

New court for veterans helps meet ‘an obligation to help’

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Cobb County has built an impressive record for being ahead of the curve when it comes to “accountability courts,” and now it is about to add another.

The Cobb Board of Commissioners voted unanimously on Tuesday to create a Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court, following on the heels of its Drug Court and Mental Health Court, which have done much to reduce the recidivism rate.

“Drug court helps drug addicts. Mental health court helps people with mental health challenges. We’re very confident that veterans court will help veterans who have some type of issue based on their military service,” Cobb District Attorney Vic Reynolds told the MDJ.

“We kept noticing we were running into a number of individuals who had a prior military background who were getting in trouble, so we began to look into the possibility of having a court specifically for veterans.”

The bulk of the funding for the Veterans Court will come from the Veterans Administration.

“Research suggests many of the veterans coming back from prior and current wars have adjustment issues when they come back into civilian life, like post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries,” said Superior Court Judge Reuben Green, who will preside over the new court and who is a former Marine. “So they could have the mental health-type issues. They also could be treating their mental health issues with different substances. So a lot of them have co-occurring issues.”

Those under the auspices of the Veterans Court will be required to find a job, find housing and support their children, if any. They’ll also have to undergo frequent drug screenings.

The conditions associated with the two wars of the past decade have put those involved at risk, even after they are home, Green said.

“Most of the people in our military now are doing multiple deployments, and doing them more rapidly. And I think that’s having a profound impact. I think we’re going to see in the future a lot more PTSD, a lot more physical injuries,” he said.

“We have an obligation to help the veterans transition from their duty to their civilian life and all too often we’ve been derelict in that responsibility.”

Well said.

And the Veterans Court is an excellent step toward meeting that obligation.