

# **Report of Veterans Arrested and Booked into the Travis County Jail**

A Project of the

## **Veterans Intervention Project**

Compiled by:

Travis County Adult Probation Department  
Travis County Constable Precinct Four  
Travis County Constable Precinct Five  
Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services  
Travis County Pretrial Services  
Travis County Sheriff's Office  
Travis County Veterans Court

November 2011

## ABOUT THE VETERANS INTERVENTION PROJECT

### ***Purpose Statement***

The Travis County Veterans Intervention Project (VIP) is a collaboration to increase awareness of veterans involved in the criminal justice system. Our purpose is to ensure that veterans are identified and referred to appropriate treatment and services which support reintegration and reduce recidivism.

### ***VIP Membership***

The Veterans Intervention Project is comprised of a wide variety of agencies and organizations that include:

- VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>
- V.A. CENTRAL TEXAS VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM – AUSTIN OUTPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC <http://www.centraltexas.va.gov/services/>
- V.A. AUSTIN VET CENTER <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?id=5459>
- NATIONAL CENTER ON DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE <http://www.ncdsv.org/>
- TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (PAROLE DIVISION)  
[www.tdcj.state.tx.us/divisions/parole/index.html](http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/divisions/parole/index.html)
- TEXAS HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION [www.hhsc.state.tx.us/](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/)
- TEXAS INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION <http://www.txcourts.gov/tidc/tidchome.asp>
- TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/>
- TEXAS ATTORNEY GENERAL (CHILD SUPPORT DIVISION)  
<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/index.shtml>
- STATE BAR OF TEXAS [www.texasbar.com/](http://www.texasbar.com/)
- TEXAS LEGAL SERVICES CENTER [www.tlsc.org/](http://www.tlsc.org/)
- LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE OF CENTRAL TEXAS [www.austinlrs.com/](http://www.austinlrs.com/)
- TRAVIS COUNTY JUDGE NANCY HOHENGARTEN  
<http://www.co.travis.tx.us/courts/criminal/county/cc5.asp>
- TRAVIS COUNTY JUDGE MIKE DENTON  
<http://www.co.travis.tx.us/courts/criminal/county/cc4.asp>

- TRAVIS COUNTY JUDGE CARLOS BARRERA  
<http://www.co.travis.tx.us/courts/criminal/county/CC8.asp>
- TRAVIS COUNTY JUDGE LEON GRIZZARD  
<http://www.co.travis.tx.us/courts/criminal/district/magistrate.asp>
- TRAVIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE [http://www.co.travis.tx.us/county\\_attorney/](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/county_attorney/)
- TRAVIS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE [http://www.co.travis.tx.us/district\\_attorney/](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/district_attorney/)
- TRAVIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE [www.tcsheriff.org/](http://www.tcsheriff.org/)
- TRAVIS COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLANNING  
[http://www.co.travis.tx.us/criminal\\_justice/research\\_planning/default.asp](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/criminal_justice/research_planning/default.asp)
- TRAVIS COUNTY CONSTABLE, PCT 5 BRUCE ELFANT <http://constable5.com/>
- TRAVIS COUNTY CONSTABLE, PCT 4 MARIA CANCHOLA <http://www.co.travis.tx.us/constables/4/>
- TRAVIS COUNTY PRETRIAL SERVICES [http://www.co.travis.tx.us/pretrial\\_services/default.asp](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/pretrial_services/default.asp)
- TRAVIS COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES [http://www.co.travis.tx.us/veterans\\_services/](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/veterans_services/)
- TRAVIS COUNTY ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT  
[http://www.co.travis.tx.us/community\\_supervision/](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/community_supervision/)
- TRAVIS COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
[http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health\\_human\\_services/default.asp](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health_human_services/default.asp)
- TRAVIS COUNTY COURT ADMINISTRATION <http://www.co.travis.tx.us/courts/criminal/>
- TRAVIS COUNTY ADULT MENTAL HEALTH PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE  
<http://www.courts.state.tx.us/tfid/travismhpd.htm>
- AUSTIN / TRAVIS COUNTY INTEGRAL CARE (FORMERLY MHMR) <http://www.integralcare.org/>
- AUSTIN BAR ASSOCIATION [www.austinbar.org/](http://www.austinbar.org/)
- AUSTIN CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS ASSOCIATION [www.acdla.com/](http://www.acdla.com/)
- AUSTIN MUNICIPAL COURT <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/court/>
- VETERANS FOR COMMON SENSE [www.veteransforcommonsense.org/](http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/)
- MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART – TEXAS CAPITAL CHAPTER [www.purpleheartaustin.org/](http://www.purpleheartaustin.org/)
- AMERICAN GI FORUM [www.agifusa.org/](http://www.agifusa.org/)
- SAMARITAN CENTER – HOPE FOR HEROES PROGRAM  
[www.samaritancenter.org/index.php?option=com...](http://www.samaritancenter.org/index.php?option=com...)

- TEXAS CENTER POINT VETS <http://www.texvet.org/wic/texas-center-point-vets>
- UNITED WAY CAPITAL AREA [www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/](http://www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/)
- GOODWILL INDUSTRIES <http://www.goodwill.org/>
- SIERRA CLUB <http://www.sierraclub.org/>

## BACKGROUND

A statistic that inspired Judge Robert T. Russell to establish the first Veterans Court in America is often repeated by various sources as many as 25 to 30 percent of returning veterans suffer from mental illness.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, one in six veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan has a substance-abuse problem and one in five has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment according to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Due to advances in modern protective equipment and advances in battlefield medicine, **more and more of our veterans are coming home with mental health impacts from traumatic brain injuries and suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** whereas in previous wars the injuries they received may have been fatal. Senator Patty Murray, chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs stated recently, "I am deeply concerned that we are not ready."<sup>2</sup>

One recommendation by the Drug Policy Alliance for veterans who are abusing drugs is "state and federal governments must modify sentencing statutes and improve court-ordered drug diversion programs to better treat- rather than criminalize and incarcerate- veterans who commit nonviolent drug-related crimes."<sup>3</sup> It has long been argued that if veterans land in jail, they will not get the help they need.

Another problem is the fact "that nearly 1 million troops- 42 percent of all service members sent to the combat zones have been deployed at least twice."<sup>4</sup> If they are not getting the help they need when they return the first time, a re-deployment can equal significant difficulty in readjusting to civil society. For some that readjustment may never happen.

In November 2007, Travis County Constable Maria Canchola began to document local examples of national trends around the difficulties veterans experience when returning to civilian life. For example, Travis County Sheriff Office representatives reported that a significant number of veterans are booked into the Travis County jail every month for a wide variety of offenses, and that a high percentage of arrested veterans are repeat offenders with alcohol and substance abuse issues. Constable Canchola convened a meeting of local, state and federal agencies and representatives from organizations that provide services to or interact with veterans. The group

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<sup>1</sup> The National Survey on Drug Use and Health Report, November 6, 2008

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.star-telegram.com/2011/10/04/3420002/study-a-fifth-of-war-veterans.html>

<sup>3</sup> Healing a Broken System: Veterans Battling Addiction and Incarceration. Issue Brief, November 4, 2009

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.star-telegram.com/2011/10/04/3420002/study-a-fifth-of-war-veterans.html>

agreed that too many veterans are arrested and that too little is being done to identify veterans who need assistance, make appropriate referrals, and follow up. It was also perceived that for a variety of reasons, many veterans were not receiving Veterans Administration (VA) services for which they were eligible.

In early 2008, the individuals convened by Constable Canchola organized themselves as the **Veterans Intervention Project (VIP)** and set out to assess the extent of challenges facing Veterans and recommend improvements. Their first step was to survey Veterans who were arrested and booked into the Travis County jail.

In 2010, a second survey was created to follow-up on the previous survey. The survey was executed during the same time frame and similar questions were asked. Two questions were added, one on homelessness and another on employment. As indicated by the study findings, our results are similar to 2008 which highlights the need for a Veterans Court and the partnerships that have been formed in the VIP.

The **Travis County Veterans Court** was conceived by the VIP and held its first docket in November 2010. More than 80 such courts across America have now been established in the last four years. They are modeled after drug courts and their intention is to keep veterans out of jail and get them into recovery. These programs and collaborations such as the VIP aim to do the unthinkable, to help veterans **before** they are arrested.

Appendix 3 contains the full report and status of the **Travis County Veterans Court**.

## METHODOLOGY

**Scope:** The intent of the Veterans Criminal Justice Survey was to determine if similar numbers of veterans were being arrested as when the first study was completed two years ago. Additional factors that were examined were the re-arrest rate, what charges were filed, whether veterans were employed or if they had experienced homelessness, and whether veterans had received VA services (see Appendix 1 for survey).

**Implementation:** Surveys were administered during a 92-day period, from September 15, 2010 through December 15, 2010 to identify veterans who were booked into the Travis County jail. It was administered by personnel at three sites: Travis County Sheriff's Office Central Booking facility, Adult Probation, and Pretrial Services. Survey completion was voluntary.

## STUDY FINDINGS

### Characteristics of Veterans Surveyed

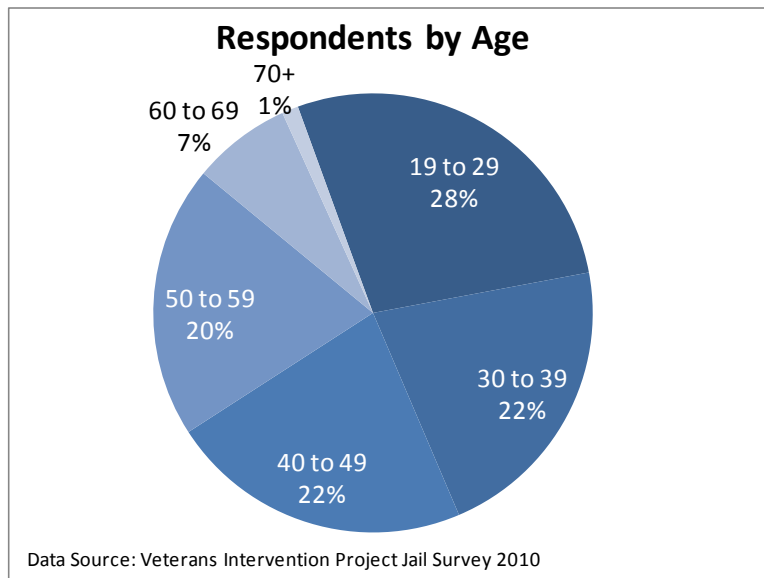
- *On average, about 170 veterans are arrested in Travis County each month.*

For the 92 day survey period<sup>5</sup>, a total of 416 veterans, representing 503 arrests, were booked into the Travis County Jail. They represented 3.35% of the total jail bookings for this period. In the previous survey, the number of total jail bookings was 3.4%. The average number of veterans arrested and booked into the jail each month was 168.

Arrests Involving a Veteran					
Travis County, Texas, September 15-December 15, 2010					
	September 15-30	October	November	December 1-15	Total for Survey Period
Total Arrests Involving a Veteran	89	179	162	73	503
Unduplicated Number of Veterans Arrested	88	171	147	72	416

*Methodological Note:* Some veterans completed more than one survey. Veterans who were arrested more than once during the survey period may have completed a survey at each arrest. Veterans may also have been surveyed at various points in the system for a single arrest. Veterans’ characteristics were analyzed based on a single survey<sup>6</sup> for each veteran and represent an unduplicated count of veterans arrested and surveyed during the 92 day survey period (N=416). Charge related data was analyzed for each arrest (n=503).

**Age:** The age distribution of survey respondents was fairly widespread. Veterans in their 20s comprised the largest share (28%) followed by those in their 30s, 40s and 50s.

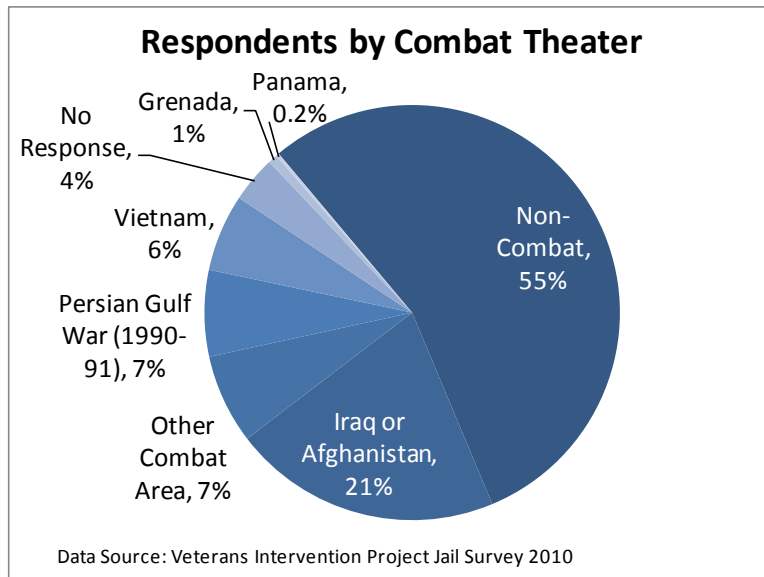


<sup>5</sup> 9/15/2010 - 12/15/2010

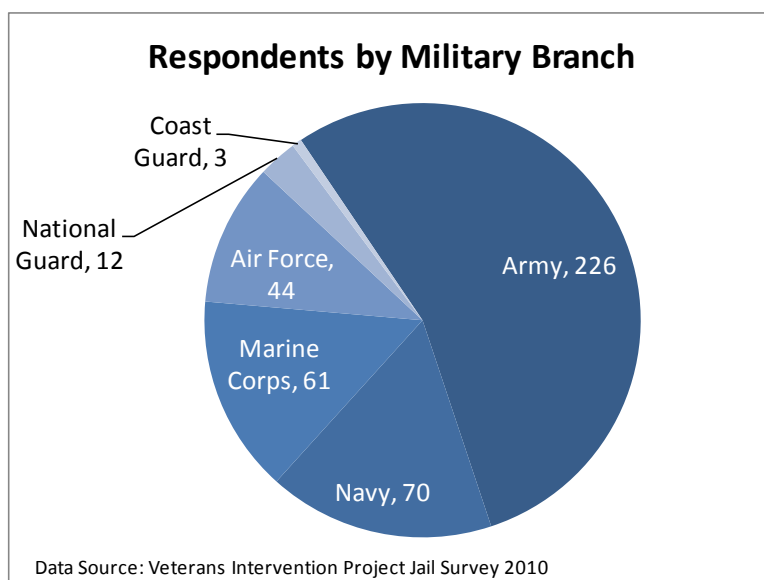
<sup>6</sup> The survey/record with the most complete information was selected for analysis. If more than one survey/record included complete information, the first survey/record was selected. Please note that for respondents completing multiple surveys, there was some inconsistency found in responses.

**Gender:** 95% of survey respondents were male, and 5% were female. These were the same numbers seen in the 2008 report.

**Combat Theater:** The majority (55%) of arrested veterans served in non-combat zones. 21% served in Iraq or Afghanistan, followed by other combat areas (7%), the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War (7%), and Vietnam (6%). 1% of veterans served in Grenada, and less than 1% in Panama.

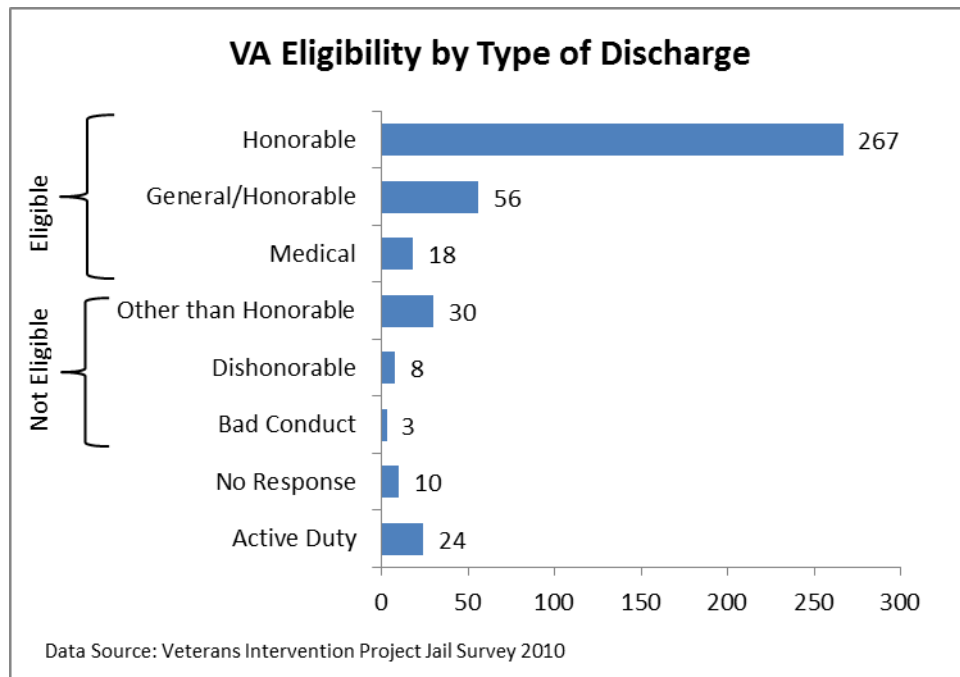


**Military Branch:** 54% of arrested veterans in this survey served in the Army, 17% served in the Navy, 15% in the Marine Corps, 11% in the Air Force, 3% in the National Guard, and 1% in the Coast Guard. In the previous report, the numbers were similar. 50% of arrested veterans served in the Army, 21% served in the Navy, 13% in the Marine Corps, 11% in the Air Force, 6% in the National Guard, and 1% in the Coast Guard.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100 because some respondents indicated service in more than one military branch.

**Discharge:** Eighty-two percent (82%) of veterans received an Honorable, General Honorable or Medical discharge, making them potentially eligible for VA services. Ten percent (10%) received a less than honorable discharge and are not eligible for VA services.<sup>8</sup>



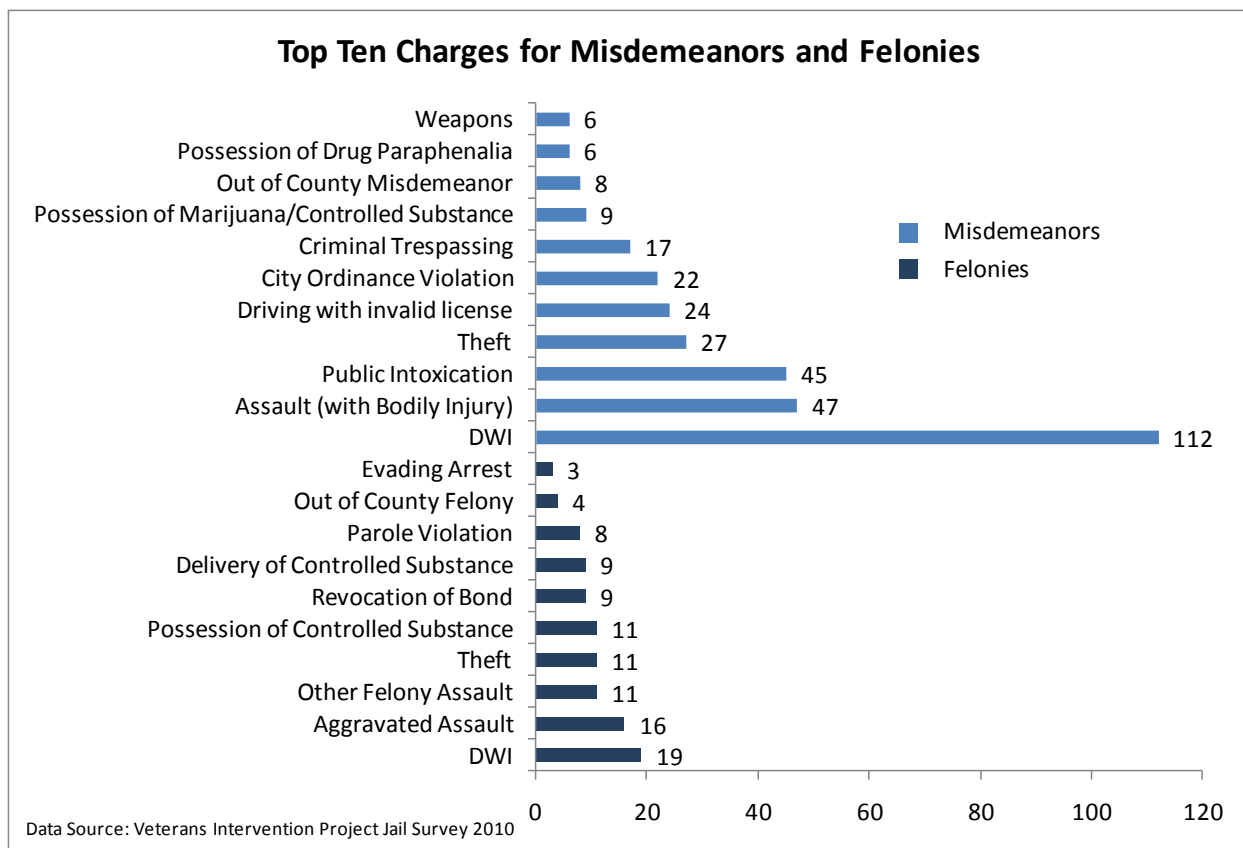
**Charges and Disposition**

**Number of Arrests:** 503 arrests involved 416 veterans. 14% of respondents (57 veterans) were arrested two or more times during the 92 day survey period. Of those with more than one arrest, the average was 2.5 arrests.

**Charges:** In 23% of cases felony charges were filed; and in 76% of cases misdemeanor charges were filed<sup>9</sup>. The top ten filed for both misdemeanors and felonies appear in the chart below. (Note: Analysis is based on primary charge filed).

<sup>8</sup> The remainder (8%) of respondents did not answer this question.

<sup>9</sup> In 1% of cases the charge level was unspecified.



**Substance Abuse Charges:** Forty-two percent (42%) percent of all charges filed were for DWI, possession, delivery and public intoxication. Thirty-one percent (31%) of all alcohol and substance abuse charges were filed against veterans ages 20 to 29.

**Assault Charges:** Fifteen percent (15%) of all charges filed were related to assault. Of all assault charges, nearly three out of four (73%) were reported as involving a family or house member. Of misdemeanor assaults all except for one were reported as involving a family or house member.

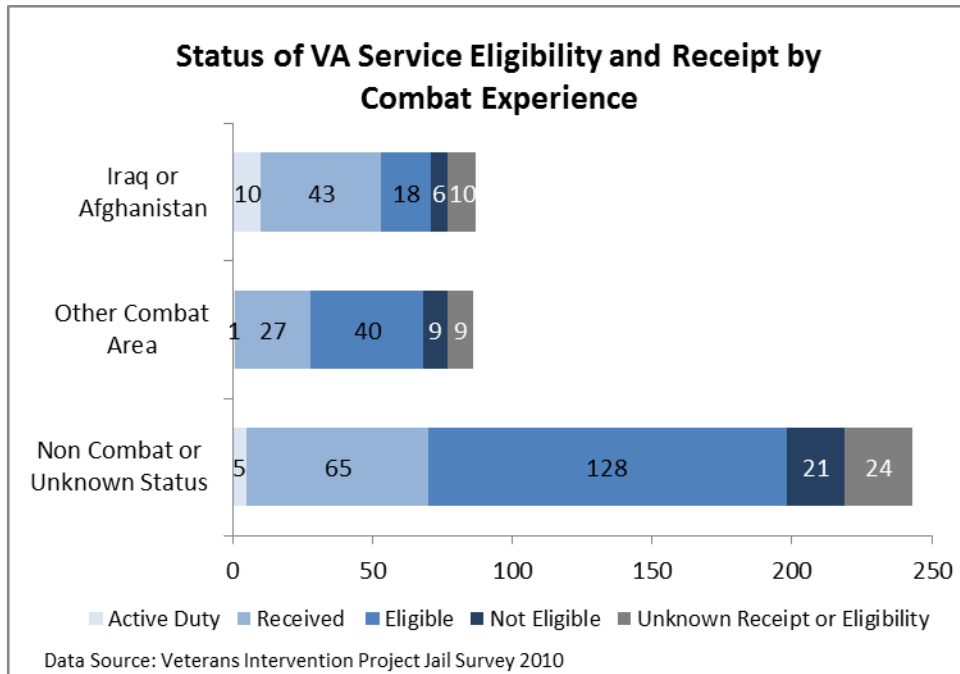
### Veterans Administration Services

➤ **58% of arrested veterans have not received VA services.**

About one-third (32%) of arrested veterans reported that they had received VA services, while 58% reported they had not (the remainder did not answer this question). These results were fairly consistent across age groups, although those in their 50s or over age 70 were most likely to report receiving VA services. The rate of receipt of VA benefits was also fairly consistent across military branches. The rate of receipt was highest for the Army (35%) and lowest for the National Guard (25%).

One of the objectives of the **Veterans Intervention Project** is to connect veterans who are arrested to appropriate services at the earliest point possible. We know that an average 168

veterans are arrested in Travis County each month and that significant numbers are arrested for substance abuse and/or anger issues. Based on a preliminary analysis<sup>10</sup>, 186 potentially eligible veterans, including 58 combat veterans, could be referred to the VA for services. The chart below provides some additional detail regarding receipt of and eligibility or VA services by combat experience.



### Eligibility for VA benefits:

Eligibility for Veterans Administration services is based on a number of factors, including the veteran’s branch of armed forces, type of discharge, where the veteran served, and the number of years and dates of service. Generally speaking, to be eligible for Veterans Administration services veterans must have served on active duty and received an Honorable, General Honorable or Medical discharge. A felony conviction will not disqualify someone from receiving services however, the VA cannot treat a veteran who is jailed or incarcerated. Furthermore, the veteran’s financial benefits are affected if convicted and jailed for more than sixty days.

Using the model that was used for the previous VIP study, if all felony charges resulted in convictions, 52.6% of arrested veterans would be eligible for VA benefits. If all felony charges resulted in acquittals, 67% would be eligible for VA benefits.

In other words, depending on the outcome of cases, just over one-half to two-thirds of veterans would be eligible for VA services.

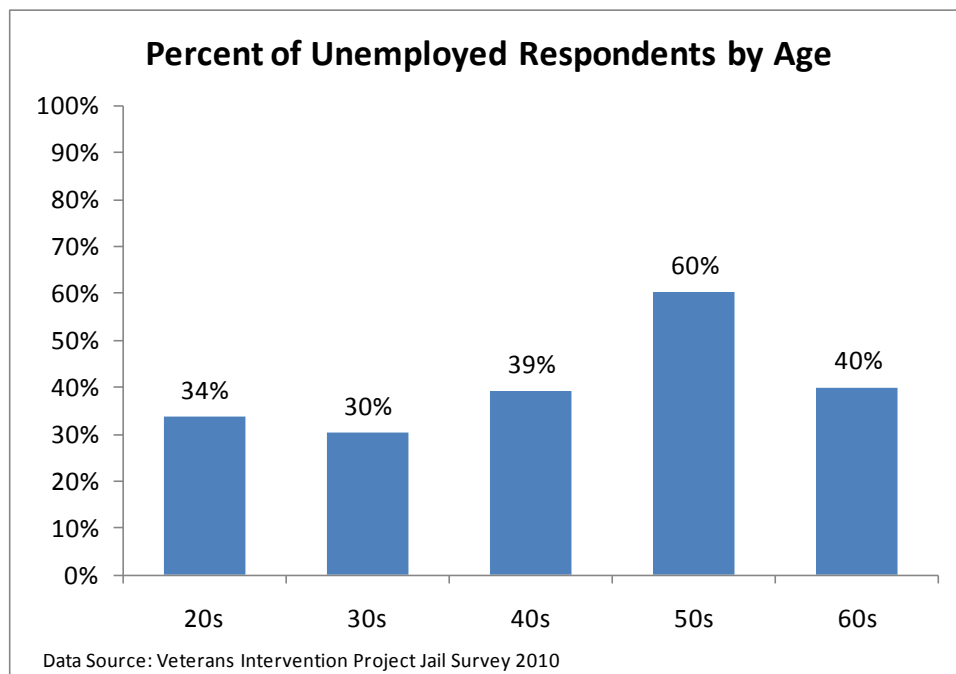
<sup>10</sup> Likely eligibility was estimated based on reported discharge status. Honorable, General Honorable or Medical discharges were considered “eligible”. Dishonorable, Bad Conduct, or Other than Honorable discharges were considered “not eligible”.

The **Austin Bar Veterans Clinic** holds monthly sessions providing free legal advice to ALL veterans, regardless of their discharge status. These sessions cover topics including Chapter 6 Bankruptcy, Child Support, Divorce and Child custody, Consumer/Contracts, Guardianship/Probate, Landlord/Tenant, Social Security/SSI, and Wills/Estate Planning.

**Housing and Employment**

Two additional questions were added to the survey. The purpose of these questions was to better understand the housing and employment needs of veterans involved with the criminal justice system.

**Employment:** More than half (57%) of veterans arrested during the survey period reported being employed at the time of their arrest while 40% reported that they were not employed at the time of their arrest. (2% did not answer the question). As shown in the following chart, veterans in their 50s were more likely to report being unemployed, followed by those in their 40s and 60s.



**Homeless Status:** Nearly one-quarter (22%) of veterans reported that they had been homeless at some point in their lives, while 69% have not experienced homelessness. (9% did not answer the question). Of all age groups, those in their 40s and 50s were most likely to have experienced homelessness (29% and 35% respectively).

## CONCLUSIONS

Due to physical and emotional injuries suffered while on active duty, veterans' reintegration back into civilian life can be extremely challenging. Many veterans return home to lost jobs, terminated leases, foreclosures and severed relationships. "The once upstanding service members were getting arrested for domestic violence and bar fights, and being pursued by police as they raced along streets at 100 miles per hour – often with drugs or alcohol involved-seeking to replicate the adrenaline rush of combat or to commit suicide by motorcycle or police bullets."<sup>11</sup> The stories are repeated across America in every state, city and small town, in any location that veterans are returning from combat. Unless veterans get the help they need they may end up hurting others or themselves. Some are suffering and do not want to be a burden, do not want to be seen as a "weak soldier" and do not want to disclose their mental troubles which may hurt their chances of promotion or future jobs (law enforcement is a frequent choice) outside of the military. The facts remain, approximately one-fifth (20%) of soldiers will be affected by PTSD or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and unable to function as they did before they entered the military.<sup>12</sup>

This study confirms these challenges in Travis County as evidenced by the numbers and re-arrest rates of veterans in our jail. Over 150 veterans are incarcerated in the Travis County Jail at any given time. A majority of arrested veterans surveyed have not obtained VA or other services – services that can help support reintegration, intervene in substance abuse and mental health issues, and prevent repeated arrests.

Given the number of veterans who are arrested and rearrested in Travis County, the criminal justice system has a vested interest to ensure that every arrested veteran is evaluated and able to access appropriate services upon their *first* arrest. Since the last report, many initiatives have been undertaken and groups have formed to help our veterans and their families reintegrate. The **VIP** continues to meet monthly for helpful exchanges of information and guidance from others. The following provides an update to the important links the **VIP** has made in the community.

**Veterans Workshops:** The Travis County Veterans' Service Office, in partnership with The University of Texas School of Law and the Austin Bar Association established workshops to assist veterans with civil issues. The **Austin Bar Veterans Clinic** started officially in June 2010. On average about 50 veterans attend the free monthly clinic sessions. The veterans families are also able to attend. A VIP committee is currently working to expand veterans workshops to include employment, housing, medical and other relevant issues. The **Austin Bar Veterans Clinic** reports that PTSD is a huge issue, and that many of the people attending their clinic sessions either make slightly above the income requirements for legal aid, but still are not able to afford an attorney. In other cases, the veterans meet the income requirements, but Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (the legal assistance agency that serves this area) does not handle criminal cases or child custody cases. While attorneys have taken on approximately 50 cases pro bono, this is not a long-term solution.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2008/0712/p02s01-usmi.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.veteransnewsroom.com/files/press/VETERANS-Fact-Sheet-Veterans.pdf>

**Veterans Brochure:** VIP partners have produced a comprehensive Veterans Services brochure that has been made available at public and private entities that work with veterans. See **Appendix 2**.

**Eligibility Determination:** For many veterans, determining eligibility for VA benefits is a daunting challenge and VA eligibility may be their only path to needed services and treatment. The Sheriff's Office wants to have the ability to assist veterans determine their VA eligibility while they are in jail.

**Veterans Court:** The **Travis County Veterans Court** was created and has been operating since November 2010. It was recently given funding for a second year of operations. Presently this court hears misdemeanor cases only; however, they are assessing the possibility of expanding the court to address felony cases. See **Appendix 3**.

**VA Evaluation as a Condition of Bond:** In the previous survey, VIP members Pretrial Services and Travis County Adult Probation agreed to initiate a pilot project. The pilot project would allow veterans to receive evaluations from VA physicians as a condition of their release from jail. The summary of their conclusions is listed here:

*From December 2009 through December 2010, twelve veterans participated in Pretrial Services' Veterans Pilot Project. These defendants were released on personal bond and referred, as a condition of bond, to be screened by the Veterans' Administration and supervised by Pretrial Services. The Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist (VJO), from the VA, screened the defendants and made recommendations for appropriate treatment. Pretrial Officers provided supervision for the defendants and worked closely with the VJO to assist the defendant in complying with their bond conditions.*

*This pilot project provided a means for justice-involved veterans to begin accessing services available from the VA and in the community at-large while they were free on bond and their criminal cases were being resolved. Though this pilot has ended, it helped to establish a lasting link between criminal justice agencies and the VA that continues to provide benefits to veterans who are involved in the Criminal Justice System.*

Over the past several years, the VIP has implemented several effective strategies toward its goal (identifying and referring veterans to appropriate treatment and services which support reintegration and reduce the number of arrests or re-arrests). A major highlight for this year has been the launch of the **Travis County Veterans Court**. But there is still more to do. Contributions and supports, both from within the collaboration and from the local community, would address the following needs:

- Continued and expanded collaboration among local, state, federal, and private entities;
- Finding ways to sustain current pilot initiatives and establishing other creative programs that work towards the VIP purpose;
- Working collaboratively to address barriers around eligibility, capacity issues and gaps in service.

In a Strategic Planning session in the spring of 2011, VIP members discussed their goals for the next year. The top priorities for the group were;

- **Expand the Veterans Court,**
- **Increase In-Patient Substance Abuse treatment beds,**
- **Housing and Housing options,**
- **Add more substance abuse treatment in general.**

Though there are many needs expressed by the veterans, these continue to be the issues that garner the most attention and where resources are not always readily available. The VIP has accomplished much in the last four years, but the work load has not decreased. With continued collaboration and increased awareness to the community of the programs and help available, our intention is to make the transition to home for veterans more manageable.

Seattle, Washington has been in the news recently, as it is among the newest Veterans Courts to open this year (September 20, 2011). The County Executive who proposed the court may have expressed it best when he said, *“Our veterans and their families stand up for us in times of trouble. Let’s provide the help they need when they come home.”*<sup>13</sup>

### **For more information please contact:**

Travis County Constable Maria Canchola, Pct. 4 (512) 854-9488 [Maria.Canchola@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Maria.Canchola@co.travis.tx.us)  
Travis County Constable Bruce Elfant, Pct. 5 (512) 854-9100 [Bruce.Elfant@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Bruce.Elfant@co.travis.tx.us)

Or the Travis County Veterans Services: [http://www.co.travis.tx.us/veterans\\_services/](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/veterans_services/)

Street Address:  
100 N. IH35 #2400  
Austin, TX 78701

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 1748  
Austin, TX 78767

Phone: (512) 854-9340  
Fax: (512) 854-4453

<sup>13</sup> [http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2016059705\\_vetscourt31m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2016059705_vetscourt31m.html)

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### VETERANS ASSISTANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

M / F  
Gender

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
DOB

\_\_\_\_\_  
SSN

Which branch of the armed forces did you serve in?

- \_\_\_\_ ARMY
- \_\_\_\_ NAVY
- \_\_\_\_ AIRFORCE
- \_\_\_\_ MARINE CORPS
- \_\_\_\_ COAST GUARD
- \_\_\_\_ NATIONAL GUARD

Where did you serve?

- \_\_\_\_ IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN
- \_\_\_\_ OTHER COMBAT AREA
- \_\_\_\_ PERSIAN GULF WAR I (1990 - 91)
- \_\_\_\_ GRENADA
- \_\_\_\_ PANAMA
- \_\_\_\_ VIETNAM
- \_\_\_\_ KOREAN WAR
- \_\_\_\_ NON COMBAT

Type of Discharge:

- \_\_\_\_ HONORABLE
- \_\_\_\_ GENERAL UNDER HONORABLE
- \_\_\_\_ MEDICAL
- \_\_\_\_ DISHONORABLE
- \_\_\_\_ OTHER THAN HONORABLE
- \_\_\_\_ BAD CONDUCT DISCHARGE

Are you still on Active Duty?	Yes	No
Have you ever received VA healthcare services?	Yes	No
Are you currently employed?	Yes	No
Have you been homeless in the last year?	Yes	No

I understand this is a screening questionnaire and information will be shared with the VA and Veterans Services agencies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

White – TCSO

Blue – Pre-Trial

Yellow - Probation

## Appendix 2



# Breaking the Cycle



If you ever served in an active combat zone and currently have legal problems, this brochure may help to direct you to treatment or other services to help improve the quality of your life and prevent future legal problems.

**Why seek treatment?**

Combat stress is a normal set of reactions to the traumatic events which commonly occur in war. With the passage of time or when feelings or issues related to the trauma are not dealt with, it can result in problems re-adjusting to civilian life. A delayed stress reaction may even surface after many years and include some or all of the following problems:

- Strong upsetting feelings such as anger, irritability, anxiety, sadness, grief, and/or guilt
- Upsetting memories and thoughts
- Nightmares and sleep disturbance
- Avoiding things because they trigger painful feelings or memories
- Avoiding interacting with other people
- Finding it hard to enjoy or get much pleasure out of things you do
- Feeling emotionally numb (which causes difficulties in relationships)
- Feeling "on guard" and hypervigilant.
- Difficulties concentrating or remembering things
- Alcohol and/or drug use to cope with these problems

Legal problems such as DWI's, DUI's, and assault or domestic violence charges can be an unfortunate consequence of the anger and alcohol or drug use that is often associated with combat stress.

This brochure represents the efforts of many different Veterans services and legal agencies in Travis County. The goal of this project is to assist our combat Veterans in accessing VA and other services and help prevent further legal problems.

CTX180099.00077



### A brochure for combat Veterans with legal problems



## Q&A

### Will treatment help me with my legal problems?

While there is no guarantee that going to treatment will help address your legal issues, efforts to seek treatment for problems that may be related to your legal problems (such as anger management and alcohol or drug treatment) will show the legal system (courts, attorneys, probation/parole officers) that you are serious about changing your behavior and addressing your legal issues.

### I need a lawyer; can the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provide me with legal assistance?

The VA does not provide legal assistance. You would need to use community resources, such as Legal Aid or Lawyer Referral Service, for legal assistance or pay for legal counsel.

### The conditions of my probation state that I need to receive alcohol or drug treatment. Can I get this through the VA?

Yes, the Central Texas VA has outpatient and residential programs for substance abuse treatment.

The VA outpatient clinic in Austin can help you. Call (512) 433-2020 to ask for information about Alcohol and Drug Assessment and Treatment Services. The Austin VA Mental Health services are located at 2101 South IH 35.

### Am I eligible to receive treatment from the Veterans Administration (VA)?

Never assume that you are not. Contact the VA and apply. The phone number of the Austin VA Outpatient Clinic is (512) 389-1010. The number for the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System (which includes Austin, Temple, and Waco) is (800) 423-2111. Eligibility must be verified before you can receive care. The phone number for Readjustment Counseling Services through the Austin Vet Center is (512) 416-1314.

### I am an Iraq/Afghanistan Veteran. How can I find out about programs for my war?

Contact the OEF/OIF Combat Veteran Case Managers at the VA Outpatient Clinic OR the Austin Vet Center. The phone numbers for the VA Case Managers are (512) 389-6672 and (512) 389-6731. The phone number for the Austin Vet Center (a program of the VA Readjustment Counseling Service) is (512) 416-1314.

### I am a Veteran from an earlier war or conflict. Can I still be seen for counseling at the VA?

Yes, Veterans can always be seen for combat stress reactions, regardless of the amount of time that has passed since the trauma. You can contact the Austin Vet Center at (512) 416-1314 or the VA Outpatient Clinic at (512) 433-2020.

### I now have a felony on my record. Will that prevent me from getting my VA benefits?

No, if you have an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions, your arrest record does not limit your access to your VA benefits.

### I have questions about VA benefits for injuries I received in the military?

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) handles benefits claims for injuries, physical or psychological.

Benefits assistance agencies outside the VA include the Travis County Veteran's Service Office and the Texas Veterans Commission.

**VBA Regional Office (800) 827-1000.**

**Travis County Veterans**

**Service Office: (512) 854-9340.**

**Texas Veterans**

**Commission (in the**

**Austin VA Outpatient**

**Clinic):**

**(512) 743-7143.**

### What help is available if I don't have a place to live?

The VA and Travis County both have services that may help you. The Austin VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program can be reached at (512) 433-2012. The ReEntry program at the Travis County Veteran's Service Office can be reached at (512) 854-9002.

### Something happened to me when I was in the military and I have not talked with anyone about it.

Contact either of the following VA and Vet Center phone numbers and ask to speak with a counselor/therapist: (512) 433-2020 or (512) 416-1314.

### Sometimes I have thoughts about harming myself.

Please call one of the following numbers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

**Austin Suicide Helpline: (512) 472-4357**

**National Suicide**

**Prevention Lifeline:**

**(800) 273-TALK (8255)**

**- Press 1 for Veteran-**

**specific services**



## Appendix 3

### **Travis County Veterans Court Helps Combat Veterans Obtain Treatment and Avoid Conviction**

The Travis County Veterans Court Program is a pre-trial diversion program for veterans who are charged with non-violent offenses that are related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) or other mental health problems resulting from their military service. Veterans Courts have become increasingly popular throughout the country over the past three years as a means for helping servicemen and women deal with the physical and psychological effects of combat. The stressors experienced during war often lead to later involvement in the justice system, usually due to behavior that is related to substance abuse, anxiety, depression and lack of anger control. These courts are typically designed as a hybrid mental health and drug court, utilizing a non-adversarial approach that has been shown to reduce the risk of re-arrest by as much as 35%. The Travis County Veterans Court, which held its first docket on November 10, 2010, employs a similar team approach. The court team consists of County Court #4 Judge, The Honorable Michael Denton, a defense attorney, prosecutor, program manager, caseworker and a Veterans Administration justice outreach specialist. In addition to helping support veterans manage the various issues they are facing, the Veterans Court program offers court participants an opportunity to avoid prosecution and a criminal conviction.

Participants in the Veterans Court undergo an evaluation by the Veterans Administration to assess psychological, substance abuse and other issues that can be addressed through various types of treatment and supportive services. A Strategic Action Plan (SAP) is developed by the Veterans Court caseworker with the veterans' input. The veterans are then provided with referrals for services needed to begin implementation of the SAP. The VA provides treatment for mental health and substance abuse problems. If a veteran is unable to attend substance abuse treatment at the VA due to schedule conflicts, they may be referred for treatment at a community service provider, such as Austin Recovery, at no charge to them. The Veterans Court staff also assists participating veterans with obtaining employment, education, health and housing services, as needed.

If accepted into the court, each veteran attends a series of court hearings to monitor and reinforce progress toward meeting the objectives of their SAP. Initially, participants attend each court session, which is held every other Thursday at 5:00 PM. As the participant progresses, he/she is promoted to the next level. As they advance through levels they are required to attend court less frequently and are also allowed to decrease individual meetings with the caseworker. Once the objectives of the SAP have been met, the participant will be successfully discharged from the Veterans Court program and the case will be dismissed from prosecution. While the length of participation may be up to two years, the expectation is that most participants will complete in 12 months.

PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injuries and substance abuse all change the way the brain functions and impacts the ability of individuals to make responsible choices. Research on effective intervention has demonstrated that establishing a supportive, non-adversarial judicial relationship, employing progressive sanctions and incentives, and providing regular, meaningful involvement with a judge are significant factors leading to positive behavioral changes among offenders. The Travis County

Veterans Court is attempting to replicate this model to help combat veterans and create a safer environment for the local community.

As of October 10, 2011, the Veterans Court has accepted 25 applicants and expects to increase this number significantly in the coming months. Referrals have increased significantly as word of the court's existence spreads and increasing numbers of veterans return from conflict.

For more information on the Veterans Court, contact the Program Manager, Jackson Glass, at [jackson.glass@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:jackson.glass@co.travis.tx.us) or at 512-854-3829.