



## CITY OF PHOENIX VETERANS COURT

**Request:** Seek \$450,000 to continue funding for the newly implemented Phoenix Veterans Court, which provides for the continuance of attorneys and expansion of services provided.

### Community Value:

The Phoenix Veterans Court focuses on protecting the community by restoring veterans in the criminal justice system through specialized treatment for the underlying issues related to their service.

### Background:

The 2010 United States Census identified 23.4 million veterans in the U.S., approximately 10 percent of whom are veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates one million new veterans over the next five years will reintegrate into civilian life. One hundred thousand of these veterans will reside in Arizona. Approximately 40 to 50 percent of all veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are returning with mental health issues. On average, veterans are taking their lives at a national rate of 18 veterans each day and the Army posted its highest suicide rate in history in 2012.

Along with the psychological problems that may face veterans, many become homeless due to their underlying issues and the difficulties of reintegrating into civilian life and their communities. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that last year as much as one third of the adult homeless population had served in the military. More than 67,000 veterans were homeless last year, with more than 2,200 Arizona veterans homeless on any given night.

Veterans Court is a problem-solving court focused on providing long-term solutions to resolve issues facing veterans in the criminal justice system. The target population consists of defendants who served in the U.S. Armed Forces who are experiencing treatable behavioral issues, such as post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, anger management, domestic violence or substance and alcohol abuse.

Veterans Court streamlines the court process and brings together the community partners in one court setting.

The veteran meets with a representative of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Magellan Health Services, the Arizona Department of Veteran Services, a prosecutor and a defense attorney. The parties work collaboratively with each veteran to explore the various counseling and behavioral programs available to the veteran.

Examples of success are already evident. Through Veterans Court, homeless veterans are placed in housing, while others go through in-patient treatment, address post-traumatic stress disorder and, in a few cases, have reunited with families that they lost because of their underlying issues. Many veterans have already successfully completed their programs through Veterans Court.



### Funding Request:

This funding request will provide continuing funding at current staffing levels for the newly created Phoenix Veterans Court by funding four contract public defenders and two full-time prosecutors for the Veterans Court to handle the staffing, dockets and necessary follow-up involved in each case. This also will allow for expansion of the services provided and incorporation of new aspects of the court, such as peer support and housing programs.

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