



*Panhandle Regional Veterans
Treatment Court*

Caring for Our Nation's Finest in the Panhandle of Texas

October 11, 2024

Military and Veterans Law Section

Fall MCLE

Texas Tech University School of Law

PRVTC - *Speakers*

Honorable Walt Weaver

Judge, County Court at Law #1

Joshua Crawford

Director of Specialty Courts

Kai Vrede

Lead Mental Health Specialist,
PAPD

Benjamin Gifford

MAC Director, Attorney

October 11, 2024

PRVTC: Team Members



- **Judge:** The Honorable Judge Walt Weaver (Potter County Court of Law #1)
- **Assistant District Attorney:** Adrian Castillo (Potter County ADA)
- **Program Defense Counsel:** Ben Gifford (MAC Director/Defense Attorney)
- **Probation Officer:** Vinus Bustos (Potter/Randall/Armstrong Counties CSCD)
- **Department of Veterans Affairs:** Lynda Mitchell (VJP, LCSW)
- **Department of Veterans Affairs:** Yvette Ramirez (LCSW)
- **Case Manager:** Kai Vrede (Mental Health Advocate)
- **Program Director:** Joshua Crawford (Specialty Courts Director)
- **Court Coordinator:** Avis Morris (Potter County Court of Law #1)
- **Others:** Cenikor (Seth Trujillo)/Family Support Services/Texas Veterans Resource Center/ Another Chance House/Peer Support Specialist (Josh Smith)/VALOR/Texas Panhandle Center (Tyconda Bonner, LPCA)(Tarissa Klander, LMSW)

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Josh Crawford

PRVTC Program Director/ Army Veteran

October 11, 2024

Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court

Mission:

The mission of the PRVTC is to promote justice through a judicially managed alternative to incarceration, specifically tailored to addressing the unique needs of military veterans involved in the criminal justice system throughout the Panhandle Region of Texas. Building upon the service members core values once instilled in them, the PRVTC aspires to provide structure and organization to Court directed, individualized treatment and therapy, with the goal of giving our veterans hope and purpose, contemporaneously prioritizing community safety and individual accountability.



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Kai Vrede

Mental Health Specialist/ PRVTC Case Manager/ Army Veteran

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PRVTC – Program Qualification Requirements

ELIGIBILITY:

- Be a veteran, active duty member, national guard, state guard, or reserve member of the United States military.
- Have a pending eligible felony or misdemeanor offense.
- Be a legal resident or citizen of the United States.
- Have a behavioral/mental health issue, mild/moderate TBI, and or substance use/abuse diagnosis.
- Be eligible for VA services OR recognized community services for veterans.
- Have treatment accessible to address the diagnosis.
- Completed PRVTC application alongside signature of all PRVTC and VA releases.

EXCLUSIONS:

- Is seriously and persistently mentally ill preventing participation in treatment.
- Previous graduation or termination from PRVTC
- District Attorney specifically excludes veteran from participation.

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Ben Gifford



- MAC Director/ Criminal Defense Attorney/ Marine Corps Veteran

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Who Qualifies?

PRVTC: Which Veterans Qualify for the Court

- Texas Government Code, Title 2: Judicial Branch, Subtitle K: Specialty Courts, Chapter 124: Veterans Treatment Court Program
 - (1) Suffers from a brain injury, mental illness, or mental disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, or was the victim of military sexual trauma if the injury illness, disorder, or trauma:
 - (A) Occurred during or resulted from the defendant's military service; and
 - (B) Affected the defendant's criminal conduct at issue in the case; or
 - (2) Is a defendant whose participation in a veterans treatment court program, considering the circumstances of the defendant's conduct, personal and social background, and criminal history, is likely to achieve the objective of ensuring public safety through rehabilitation of the veteran in the manner provided by Section 1.02(1), Texas Penal Code

Judge Walt Weaver



- Texas Tech University, School of Law, J.D., 1992
- New Mexico State University, B.S., 1984
- Board Certified in Criminal Law, 2006
- Board Certified in Criminal Appellate Law, 2012
- Judge, Potter County Court at Law #1, 2019-Present



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Judge Walt Weaver



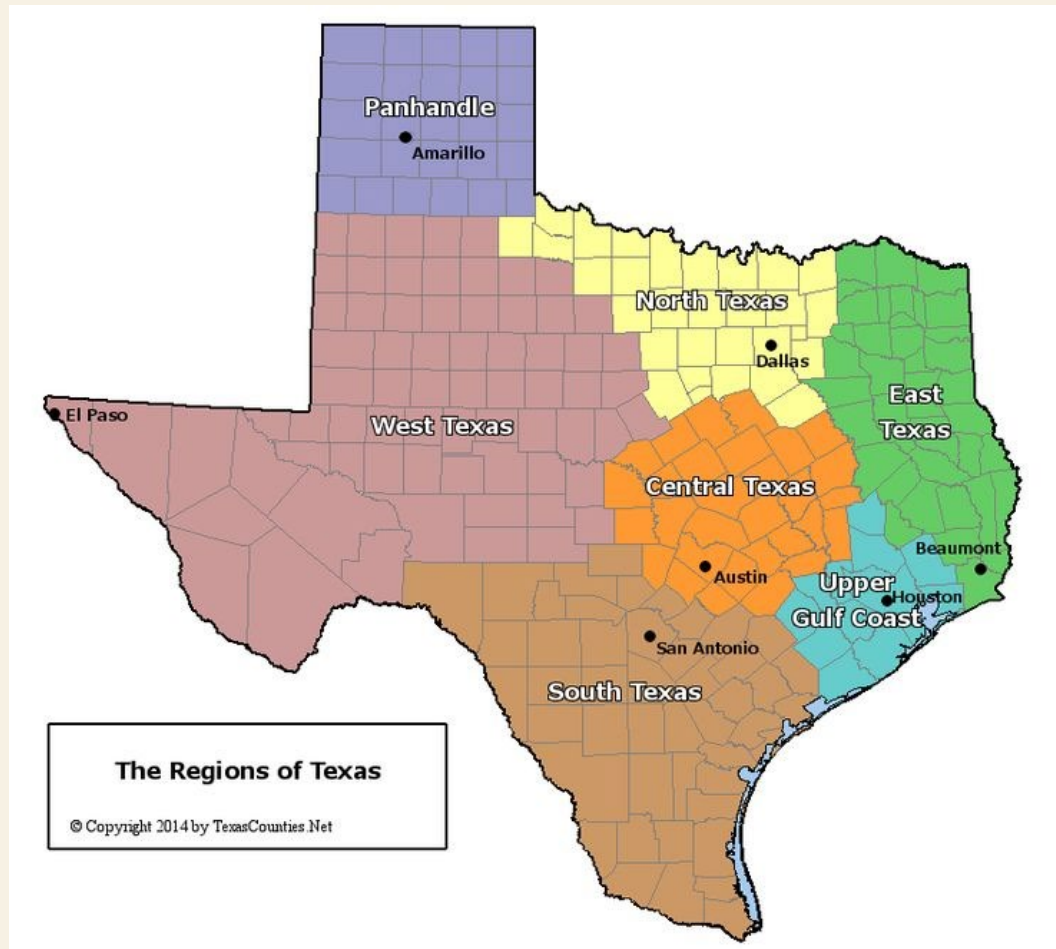
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Program History



- **January 4, 2008:** The Nation's first veterans treatment court was started in Buffalo, New York by Judge Robert Russell.
- **June 1, 2016:** PRVTC was started in Amarillo, Texas as a 47th District Court Diversion program for felony charges in Potter County.
- **February 1, 2021:** As the Court started to develop and increase in population, the Office of Courts Administration, through the Texas Judicial Branch, officially recognized PRVTC.
- **2021-Present:** Both the County Attorney's Office and the District Attorney's Office in Potter County, began to send diversion cases to PRVTC.

PRVTC – *Region Served*



- Upper 26 Counties
- Population: 435,082
- 26,000 square miles
- 62 incorporated cities
- Veteran Population: 24,658 (2019: Texas Workforce Investment Council)
- Vet. Pop. Randall County: 9,505 (largest)
- Vet. Pop. Potter County: 6,247
- Vet. Pop. Roberts County: 45 (smallest)

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PRVTC -- *Getting Into the Court*

- Identify Veteran for Program. (Magistration, Jail Visit, PD/MAC, District Attorney, WOM);
- Application/Evaluation;
- Staffing Committee Votes;
- District/County Attorney's Office Approves or Vetoes;
- PRVTC Allows Entry into the Program for all Pre-Trial Diversion, Deferred Probation, Straight Probation, and Probation referrals;
- Veteran appears for initial PRVTC appearance, if in agreement with terms of the PRVTC, the veteran will sign the PRVTC contract. (Blank copy of application)
- Veteran begins working phases and treatment plan.



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<u>PRVTC METRICS</u>	2022	2023	2024
Total Vets within PRVTC	20	29	23 (Current)
Vets Graduated	5	9	12
Graduation Rate	84%	89%	84%
Vets Discharged Unsuccessfully	1	2	3
Avg. Time in Program (Days)	489.08	640.33	545.01
New Participants	11	14	15
Female Vets in Program	2	2	1
Vets age 41+ in Program	9	18	17
PTSD as primary diagnosis	7	12	11
Vets sent to VALOR	0	0	2

Weekly Staffings

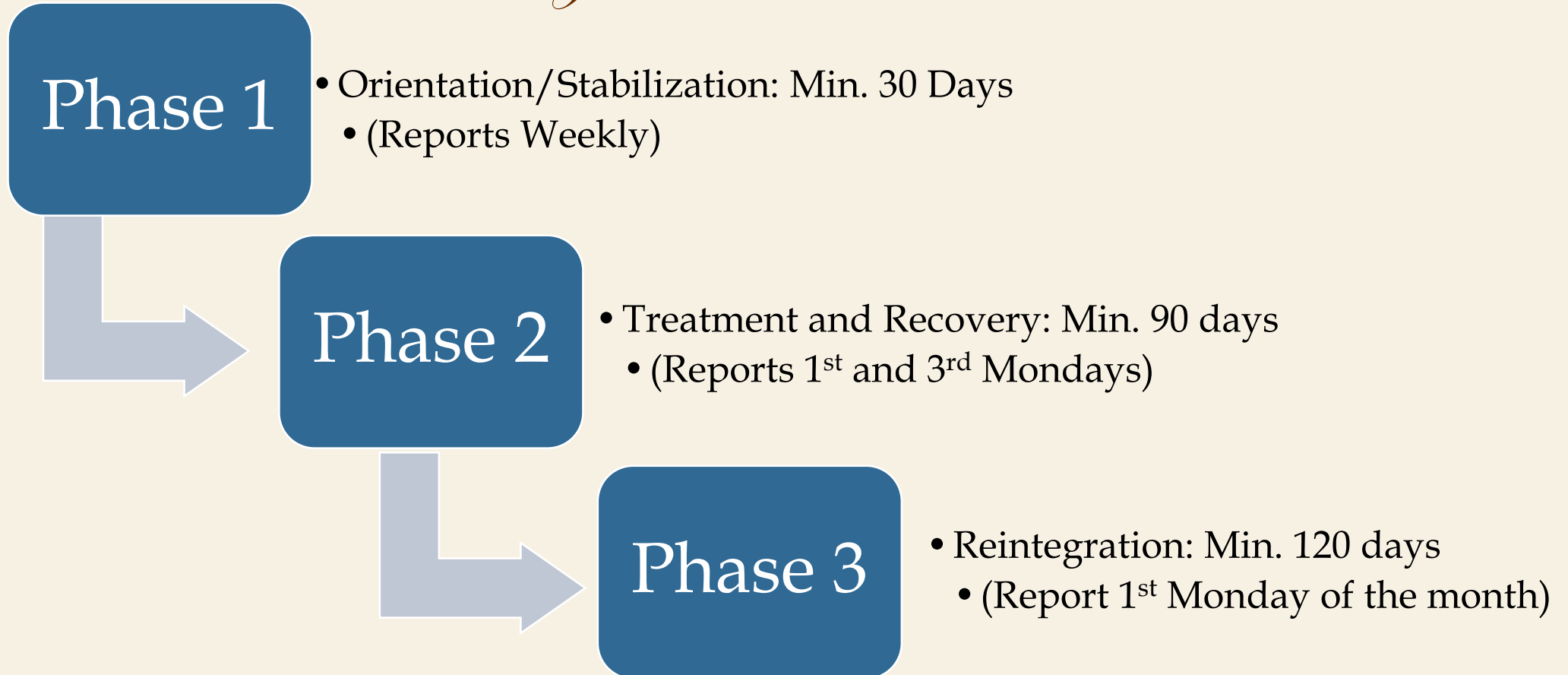
Concerns Addressed

1. UAs
2. Substance Use Treatment
3. Mental Health Treatment
4. CSCD Compliance
5. Phase Progression

Environmental/Social Barriers

- Food
- Housing
- Transportation
- Phone/Communication
- Medication Management/Education
- Continuing Education-Amarillo College, WTAMU
- Furniture needs
- Clothing
- Service Dog Training
- Disability Aids (walking canes, ramps for home)

PRVTC- *Program Timeline*



Participants can graduate in as little as 8 months

Community Partners

- Thomas E. Creek VAMC (Amarillo VA)
- Vet Center
- Veterans Resource Center
- CENIKOR
- Texas Panhandle Centers
- Family Support Services
- Another Chance House
- Downtown Women's Center (DWC)
- Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance

Treatment Facilities:

- TCDJ ID - ISF
- TCDJ ID - SAFPF/Relapse SAFPF
- VALOR - McKinney, Texas
- Rise - VA Waco, Texas
- Temple Domiciliary - VA Temple, Texas
- Big Springs Domiciliary - VA Big Springs, Texas
- Bonham Domiciliary - VA Bonham, Texas
- CENIKOR - Amarillo, Texas
- Serenity - Women only - Amarillo, Texas

Why Participate?

1. Experience improved coordination and access to needed mental health and addiction treatment.
2. Resolve felony and misdemeanor charges.
3. Improve long-term mental health recovery and community reintegration.
4. Reduce drug use, criminal activity, and criminal recidivism.
5. Reduce taxpayer burden.
6. Better protect victims and the community.

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Questions?

1. What are the different type of crimes you take on? What do you exclude?
2. Are there different types of risks (how do you manage those two groups)?
3. How many days/years not served in jail (financial savings)
4. How do I get other counties involved, or start my own?
 - i. County Commissioners authority
 - ii. Memorandums of Understanding with all agencies
 - iii. Different Courts granting authority for me to take over a case
5. Punishment versus Treatment adjustment concepts?

PRVTC - *Contact Information*

Honorable Judge Walt Weaver

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Thank You!

LEAVE NO VETERAN BEHIND!