



## Spotlight: Veterans Trauma Court

In honor of Veterans Day, CSG West welcomes the opportunity to spotlight the work of Colorado's [Veterans Trauma Court](#) (VTC). Guided by a philosophy of therapeutic jurisprudence, VTC provides treatment alternatives to incarceration for U.S. military veterans and active-duty military personnel with trauma spectrum disorders.

Of the more than two million veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than half a million experience mental health disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In cities such as Colorado Springs, more than 25% of residents are military affiliated. Consequently, Colorado's 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District implemented VTC to meet a growing need for a special docket for veterans, in particular those who have experienced service-related trauma.

Among its primary objectives, VTC assists veterans with accessing treatment for PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), mental health, and/or substance use disorders. Through its partnerships with behavioral health providers, law enforcement, peer mentors, and public, private, and community-based organizations, VTC employs a cooperative approach to treatment engagement.

The Honorable Judge David Shakes presides over VTC, bringing a unique perspective gained from his service as a former Judge Advocate with the U.S. Army. CSG West was honored to have Judge Shakes host a session on the role of veterans and problem-solving courts in criminal justice reform during this year's 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Colorado Springs.



Of the key areas discussed, Judge Shakes highlighted two core philosophies underlying problem solving courts. These include a **team approach** to addressing behavioral health matters in a court setting, and an emphasis on a **therapeutic jurisprudence framework**. Additional discussion addressed court supervision to reduce recidivism, building public trust in the justice system, and reducing the cost of jail and prison beds.

During the session, Judge Shakes shared a veteran's story of rehabilitation while participating in VTC. To watch the full video, please click [here](#).

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