

## For Immediate Release

Contact: Teri Hamlyn  
Director of Treatment Courts  
(904) 255-1046  
[Thamlyn@coj.net](mailto:Thamlyn@coj.net)

### **The Fourth Judicial Circuit Receives National Honor**

Jacksonville, Florida. March 29, 2017. The Fourth Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment Court has been named one of only four national mentor courts by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), Justice For Vets, and the U.S. Department of Justice. The program will receive an award marking this distinction on Wednesday, April 5, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. at the Duval County Courthouse, 501 West Adams Street, Courtroom 407, Jacksonville, Florida 32202.

As a national Mentor Court, the Fourth Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment Court will help develop, identify and test national best practices and provide technical assistance to jurisdictions interested in implementing a veterans court, including hosting visitors from around the country. The program will serve as a national Mentor Court for a period of three years.

“Many individuals who have served our country have service-related conditions which bring them into the criminal justice system. One of the most gratifying things I do as a judge is watching those individuals put their lives, families and careers back together. Instead of becoming convicted criminals, they again become productive members of society. The Fourth Circuit Veterans Courts have a demonstrated record of success in this regard,” said The Honorable Don H. Lester, Administrative Judge, Problem-Solving Courts.

“In keeping with the high standards of the past 20 years, Chief Judge Mark H. Mahon advocates for Problem-Solving Courts that provide court supervised treatment services and accountability to those engaged in activities to overcome their addictions, stabilize their mental health, and restore their lives. Judge Mahon’s mission is shared by many in the Fourth Judicial Circuit who believe that those who have served our country have earned our compassion and support. We are very proud that Duval County is being recognized by Justice For Vets as a mentor court site for the Veterans Treatment Court program and are eager to assist other communities that share our commitment to the mission of leaving no veteran behind. We look forward to continuing our efforts toward promoting change, restoring families, and improving public safety in this community for years to come,” said Joseph G. Stelma, Jr., Trial Court Administrator.

#### About the Fourth Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment Court

The Fourth Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment Court is a problem-solving treatment court which includes regular court appearances before a dedicated judge and intensive

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substance abuse and mental health treatment services. It is well known that the impact of military service on veterans can be immense and long-lasting. This includes substance abuse and mental health disorders. Service members have many shared experiences, many of which are not common among their non-military peers. For this reason, Veterans Treatment Court was developed to appropriately and adequately serve this population. The program utilizes services that are consumer centered, recovery oriented, evidence-based, quality driven, and trauma informed and seeks to enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, and restore families. The Fourth Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment Court provides multilevel benefits to the community including improvement in public safety, substantial monetary savings, and a projected lower recidivism rate for successful participants. Veterans Treatment Court invites veterans to choose to be transformed from a typical “criminal defendant” into a “veteran-participant.” This transformation shifts the focus from the stigma of being a criminal to the honor of being a veteran, highlighting their individual worth and their collective value to society.

#### About The National Association of Drug Court Professionals

Since 1994, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), a non-profit organization 501 (c)(3) representing more than 27,000 multi-disciplinary justice professionals and community leaders, has worked tirelessly at the national, state and local level to create and enhance drug courts and other treatment courts. NADCP is recognized as experts on the intersection of addiction and the criminal justice system. After 26 years of innovation, NADCP has helped lead the effort to create over 3,000 drug courts located in all 50 US states and territories. For more information, visit [www.AllRise.org](http://www.AllRise.org).

#### About Justice For Vets

Justice For Vets is a professional services division of the National Association of Drug Court professionals. Justice For Vets believes that no veteran or military service member should suffer from gaps in service, or the judicial system when they return to their communities. As the stewards of the Veterans Treatment Court movement, Justice For Vets keeps veterans out of jail and connects them to the benefits and treatment they have earned; saving their lives, families, and futures, and saving tax dollars for the American public. Justice For Vets ensures that the criminal justice system effectively identifies, assesses, and responds to all justice-involved veterans appropriately, and is leading the national effort to establish Veterans Treatment Courts within reach of every veteran in need. As the national leader, Justice For Vets aggressively advocates for Veterans Treatment Courts and mobilizes the public to take action to join in ensuring that no veteran is left behind. Many organizations exist to provide programs and services to veterans, however service duplication and lack of coordination have created wide gaps in access. Often, justice-involved veterans are excluded entirely from accessing this help. Justice For Vets helps communities bring together local, state and federal resources to directly serve veterans involved in the justice system due to

substance abuse, mental illness, or trauma. For more information, visit [www.justiceforvets.org](http://www.justiceforvets.org).

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