



JAMES L. MADARA, MD
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

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February 21, 2020

The Honorable Bruce Williams
Chair
National Association of Drug Court Professionals
625 N. Washington Street, Ste. 212
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Veterans Treatment Courts

Dear Judge Williams:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing regarding the AMA's support of specialized Veterans Courts as a method of intervention for veterans who commit criminal offenses that may be related to a neurological or psychiatric disorder. We understand that the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) has developed a veterans treatment court model, and the AMA would be interested in learning more about your efforts, including the potential for the AMA and NADCP to work together on our shared interests.

Our members provide medical care on a daily basis to veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury and other psychiatric diseases and medical trauma. PTSD can lead to distressing and persistent symptoms, including re-experiencing trauma through flashbacks or nightmares, reckless and self-destructive behavior, sudden anger and drug and alcohol abuse. These behaviors can lead to interactions with law enforcement and a criminal justice system that is ill-equipped to provide our wounded warriors the support they deserve and have earned. Just as Veterans Administration health facilities are structured to provide mental and physical care uniquely tailored to wounded veterans, the veterans courts model provides the structure and fellowship to more effectively handle criminal cases involving veterans.

Medical student members of the AMA's House of Delegates (HOD), our policy making body, developed and strongly backed a resolution supporting the veterans court model. This resolution was adopted overwhelmingly by the HOD and became AMA policy in November 2019. As a result, we also plan to send a companion letter to the National Governors Association.

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4954.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD