

In Practice Podcast

Addressing Housing Insecurity Among Justice-Involved Veterans

Transcript

Panel Members

- Hon. Marcia P. Hirsch
Presiding Judge of the Queens Veterans Court and the Drug Diversion Court
- Sean Clark
National Director of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Robert V. Wolf
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Marcia Hirsch [Teaser]: *The veteran mentor can encourage them and tell them where they were successful in the past when they may have been in the military and the goals that they accomplished there. So they can be successful again, going forward. Just because they stumbled into the criminal justice system, that doesn't mean that they will be mired there.*

Robert V. Wolf: Welcome to a new episode of *In Practice*, the podcast of the Center for Court Innovation, where we talk with justice practitioners who are promoting new solutions and solving real problems in their communities. Today we're going to focus on justice-involved veterans and the particular challenge thousands of them face: homelessness. One way justice systems have responded to the presence of veterans in the justice system is by creating veterans' treatment courts. These courts offer vets substance use treatment in lieu of jail, but they also try to support veterans with all their needs, including finding permanent housing. They get a tremendous amount of assistance and support from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which created the Veterans Justice Outreach [VJO] Program with a goal to end homelessness among veterans. In 2016, specialists with the Veterans Justice Outreach Program worked with 461 treatment courts. But by 2019 the number of veterans' treatment courts they work with had grown to over 600.

Wolf: With me today to talk about veterans' treatment courts and the Veterans Justice Outreach Program and how they work together to address homelessness are Judge Marcia Hirsch, the presiding judge of treatment courts in Queens, New York, including the Queens Veterans Treatment Court, and Sean Clark, National Director of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [VA]. Thank you both very much for joining me today on *In Practice*.

Marcia Hirsch: Thank you.

Sean Clark: Thank you for having me, pleasure to be with you.

Wolf: In 2018, the Department of Housing and Urban Development estimated there were over 37,000 veterans experiencing homelessness that year. So, Sean, since you have a national role at the VA, can you give us a sense of the scope of this problem currently? Do we know how many vets are homeless, and particularly how many vets who have contact with the justice system lacks secure housing?

Clark: The most recent data, and also the data that are available from what's called the point in time count, which is a nationwide count of homeless people, including homeless veterans in the United States—these data come from January of 2020, so they're pre-COVID, that's important to note—but it is just over 37,000, the number of veterans who were identified as being homeless on a single night. So, very similar number at the national level from a couple of years ago. And again, that the most recent national data point is pre-COVID. And we know that's had a variety of impacts on housing stability for people across the country. So that's important to note as a qualifier. But as you say, these issues of homelessness and justice involvement are intertwined, and that has informed the approach that the Department of Veterans Affairs is taking to reaching and serving justice-involved veterans.

Clark: The program that I direct, Veterans Justice Outreach, also its companion program, which is called Health Care for Re-entry Veterans, these are two dedicated programs for veterans at various stages of the criminal justice process. And they're both part of VA's array of programs that address homelessness and the risk of homelessness among veterans. We know that incarceration as an adult male in particular has been identified as one of the most powerful predictors of homelessness that there is. So again, that speaks to the nexus between these two issues, into the need to intervene in the criminal justice system if you are taking a really comprehensive approach to homelessness prevention. It can't just be a matter of waiting until someone is literally homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness to be doing true prevention. You need to be looking further upstream than that, and the criminal justice place is a natural place to begin the work of getting veterans connected to the services that can help them arrest any kind of slide that they might be on toward housing instability, and of course, ultimately homelessness.

Clark: So that's the approach that we've taken between those two programs, is to really see justice involvement as a significant piece of the puzzle in addressing veteran homelessness on the prevention side.

Wolf: And I've just wondered, in addition to justice system involvement, and maybe some of the pressures we can, I think, imagine might lead to homelessness, like losing a job—do veterans have unique experiences that might contribute to, or risk factors that might contribute to, loss of housing? What are some of those risk factors?

Clark: I think the first thing to note is that the risk factors for veterans, they're a great resemblance to the risk factors for anyone becoming homeless. And I think you've hit on one of the major ones, which is the loss of employment or other perhaps longer-standing barriers to employment or to an income that will allow folks to maintain themselves in housing. And the justice programs and the VA homeless programs more broadly, we always want to emphasize that competitive employment is not something that is the path to stability for everyone. There are folks who have physical or other disabilities, including as a result of their time in service, and where it may be appropriate for VA benefits or other sources of benefits to

sustain them in housing. And that's a success as well when they're able to access those as needed. But I think that's of course the main one to note, employment.

Clark: There are in the population that we serve, in the justice program, there are really widespread clinical needs in the veteran, justice-involved veteran population, primarily mental health issues, substance use disorder issues that need to be addressed. And that can interfere with someone's ability to maintain both employment and maintain themselves in housing if those issues aren't addressed. So there are a number of things I think that can threaten the stability of someone's housing arrangement or really pose barriers to getting into housing if someone is literally homeless. And so addressing those issues was an important part of the puzzle to getting them [inaudible 00:06:32] stable and hopefully into permanent housing and staying in it over the long-term.

Wolf: Judge Hirsch, why don't you tell us about the Queens Veterans Treatment Court? Can you tell us a little bit of its history, how it came about and who it serves?

Hirsch: Sure. Our veteran treatment court opened in December of 2010. We applied for and received a grant through the National Drug Court Institute for our entire team of 10 people to go to Buffalo the October of 2010 to be trained and to observe Judge Russell's veterans' court. Now Judge Russell is the founder of the first veterans' court. So our team went to Buffalo, and we were trained and we observed his court. We met with his mentors and his staff, and we really watched a terrific veterans' court in action. And then we prepared the groundwork for our veterans' court, and we picked our date to open, which was December 10 of 2010. And the interesting thing is that I preside over several of the treatment courts here in Queens, and I already had veterans in my felony drug treatment court, in my DWI treatment court, and in my mental health court.

Hirsch: So it seemed totally natural to take all of those veterans in my different courts and to combine them and put them in the veterans' treatment court, where we would be better able to coordinate and get them the services and support that they need through our linkages with VA and our other treatment resources within our community. And the benefit to the veteran of being in a veterans' treatment court is that at the end of their time with us, which—I am a felony court, so my veterans stay with me for a minimum of one year—I would seal and dismiss their felony charges, which is significant if they afterward wanted to apply for employment or licensing, where a felony could be a bar to them obtaining those licenses or professional requirements or further education or whatever they wanted to do with their lives. So our goal here is to provide veterans with services.

Hirsch: And as Sean mentioned, some of our veterans struggle with mental health issues and some struggle with alcohol and drug issues, addiction, and other dependences. Many of our veterans have service-connected injuries for which they really live with daily pain. And a lot of their problems with drugs came from prescription pain medication. So we try to treat the entire person. We also do focus on the homelessness issue and providing them with a safe place to live. And also we help them get permanent housing as well. And we do pride ourselves on providing them with wraparound services.

Wolf: Obviously the VA is a crucial partner here, offering a whole range of services, and particularly the Veterans Justice Outreach Program as I understand it is sort of the bridge between the court and the VA.

So I wonder if you, maybe from both of your perspectives, could talk about how the Veterans Justice Outreach Program works and serves this particular population that is in the veterans treatment courts? So, Sean, maybe can you start?

Clark: Happy to, and I think the bridge image is a very good one in describing how to think about the Veterans Justice Outreach Program and the function that it's intended to serve. The idea really is to be a bridge into treatment and the other supportive services that the VA can offer for veterans, including those who are justice-involved. So VJO as a program has been around since 2009. And the concept is to essentially project the treatment capacity that the VA has into various criminal [inaudible 00:10:48] focusing on the front, what we call the front end of the criminal justice system. I mentioned earlier, there is a companion program, Health Care for Re-entry Veterans, which works with veterans coming out of state and federal prisons. VJO is the compliment to that, that looks earlier on in the process. And so VJO specialists conduct outreach in local jails.

Clark: They build and maintain relationships with local law enforcement agencies to help them better understand resources that are available for veterans in the communities that they're serving. And last but not least, they staff veterans' treatment courts and other veteran-focused courts across the country. And that work in the veterans' courts is by far the most visible part of the program publicly, because the veterans' treatment courts have grown so quickly. They have spread so thoroughly across the country in the 10-plus years that they've been around since Judge Russell's first court, which Judge Hirsch was talking about. And the role of the VJO specialist in those courts is really to be that liaison between the judge and the other members of the treatment team and the VA medical center or that's what we call just the VA hospital, the largest facilities in our healthcare system where these specialists are based.

Clark: And where many of the veterans who go through these treatment court programs are receiving care in between the sessions where they're actually engaging with the judge and the other members of the team in court. So the specialist's role is to help assess the needs that any individual veteran is going to have. Those are individual needs. So there is no prescribed course of treatment for veterans who are in the criminal justice system. There is no set curriculum on the VA side that justice-involved veterans go through. It's not a cookie cutter approach. We want to make sure that we're helping veterans access the right services at the right time—and, importantly, that we're keeping the judge and the other members of the team informed about how that is going during the course of the veteran's participation in the treatment court, so the judge can make decisions about how that case is going to proceed and how the veteran is going to move towards, hopefully, successful completion and ultimately graduation from the court.

Clark: But I mentioned there are these various settings across the criminal justice system where VJO specialists work, where they conduct this outreach, where they build these relationships with our criminal justice partners. The work looks a little different in each one of those settings, and it looks a little bit different in every community, even in the same type of setting. So these veterans courts have different rules, they run differently. Likewise with local jails, very different procedures that you find there. But the point for us in all of it is exactly the same: That is, helping veterans access responsive services at the earliest possible point. So we've tried to design into and maintain the program with the

kind of flexibility that allows us to respond to local conditions, to recognize the fact that we are a guest in every single one of these facilities. And that means partnerships with veterans' treatment courts and other local criminal justice agencies are vital to our ability to reach the justice-involved veteran population where they are and help them begin the process of getting access to the services that they need.

Clark: So we try to be as flexible as we can in achieving the goal that we and every veterans' treatment court and every local jail shares, which is getting the justice-involved veterans population identified, assessed, and connected to services at the earliest possible point. So that's kind of a, I think a global view of what it looks like on the VJO side and on Judge Hirsch's side. I'd be very interested in hearing what the experience is like in practice in one particular court, because like I mentioned, they're very different. If you've seen one veteran's treatment court, you've seen one veterans' treatment court.

Hirsch: Exactly.

Wolf: Judge Hirsch, I thought maybe yes, I would like to hear how you interact with the Veterans Justice Outreach Program—that maybe you could also frame it in the context of just how the court works. I mean, when a client comes to you, how do you identify what their needs are? Especially if they have a lot of needs, including need for shelter, a need for a secure home.

Hirsch: As Sean mentioned, the VJO is a key person in that process, because the Veterans Justice Outreach person usually meets some of our justice-connected veterans in jail, in the county jail. And here in our case, in New York City, that would be in Rikers Island. So the VJO then determines if the person is connected, is eligible for VA benefits, because not all veterans are eligible. Unfortunately, some veterans, because of their less-than-honorable discharge status, may be ineligible for VA benefits. So therefore our court would then have to connect that veteran with other private services within our community. So the VJO makes that first determination for us: Is the veteran eligible for VA benefits, or do we have to then look for other referrals and other placements? Our VJO attends all of our team meetings. It does a complete assessment as far as what types of services and treatment the veteran would need if the VA will provide that.

Hirsch: If the veteran is not service-connected, then we have a separate member of our team do the assessment and then make the referral to, say, community-based health, community-based substance abuse treatment, and community-based mental health services. But I think the best asset of the VJO on our team is his ability to pivot quickly and to respond to anything that happens in that veteran's life while that veteran is before our court. And sometimes emergencies happen, sometimes the veteran may get very sick or may have a serious health diagnosis. Sometimes the veteran may be evicted and need new housing right away. Sometimes the veteran may need benefits or financial assistance, and our VJO is able to access all of those things for our veterans that are connected. And I have to tell you, I've had my veterans' court now for about 10 and a half years and at every single graduation that we do, the one person that all of my vets thank by name is our VJO.

Wolf: Wow, that says a lot. Sean, I know you mentioned to me prior to actually starting the interview that there's also a mentor program. I wondered how that fits in to this work?

Clark: Oh, absolutely. And that's one of the distinguishing features of veterans' treatment courts as treatment court is the presence of volunteer veteran mentors that work really independently of either of the, what you might think of as kind of some of the main poles of institutional authority that make up a veterans' court. They're not working for VA. They are not working for the court in the strict sense of the term. They're really there as independent sources of support—kind of veteran participants—as they're going through the program. They're there to provide a nonclinical sense of support through a sense of shared identity and shared experience that they have in common with the veteran participants.

Clark: So that was one of the innovations that made the Veterans Treatment Court model different and special I'd say from the beginning. Because it's building on that recognition that there is a commonality here that can be drawn on in a very productive way for veterans who are going through, in addition to any challenges that they're working on, perhaps, through their treatment that they're receiving. Other challenges that are often present in their lives, including but not limited to the charge that they've been facing and that they're working to resolve through participation in the treatment court, but other challenges as well, and a lot can come up in the course of, as Judge Hirsch mentioned, a year or even longer in many cases. All veterans are going through these courts.

Clark: And so the volunteer veteran mentors are there to help them stick it out, I think, is one way to think about it, and to stay focused on their goals—which is not limited to completing the court, although that's a major proximal goal. But they really build on the support that is available through different parts of the VA, different services that we offer from the court itself. And I think that's important to emphasize that the judge him- or herself is a major, major driver of what the veterans' experience is like in a veterans' treatment court. And the support and encouragement and reinforcement that veterans get from the judge is really critical to their ability to successfully complete the program. But the volunteer veteran mentors make the veterans' treatment courts what they are.

Clark: In addition to the fact that they are, of course, by definition, focused on serving the veteran participants and the availability of treatment resources through the VA and other veteran-focused providers that these courts spring in and partnership, it's the volunteer veteran mentors that make this a very different experience from, I think by common agreement, a much more cohesive experience than they would be without them. Kind of there to, again, to keep veterans focused on the ultimate goal and keep them working towards resolving everything that they need to in order to get through the program successfully.

Hirsch: We've seen some of our veteran mentors do amazing work with our veteran participants. We've seen veterans who have a truck help a veteran move, or help put things in storage until they found another place to live. Some veterans have given rides to their mentees to self-help meetings. They do telephone calls and check-ins. Pre-COVID, if a veteran landed in the hospital, the mentor would go and visit. The veterans are always looking to help unemployed veterans find new jobs: "Oh, my company is hiring," or "I know this factory down the street and they just put out a help wanted sign." And on a very serious note, I've also had veterans do daily check-ins either in-person or by phone with at-risk veterans who may have been contemplating suicide. And we've all heard of those horrible numbers with a large

number of veterans who do commit suicide in this country on a daily basis. So we've had veteran mentors do daily check-ins with our vulnerable at-risk population.

Wolf: And I know that there are advantages, as you were saying, Judge Hirsch, to bringing all the veterans together in this court, partly because there are unified services offered through the VA. But it also sounds like there is an advantage because they have this shared experience of having gone through the military. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that: How they bond around that and how that may enhance their progress through the court, and also hopefully their progress solving problems or mending situations that for instance might have led to homelessness.

Hirsch: Sure. There is such a thing as military culture, and all of us who've been trained to work in veteran courts have learned a lot about military culture. And the one thing that our veteran participants share with the veteran mentors is an appreciation for military culture. They've all been through basic training. They've all been away from home. They've all had to learn new jobs within the military and receive training for those jobs. They've all experienced separation from their family while they were deployed or in service. And they've all experienced the loneliness, that being away from home, and the other issues that veterans deal with. And some of the various branches—we do not, in our veterans' treatment court, we do not have the ability to match every veteran with someone from the same branch of the military, but the fact that they were all in the military together. And they may have even served the same locations, whether it was Vietnam—because we still do have a lot of Vietnam veterans in our veterans' treatment courts—whether it was Vietnam or whether it was Iraq or Afghanistan, they have common experiences that they share and they talk about, and some of them have common jobs that they did while they were in the military.

Hirsch: So there is a bond there, and there's also that tremendous sense of teamwork of having a mission, having a goal, meeting that goal and succeeding, and our veterans take great pride in that. And they can tap into that common culture, the shared sacrifice of veterans and their love of country. And even though our veterans who are defendants and who are arrested sometimes feel very ashamed of the fact that they've been arrested, a veteran mentor can encourage them and tell them where they were successful in the past when they may have been in the military and the goals that they accomplished there.

Hirsch: So they can be successful again, going forward. Just because they stumbled into the criminal justice system that doesn't mean that they will be mired there, they can move forward and they can have a good future. And that's, I think, what the veteran provides them with: an optimistic outlook that you can succeed, you've been through worse and you can even do better going forward.

Wolf: It sounds like to address this issue of homelessness, it really takes a holistic approach. So you, for instance, are dealing with the substance use disorder in the court, Judge Hirsch, but you're also trying to provide wraparound services to deal with a whole range of things. And it sounds like a similar philosophy at the VA, Sean, is that right?

Clark: That's absolutely right. So there is not a single service typically that an individual who is homeless or at risk is going to need and that's going to resolve everything, You know, that may have led to that

situation. The VA as a comprehensive integrated healthcare system fortunately is in a position to offer a really wide array of services to address the need that veterans who are homeless or at risk might have in a number of different areas. So in addition to the programs that are really built around providing housing in some form, whether that's transitional housing for veterans who are literally homeless, there's a program called supportive services for veteran families that works on stabilizing for veterans before they become homeless, veterans and their families in their current housing, making sure they're able to maintain stability there.

Clark: And of course rehousing them if the worst should happen, they become homeless. There's a program called HUD-VASH. That's a joint effort between VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] through which HUD provides a housing voucher and VA provides long-term case management support for veterans who are in need of clinical supports to stay housed over the long term. But that is housing that's available on a permanent basis for veterans in that program. That's not a temporary solution. And there are other programs as well in the array of homeless services that VA has to offer. But again, we're part of a comprehensive healthcare system. And so veterans who are coming into these programs, especially in many cases, they've spent a significant amount of time homeless. That is tremendously hard on your health overall, mental and physical health. And so there are oftentimes many clinical needs that veterans, especially who have been homeless for a period of time might have above and beyond sort of others at the same age, takes a toll.

Clark: And so that's where the fact that VA is as a comprehensive health care system, that really comes into play. And that once a veteran is in receiving services, perhaps they wanted to be in homeless programs, they also have the opportunity to engage with primary care services, mental health, substance use, and substance use disorder services. And a wide variety of specialty care services that they're going to meet a veteran's individuality. That's all provided as part of one integrated system. And that's one of the great advantages the VA has as a health care system.

Wolf: And one thing we haven't touched on is COVID-19, actually. And I wonder if you have, maybe it's only anecdotal information, because I know you said the numbers haven't come in in terms of, like, overall impact on homelessness, but what was the cumulative effect? I mean, lots of vulnerable populations were hard hit by COVID. And I wonder what impact that has had on the populations you both work with.

Hirsch: The veterans in my treatment court have really experienced a lot of isolation because of COVID. The inability to meet in-person at the VA. A lot of their groups became virtual. A lot of their appointments became through telehealth. So our veterans were pretty isolated. Many of them really talked about being lonely and not being able to see their grandchildren or other family members not being able to travel. So, that's another place where our veteran mentors were really helpful and our VJOs were terrific. Because they kept in touch with the veteran to be sure that the veteran was doing okay with keeping the appointments, was receiving their medication. Around the holidays all of the news stories covered the fact that a lot of the veterans weren't getting their medication because of the overloading of packages through the post office. So our VJOs were on top of that to see if they needed temporary prescriptions, and allowing them to get medication locally as opposed to waiting for the mail.

Hirsch: So we really deal with full service here for our veterans. I had a veteran who, during our virtual court appearance, he was really gasping for breath. And I said to him, "Mr. So-and-so, you really don't look well, your color isn't good. You're gasping for breath. You need to go to the emergency room." And sure enough, he ended up having COVID and he was admitted to the hospital for a week. He came home, he's fine now. But he said to me, "You know, judge, if you didn't tell me to go to the emergency room, I wouldn't have gone." That's the importance of having those connections in those, even virtually. Even seeing people on a screen, we were still able to connect our people with the services and treatment and be able to ensure that they could stay healthy during the challenges of COVID-19.

Clark: And we've seen, of course, a lot of those same impacts on the VA side. I've got to say that I was just very impressed, to put it mildly, by the ability of the courts in particular to really quickly pivot and find ways to keep operating in a way that kept everybody safe. So in the early days of the COVID response or the COVID pandemic, one of the things changed on a dime for the justice programs and for our ability to conduct outreach: Criminal justice settings, prisons, and jails of course, closed in-person visitation. And that forced a lot of people to get a lot more comfortable with the use of technology than they might otherwise have been. I think if we probably as a system and as a program did five years' worth of evolution in that department in the course of the last year.

Clark: And so we've seen really dramatic increases in the use of telehealth, in particular for our specialists to conduct outreach and to work with justice-involved veterans over time. Little aside, I think that's one of the silver linings, ultimately, of the COVID experience is that that quicker adoption and spread of the use of that technology is going to enable us to extend our reach as a program over time, including the communities that are a real challenge to cover, just because of geography. For, and I mentioned, our specialists are based at the major VA hospital facilities, which a lot of those are in urban areas, and smaller outlying jurisdictions may be hours' drive away in both directions. And the introduction of a telehealth capability is transformative for our ability to provide outreach in those settings. So to the extent we can get those operational, both in response to COVID as an immediate sort of safety measure, but then also as program longer term, I think it's going to put us in a better position for being able to reach more justice-involved veterans.

Hirsch: And also with respect to the virtual court appearances, I think I've seen my veterans more frequently post-COVID, because I could say, "I want to see you back in two weeks." Whereas normally I may have said, "Well, I'll see you next month." But because they could just call in and I could see them on the screen, I could check in with them more frequently and monitor their progress and see how they were doing. And I think they really appreciated that.

Wolf: It's an interesting relationship you have with them, because I think a lot of people would think, "Going back to court more often, why is that a good thing?"

Hirsch: Right, and in the snow, we've had a particularly harsh winter this past winter, we had a lot of snow days and a lot of ice and really pretty treacherous conditions where these people would never have come to court on a regular snow day. But you know what, because of the virtual appearances and

telecourt, so to speak, we were able to see them on the worst snow days. So I know I've seen my veteran population more frequently over the past year than prior to COVID-19.

Wolf: It tells the story of how a court like this works, where the relationships are different. It's less adversarial. And as you were saying, I mean, your client participant thanked you for sending them to the emergency room.

Hirsch: Yes, definitely. And, I mean, even a family member or the wife or the spouse, or the significant other may poke their head in on the call and say, "I think he's doing great." Especially someone who may have struggled with serious alcohol and substances issues. It's really nice to see another face pop up on the screen and say, "I just want to tell you he's doing great or she's doing wonderfully." And we wouldn't have that connection otherwise.

Wolf: We've been focused on the court, but that's really part of a more complex justice system. And I wonder how the pieces fit together. And Sean talked about people reentering from prison. So going to the other side, where we're perhaps dealing with law enforcement, who might be the first contact with someone who ends up being a participant, does the court have a relationship with law enforcement? How does that work? And how did they know to identify perhaps if someone is a veteran, do they do that? Or is the identification happening later?

Hirsch: Yes. Our court, as a matter of fact, has been invited to come in and speak to some of the police officers in the New York City Police Department, who have actually served in the Reserves and the National Guard. And we've gone in and talked to them about our veterans' court and explained about the services that we provide to any veteran who they may be arresting. So we've told them in law enforcement that if they could pay attention to the tattoos or the stance of the person, no one can identify a veteran faster than another veteran. So our veteran police officers and probation officers, they serve an important role there. And we've explained to them where our veterans' courts are operational. And fortunately for us here, all of our counties in New York City now have veterans' courts. So we explained that they could make that referral, or they should note it on the booking paperwork that they're doing, so that the veteran can be connected right away with the veteran services and with their VJO and with the team of professionals.

Hirsch: So that time is of the essence here. And we can get a veteran in crisis and match them with appropriate treatment quickly. We've been talking about veterans and some of our people in our audience may think that we're only referring to the male veterans, but I do want to mention that there are a lot of female veterans these days, and our courts also work with female veterans. We have female veteran mentors for them. We have special groups and treatment for our women veterans, and also the LGBTQ population as well. So we work with all of the veterans who come in through the criminal justice system, and we want to provide them with gender-specific services for the women and the men who may be experiencing military sexual trauma. And that is a big issue that we are dealing with in our courts and in our mental health system today. So we are very, very cognizant of the needs for our female veterans, and our VJOs do a terrific job in matching them with appropriate services as well.

Wolf: It has really been a pleasure talking to both of you. Thank you so much for talking with me today about veterans' treatment courts, the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, and how you guys work together to deal with homelessness and other issues that affect our veterans.

Hirsch: Thank you.

Clark: Thank you so much for having me.

Wolf: I've been speaking with Judge Marcia Hirsch, who is the presiding judge of treatment courts in Queens, New York. And that includes among the treatment courts that she presides over the Queens veterans' treatment court. And I've also been speaking with Sean Clark, who's the national director of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. And I am Rob Wolf of the Center for Court Innovation. And you have been listening to *In Practice*. Please subscribe to the show to hear more about how practitioners are helping change and improve and transform the justice system. And you can find out more about the work of the Center for Court Innovation at www.courtinnovation.org. Thanks for listening.