



NEWS RELEASE –

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DENVER DA, DENVER PRE-TRIAL SERVICES, AND VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA ESTABLISH PRE-TRIAL SERVICES REFERRAL PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

Denver District Attorney Beth McCann announced today that the Denver District Attorney’s Office, Denver Pre-Trial Services, and Volunteers of America Colorado’s Bill Daniels Veteran Services Center have joined together to offer assistance to veterans who find themselves defendants in the criminal justice system.

“Unfortunately, our veterans sometimes find themselves involved in the criminal justice system. There are services available for our veterans through the Volunteers of America program. So, it makes sense for those of us in the criminal justice system to partner with services for veterans to assist in helping them navigate the system and be productive members of society,” Denver DA Beth McCann explained. “We recognize that they may have special needs that arise because of their service to our country and we want to assist them as appropriate.”

The Denver Pre-Trial Services Program, part of the Division of Community Corrections, Denver Department of Public Safety, investigates a criminal defendant’s background to assist a judge in determining what bond to set. It also monitors compliance with the conditions set by a judge that must be followed by an offender in order to remain on bond. Denver Pre-Trial Services has implemented many national best practice strategies that have defined the program as a leader in pre-trial justice reform. This includes fostering and coordinating services and support in community-based settings.

Volunteers of America is a faith-based non-profit organization that has worked to feed, shelter, and support Colorado’s most vulnerable residents since 1896. The Volunteers of America Bill Daniels Veteran Services Center at 1247 Santa Fe Drive in Denver coordinates and expedites services to veterans including housing, employment, VA benefits, public benefits, legal assistance, mental health services, counseling, peer support services, and food, showers, and clothing.

Since mid-October, Denver Pre-Trial Services has asked all defendants arrested on felony charges if they have served in the military. If the defendant answers yes, then Pre-Trial will note the response in its pre-trial report along with the standard employment and educational information. The public defender appearing at 1st advisements gives each self-identified defendant a release form asking if the veteran will agree to be contacted by a representative from the Veteran Services Center. If signed, the form will be provided to the deputy district attorney, who will provide the authorization to the Volunteers of America Bill Daniels Veteran Services Center.

Volunteers of America in turn connects the veteran with a “peer mentor,” whether the defendant is released or remains in jail. This peer-mentor can be a “battle buddy” as the veteran navigates the criminal justice system, and can assist the veteran in accessing a variety of services that are available through the Veteran Services Center.

This peer-mentor program is offered to all veterans arrested on a felony offense. The services available may be dependent on the veteran’s discharge status, but everyone will be referred to a peer-mentor. This Pre-trial Services arrangement with Volunteers of America is veteran-specific because it is the only resource available right now that provides peer-mentors free of charge.