



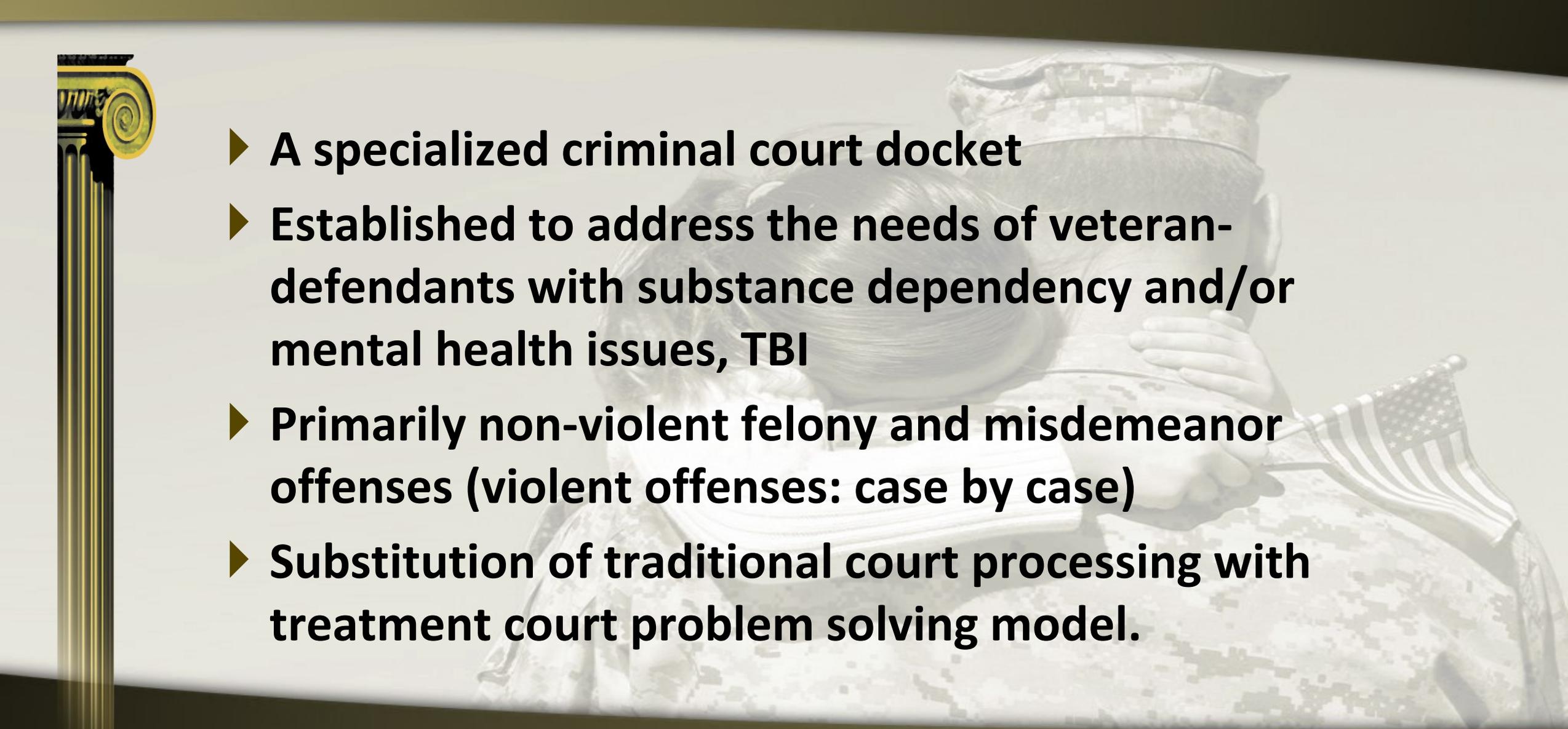
# Veterans Treatment Courts: Serving Those Who Have Served

History and Background of Veterans Treatment Court  
Judge Robert Russell (ret.)

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- ▶ **Judge's Treatment Court Background: Drug & Mental Health Courts**
  - ▶ **Veterans seen in Treatment Courts**
  - ▶ **Facilitation by fellow Veterans**
  - ▶ **Visit to Buffalo Veterans Hospital Advisory Board, (WNY) V.A. [Director Michael Finnegan](#)**
  - ▶ **Community forums with Veterans Health Care, the Court and Community Behavioral Health Care Providers-Keynote Speaker [Deputy Under Secretary William Feeley](#)**

Background and Inspiration for Veterans Tx Court



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- ▶ **A specialized criminal court docket**
  - ▶ **Established to address the needs of veteran-defendants with substance dependency and/or mental health issues, TBI**
  - ▶ **Primarily non-violent felony and misdemeanor offenses (violent offenses: case by case)**
  - ▶ **Substitution of traditional court processing with treatment court problem solving model.**

# Veterans Court

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- ▶ **What Makes VTC Different**
  - ▶ **Military Culture**

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- ▶ **The Participants prior experiences are different,**
  - ▶ **The array of services are expanded, specific and catered to Veterans,**
  - ▶ **The addition of Volunteer Veteran Mentors to Treatment Court Operations.**

**What Makes them Different**

Veterans are used to:

- ▶ **Structure**
- ▶ **Leadership**
- ▶ **Loyalty**
- ▶ **Patriotism**
- ▶ **Camaraderie**
- ▶ **Teamwork & Self-reliance**



Military Culture

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- ▶ **Court entirely of Veterans**
  - ▶ **Veterans Health Care Worker(s) & Services**
  - ▶ **Veteran Mentors**
  - ▶ **Therapeutic Environment**
  - ▶ **Hybrid Drug & Mental Health Court**

**Unique Components**

▶ **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**



▶ **U.S. Department of Labor**

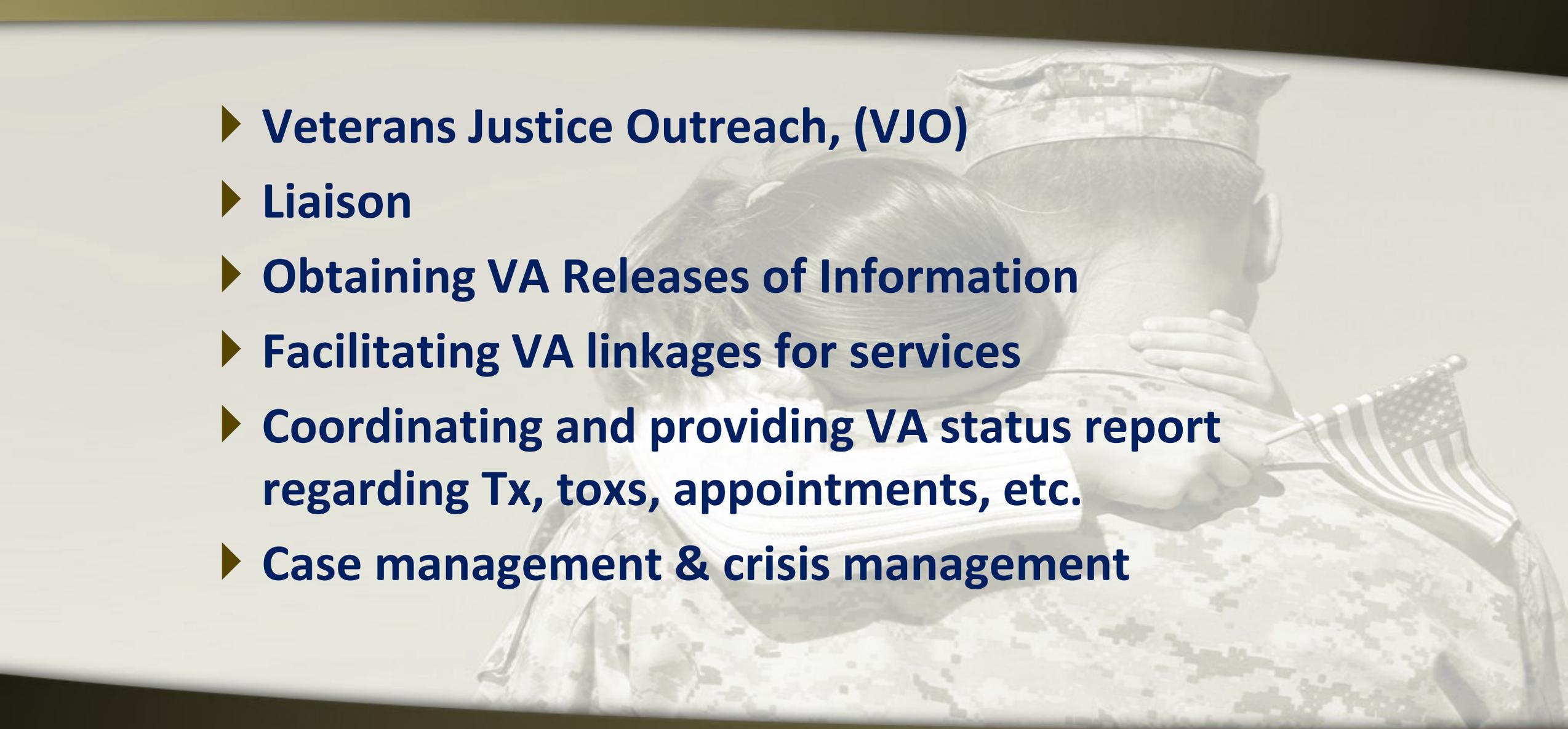


▶ **State Departments of Veterans Affairs**

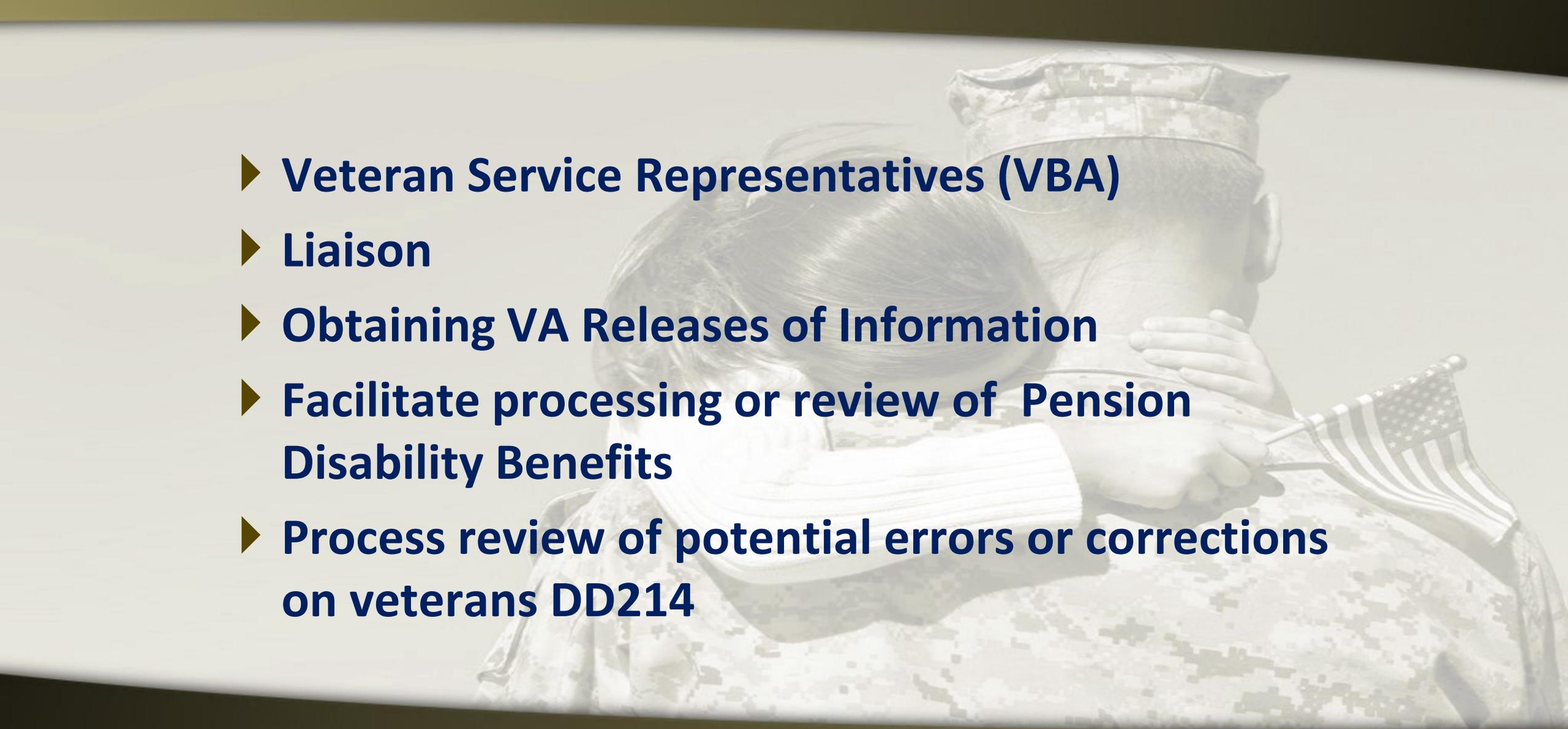


▶ **Veterans Service Organizations**

**Non-Traditional Resources  
Veterans Treatment Courts**

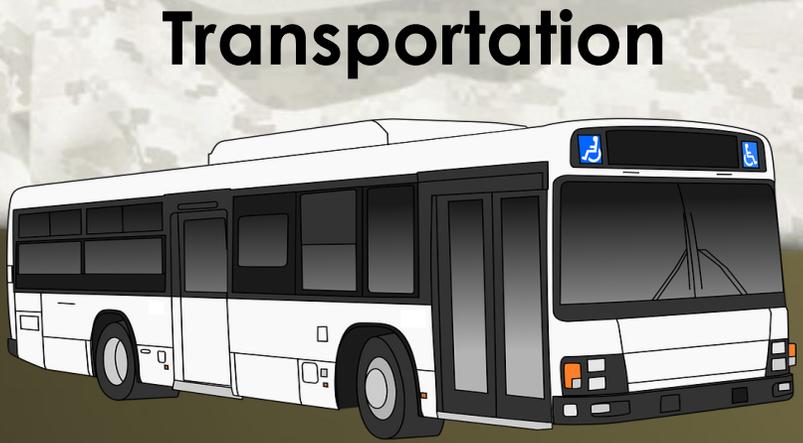
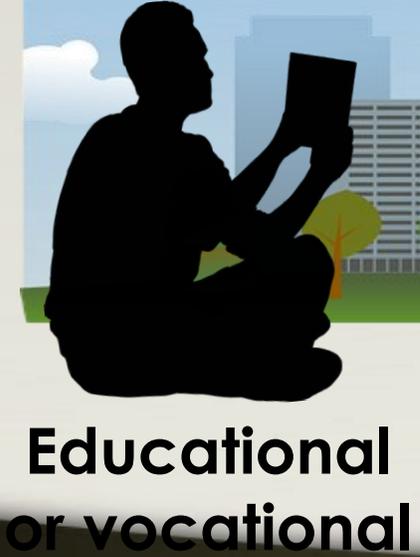
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- ▶ **Veterans Justice Outreach, (VJO)**
  - ▶ **Liaison**
  - ▶ **Obtaining VA Releases of Information**
  - ▶ **Facilitating VA linkages for services**
  - ▶ **Coordinating and providing VA status report regarding Tx, tox, appointments, etc.**
  - ▶ **Case management & crisis management**

V.A. Health Care Worker

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- ▶ **Veteran Service Representatives (VBA)**
  - ▶ **Liaison**
  - ▶ **Obtaining VA Releases of Information**
  - ▶ **Facilitate processing or review of Pension Disability Benefits**
  - ▶ **Process review of potential errors or corrections on veterans DD214**

**FEDERAL OFFICE OF VETERANS BENEFIT AFFAIRS**

# Empower them with getting the resources they need.



► **The Secret Sauce of Veterans  
Treatment Courts...**



# The backbone of Veterans Treatment Courts...



*“Leave no one behind”*

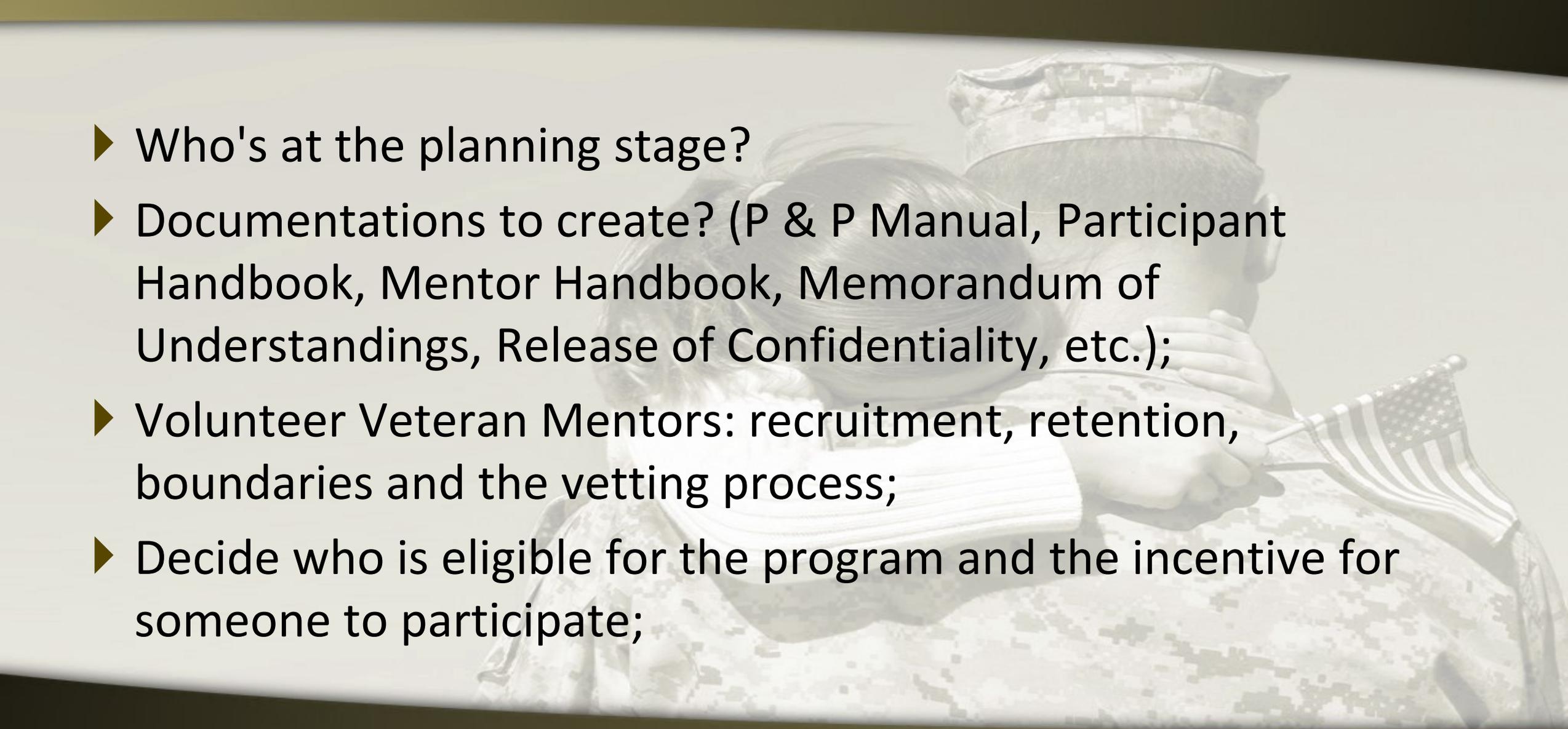


Veteran Mentors

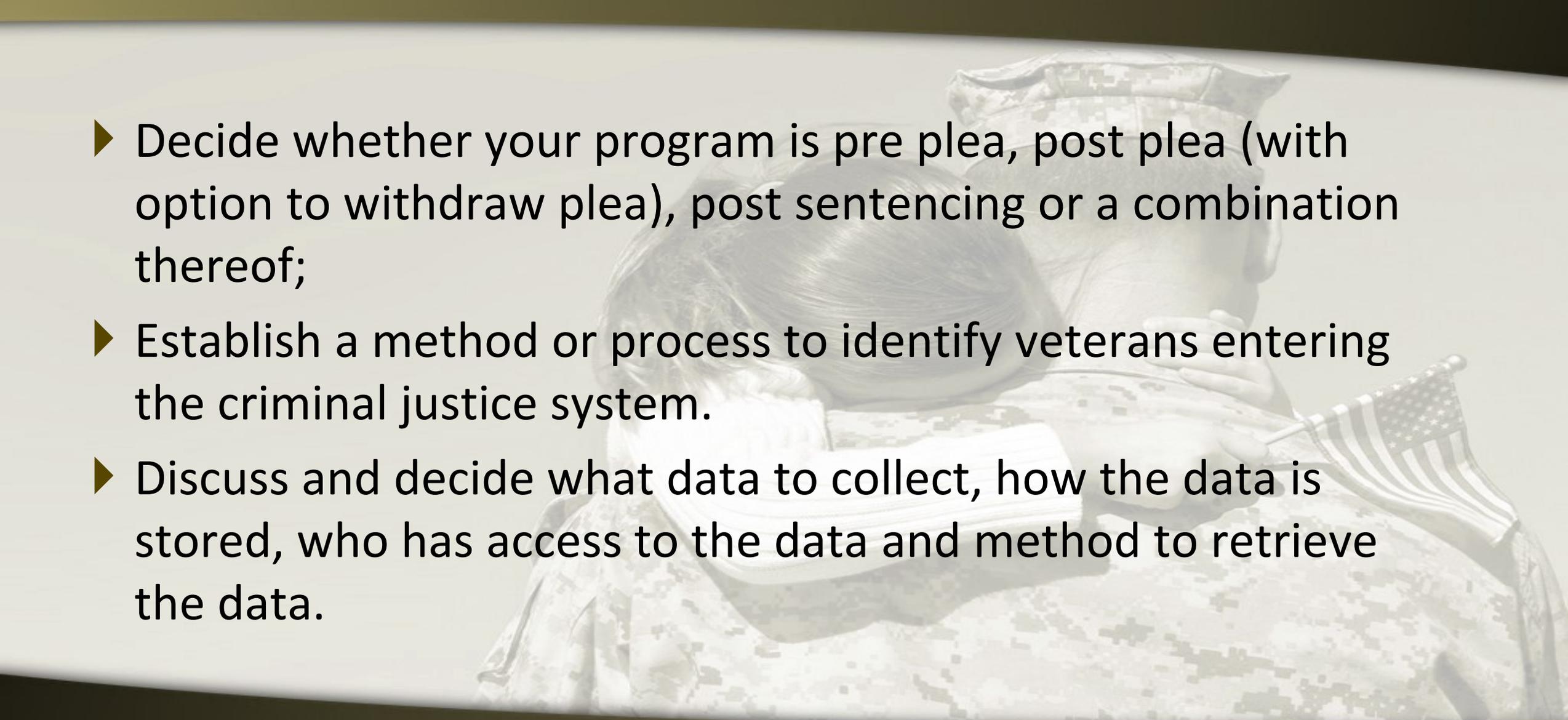
- ▶ Coach
- ▶ Facilitator
- ▶ Advisor
- ▶ Sponsor
- ▶ Support



# Veteran Mentors' Role

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- ▶ Who's at the planning stage?
  - ▶ Documentations to create? (P & P Manual, Participant Handbook, Mentor Handbook, Memorandum of Understandings, Release of Confidentiality, etc.);
  - ▶ Volunteer Veteran Mentors: recruitment, retention, boundaries and the vetting process;
  - ▶ Decide who is eligible for the program and the incentive for someone to participate;

# The Planning Stage

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- ▶ Decide whether your program is pre plea, post plea (with option to withdraw plea), post sentencing or a combination thereof;
  - ▶ Establish a method or process to identify veterans entering the criminal justice system.
  - ▶ Discuss and decide what data to collect, how the data is stored, who has access to the data and method to retrieve the data.

# The Planning Stage

## ▶ Ask the right question

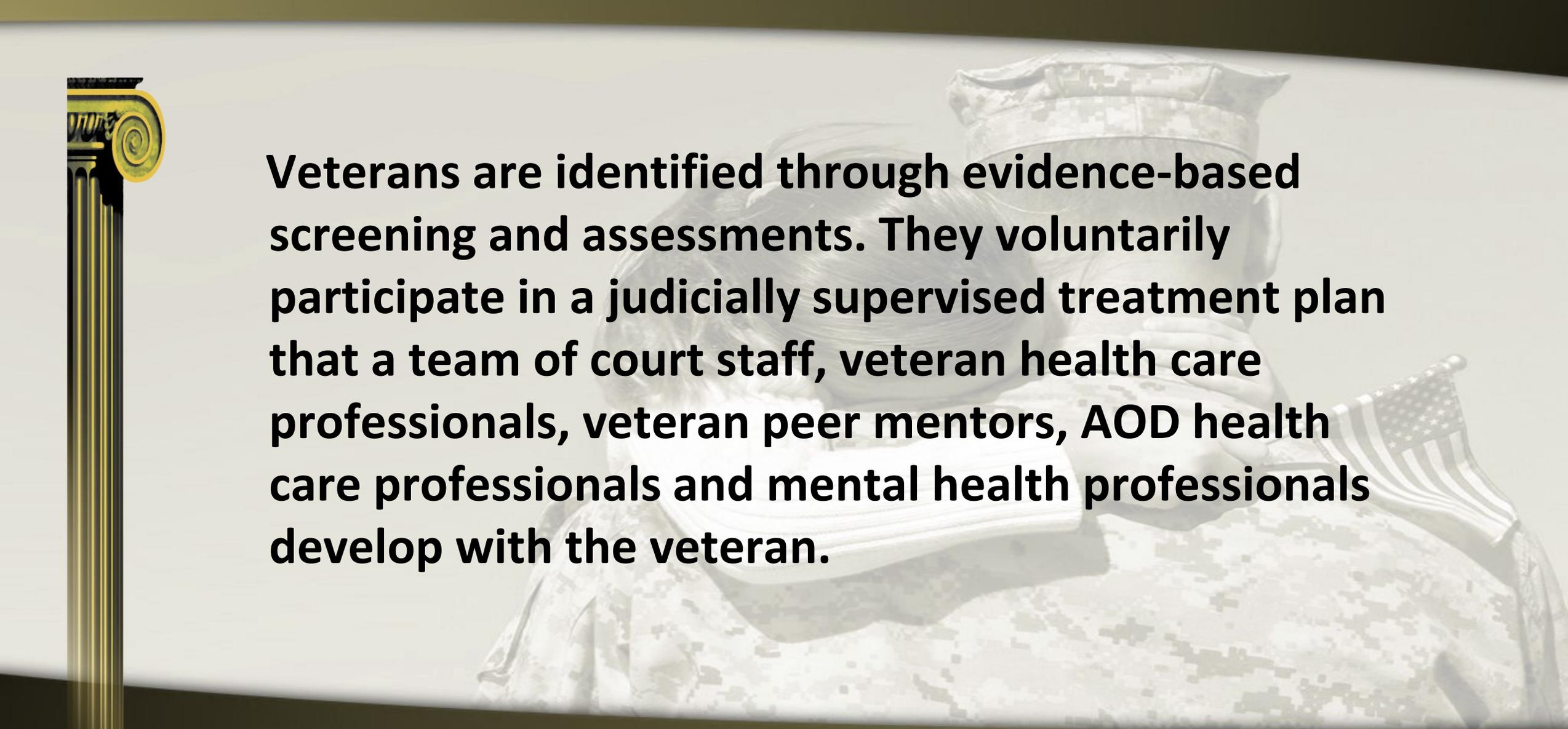
- ▶ *Have you ever served in the United States military/Armed Forces (to include the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force or Coast Guard; Active duty, Reserves, or National Guard)?*

## ▶ Ask early, ask often

- ▶ Initial law enforcement contact all the way through sentencing
- ▶ Screen existing treatment court clients
- ▶ Some Veterans will not self-identify



# Identifying your Veterans



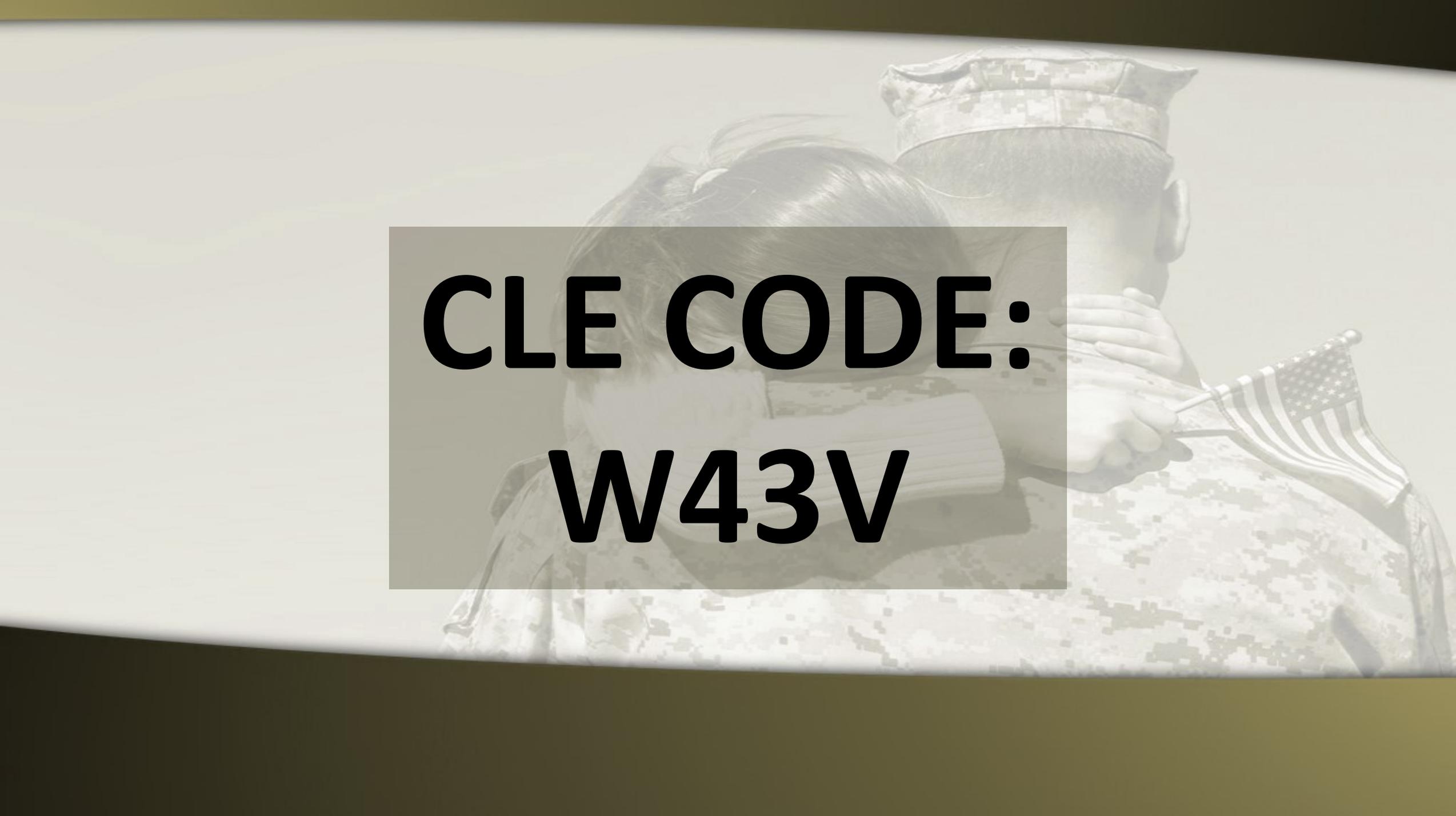
**Veterans are identified through evidence-based screening and assessments. They voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan that a team of court staff, veteran health care professionals, veteran peer mentors, AOD health care professionals and mental health professionals develop with the veteran.**

**Early Identification: Treatment Need**





September 2008-The Today Show



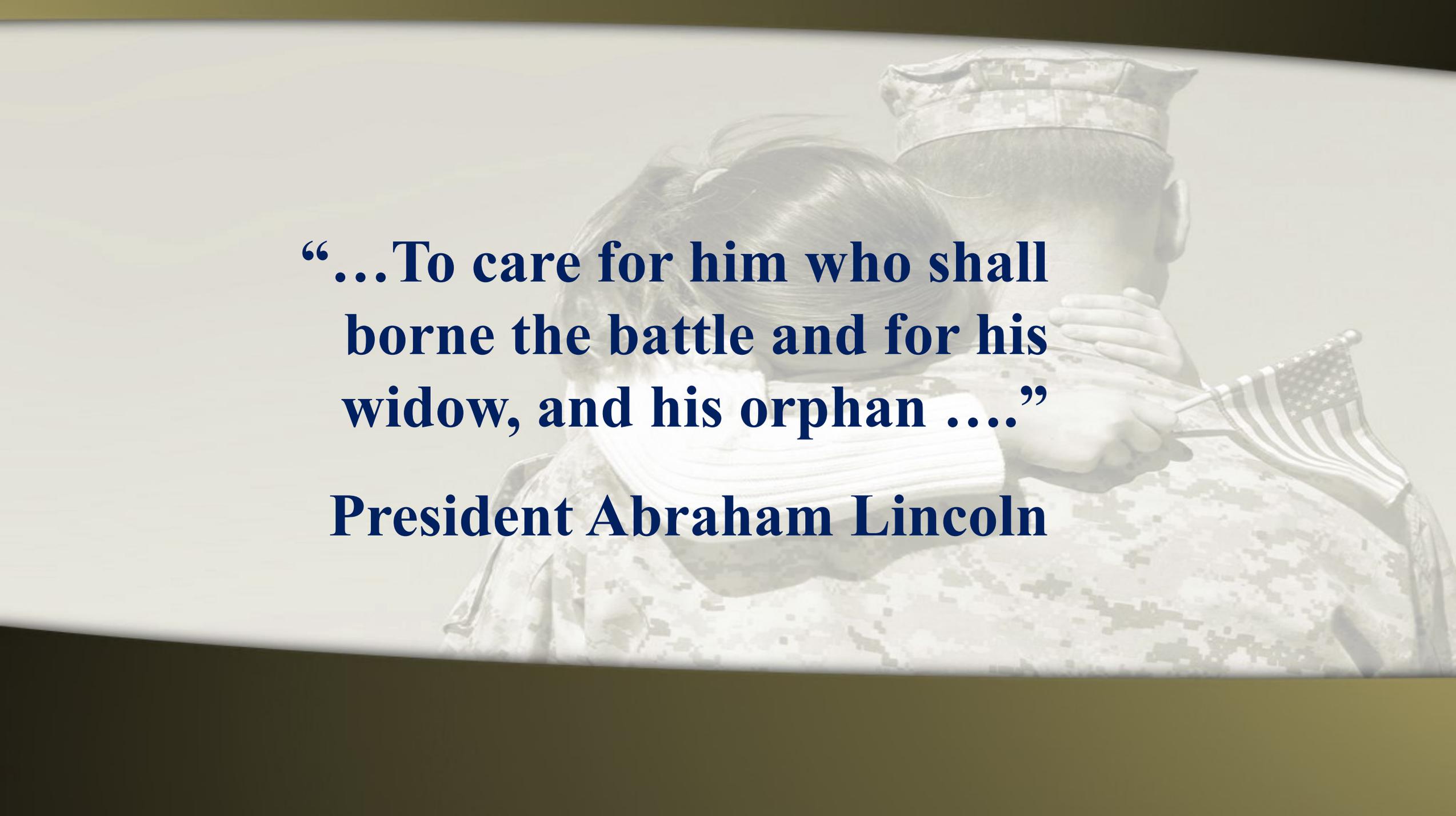
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# Why Veterans Treatment Courts?

Affording the best opportunity for  
success

And.....





**“...To care for him who shall  
borne the battle and for his  
widow, and his orphan ....”**

**President Abraham Lincoln**



Thank You for Starting or Considering  
Veterans Treatment Courts