

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 4.905-11/10

IN RE: PALM BEACH COUNTY VETERANS' DOCKET/
AND CREATION OF "VA" DIVISION

A report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Mental Health Services National GAINS Center determined that on any given day, veterans account for nine (9) out of every one hundred (100) individuals in U.S. jails and prisons. Statistics show that in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, approximately sixty (60) veterans enter the criminal justice system on a monthly basis.

In 2010, the Chief Judge of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit formed a Veterans' Committee comprised of stakeholders from the Judiciary, Office of the State Attorney, Office of the Public Defender, the Clerk and Comptroller's Office, Probation, Department of Corrections, Veteran's Association, Stand Down House, Vietnam Veterans of America, Law Enforcement and Court Administration. The Committee's goal was to improve public safety by providing meaningful treatment to address the needs of veterans while reducing recidivism.

The Veterans' Committee determined that a need existed for a Veterans' Docket staffed by a full time case coordinator who will work on individualized treatment plans to address existing substance abuse, mental health, homelessness and employment issues of veterans charged with misdemeanor, municipal ordinance violations, county ordinance violations, and felony crimes. The case coordinator will link the veterans to services available at the Veteran's Hospital and local Community Service Providers with the goal of having the veterans become crime free citizens. The Veteran's Association agreed to fund the case coordinator to establish an individualized treatment plan for veterans. The Veterans' Committee also determined that a Volunteer Mentor Program, made up entirely of specially trained veteran volunteers, is a critical component of the Veterans' Docket. As such, the Stand Down House and Vietnam Veterans of America have agreed to oversee the Mentor Program and to coordinate training and background checks of the mentors.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority conferred by Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215, it is **ORDERED** as follows:

1. Effective November 11, 2010, Veterans' Day, the Palm Beach County Veterans' Docket ("Veterans' Docket") is hereby established. The Veterans' Docket will hear qualified

charges pursuant to criteria which will be set forth in the Veterans' Treatment Docket procedural manual which will be found at www.15thcircuit.com.

2. County Judge Ted Booras will preside over this docket and hearings shall take place at the Criminal Justice Complex/Gun Club Facility.
3. The Clerk and Comptroller shall designate all Veteran cases as Division "VA" for case assignment purposes. Upon receipt of court orders transferring individual cases to the Veterans' Docket, the Clerk of the Circuit Court shall assign those designated cases to Division "VA", Veterans' Docket.
4. The Veterans' Docket shall occur on the first (1st) and third (3rd) Thursday of each month, subject to change by the presiding Judge, beginning at 1:30 p.m. in Courtroom 1 of the Criminal Justice Complex ("Gun Club") Courthouse.
5. In all cases in which defendants have been referred to the Veterans' Docket, but subsequently either elect not to participate in the program, are rejected from the program for any reason, or are removed from the program prior to entry of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere, then the Clerk and Comptroller, or Criminal Case Manager, shall transfer those cases back to the previously assigned divisions for further proceedings.
6. In those cases where felony and misdemeanor offenders participating in the Palm Beach County Veterans' Docket are placed on probation, they shall be supervised in the normal course by the Florida Department of Corrections staff or Pride Probation.
7. A Mentor Program is hereby created and will be overseen by The Stand Down House and Vietnam Veterans of America who will conduct trainings and background checks on the assigned mentors.
8. The Administrative Office of the Court, in collaboration with the Veteran's Association and Palm Beach County Pretrial Services, will facilitate collection and maintenance of the statistical data for the program.
9. The case coordinator, funded by the Veteran's Association, shall attend all case staffings and court sessions.

10 **DONE and SIGNED**, in Chambers, at West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, this day of November, 2010.



Peter D. Blanc
Chief Judge