



## John Hummel District Attorney

1164 NW Bond Street • Bend, Oregon 97701  
(541) 388-6520 • Fax: (541) 330-4691  
Grand Jury Fax: (541) 330-4698  
[www.ddda.us](http://www.ddda.us)

### VETERANS INTERVENTION STRATEGY

In November 2020, the Deschutes County District Attorney's Office, in partnership with the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, Central Oregon Vet Center, Deschutes Defenders, Kollie Law Group, and Deschutes County Community Justice launched the Veterans Intervention Strategy (VIS). The VIS provides veterans who are involved in the criminal justice system with an opportunity to improve their criminal justice outcomes by engaging in individualized treatment and services to address their mental health illnesses and/or substance use disorders that have played a role in their criminal activity.

The VIS is modeled after traditional veteran treatment court programs, but balances our community's desire to improve the type and level of support provided to our veterans with the resources and services available within Deschutes County. So, although the VIS has many elements that mirror a veterans treatment court, it is not a court-based program but instead is an inter-agency program managed out of the District Attorney's Office.

This Veterans Intervention Strategy is needed because when some veterans return from service they face monumental challenges, including combat wounds, head injuries/Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), unemployment, homelessness, strained relationships, and significant reintegration issues. When these challenges are not effectively treated and managed, they can lead veterans into the criminal justice system, sometimes on a recurring basis. The VIS will help veterans who are challenged with these injuries and disorders to access the treatment and medical care they need to improve their lives.

The VIS takes a veteran-focused, community-based approach to providing services to participating veterans in order to help them address their personal challenges. In a supportive environment that rewards success, but holds participants accountable, while also allowing for participant tracking and program assessment, the VIS aims to:

1. Improve community safety by reducing recidivism among justice involved veterans.
2. Improve veterans' lives through engagement in a targeted series of veteran programs.
3. Reduce risk and increase victims' likelihood of receiving restitution by improving a veteran's stability.
4. Collaboratively work with agencies throughout Deschutes County to provide specialized services to veterans.

Veterans must meet a series of eligibility requirements to participate in the VIS, which include an eligible felony or misdemeanor charge within Deschutes County; residence in Deschutes, Jefferson or Crook counties; and a mental health illness, and/or a substance use disorder diagnosis that is related to their service and criminal offense.

The VIS is available to approximately 20 veterans per year. Each veteran will accept guilt and agree to program requirements, treatment, incentives, and sanctions that will be unique to them, and based upon their own personal health, criminal history, and current charges. To support the unique needs of each veteran, the program has two tracks. Track I will be for veterans that engaged in lower level crimes, who also have a less severe substance use disorder or mental health illness. Track II will be for veterans who

have committed a more serious crime and/or have more severe mental health illnesses or substance use disorders.

Veterans in both tracks will be expected to: 1) create an individualized treatment plan, 2) participate for at least 12 months; 3) work with a mentor; 4) engage in social service programs; 5) attend VIS inter-agency meetings; 6) comply with drug and alcohol testing requirements; and 7) pay restitution, if appropriate. Veterans in Track II must also secure employment or attend post-secondary education courses, complete a wellness plan, and will be required to meet more frequently with the inter-agency team.

Veterans that successfully participate in the VIS, will move through the program's structured phases, which are designed to acknowledge successes with reduced meetings requirements and more opportunities for independence. Veterans struggling in the program will be supported and encouraged to continue to engage. Program requirements will be adjusted to address their personal challenges in order to help them succeed with additional supervision and program requirements. When a veteran meets their graduation requirements they will not only be rewarded with a certificate and coin commemorating their commitment to the program and their ultimate success, but they will also obtain the legal benefits that were agreed upon when they entered the VIS. Those benefits will vary by individual, but may range from reduced jail time, downward departures, or in some circumstances even dismissals.

For veterans that are not ready to make the substantial life changes that the VIS requires, and reoffend or continuously fail to achieve program requirements, their case will be returned to the traditional criminal justice system. The veterans will again be in front of a judge and will no longer be eligible for the legal benefits discussed at program entry.