participating in King County's veterans treatment courts are homeless at enrollment in the court program.

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While justice-involved veterans are the direct beneficiaries of the veterans mentor program, families and communities also benefit. Specifically, volunteer mentors may host family and community events as appropriate to assist court-involved veterans with reintegration into the community, and support development of positive relationships. As such, families and communities are strengthened by a mentor program.

Mentors themselves benefit from participation in the veterans mentor program. In addition to obtaining a support network of other veteran mentors, “mentors often express gaining a new perspective on life issues and feel they are giving something back to society” through their participation in a mentor program.²³ Supporting fellow veterans struggling with the transition to civilian life allows mentors to reconnect with their military value of “Never leave a buddy behind” and other positive aspects of service.

- 2. Location is an important factor in the availability and delivery of services. Please identify whether this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program addresses a specific geographic need in the following area. Please provide additional that discusses the basis for the selection:**
County-wide

Individuals participating in the VTCs in King County represent individuals from all parts of the county. In addition to attending review hearings of mentees, the mentor coordinator and volunteer mentors will have the opportunity to do outreach with mentees in the community and host pro-social events in the community for veterans participating in the court programs.

- 3. What types of COLLABORATIONS and/or PARTNERSHIPS may be necessary to implement this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program, and with whom (other jurisdictions & cities, law enforcement, first responders, treatment providers, departments within King County, housing, employers, etc.)? Please be specific.**

The mentor coordinator will collaborate with each of the VTCs in King County to develop and implement the Veterans Mentor Program. The mentor coordinator will also partner with existing stakeholders in the VA (Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators), the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (i.e., Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Services program), the County Executive Branch, the King County Veterans Program, and MHCADSD (i.e., Veterans Justice Coordinator). It is anticipated that the mentor coordinator will form partnerships with local businesses, veterans groups, veteran service organizations, veterans advisory and levy boards, Vet Centers and VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinics to identify veterans interested in serving as volunteer mentors. Collaborations with mental health peer and peer recovery coach programs will also be valuable for identifying veterans in recovery who can provide mentorship.

D. Drivers, Barriers, Unintended Consequences, and Alternative Approaches

- 1. What FACTORS/DRIVERS, such as health care reform, changes in legislation, etc. might impact the need for or feasibility of this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program? How?**

The mentoring services provided through this program are intended (among other goals) to aid justice-involved veterans identify unmet needs, navigate a complex veterans service system, and access behavioral health services. The goal of service linkage and ongoing maintenance of appropriate services (i.e., mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorders treatment) is aligned with King County’s

²³ Ibid, Women’s Prison Association [2008].

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current movement toward behavioral healthcare integration. Noteworthy, in order to participate in any of the three VTCs in King County, an individual must be eligible for VA healthcare and receive behavioral health services through the VA Puget Sound Healthcare System. As such, healthcare reform and other Washington State legislative changes pertaining to healthcare do not impact the feasibility of this New Concept.

2. What potential BARRIERS, if any, might there be to implementation? How might these be overcome? Who would need to be involved in overcoming them?

The single largest barrier to implementation of a veteran mentor program is recruitment and retention of mentors.²⁴ While the VA estimates approximately 115,000 veterans currently reside in King County, finding veterans who are interested and have the capacity to volunteer as veteran mentors to individuals participating in the therapeutic veterans courts may be challenging.

Hiring a mentor coordinator has been identified as a critical lesson learned through implementation and research of volunteer mentor programs within the criminal justice system.²⁵ Programs that did not have a mentor coordinator experienced challenges in getting their mentoring components operating effectively.

Additional support for the implementation of a veteran mentor program may be obtained through the Mentor Boot Camp presented annually as a track within the National Association of Drug Court Professionals' Vet Court Conference and through coaching packets designed to assist jurisdictions in the implementation of mentor programs.²⁶ King County is home to a robust veterans services and advocacy network, which can be leveraged to support a strong and effective mentor program. Court staff (in particular, court managers) and existing stakeholders, including the VA (Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators), WA State Department of Veterans Affairs, King County Veterans Justice Coordinator, Veterans and Human Services Levy Board, and King County Veterans Program would be involved in overcoming this barrier.

3. What potential UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES might exist if this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program is implemented? Please be specific---for whom might there be consequences?

Currently, the three VTCs in King County use their own internal tracking protocols to collect data pertaining to referrals and outcomes. The data collected differs depending on which court is collecting the data, making it difficult to evaluate participant characteristics, services, and outcomes across the courts, and challenging to examine the impact of a variable like mentor services across the courts. It will be critical for the courts to coordinate around data collection in order to ensure 1) the mentor program fits the specific needs of the population served by the courts, and 2) ongoing quality improvement and program evaluation.

Additionally, while King County Regional Veterans Court and the Veterans Track of the King County Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court have court managers that can support data collection efforts and assist with coordination of court staff to meet data needs, the Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court does not have a staff member identified as a court manager. This has created some challenges with regard to team coordination around program operations and could serve as a challenge

²⁴ Ibid, Baldwin, Julie M. [2012].

²⁵ Ibid, U.S. Department of Labor [2007].

²⁶ Ibid, Center for Effective Public Policy [2009].

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with regard to implementation of a mentor program in day-to-day court operations. That being said, the Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court does have a designated data analyst. This data analyst has served as the de facto court manager for the program in addition to leading data collection efforts for program evaluation purposes and has committed to playing a key role in implementation of the mentoring program in Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court.

The courts are able to tap internal data collected by court staff on program participants and outcomes as well as internal data that MHCADSD collects on referrals, linkages and treatment admissions. However, data collected through the MHCADSD information system does not include service utilization data from the VA, the agency that provides a majority of the behavioral health and social services to court participants. The courts in partnership with MHCADSD would need to negotiate an arrangement with the federal VA to obtain service utilization information for data collection purposes. Fortunately, representatives from the federal VA participate on the three VTC teams in King County and may be able to collaborate with court staff with regard to data sharing for program evaluation purposes if required releases of information are obtained or a data sharing agreement enacted.

4. What potential UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES might there be if this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program is *not* implemented? Please be specific---for whom might there be consequences?

If this New Concept of a Veterans Mentor Program is not implemented, the VTCs in King County will function without a component that has been described as an essential and key element to their success according to 1) the National Drug Court Association Justice for Vets Division, 2) a wealth of anecdotal data reported by VTC teams and participants, and 3) a recent study of VTC components predicting positive outcomes.²⁷ The importance of mentoring is further supported by a growing body of research demonstrating the positive impact of mentor programs on successful re-entry of justice-involved adults. As mentoring has been associated with increased retention in programs and services critical for maintaining stability in the community, it is possible the County's relatively new VTCs will not achieve their full potential pertaining to their impact on veteran participants, their families, and the community.

In the absence of a mentor program, veterans served by the court may not receive an opportunity to develop healthy, pro-social relationships with veterans in their community or to reconnect meaningfully with associated pro-social values. Community ties and sense of belonging have been identified as stabilizing and rehabilitative forces in not only the VTC and re-entry literature, but also from a restorative justice framework.

Failure to implement this New Concept may impact the potential for collaboration among the County's VTCs in regard to 1) standardizing and enhancing data collection efforts and program evaluation, and 2) influencing policy, initiatives, and partnerships that impact veterans in our community.

5. What ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES currently exist to address this need apart from this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program? At a high level, how does this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program compare to those other approaches in terms of cost, feasibility, etc. Could this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program be merged with one or more of the alternatives? What are the pros/cons of merging?

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) provides short-term re-entry services to justice-involved veterans including supporting re-entry efforts of the therapeutic veterans courts in King

²⁷ Ibid, Knudsen & Wingenfeld [2015].

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County. This re-entry program is funded via the King County Veterans and Human Services Levy and Chapter 73.08 Revised Code of Washington, Veterans Relief,²⁸ and is a body of work overseen via contract between King County MHCADSD and the WDVA. WDVA re-entry support includes brief case management services and linkage to behavioral health, housing and other ancillary services that may assist justice-involved veterans with achieving stability in the community.

The WDVA re-entry support team consists of 3.0 full-time equivalents (FTE) and, historically, at least 1.0 FTE has been a veteran. The WDVA re-entry support team serves veterans regardless of participation in the therapeutic veterans courts, receiving referrals from the King County Correctional Facility, Maleng Regional Justice Center, South Correctional Entity (SCORE), and the following misdemeanor jails in King County: Issaquah, Kent, Kirkland, and Enumclaw. Though the WDVA re-entry team may consist of at least one veteran staff member and collaborates with VTC-involved veterans to support the courts' re-entry efforts, they do so as service providers not mentors.

The VA has recently developed peer support programs to be implemented across the country.²⁹ These programs are designed, for veterans with behavioral health disorders who are utilizing the VA healthcare system, to provide some combination of the following services: information, support, skill-building, and advocacy. Unfortunately, as is true with many federal VA initiatives, the VA peer support programs "take many forms throughout the VA and wider community" and vary from region to region in regard to staffing plan, nature and intensity of peer interaction (weekly, monthly, single session), compensation (volunteer, compensated work therapy, paid), and the amount of training and supervision involved.³⁰ The VA Puget Sound Healthcare System has a small peer program composed of paid staff, and is designed to provide support to individuals experiencing severe mental illness while seeking services at a day treatment center on the VA campus (VA campus-based program rather than community-based program). Similar to the WDVA re-entry team, the VA peers may provide support to some portion of court-involved veterans as service providers, not as mentors, and is not a viable option for veterans seeking community supports and activities. (The VA peer program is not overseen by King County and currently does not formally interface with any County-funded programs.)

A Veterans Mentor Program is part of a comprehensive re-entry strategy utilized by VTCs to support participants' health and recovery, and reduce recidivism and promote community safety. As such, a veteran mentor program may work in partnership with these aforementioned resources (WDVA re-entry program and VA peer program) to support VTC participants' recovery and increase the likelihood of engagement and retention in the VTC programs. However, a mentor program cannot be replaced by or merged with these alternative resources because it performs a different and complementary function. Additionally, the veterans re-entry program and the VA peer program are potential resources available to eligible court-involved veterans, but do not exclusively serve the County's VTCs, nor do they prioritize service for VTC participants. In fact, these alternative programs are required to serve a much larger pool of veterans in our community and are therefore limited in the intensity of services that can be offered to VTC participants. Finally, as the alternative programs are provided by service providers rather than volunteers in the community, merging of a mentor program with these alternatives reduces the community building potential of the program.

²⁸ <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=73.08>. Accessed 12/23/15.

²⁹ Lucksted, A. "Peer Support Programs: Overview." *VISN 5 MIRECC Recovery Resources*. Available at: http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/recovery/peer_support.pdf.

³⁰ Consultation with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator, Kevin Devine, LICSW. [December 2015].

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E. Countywide Policies and Priorities

1. How does this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program FIT within the CONTINUUM of care, and within other county initiatives such as Behavioral Health Integration, Health and Human Services Transformation, Best Starts for Kids, All Home, the Youth Action Plan, and/or the Vets and Human Services Levy or any other County policy work?

The establishment of this new position fits within the continuum of care by providing support and assistance to court-involved veterans as they transition to the community and navigate the complex local, state and federal veterans service systems critical to community tenure. This New Concept fits with the county's movement toward Behavioral Health Integration and All Home Initiatives as a primary goal of mentoring services is to engage and retain individuals in behavioral health services and stable housing. The VTCs work closely with and receive funding from the King County Veterans and Human Services Levy, and this New Concept would likely further that partnership as the mentor coordinator could work closely with the Veterans and Human Services Levy Oversight Board to recruit mentors in the community and continue to develop the county's relatively new VTC programs.

2. How is this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program rooted in principles of recovery, resiliency, and/or trauma-informed care?

This New Concept links with the Recovery Plan for Mental Health Services in that it aims to augment the treatment plan designed for veterans participating in the therapeutic veterans courts by providing participants with mentors who can inspire and support them while they engage in appropriate services they may be ambivalent about and work toward recovery. A critical component of standard mentor training programs is educating the identified mentor coordinator and prospective mentors about the behavioral health issues that veterans experience (including PTSD; depression; substance use disorders; sequelae of military sexual trauma and/or traumatic brain injury), how these issues can contribute to criminal justice involvement if left untreated, and the qualities and skills veterans can leverage as a result of their military training and experience to be successful in recovery (i.e., resiliency). At its very foundation, a mentor program is built on principles of recovery, resiliency and trauma-informed care. Veterans participating in VTCs who are newly in recovery will have role-models who not only inspire them to continue working towards their personal goals but serve as living examples of what can be accomplished with adequate support and perseverance.

The mentor coordinator and volunteer mentors will be encouraged to attend the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Vet Court Conference Mentor Boot Camp where mentors will learn about how best to work with veterans having experienced trauma and other behavioral health issues.

3. How does this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program enact and further the County's EQUITY and SOCIAL JUSTICE work?

There are alarming rates of poverty, homelessness and untreated behavioral health and primary care conditions in the population of veterans who become involved in the criminal justice system. Often, veterans come into contact with law enforcement because of these very issues (e.g., behavioral health crisis, engaging in survival economies) and are taken to jail in lieu of addressing the root cause of the problem. Criminal justice involvement impacts social capital, which can exacerbate withdrawal and isolation commonly seen in marginalized and disenfranchised populations, and can further complicate access to stabilizing resources in the community. At its core, this New Concept of a Mentor Program aims to assist justice-involved veterans regain social capital and connect with the community in a way that is not easily accessible to individuals with prior court involvement, experiencing behavioral health

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conditions and, often, poverty. This New Concept also promotes equity and social justice as individuals should not be ostracized and removed from their community due to their social service needs but, rather, assisted in meeting these needs and supported by their communities for doing so.

The three VTCs in King County serve a diverse population of veterans—individuals varying in age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, behavioral health issues, and social service needs. The mentor coordinator hired to oversee the volunteer mentor program that serves the VTC population would be expected to complete ongoing equity and social justice training from King County. Court staff, court managers, VA Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators, and the King County Veterans Justice Coordinator will work closely with the selected mentor coordinator and volunteer mentors to ensure development of a recovery-oriented, person-centered program responsive to the needs of the diverse population of veterans participating in the therapeutic veterans courts.

In short, a veteran mentor program promotes access to services in a culture where stigma prevents such access (in particular, within the military community) and reconnects court participants to a community of veterans who care for and value them.

F. Implementation Factors

1. What types of RESOURCES will be needed to implement this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program (staff, physical space, training, UA kits, etc.)?

Resources needed to implement this New Concept include the mentor coordinator, physical space for a mentor coordinator (which includes a telephone, computer with Internet access, copy machine, printer, and fax machine) and access to training resources to support mentor coordinator and volunteer mentor development.

2. Estimated ANNUAL COST. \$100,001-500,000 Provide unit or other specific costs if known.

Estimated annual cost of the Veteran Mentor Program is \$105,000. While the majority of funds requested in this proposal would be allocated to salary and benefits for the mentor coordinator (\$85,000), a portion of the funds (\$15,000) would be designated as “flex funds.” Flex funds would be used by the mentor coordinator and volunteer mentors to 1) host family and community social events as appropriate, to support reintegration into the community and development of positive relationships, 2) cover transportation costs for court-involved veterans to attend mentor-hosted social events, and 3) pay for emergency services for the veterans as those needs arise. This New Concept also proposes to reserve a small portion of funds (approximately \$5,000) for ongoing training needs of the mentor coordinator and volunteer mentors (e.g., send the mentor coordinator to the Mentor Boot Camp program presented annually as a track within the National Association of Drug Court Professionals’ Vet Court Conference).

3. Are there revenue sources other than MIDD that could or currently fund this work? Clarify response, citing revenue sources.

While there is no strategy in the Veterans and Human Services Levy that currently funds a Veteran Mentor Program, the next iteration of the levy (if approved by the voters) could potentially be a source of revenue for this New Concept. The current Veterans and Human Services Levy funds are allocated through 2017, so the levy does not represent a possible funding option until County Fiscal Year 2018 at the earliest.

4. TIME to implementation: 6 months to a year from award

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a. What are the factors in the time to implementation assessment?

Factors for implementation include the following: Request for Proposal (RFP) process; successful bidder hiring a mentor coordinator; development of a mentor program and training materials in collaboration with other community stakeholders; mentor coordinator participation in the Mentor Boot Camp presented at the annual Veterans Court Conference; recruitment of volunteer veteran mentors; training of volunteer mentors and selection of assignments.

b. What are the steps needed for implementation?

Steps needed for implementation include the following:

- Successful completion of RFP process;
- Development of a job description for the Mentor Coordinator position based on the RFP, assembling a hiring panel for the Mentor Coordinator position, and hiring the Veteran Mentor Coordinator;
- Development of mentor program policies and procedures, including detailing the management of operational issues regarding mentor and mentee consent and participation, and managing information sharing and disclosure;
- Development of a mentor training protocol;
- Successful completion of the NADCP Vet Court Conference Mentor Boot Camp by the identified Mentor Coordinator;
- Development of data collection protocol for the mentor program that interfaces with a standardized VTC data collection protocol across the three courts; and
- Recruitment of volunteer veteran mentors through community outreach.

c. Does this need an RFP?

Yes.

G. Any OTHER INFORMATION that would assist reviewers with making recommendations about this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program? (optional). Do you have suggestions regarding this New Concept/Existing MIDD Strategy/Program?

None.

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New Concept Submission Form

#5

Working Title of Concept: Regional Veterans Court Mentor Program

Name of Person Submitting Concept: Johanna Bender, King County District Court Judge, Willie Gregory, Seattle Municipal Court Judge, and Cheryl Carey, King County Superior Court Judge

Organization(s), if any: King County District Court Regional Veterans Court, Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court, and Veterans Track, King County Department of Judicial Administration/Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court

Phone: 206-477-1680

Email: Johanna.Bender@kingcounty.gov

Mailing Address: 516 Third Ave., Suite E327, Seattle, WA 98104

Please note that county staff may contact the person shown on this form if additional information or clarification is needed.

Please share whatever you know, to the best of your ability.

*Concepts must be submitted via email to MIDDconcept@kingcounty.gov by **October 31, 2015**.*

1. Describe the concept.

Please be specific, and describe new or expanded mental health or substance abuse-related services specifically.

Use of a veterans mentor program is recognized as a key component of the veterans treatment court model. Veteran mentors draw on their shared experiences in the United States armed forces to provide emotional support and encouragement to veterans participating in treatment courts. Mentors are also able to provide support regarding housing and job searches, education, transportation, and other services which are critical to achieving stability in the community. Finally, mentors are able to provide sober and pro-social support outside of the courtroom. We seek funding for a Mentor Coordinator who will recruit, train, and supervise a pool of veteran mentors. This pool of mentors will provide support to court-involved veterans within the King County Regional Veterans Court, the Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court, and the Veterans Track of the King County Department of Judicial Administration/Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court. The Mentor Coordinator will work with court staff, the King County Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators to develop the court's volunteer mentor program, design a mentor handbook, and design and implement a mentor orientation. While the majority of the funds requested would go to salary and benefits for the Mentor Coordinator, we anticipate holding a portion of the funds in reserve to create a "flex fund." This fund would be used by the Mentor Coordinator and volunteer mentors to host social events for court-involved veterans, to cover transportation costs for court-involved veterans to attend mentor-hosted social events, and to pay for emergency services for the veterans as those needs arise. Finally, we propose to use approximately \$5,000 in funding to send the Mentor Coordinator to the Mentor Boot Camp program presented annually as a track within the national Justice for Vets conference.

2. What community need, problem, or opportunity does your concept address?

Please be specific, and describe how the need relates to mental health or substance abuse.

Veterans with PTSD, depression, and other psychiatric conditions often face extreme withdrawal and isolation. This isolation can be particularly profound for veterans, many of whom have internalized the message that it is a sign of weakness to acknowledge and seek help for mental health issues or substance abuse. Isolation from family and community may be further compounded as a result of court-imposed protection orders and incarceration. Many court-involved veterans are newly sober and struggling to establish pro-social sober support networks. A veterans mentor program would provide veterans

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participating in treatment courts with supportive relationships, thus increasing the likelihood of treatment retention, pro-social behaviors, and successful completion of court obligations. Veterans may experience ambivalence about their time in the military. A veterans mentor program would also reconnect court-involved veterans with positive aspects of their military service, restoring a sense of self-worth and a code of conduct that embodies a life where integrity, loyalty, honor, selflessness, and courage are of paramount importance. We wish to see our participating veterans regain these life skills and values not only to support their health and recovery but also in order to reduce recidivism and promote community safety.

3. How would your concept address the need?

Please be specific.

The Mentor Coordinator and participating volunteer mentors will provide emotional and logistical support to court-involved veterans who are striving to maintain sobriety and/or to address the symptoms of PTSD and other psychiatric conditions. Because the military experience is so unique, fellow veterans are situated to connect with and support one another. Volunteer mentors can tap into military values and tenets (e.g., “Always place the mission first,” “Never accept defeat,” and “Victory with honor”), as well as shared experiences to enhance motivation and support behavioral change and pro-social goal achievement.

4. Who would benefit? Please describe potential program participants.

Veterans participating in the King County Regional Veterans Court, the Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court, and the Veterans Track of the King County Department of Judicial Administration/Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court would be the direct recipients of mentor services. In addition, the volunteers may host family and community events as appropriate to assist court-involved veterans with reintegration into the community and to support development of positive relationships.

5. What would be the results of successful implementation of program?

Include outcomes that could be measured and evaluated. Please indicate whether this data is currently collected in some fashion, and in what form.

King County’s therapeutic courts currently track the outcome of each participating veteran’s case. If we are able to add a mentor program, we will partner with MHCADSD to potentially modify our tracking protocol. New data might include the extent to which mentor time is used, the correlation between mentor utilization and positive program outcomes, and the types of services provided by mentors.

6. Which of the MIDD II Framework’s four strategy areas best fits your concept? (you may identify more than one)

- ☐ **Prevention and Early Intervention:** Keep people healthy by stopping problems before they start and preventing problems from escalating.
- ☐ **Crisis Diversion:** Assist people who are in crisis or at risk of crisis to get the help they need.
- ☒ **Recovery and Re-entry:** Empower people to become healthy and safely reintegrate into community after crisis.
- ☒ **System Improvements:** Strengthen the behavioral health system to become more accessible and deliver on outcomes.

7. How does your concept fit within the MIDD II Objective – to improve health, social, and justice outcomes for people living with, or at risk of, mental illness and substance use disorders?

The King County Regional Veterans Court, Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court, and Veterans Track of the King County Department of Judicial Administration/Superior Court Adult Drug Diversion Court all serve court-involved veterans. Although the eligibility criteria of these programs differ somewhat, each

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serve veterans who have been diagnosed with mental illness and/or a substance use disorder and who have become involved in the criminal justice system as a result of these disorders. The goal of each program is to address the issues that have resulted in the veteran being referred to the criminal justice system, to provide a courtroom environment that is supportive and respectful of the veteran and the victim (if any), and to strive to increase public safety through collaborative, team-based support, treatment, and supervision. Research demonstrates that mentoring programs can positively affect social and behavioral outcomes in court-involved adults, and mentoring programs have been used to support individuals transitioning from incarceration to the community in re-entry programs nationwide.

8. What types of organizations and/or partnerships are necessary for this concept to be successful? Examples: first responders, mental health or substance abuse providers, courts, jails, schools, employers, etc.

We anticipate that the Mentor Coordinator will form partnerships with local businesses, veterans service centers, and veterans service organizations to identify veterans interested in serving as volunteer mentors. The Mentor Coordinator will also partner with our existing stakeholders in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, the County Executive Branch, and the King County Veterans Program.

9. If you are able to provide estimate(s), how much funding per year do you think would be necessary to implement this concept, and how many people would be served?

Pilot/Small-Scale Implementation: \$ # of dollars here per year, serving # of people here people per year
Partial Implementation: \$ # of dollars here per year, serving # of people here people per year
Full Implementation: \$ 150,000 per year, serving 100 veterans plus their impacted family members people per year

Once you have completed whatever information you are able to provide about your concept, please send this form to MIDDConcept@kingcounty.gov, no later than 5:00 PM on October 31, 2015.

If at any time you have questions about the MIDD new concept process, please contact MIDD staff at MIDDConcept@kingcounty.gov.