

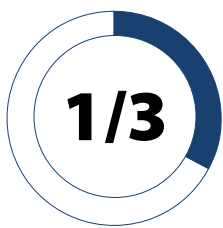
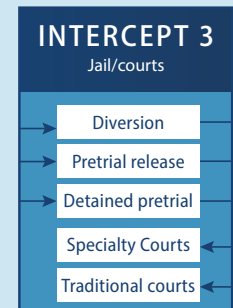
## Veterans Justice Outreach Toolkit: The Sequential Intercept Model

# Intercept 3: Jail/Courts

**Introduction:** Intercept 3 focuses on minimizing unnecessary detention and connecting justice-involved Veterans to needed care and support through appropriate screening and referral processes. Key actors include jail intake personnel, correctional officers, court officials, Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) specialists, and defense attorneys, all of whom play critical roles in identifying and connecting Veterans to appropriate resources. Timely identification of incarcerated Veterans is essential because without it they are often overlooked for specialized reentry resources. Underutilized tools such as the Veterans Reentry Search Service (VRSS) and the Status Query and Response Exchange System (SQUARES) are instrumental in this process. Encouraging the adoption of these tools by jails and courts can significantly improve the identification process.

Pre-sentencing investigations or reports that document Veteran status provide courts with crucial information to consider community-based alternatives or diversion programs. Court-based interventions, such as Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs), utilize structured assessment procedures to create individualized case plans that address the unique needs of each Veteran, promoting rehabilitation and reducing recidivism.

By integrating these practices and tools, Intercept 3 enhances the identification of justice-involved Veterans, reduces unnecessary detention, and strengthens connections to appropriate treatment and support services during critical stages of the justice process.



**Only 33% of  
Veterans are  
identified in jails**

Research indicates that Veterans are frequently under-identified in jail settings, leading to missed opportunities to receive culturally appropriate services. In one study, only about one-third of Veterans who disclosed military status at booking were recognized as such by clinicians, and among those identified, few were referred to Veteran-specific services during discharge.<sup>1</sup>

## Suicide Prevention Opportunities Related to Intercept 3

- All Veterans in jail or court settings with service needs should be connected to community and VA-based supports, such as VJO. These connections strengthen protective factors, reduce risk of crisis, and help address individual needs—regardless of whether the Veteran participates in a specialized court program like a VTC.<sup>2</sup>
- VTC-involved Veterans are assigned a peer mentor, who can foster peer support, enhance engagement, and build a sense of connectedness, reducing isolation and promoting long-term well-being.



## ***Strengths and Protective Factors for Suicide Prevention***

- Veterans booked into jail benefit from early screening by jail intake personnel, correctional officers, and court officials, ensuring identification and timely connection to diversion programs like VTCs and referral to VJOs.
- Access to structured court-based interventions, including VTCs, provides individualized case plans, specialized mental health and substance use treatment, and peer mentorship, fostering stability and reducing recidivism.
- Strong collaboration among VJO specialists, defense attorneys, and community service providers enhances Veterans' access to tailored support, increasing engagement in rehabilitation.

## ***Spotlight: Orange County (FL) Veterans Dormitory Pod***

The Orange County Corrections Department established a specialized dormitory for incarcerated Veterans in 2012. Staffed by correctional officers with military backgrounds, the dorm fosters peer support and camaraderie among Veterans. Participants receive tailored case management and reentry planning from both corrections staff and VA partners. This model promotes early identification, reduces isolation, and supports Veterans through their transition from incarceration to the community.<sup>3,4</sup>



## ***Recommendations***



### **Policymakers**

Support the development and funding of Veteran-specific interventions aimed at reducing suicide risk, overdose, and other adverse outcomes. Ensuring that Veterans receive timely mental health and substance use support while incarcerated can significantly improve post-release stability and well-being.



### **Criminal Justice System Professionals**

Strengthen internal policies and training practices for identifying Veterans by consistently asking, "Have you ever served in the military?" at the point of encounter. Professionals should also connect with their local VJO specialist to build a working relationship and codevelop a response plan that ensures timely diversion to the most appropriate community resources. Other resources to facilitate Veteran identification include the VRSS and the SQUARES.



## Community Members

Community members play a vital role in supporting justice-involved Veterans by fostering an environment that acknowledges and addresses their unique experiences and needs. To enhance this support, community organizations and service providers are encouraged to do the following:

- Survey local program staff to identify individuals with military backgrounds who can serve as in-house champions or liaisons, bridging the gap between Veterans and available services.
- Provide recurring military culture training for staff and partners to improve understanding and communication with Veterans. Resources such as the Veteran Cultural Competence Training offered by the Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers/Centers of Excellence (MIRECC/CoE) can be utilized for this purpose.
- Identify local or regional Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) and develop memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to facilitate quick referrals. CCBHCs are mandated to serve Veterans and can provide essential services to this population.
- Build relationships with your local VJO Specialist to co-develop programs and ensure strong linkages to VA and community-based Veteran services. This partnership can help streamline referrals, increase access to benefits and treatment, and promote long-term success for Veterans navigating the justice system.

## Related Resources

- [Justice for Vets](#) | AllRise
- [Veterans Justice Outreach](#) | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- [MIRECC Veteran Cultural Competency Training](#)
- [The Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale](#)
- [Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program](#)

## References

- 1 Comartin, E., M. Dunnigan, and V. Nelson. "Lost in Transition: The Behavioral Health Needs of Veterans in Eight County Jails." *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research* 49, no. 1 (2022): 104–15.
- 2 Orange County Corrections Department. 2020. *Inmate Programs*. Accessed July 8, 2025. [https://netapps.ocfl.net/BestJail/PDF/BKT\\_22.01\\_Inmate\\_Programs.pdf](https://netapps.ocfl.net/BestJail/PDF/BKT_22.01_Inmate_Programs.pdf).
- 3 Orange County Government. "Orange County Jail Continues to Help Incarcerated Veterans Find Their Way." *Orange County, Florida Newsroom*, November 17, 2017. <https://newsroom.ocfl.net/2017/11/orange-county-jail-continues-help-incarcerated-veterans-find-way/>.
- 4 U.S. Department of Justice. *Fact Sheet: Access to Justice Is Access for Veterans*. 2023. <https://www.justice.gov/atj/fact-sheet-access-justice-access-veterans>.