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Program Evaluation and Research Unit

Justice Involved Veterans Recidivism and The Impact of Veteran Treatment Courts (VCTs)



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Presenter Info



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Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to do the following:



Understand the origins of Veteran Treatment Courts (VTCs)



Understand some benefits and limitations of VTCs and determine eligibilities and exclusions



Understand recommendations for expanding the positive benefits of VTCs and overcoming some limitations



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What Are VTCs



Non-adversarial
solutions-based
justice initiatives for
Veterans

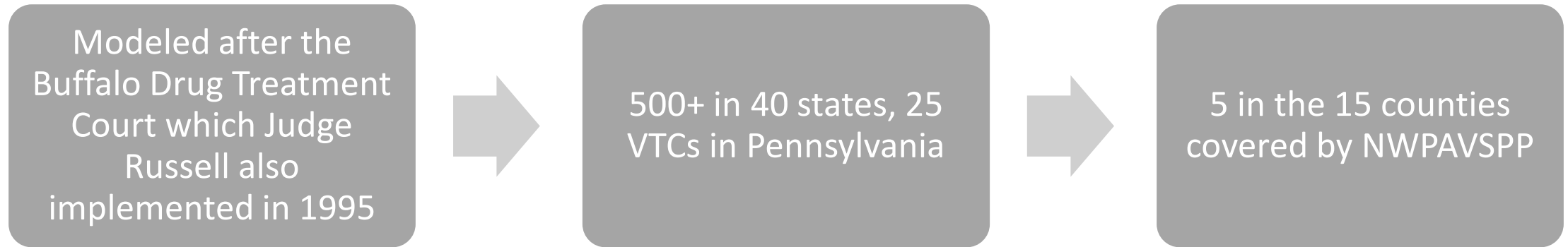


Problem solving
courts based in part
on the drug court
model

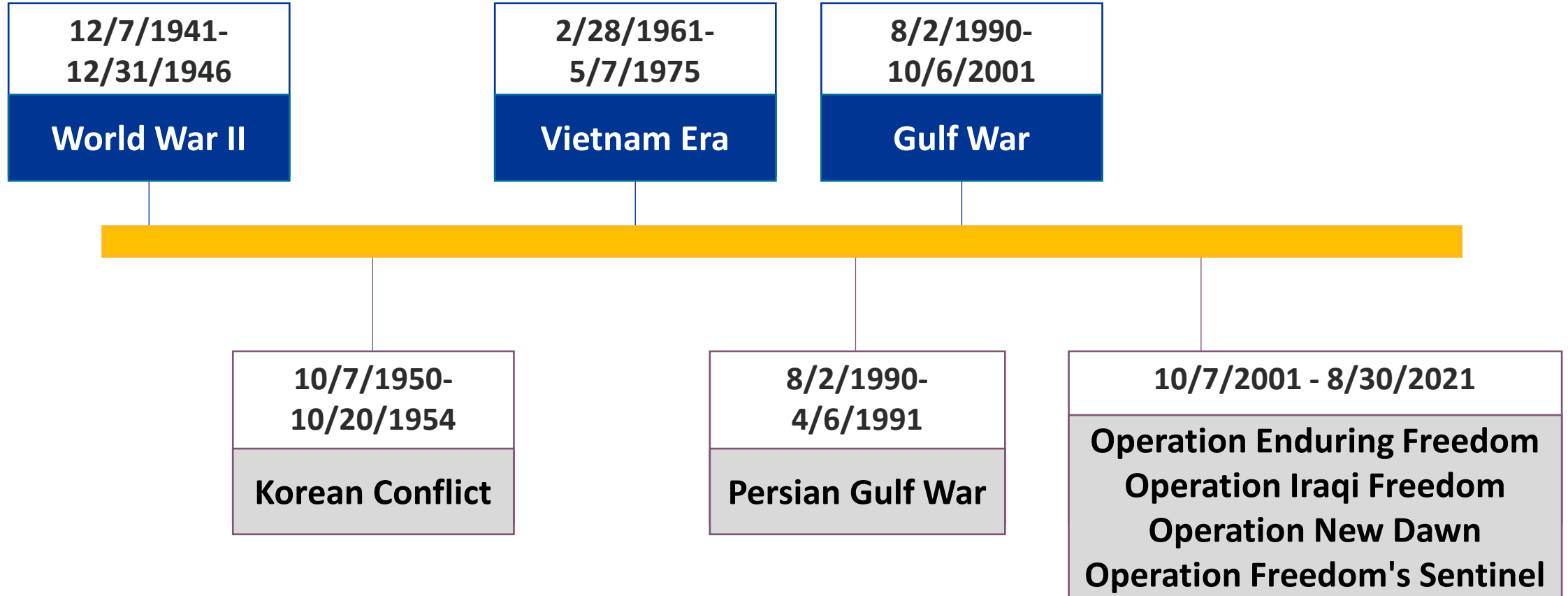


First VTC created in
2008 in Buffalo NY
by Judge Robert T.
Russell

What Are VTCs (Cont'd)



Eras of Service



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Primary Eras of Service For Veterans Impacted by VTCs

Pre - OEF/OIF/OND/OFS

- There is limited research available although the VA states that while “draft era vets are less likely to be incarcerated than vets from the All-Volunteer force, Two thirds of incarcerated vets were from the era 1974-2000”

OEF/OIF/OND/OFS

- Treatment courts emerged in the wake of operations OEF, OIF and OND as well as Operation Freedom’s Sentinel in Afghanistan (OFS)



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Impact of VTCs on OEF/OIF/OND/OFS Veterans

OEF/OIF/OND and OFS Veterans account for 6% of incarcerated Veterans, a number that is projected to increase as more veterans are identified

As of publishing of the article, an estimated 96,300 males in state prison and 9,100 in federal prison were Veterans. Those numbers were predicted to increase and are likely an underestimate

An estimated 74% of male veterans in state prison and 77% of those in federal prison received an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions



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Article Overview and Research

“Waging War on Recidivism Among Justice-Involved Veterans: An Impact Evaluation of a Large Urban Veterans Treatment Court”

This study was “an impact evaluation regarding recidivism among participants of a large urban VTC program”



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Article Overview and Research

Many states have passed legislation or administrative orders creating VTCs

VTCs are currently the fastest growing specialty court across the country

The efficacy of VTCs has not been fully researched though their expansion continues



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Article Overview and Research (Cont'd)

The effects of specialty courts are most often measured by the outcome of recidivism that is often defined as a new arrest after participation in the program begins.

VTC participants were compared with an analogous group of offenders, or a control group

Random assignment to the VTC is not possible, an equivalent comparison group was utilized to provide an adequate assessment of whether participation in the VTC program results in lower recidivism



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Article Overview and Research (Cont'd)

The VTC studied limits participation to Veterans with non-violent misdemeanors which differs from the majority

VTC participants receive mental health & substance use disorder treatment, as well as housing, vocational training and transportation services

A new arrest does not automatically lead to termination from the VTC, and relapse is expected and accounted for

Continued participation requires adherence to a tailored treatment regimen



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Research Findings

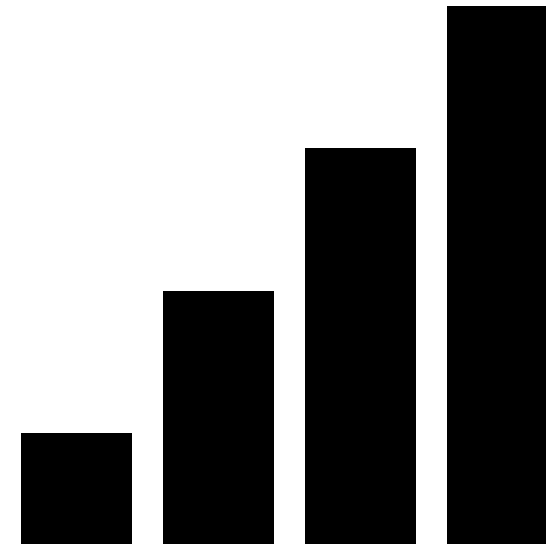
- VTC programs were beneficial in reducing re-arrest up to 36 months after program entry, though these results must be interpreted with specific limitations in mind



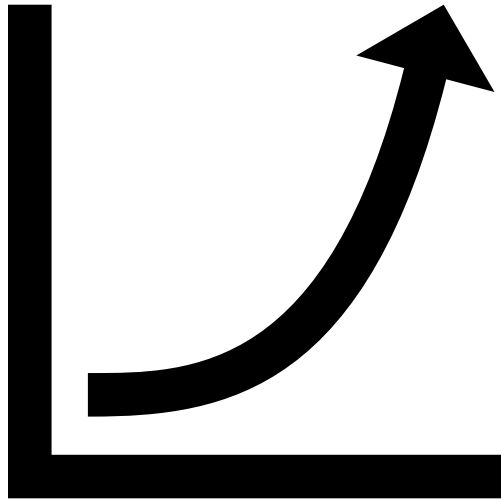
Research Findings (Cont'd)

Some VTC Strengths:

- The VTC studied reported high outcomes for all participants and a 100% success rate for Black Veteran participants



Research Findings (Cont'd)



Some VTC

Limitations/opportunities:

- Half of respondent VTCs reported having no database to track and evaluate outcomes
- Recidivism is not uniformly defined

Research Limitations

1

True experimental design not possible

2

Sample size error

3

Lack of Random assignment



Research Recommendations

Single- and multisite evaluations must be conducted to determine whether certain VTC programs and/or program components affect different types of veteran offenders differently

Additional measures including, but not limited to, motivation to treatment and reasons for participant opt-out and termination, must be included in future studies



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Research Recommendations

Finally, program creators and administrators must carefully conceptualize their program components and focus on effective implementation

Researchers and practitioners must effectively collaborate with the ultimate goals of increasing outcomes in mind.

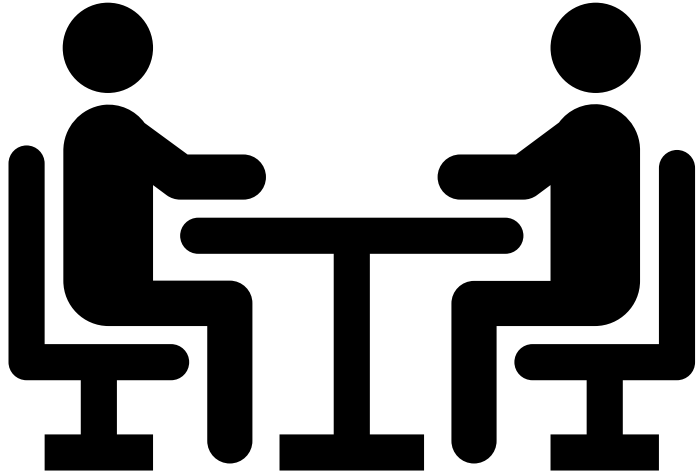


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Discussion



- For counties with VTCs, how are outcomes reported?
- Considering the limitations and potential of VTCs, How can PA VTCs better serve PA Veterans?



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