



2025 REPORT ON GASTON COUNTY VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PILOT PROGRAM

S.L. 2023-134, 16.8(b)

PREPARED BY
NORTH CAROLINA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
FEBRUARY 1, 2025



About the North Carolina Judicial Branch

The mission of the North Carolina Judicial Branch is to protect and preserve the rights and liberties of all the people as guaranteed by the Constitutions and laws of the United States and North Carolina by providing a fair, independent and accessible forum for the just, timely and economical resolution of their legal affairs.

About the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

The mission of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts is to provide services to help North Carolina's unified court system operate more efficiently and effectively, taking into account each courthouse's diverse needs, caseloads, and available resources.

Introduction

Section 16.5(b) of Session Law 2023-134 requires the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) to submit a report on the results of Gaston County's Veterans Treatment Court Pilot Program. Specifically, S.L. 2023-134, sections 16.8(a) and (b) provide as follows:

SECTION 16.8.(a) Pilot Program. – The Administrative Office of the Courts, in coordination with the Chief District Court Judge of District Court District 27A, shall establish a pilot program in Gaston County that creates a judicially managed accountability and recovery court, as governed by Article 62 of Chapter 7A of the General Statutes. The goals of the accountability and recovery court shall be to reduce alcoholism and other substance abuse and dependencies among offenders; to reduce recidivism; to reduce the drug-related court workload; to reduce the mental, behavioral, or medical health-related court workload; to increase the personal, familial, and societal accountability of offenders; and to promote effective interaction, collaboration, coordination, and use of resources among criminal justice personnel. The judicially managed accountability and recovery court shall prioritize participation of offenders that are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States.

SECTION 16.8.(b) Report. – The Administrative Office of the Courts shall report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety and its chairs on the results of the Gaston County pilot program, including the number of individuals who participated in the program in the prior year, no later than February 1 of each year following a year in which the pilot program receives funding from the State.

NCAOC respectfully submits this report pursuant to the legislative mandate in Section 16.8(b). For the purposes of this report, the pilot program authorized pursuant to Section 16.8(a) will be referred to as the VTC pilot program.

Initial Steps

Gaston County developed a scope of work that encompasses both the appropriated funds and a programmatic outline to establish a VTC pilot program. From there, the scope of work was incorporated into a contract with NCAOC, and once executed, NCAOC disbursed the funds in accordance with the schedule set by S.L. 2023-134, section 5.3(b). Table one shows the FY 2023-24 appropriations to Gaston County and summarizes the timeline of the initial steps taken to disburse these funds.

Table 1

Recipient County	Initial Contact	NCAOC Sent Contract to County	NCAOC Received Signed Contract	FY2023-26 Contract Amount	First Payment Date	First Payment Amount
Gaston	9/26/2024	12/11/2023	1/8/2024	\$460,000	1/26/2024	\$230,000



Table two shows the most recent fund disbursement timeline as of December 31, 2024.

Table 2

Recipient County	FY2023-24 NR Appropriations	First Payment Date	Most Recent Payment Date	Total Payments to Date	Remaining Payments
Gaston	\$460,000	1/26/2024	4/2/2024	\$460,000	0

Performance Report

To report on the current status of the VTC pilot program project, NCAOC developed a standardized performance report survey that was completed by Gaston county. To provide general context to the county's response, a narrative summary that describes the structure and purpose of the VTC pilot program is documented.

Gaston County

Project Narrative: The Gaston County VTC will focus on eliminating obstacles experienced by marginalized military populations to increase equitable access to benefits and services and improve stability and outcomes. The program will provide an alternative response for justice-involved veterans with substance use and mental health needs by enhancing treatment and relapse prevention support services through additional resources and staff to serve an increased number of veterans in District Court District 27A.

1) Have you established a JMARC committee, and has this committee met?

- a. A committee has been established and initially met on October 30, 2024, with the next meeting scheduled for March 26, 2025. Membership includes:
 - i. Hon. Justin N. Davis, Superior Court Judge
 - ii. Hon. William "Gus" Anthony, District Court Judge
 - iii. Hon. Travis G. Page, District Attorney
 - iv. David Hargett, Defense Attorney
 - v. Chrystal Goldberg, Probation
 - vi. Curtis Council, Probation
 - vii. Dr. Cory Richardson, Integrated Care of Greater Hickory
 - viii. Melisa Cruse, Andrew Dodson, and Corey Richardson, Integrated Care of Greater Hickory
 - ix. Wanda Jones, A.S.P.E.N.
 - x. Atreece Bailey, Veterans Justice Outreach
 - xi. Scott Wyatt, Chief Deputy, Sheriff's Office
 - xii. Hon. Roxann Rankin, Clerk of Superior Court
 - xiii. Holly Wall, Partners Health
 - xiv. Mike Meeks, Veterans Council
 - xv. Shina Carter, Court Coordinator
 - xvi. Ken Heavner, Court Manager



2) What accomplishments have been achieved to date?

- a. We have witnessed a complete (positive) transformation of several participants. We completed a full review and menu of substance use disorder and Mental Health treatments that are available for our participants. We initiated a full review & update of our Policy & Procedure Manual, court docket and Participant handbook. We updated our memorandums of understanding with our treatment/community partners. We started to build our recovery capital to meet the needs of our participants. We initiated 4 reoccurring vendor contracts in support of our program. We laid out a time/task timeline with our external evaluation to identify & mitigate shortfalls of our program.

3) What challenges have you experienced to date?

- a. We have had several participants struggle with relapses. We have also struggled to identify additional mental health treatment providers when the VA Hospital could not provide a participant an earlier available appointment. We have struggled finding inpatient mental health and or substance abuse treatment when it has been needed. We are currently limited and are having to screen out potential participants who need inpatient treatment due to an inability to be able to provide what they are truly in need of.

4) Did your team attend any trainings to date?

- a. Our VTC team conducted All Rise training July 10-12, 2024. We also completed a work group on August 15, 2024 to update and review our Policy & Procedure Manual. We have submitted our request for All Rise training (ADC incentives, sanctions, and service adjustments, ISSA) for 2025. We are attending the All Rise Training and Conference in May of 2025.

5) Do you have any data to report to date?

- a. We screened 224 potential participants, with 13 still in the screening process. **We currently have a total of 15 active participants**, six of whom have moved up phases throughout the year.

6) What goals do you hope to attain moving forward?

- a. We hope to refine and streamline our processes to expand our roster of participants and grow the program. We also aim to build our recovery capital with community partners to facilitate the needs of our participants being met.

Summary

NCAOC has disbursed all remaining funds appropriated to the Gaston County VTC pilot program in accordance with the schedule set by S.L. 2023-134, section 5.3(b). NCAOC will continue to monitor its performance as this program progresses.



North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

P.O. Box 2448

Raleigh, NC 27602

www.nccourts.org

919 890 1000

