

Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Justice Outreach Initiatives

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**Development of the Harris County
Veterans' Court**

The background of the slide is a dark blue-tinted image. On the left, there are several rows of bookshelves filled with books. On the right, a large, white scale of justice is visible, with its pans hanging from a central beam. The overall scene suggests a legal or judicial environment.

Development of Houston Veterans' Court

- **What is a Veterans' Treatment Court**
- **Why Houston Needs a Veterans' Court**
- **Importance of Community Partnerships**
- **Approval Process**
- **Unique Features of Houston Court**
- **Status Report**

What is a Veterans' Treatment Court?

- **Hybrid of Drug and Mental Health Courts**
- **Judicially supervised court dockets**
- **Balance between treatment and accountability**
- **Coordinated Response between Court and VA treatment resources**
- **Over 28 in the country**
- **Legislation in 3 states (Texas, Nevada, and Illinois)**

Why Houston Needs a Veterans' Court



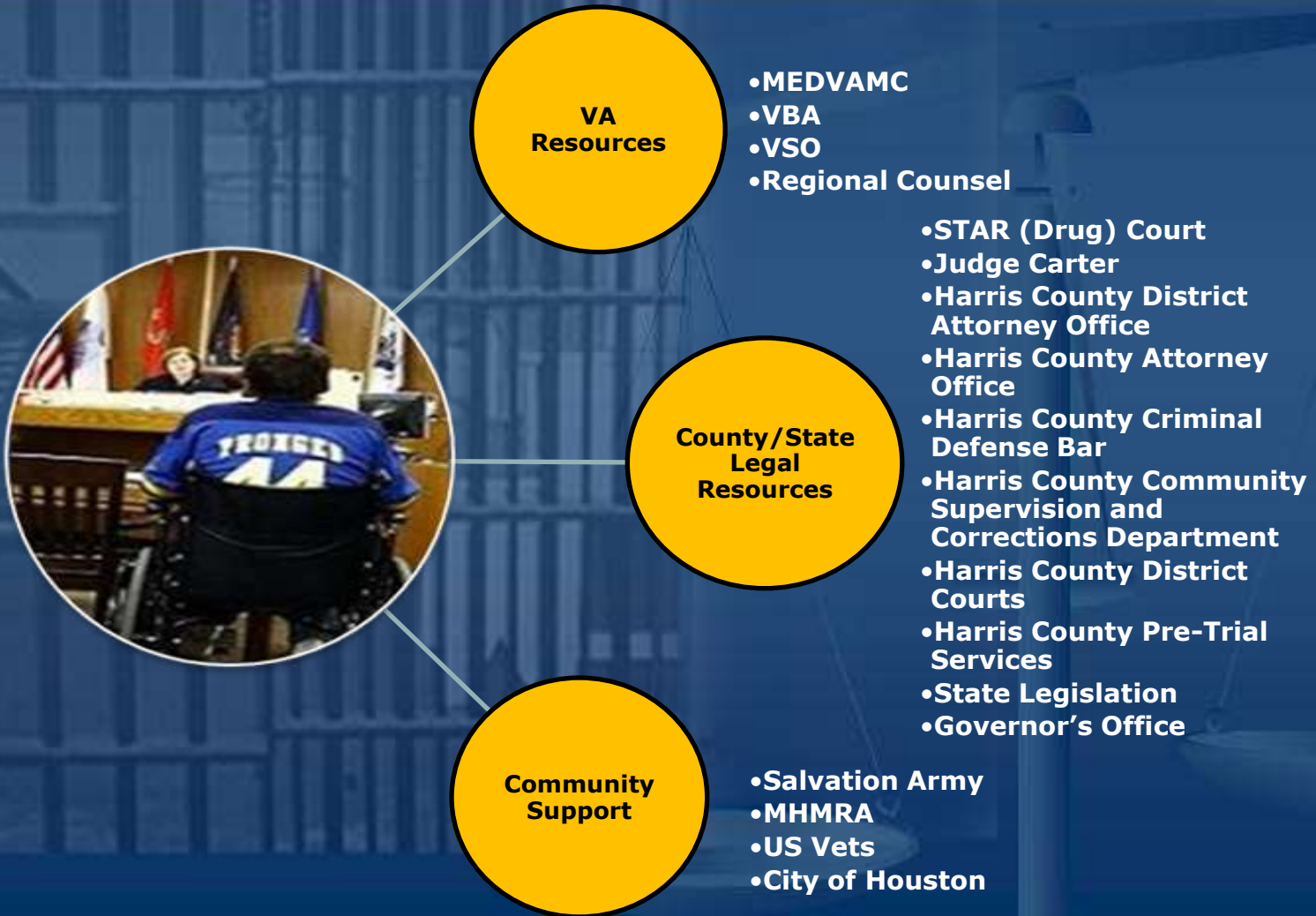
- **Pretrial Services estimates between 350 to 450 vets booked into Harris County jail each month. Many for minor non-violent crimes**
- **25% of veterans incarcerated in local jails have mental illness vs. 15% of nonveteran population***
- **Harris County Jail -25% of detainees with mental illness****
- **Veterans make up approximately 1/5 of Houston's homeless population, estimate some 3000 homeless veterans in Houston**

* From: Bureau of Justice Statistics' Special Report: *Veterans in Prison and Jail* (2000)

** From: MHMRA (2009)

Planning a Veterans' Court

Working with Community Partners



Planning and Implementation of Veterans' Court

Approval Process

- TX SB 1940 – (6/19/09) Allowed for development of Veterans' Courts in State of Texas
- Final Proposal presented to *District Court Judges, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and County Commissioners' Court* (All completed by 11/10/09)
- Public Announcement Veterans' Court following approval by Harris County Commissioners Court November 11, 2009
- First Docket – 12/9/09

Planning and Implementation of Veterans' Court

Unique Features of Houston Court

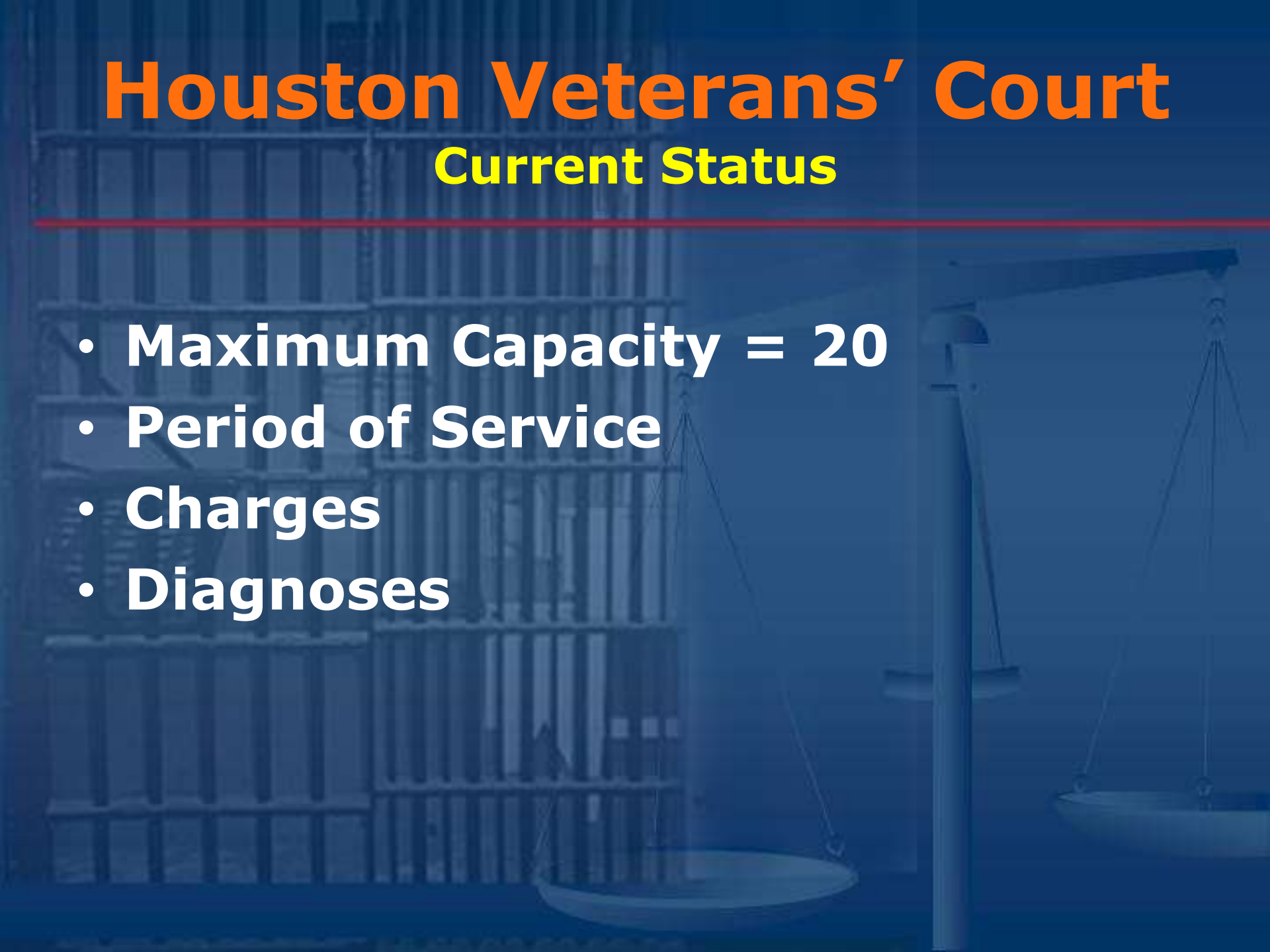
- **Development of Jail Diversion Treatment Team (*Pilot – 6 months*)**
- **Accept Variety of Offenses**
- **Accept Variety of Diagnoses**

Veterans' Court Phase Progression

Phase I –Stabilization (90 Days)	Phase II –Treatment (90 Days)	Phase III – Transitional (180 Days)	Phase IV- Maintenance (180 Days)	Phase V-Aftercare (180 Days)
<p>VA Treatment Modalities</p> <p>SUD- Substance Dependence Treatment Program (SDTP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial Assessment • Emotional Behavioral Assessment • Health Screen • Case Management (weekly) • Residential Treatment at Salvation Army Harbor Lights • Partial Hospitalization/ Addiction Education and support groups • Medication as needed <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biopsychosocial Assessment • Case Management (weekly) • Medication as needed • Enrollment in specialized treatment * pending diagnoses and needs: <p>CMHP (Comprehensive Mental Health)– Psychosis and Mood Disorders</p> <p>TRP (Trauma Recovery Program) – PTSD and Anxiety Disorders</p> <p>Court Requirements Court Appearances: Court Staffing (1st and 3rd Wednesdays) Court Case Management: 2 field visits per month</p> <p>*Seeking Safety, Anger Management, Diagnosis-Specific support and education groups, Cognitive Processing Therapy groups, Psychosocial Rehabilitation, family therapy, Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Psychodrama, OEF/OIF Coping Skills, Combat Nightmare Group, Dual Diagnosis Groups, Women’s Group, and referrals to Vet Center programming.</p>	<p>VA Treatment Modalities</p> <p>SUD – SDTP Cont.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relapse Prevention and Aftercare education and support groups • Weekly Case management • Veterans In Progress/Health Care for Homeless Veterans Housing • Medication Maintenance with MD as needed • Vocational Program <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management (weekly) • Medication monitoring • Continued specialized treatment <p>Court Requirements Court Appearances: Court Staffing (1st and 3rd Wednesdays) Court Case Management- 2 field visits per month</p>	<p>VA Treatment Modalities</p> <p>SUD - SDTP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation from SDTP – Certificate of Completion • Continued Medication monitoring as needed <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation from Stabilization and Treatment Phase – Certificate of Completion • Continued Medication monitoring and specialized programming as needed <p>Court Requirements Court Appearances: One Court Staffing per month Case Management: 3 Face to Face Meetings 1 Field visit per month Urinalysis: Random</p> <p>Community Treatment/Activities Any court-required community activity, support group, or additional programming determined by Court.</p>	<p>VA Treatment Modalities</p> <p>SUD – SDTP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Medication monitoring as needed <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Medication monitoring and specialized programming as needed <p>Court Requirements Court Appearances: One Court Staffing per month Case Management: 2 Face to Face Meetings 1 Field Visit per month Urinalysis: Random</p> <p>Community Treatment/Activities: Any court-required community activity, support group, or additional programming determined by Court.</p>	<p>VA Treatment Modalities</p> <p>SUD – SDTP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Medication monitoring as needed <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Medication monitoring and specialized programming as needed <p>Court Requirements Court Appearances Quarterly Court Staffings Case Management One office visit per month Urinalysis: Random</p> <p>Community Treatment/Activities: Mentorship Activity and any court-required community activity, support group, or additional programming determined by Court.</p>

Houston Veterans' Court

Current Status

- **Maximum Capacity = 20**
 - **Period of Service**
 - **Charges**
 - **Diagnoses**
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- The background of the slide is a dark blue-tinted image. On the left side, there are several rows of bookshelves filled with books. On the right side, there is a large, white scale of justice, also known as the scales of law, which is a symbol of fairness and justice. The overall aesthetic is professional and legal.

**Maria Conchola, Travis County
Constable Precinct 4**

Incarcerated Veterans in Travis County

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David Sands, LCSW
Re-entry Specialist VISN 16
Michael E. DeBakey, VA Medical Center

Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans (HCRV) Partnering with the Community

MISSION STATEMENT

Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans promotes an effective and efficient VISN wide approach of outreach to incarcerated Veterans through both direct outreach service provision as well as coordination and liaison with multiple facilities and systems within and outside the VA.

VA AND RE-ENTRY

- **1970's- VA Outreach begins to jails and prisons**
(purview of local VA's)
- **2005- VHA Strategic Mental Health Plan mandates outreach**
- **2005- PAVA begins outreach to prisons and jails**
- **2006- VHA policy IL 10-2006-007**
- **2007- VISNS hire Incarcerated Veteran Re-entry Specialist**

< 6 months

VISN 16 PROGRESS

Prior to Information Letter and VHA Kick-off:

- **Outreach activities throughout the VISN In Texas Partnership with Texas Correctional Office On Offenders with Medical Mental Impairments**
- **Linkages established. Memorandum of Understanding 2007.**
- **Access badges given to all VA reentry specialists to facilitate prison entry**
- **Model Developed**

HCRV PROGRAM PROFILE

Services include:

- **Outreach and pre-release assessment services**
- **Referrals and linkages**
- **Short term case management**

HOW MANY ARE THERE?

Bureau of Justice Statistics, January 2000

- **Over 225,000 veterans held in Nation's prisons or jails***
- **80-85% have honorable or medical discharges**
- **Approx 10-12% of those incarcerated are Veterans**

** Approximately 500 are released monthly and 1 in 5 come to the Houston area.*

WHO ARE THEY?

Bureau of Justice Statistics, January 2000

- **30% of Veterans were more likely than other State prisoners (23%) to be first-time offenders**
- **26% Veterans in State prison were less likely than other State prisoners 34% to report having used drugs at the time of their offense.**
- **70% of veterans, compared to 54% of other State prisoners, had been working full-time before arrest**
- **32% of Veterans were more likely than non-veterans (11%) to have attended college**
- **60% of incarcerated veterans had served in the Army**

WHO ARE THEY?

Bureau of Justice Statistics, January 2000

- **20% of veterans in prison reported seeing combat**
(combat veterans were no more likely to be violent offenders than other veterans)
- **Among State prisoners, the median age of veterans was 10 years older than other prison and jail inmates**
- **56,500 Vietnam War-era veterans and 18,500 Persian Gulf War veterans were held in State and Federal prisons**
- **Incarcerated veterans were as likely as non-veterans to have been homeless when arrested**
- **Among violent State prisoners, the average sentence of veterans was 50 months longer than the average of non-veterans**

YOU ALREADY KNOW THEM

- **They are already being seen in VA Healthcare System**
- **40% of Grant and Per Diem Residents have been incarcerated (NEPEC)**

WHAT DO THEY NEED?

- BIRTH CERTIFICATES
- ID
- DD214
- HOUSING
- TRANSPORTATION
- JOBS
- MONEY
- CLOTHING
- FOOD
- HEALTHCARE
- MENTAL HEALTH TX
- SUBSTANCE ABUSE TX
- SOCIAL/FAMILY NEEDS
- VBA ASSISTANCE
- CASE MANAGEMENT
- LINKAGE

THE “INSIDE JOB”

- DD214
- 1010S- TO MEDICAL CENTER Registration Eligibility
- OEF/OIF IDENTIFICATION
- ID AND BIRTH CERTIFICATES
- RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL
- LONG TERM RE-ENTRY PLANNING
- ASSESSMENT / TX MATCHING
- INITIAL CASE MANAGEMENT
- EMPATHETIC LISTENING