

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 2147

AN ACT

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to provide treatment court services to justice-involved veterans, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Treatment
3 Court Improvement Act of 2018”.

4 **SEC. 2. HIRING BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**
5 **OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUT-**
6 **REACH SPECIALISTS.**

7 (a) HIRING OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE
8 OUTREACH SPECIALISTS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
10 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
11 of Veterans Affairs shall hire not fewer than 50 Vet-
12 erans Justice Outreach Specialists and place each
13 such Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist at an eli-
14 gible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center
15 in accordance with this section.

16 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall en-
17 sure that each Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist
18 employed under paragraph (1)—

19 (A) serves, either exclusively or in addition
20 to other duties, as part of a justice team in a
21 veterans treatment court or other veteran-foc-
22 used court; and

23 (B) otherwise meets Department hiring
24 guidelines for Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-
25 cialists.

1 (b) ELIGIBLE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
2 MEDICAL CENTERS.—For purposes of this section, an eli-
3 gible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center is
4 any Department of Veterans Affairs medical center that—

5 (1) complies with all Department guidelines and
6 regulations for placement of a Veterans Justice Out-
7 reach Specialist;

8 (2) works within a local criminal justice system
9 with justice-involved veterans;

10 (3) maintains an affiliation with one or more
11 veterans treatment courts or other veteran-focused
12 courts; and

13 (4) either—

14 (A) routinely provides Veterans Justice
15 Outreach Specialists to serve as part of a jus-
16 tice team in a veterans treatment court or other
17 veteran-focused court; or

18 (B) establishes a plan that is approved by
19 the Secretary to provide Veterans Justice Out-
20 reach Specialists employed under subsection
21 (a)(1) to serve as part of a justice team in a
22 veterans treatment court or other veteran-fo-
23 cused court.

24 (c) PLACEMENT PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall
25 prioritize the placement of Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-

1 cialists employed under subsection (a)(1) at eligible De-
2 partment of Veterans Affairs medical centers that have
3 or intend to establish an affiliation, for the purpose of car-
4 rying out the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, with
5 a veterans treatment court, or other veteran-focused court,
6 that—

7 (1) was established on or after the date of the
8 enactment of this Act; or

9 (2)(A) was established before the date of the
10 enactment of this Act; and

11 (B) is not fully staffed with Veterans Justice
12 Outreach Specialists.

13 (d) REPORTS.—

14 (1) REPORT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AF-
15 FAIRS.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year
17 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
18 Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to
19 Congress a report on the implementation of this
20 section and its effect on the Veterans Justice
21 Outreach Program.

22 (B) CONTENTS.—The report submitted
23 under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

24 (i) The status of the efforts of the
25 Secretary to hire Veterans Justice Out-

1 reach Specialists pursuant to subsection
2 (a)(1), including the total number of Vet-
3 erans Justice Outreach Specialists hired by
4 the Secretary pursuant to such subsection
5 and the number that the Secretary expects
6 to hire pursuant to such subsection.

7 (ii) The total number of Veterans
8 Justice Outreach Specialists assigned to
9 each Department of Veterans Affairs med-
10 ical center that participates in the Vet-
11 erans Justice Outreach Program, including
12 the number of Veterans Justice Outreach
13 Specialists hired under subsection (a)(1)
14 disaggregated by Department of Veterans
15 Affairs medical center.

16 (iii) The total number of eligible De-
17 partment of Veterans Affairs medical cen-
18 ters that sought placement of a Veterans
19 Justice Outreach Specialist under sub-
20 section (a)(1), how many Veterans Justice
21 Outreach Specialists each such center
22 sought, and how many of such medical
23 centers received no placement of a Vet-
24 erans Justice Outreach Specialist under
25 subsection (a)(1).

(iv) For each eligible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center—

(I) the number of justice-involved veterans who were served or are expected to be served by a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist hired under subsection (a)(1); and

(II) the number of justice-involved veterans who do not have access to a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist.

(2) REPORT BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the implementation of this section and the effectiveness of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) An assessment of whether the Secretary has fulfilled the Secretary's obligations under this section.

1 (ii) The number of veterans who are
2 served by Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-
3 cialists hired under subsection (a)(1),
4 disaggregated by demographics (including
5 discharge status).

6 (iii) An identification of any sub-
7 groups of veterans who underutilize serv-
8 ices provided under laws administered by
9 the Secretary, including an assessment of
10 whether these veterans have access to Vet-
11 erans Justice Outreach Specialists under
12 the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

13 (iv) Such recommendations as the
14 Comptroller General may have for the Sec-
15 retary to improve the effectiveness of the
16 Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

17 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

18 (1) JUSTICE TEAM.—The term “justice team”
19 means the group of individuals, which may include
20 a judge, court coordinator, prosecutor, public de-
21 fender, treatment provider, probation or other law
22 enforcement officer, program mentor, and Veterans
23 Justice Outreach Specialist, who assist justice-in-
24 volved veterans in a veterans treatment court or
25 other veteran-focused court.

1 (2) JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERAN.—The term
2 “justice-involved veteran” means a veteran with ac-
3 tive, ongoing, or recent contact with some compo-
4 nent of a local criminal justice system.

5 (3) LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.—The
6 term “local criminal justice system” means law en-
7 forcement, jails, prisons, and Federal, State, and
8 local courts.

9 (4) VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PRO-
10 GRAM.—The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Pro-
11 gram” means the program through which the De-
12 partment of Veterans Affairs identifies justice-in-
13 volved veterans and provides such veterans with ac-
14 cess to Department services.

15 (5) VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH SPE-
16 CIALIST.—The term “Veterans Justice Outreach
17 Specialist” means an employee of the Department of
18 Veterans Affairs who serves as a liaison between the
19 Department and the local criminal justice system on
20 behalf of a justice-involved veteran.

21 (6) VETERANS TREATMENT COURT.—The term
22 “veterans treatment court” means a State or local
23 court that is participating in the veterans treatment
24 court program (as defined in section 2991(i)(1) of

1 the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of
2 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1))).

Passed the House of Representatives June 13, 2018.

Attest:

Clerk.

115TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 2147

AN ACT

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to provide treatment court services to justice-involved veterans, and for other purposes.