

**STATE OF FLORIDA
SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT**
Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns & Volusia Counties
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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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New Veterans Treatment Court starting in St. Augustine

ST. AUGUSTINE - A new Veterans Treatment Court designed to focus on military veterans in the criminal justice system will start in St. Augustine, opening with a special ceremony on Jan. 19.

Circuit Judge Howard O. McGillin, Jr. will preside over Veterans Treatment Court, which has its first hearing at 1:30 p.m., Jan. 19, in the Courthouse Annex of the Richard O. Watson Judicial Center, 4010 Lewis Speedway, St. Augustine.

Veterans Treatment Court is a specialized court for the 7th Judicial Circuit, aimed at helping veterans who face criminal charges and need treatment for mental health, substance abuse, traumatic injuries or post-traumatic stress disorder. Defendants who were honorably or generally discharged may be eligible for the court, which works with the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs.

"The Veterans Treatment Court organization mimics the military structure with a team approach that the veteran should find familiar. The judge acts, in many ways, like the Commanding Officer of the team - encouraging good behavior and discouraging negative behavior," said Judge McGillin, a retired U.S. Army colonel and military attorney, who spearheaded the effort to start the court in St. Johns County. The circuit has a similar court in Volusia County.

Thursday's hearing is expected to include a military honor guard, as well as speakers from St. Johns County, local law enforcement agencies and local veterans organizations.

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