

WELCOME

May 1, 2024

Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

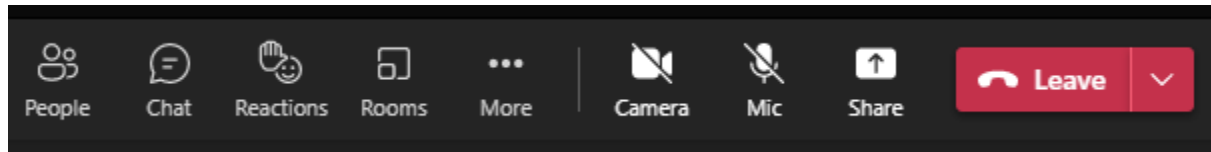
Dept. of Corrections HQ

1920 Technology Parkway, Mechanicsburg

**This meeting, and all content, is being recorded for executive documentation only.
Your continued participation is acknowledgement and approval of recording.**

--We will begin shortly--

Chat function is used to submit comments or questions



*Please enter your **full name and agency** for attendance purposes



INTRODUCTIONS & OPENING COMMENTS



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

OLD BUSINESS

Shining Light Academy

- Uses evidence-based, interactive programming to build strong community reentrants.
- Works with SCI Dallas Veteran Service Unit.
- Allows inmates to find their passion and develop new perspectives on how to work through life's challenges.
- Tremendous success and drastically reduces recidivism.



GUEST SPEAKER

- **PA AGING PLAN / VETERANS HOMES**
Mr. Travis Davis

GUEST SPEAKER

- **TUNNELS TO TOWERS (T2T.ORG)**
Ms. Lynda Cox
Mr. Justin Holcomb



PENNSYLVANIA GAC-VS

MAY 1, 2024

Presented by:
Justin Holcomb
Director of State and Local Government Affairs

TUNNEL TO TOWERS OVERVIEW

On **September 11, 2001**, firefighter **Stephen Siller**, was on his way to play golf with his brothers when he learned that a plane hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

Stephen called his wife Sally and asked her to tell his brothers that he would be late. He returned to **Squad 1** to get his gear.

Stephen drove his personal truck to the **Brooklyn Battery Tunnel**, but it had already been closed for security purposes. Determined to carry out his duty, he strapped 60 lbs. of gear to his back and raced on foot through the **Tunnel to the Twin Towers** to save others. Stephen died in the collapse of the South Tower.

It is in Stephen's honor that we follow in his footsteps endeavoring to "do good" and make a positive and lasting impact in the lives of others.

We provide innovative housing solutions for our nation's heroes.

<https://t2t.org/homeless-veteran-program/>

TUNNEL TO TOWERS PRESENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA

The **In The Line Of Duty Programs** have built homes or paid off mortgages for veterans, first responders, and their families throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Smart Home

- William Essary (Butler, PA)
- Adam Hartswick (State College, PA)
- Timothy Donley (Bethel, PA)
- Doug Vitale (Peters Township, PA)

Gold Star Home

- Christopher O'Neil Moudry (Port Allegany, PA)
- Nicolas Eduardo Prabhavat (Mechanicsburg, PA)
- Caleb Nathaniel King (Chadds Ford, PA)
- Stephen C. Plum Jr. (Warminster, PA)
- Dennis James Veater (Lake Ariel, PA)
- Michael Anthony Hook (Coraopolis, PA)

Fallen First Responder Home

- Christopher David Hill (York, PA)
- Michael L Henry Jr. (Derry Township, PA)
- Michael Bernstein (Philadelphia, PA)
- James O'Connor (Philadelphia, PA)
- Michael Malinowski Sr. (Morton, PA)
- Martin Francis Mack III (Bristol, PA)
- Branden Tyler Sisca (Trappe, PA)
- Justin McIntire (Brackenridge, PA)

Covid-19

- John F. Burke Jr. (Drexel Hill, PA)
- Christopher Mortenson (Bear Creek Township, PA)

Through the **Homeless Veteran Program**, we have already provided housing assistance and access to services to over **118 Pennsylvania veterans last year.**

HOMELESS VETERAN PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- The Tunnel to Towers Homeless Veteran Program seeks to eradicate veteran homelessness nationwide.
- With over 33,000 veterans experiencing chronic homelessness, we understand that this is no easy task.
- Simply housing an unhoused veteran is not enough to make a substantial difference in their lives.
- In order to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate our veterans back into society, we must also provide a platform where they have ready access to a wide range of needed services, geared towards diagnosing and solving root causes of their housing insecurity.
- Their specific emotional, financial, and physical issues must be addressed.
- Our team has created a two-pronged model to address this tremendous problem...

OUR COMMITMENT

We do not engage in a project unless we can see it through to fruition with funding and capability. We,

- House with comfort, stability, and dignity,
- Provide wraparound on-site and off-site services that enhance (not replace) veteran's government provided healthcare, and
- Collaborate with like minded charities, organizations, and government entities to maximize public/private partnerships to solve problems and deliver tailored services.

No veteran who wants to be housed should have to wonder where they will live.

OUR APPROACH

Veterans Village

- Adaptive Reuse of existing Hospitality Properties or Raw Land Development
- Community of Comfort Homes
- On-site Supportive Services
 - Counseling
 - Mental
 - Employment
 - Etc.



National Case Management



- Intake online or through the T2T Call Center
- Assign Case Manager to Coordinate Care
- Identify Service Providers located in the veteran's area to obtain housing, benefits, and services

<https://t2t.org/homeless-veteran-program/>

VETERANS VILLAGE APPROACH

THE CAMPUS APPROACH

- A continuum of housing supported or independent living

THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

- Safe residential environment
- Veterans take responsibility to change their lives
- Psychosocial rehabilitation activities
- Veteran Council
- Town hall to connect veterans and staff for solution-focused collaboration
- Peer mentoring
- Therapeutic, social, recreational, cultural, and holiday activities

CLIENT-CENTERED

- Program progression through phases and tracks with recognition for achievements
- Treatment planning & case management services
- Psychoeducational classes where clients have agency

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

- Community collaborations and referrals
- Multidisciplinary team approach to treatment

OUTCOME DRIVEN

- Annual agency goals
- Monthly performance reporting

Veterans Village - Harrisburg, PA

1109 S. Front St, Harrisburg, PA

- 8.5 Acre Tract sitting directly on the Susquehanna River
- 64 unit permanent housing complex
- Village of 20 Comfort Homes
- Estimated Completion, EOY 2025



NATIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT NETWORK

In 2023, the Homeless Veteran Program's National Case Management Network provided over 3,000 veterans with housing assistance and supportive services, in addition to almost 1,000 children.

This number will grow exponentially in the years to come as we grow out our team, strengthen our relationships across the country, and form strategic alliances with other organizations in the space.

Each Veterans Village will have a satellite office to further assist veterans and families not physically living at the site.



SERVICE CATEGORIES WITHIN NATIONAL NETWORK

Advocacy	Emergency	Mental Health
Assisted Devices	Emotional Support/Service	Minority Affairs
Benefits	Animals	Outreach
Car Expenses	Financial Assistance	Peer Support
Caregiver Support	Financial Literacy	Pet Care/Assistance
Case Management	First Responders	Recreation
Childcare	Food	Shelter
Civilian Transition Assistance	Healthcare/Medical	Spouse and Family
Clothing/Toiletries	Heat Relief/Cooling Centers	Substance Use
Crisis Support	Housing Assistance	Telehealth
Deployment	Information and Referral	Transitional Housing
Disability	Legal	Transportation
Education	Life Skills	Volunteer
		Youth/Young Adult

**CURRENT
TUNNEL TO TOWERS
HOMELESS VETERAN
PROJECTS**

Veterans Village - Houston, TX

18818 Tomball Pkwy, Houston, TX

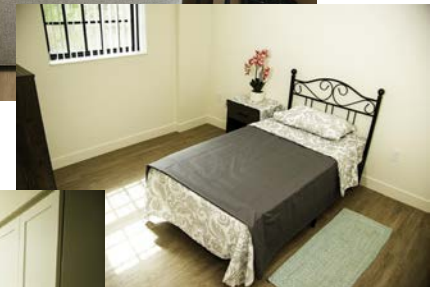
- 131 unit complex - Opened November 2023
- 54 permanent units and 77 transitional beds
- **PHASE II** Village of 14 Comfort Homes
- Opening Fall, 2024



Veterans Village - West Los Angeles Campus

11401 Vandergrift Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90049

- Grantors of West LA rebuild
- 1,700 units completed by 2030
- Will provide permanent and transitional housing for 3,000 veterans



2024 VETERANS VILLAGES

GEORGIA

65 S. Service Rd, Austell, GA

- 92 Unit Permanent Housing Complex
- Groundbreaking, May 17, 2024
- Opening Fall 2024



ALABAMA

530 Providence Dr., Mobile, AL

- 86 Unit Permanent Housing Complex
- Opening End of Year 2024



2025 VETERANS VILLAGES

- 9 Acre tract deeded to T2T by Manatee County
- 84-unit permanent housing complex
- Village of 38 Comfort Homes
- Estimated Completion – Summer 2025



Other Villages Coming Soon

Saddlebrook, NJ
Portland, OR
San Francisco, CA
Las Vegas, NV
Charlotte, NC
Jacksonville, FL

Orlando, FL
Buffalo, NY
Tulsa, OK
Memphis, TN
Seattle, WA

San Diego, CA
Denver, CO
Myrtle Beach, SC
Fort Lauderdale, FL
Detroit, MI
Washington, DC



CONCLUSION

Tunnel to Towers understands that **not all injuries are physical** and sometimes the invisible injuries can have the most impact on our veterans leading to challenges that cause homelessness.

Every homeless veteran has sworn an oath to protect and defend the United States of America.

No one that has honorably volunteered to fight for this country should ever have to worry about where they will live when their service is over.

The **Homeless Veteran Program** is an extension of Tunnel to Towers' proven and successful record of providing innovative housing solutions for our nation's heroes and their families.

HOMELESS

Mr. Brendan Auman, Co-Chair

Goals/Initiatives

- Explore existing programs/resources to help house our “hard to place” veterans
- Expand committee participation to new stakeholders
- Share local, state, and federal resources available to improve service delivery
- Advocate for new affordable housing

Updates

- Highlighted two housing programs
 - VASH Vouchers
 - SHARE Housing – PA Department of Aging

- Outreach Opportunity with Christian Life Ministries

- Housing Coalition of Cumberland County
 - Landlord Engagement Initiative

Challenges/Barriers

- Safe, accessible, and affordable housing availability
- Hard-to-place veterans
- Data to inform committee efforts

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Crystal Houser, Chair

GI Bill®

The Veterans/Military Education Division of the Pennsylvania Department of Education has been designated by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as the State Approving Agency for Training of Veterans/Eligible persons and reservists in the field of institutional training, correspondence training, flight training, apprenticeship training, and other on-the-job training.

Updates

- Risk-Based Survey Data Triggers revised per Congress in January 2024
- Supervisory Visits reinstated in January 2024
- Uniform Application Implemented in February 2024 – updated version to be released in April 2024

Challenges/Barriers

- Moving targets, changing forms, and frequently changing guidance have resulted in slower processing times as our advisors and our SCOs train and adapt.
- Mid-Contract Year Change from 2-1 RBS to Supervisory Visits ratio resulted in significant increase in travel that was not budgeted.
- Staffing – 2 retirements, 1 interagency transfer, & 1 military deployment in past 6 months

Education Assistance and Military Family Educational Programs

- Provide educational assistance to eligible members of the PA National Guard (EAP) and qualifying family members (MFEP)
- MFEP requires additional 6-yr service agreement with the PANG
- www.pa.ng.mil/education/

Updates

- The lesser of 100% of the tuition plus technology fee at the institution where enrolled; OR
- the annual tuition rate and technology fee charged to a PA resident at a state-owned university
- Annual Application Process: Log into www.pheaa.org

Challenges/Barriers

- While not required for EAP or MFEP, the 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA[®]) issues and delays are impacting some students' enrollment plans for fall 2024.

PA State Grant Program

- 2023-24 award year
 - \$5,750 max award
- 2024-25 award year
 - Due to issues with the 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA[®]), the PA State Grant application deadline for submission of the FAFSA has been extended to June 1.

Updates

- More than \$13 billion in grant awards since inception
 - Provided awards to more than 2.9 million students since 1966 program creation
- 2022-23 award year
 - Approx. 107,200 recipients
 - \$5,750 max / \$4,128 avg. award
 - Veterans qualify for max award

Challenges/Barriers

- 2024-25 FAFSA issues are impacting student enrollment plans for fall 2024
- Maintaining purchasing power of the awards as a percentage of tuition

PA Targeted Industry Program (PA-TIP)

- Prepares students with skills in high demand by today's employers
- Provides awards to students enrolled in short-term programs of study in the areas of Energy, Health, Manufacturing and Agriculture
- 2023-24 Commonwealth funding for PA-TIP held steady at \$8.652 million
- Program demand, particularly in health programs of study, is on course to exceed available 2023-24 resources

Updates

- 27,942 unique applicants
- 16,461 unique award recipients
- 90 schools with recipients
- \$64,741,025 in grants awarded
- 93% of graduates gained employment
- 78% of recipients graduated

Challenges/Barriers

- Alignment of student demand with available funding



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

--SHORT BREAK--

JUDICIARY

Mr. Michael Carrington, Chair

Goals/Initiatives

- Improve outreach efforts to veteran staff within the Department of Corrections (DOC) through collaboration with external agencies
- Expand/enhance programming, workshops, and educational/employment opportunities within the veteran service units (VSUs)
- Increase the amount/availability of veteran-specific trainings and/or educational opportunities for employees/spouses/dependents
- Advocate for the creation/enhancement of veteran courts/tracks
- Expand veteran services within the DOC to field supervision to enhance the care continuum

Updates

- Mercer and Phoenix Veteran Service Units expected to expand in 2024; More than 100 beds will be made available via the expansion
- Muncy VSU Fundraiser in February raised \$3,985 for PA Wounded Warriors
- Houtzdale VSU opened its doors for two successful reentrant speakers
- PA DOC Veteran Services presented to the Board of Pardons on 4/11/24 to enhance their knowledge of VSU life for our veteran inmates
- Shining Light Reentry Academy's positive impact on the Dallas VSU
- DOC Veteran Services Team met with VBA Management Analyst Amanda Mills (Washington, DC) and her team on 4/22/24 to discuss C&P exam process

Challenges/Barriers

- Early identification for criminal-justice involved veterans
- Nursing home care for HTP veterans that have been paroled or are approaching their maximum date of sentence
- Housing for veterans with prior sex offenses
- Enhanced training for first responders dealing with veterans in crisis
- Additional programming for those incarcerated with PTSD and/or TBI
- Technological needs continue to create barriers for PA VETConnect delivery to incarcerated veterans

WOMEN VETERANS

Ms. Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta, Chair

Goals/Initiatives

- Establish a network of public-private relationships to reach women veterans
- Create annual regional Town Hall to provide information on Federal and State benefits and local resource and support organizations
- Develop Pennsylvania's "I Am Not Invisible" campaign

Updates

MILITARY WOMEN'S MUSEUM, Arlington, VA

- 12,000 total Pennsylvania women veterans registered; Approximately 7,000 living

WOMEN VETERANS DAY EVENTS

- **2024 Women Veterans Day Commemoration**
Monday, June 10, 2024, 12pm | East Wing Capitol Building
- **Governor's Advisory Commission on Women – Women Veterans Recognition Ceremony**
Wednesday, June 12, 2024, 1:30pm | Location TBD

Challenges/Barriers

Reaching women veterans

- Both Rural and Urban

Town Halls

- Funding for town halls throughout PA
- Identifying locations/times to hold town halls
 - Working
 - Childcare
- Attendance

Current data on women veterans in Pennsylvania

- PA snapshot of national data tracked

**GOOD OF THE ORDER /
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **DMVA website:** www.dmva.pa.gov
- **GAC-VS page:** [Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services \(pa.gov\)](http://www.gac-vs.pa.gov)
- **Sign up for the Veterans Registry and DMVA Digest!**
www.register.dmva.pa.gov

NEXT MEETING:

August 7 at 1:00PM

Dept. of Agriculture HQ

2301 N. Cameron Street

Harrisburg, PA 17110