

WELCOME

Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

May 19, 2021

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Exit Meeting

Participant List



Camera

Chat Panel

*Type your name for
attendance or ask a
question.*



INTRODUCTIONS

OPENING COMMENTS

OLD BUSINESS

AGING

Ms. Margo Coleman, Co-Chair

AGING



Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Margo Coleman, Co-Chair	DMVA	Jonathan Bowman, Co-Chair	DHS
Samantha Cossman	DMVA	Jamie Dunlap	Pa Council on the Arts
Brian Natali	DMVA	Larry Furlong	PA Fish and Boat Commission
Kimberly Sell-Shemansky	VA (VISN 4)	Christopher Kemmerer	PA State Parks
Beth Ellis	DHS	James Fearn	DHS (OLTL)
Sierra Bilous	OMHSAS	Tim Cleveland	Tioga Co. Veterans Affairs
Kevin Longenecker	PDA	Julia Chagnon	DMVA
Erin Walters	PDA		

Mission/Vision:

Expand awareness of and access to services, supports, benefits, and opportunities for Pennsylvania's aging veterans and their families and caregivers so that they may live and thrive in their communities.

Goals:

- 1) Increase awareness of services and supports for aging veterans and their families and caregivers among professionals within PA's Aging and Veteran Services networks.
- 2) Increase awareness of opportunities for community engagement among aging veterans, their families and caregivers, and those serving them.
- 3) Safeguard Pennsylvania's aging veterans from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-harm.

Goal 1: Increase awareness of services and supports for aging veterans and their families and caregivers among professionals within PA's Aging and Veteran Services networks.

“Expanding Long-Term Care Services to Pennsylvania Veterans”

Consider using public and nonpublic nursing facility bed capacity for Veterans in need of long-term care if the DMVA beds are unavailable and Improve Veterans' access to existing Home and Community-Based services and programs through education and navigation services

How: *collaborating with PPL office to gather information on how to make this change happen.*

Who: *Margo and Jonathan, PPL staff.*

What: *information gathering with focus on how to improve reporting and policy change for use of public and non-public nursing facilities.*

When: *March 9, 2021*

Outcome: The role of the aging committee would be better served by generating an awareness campaign providing communications to local nursing homes on how to identify veterans and getting them assessed or reassessed through the federal VA so they could access benefits through that route.

Goal 2: Increase awareness of opportunities for community engagement among aging veterans, their families and caregivers, and those serving them.

How: *Educational videos jointly presented by aging and veteran system stakeholders to explain important programming and resources for aging veterans and caregivers.*

Who: *TBD*

What: *TBD*

When: *TBD*

Goal 3: Safeguard Pennsylvania's aging veterans from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-harm.

Identify barriers in Long-Term Care when reporting potential financial exploitation and collaborate with stakeholders to identify areas for judiciary/policy change to improve reporting and outcomes.

How: *Partner with financial exploitation study to glean information on recommendations and policy changes.*

Who: *Margo and Jonathan in conjunction with PDA and the IDT task force state agencies.*

What: *Interagency collaboration to prevent financial exploitation.*

When: *Monthly through April*

Outcome: *Aging committee was able to provide 2 recommendations to the FETF and the FETF has adopted those changes as part of their Task Force Strategy*

1. *Create a feedback loop between law enforcement and long-term care facility staff to help identify possibly missed opportunities/evidence during an investigation. It may help improve investigations in long-term care facilities to have the assistance of a trained detective to identify any areas missed during the investigation.*

2. *If a Report of Need is made from an agency, rather than a private party, the outcome of the investigation should be shared between agencies.*

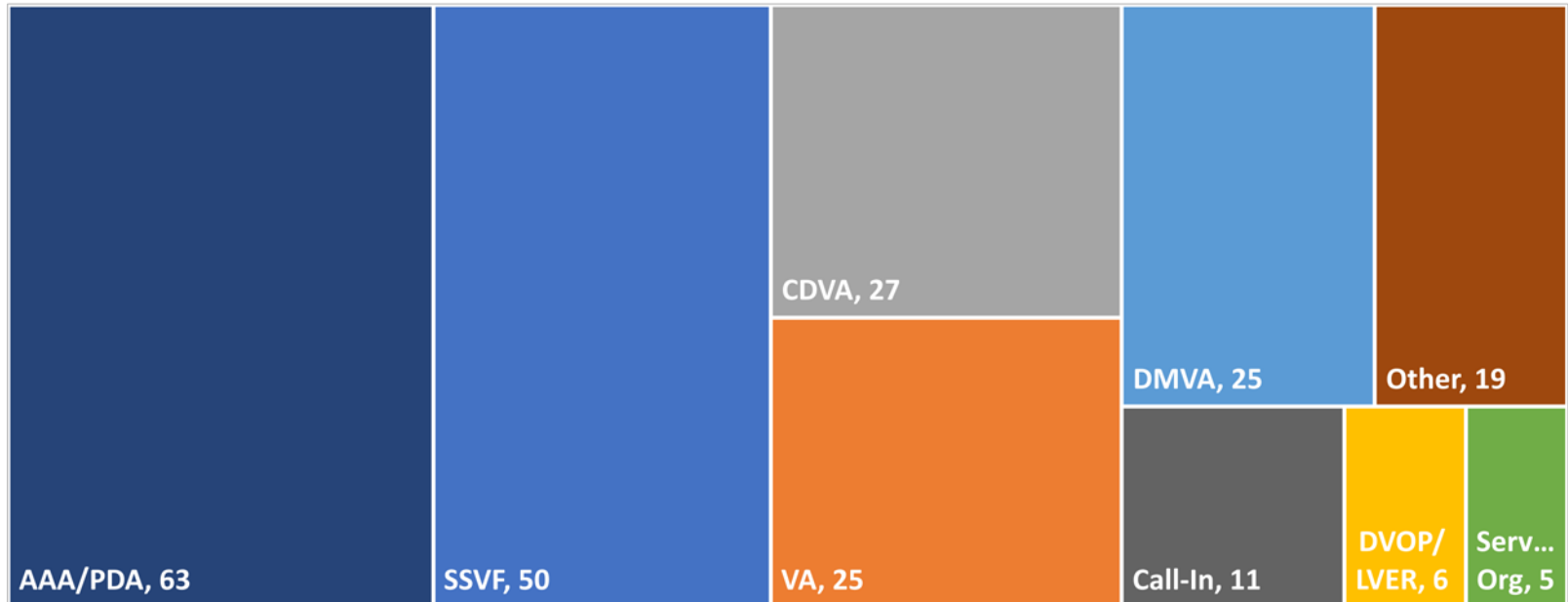
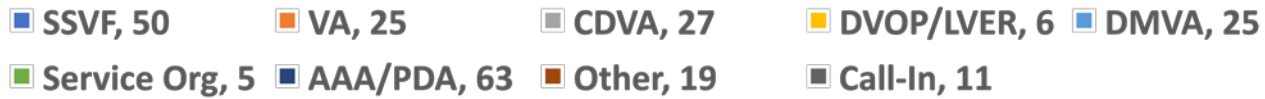
****Protecting Aging Veterans Workgroup****

Pension poaching initiative

Continues its efforts to launch the Veteran Pension Poaching awareness initiative with June 1st as anticipated launch date. This effort will result in community level professionals being educated and therefore better able to direct Veterans and beneficiaries to free and safe assistance by providing a toolkit of information and resources

Protecting Aging Veterans Workgroup

230+ advocates educated on Older Adult Protective Services in collaboration with PDA Protective Services Office



94% agreed they better understand Older Adult Protective Services now and would share what they learned with others

Recommendation 1

- Hold a cross-system conference for aging, long-term service and veteran/support system stakeholders and advocates

Committee will begin to brainstorm options for achieving this recommendation.

What is one thing we want to do to achieve this? Aging committee to collaborate with the protecting aging veterans work group to identify area to target for distributing information to stakeholders

Recommendation 2

- Educational videos jointly presented by aging and veteran system stakeholders to explain important programming and resources for aging veterans and caregivers. Post to social media, YouTube, stakeholder websites.

Committee will begin to brainstorm options for achieving this recommendation.

What is one thing we want to do to achieve this? Meet with DMVA communications department to identify if there are any archived programs that we could use that could be shared with local PBS stations and/or news stations that would donate free airtime to broadcast our message. Identify what form of media might reach the broadest audience as older Pennsylvanians may not be as familiar with or as comfortable with using social media platforms.

Recommendation 3

- Initiate the veteran pension poaching postcard effort
 - Protecting Aging Veteran's Work Group continues to spearhead this initiative.

Recommendation 4

- Host regional or local town halls or listening forums for aging veterans, their families, and caregivers to attend – to learn about resources, voice concerns, identify service gaps, brainstorm innovative solutions.

Committee will begin to brainstorm options for achieving this recommendation.

What is one thing we want to do to achieve this? Possibly utilize local PBS stations who may want to do a specific piece on Aging Veterans and their interests, needs, experiences etc.

HOMELESS

Mrs. Samantha Cossman, Chair

HOMELESS



Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Joel Mutschler (co-chair)	DMVA	Samantha Cossman (co-chair)	DMVA
Bill Cress	VISN 4	Bill Reed	YWCA Greater Harrisburg
Missy Russell	Lawrence Co. Social Services; Western PA CoC Veterans Committee co-chair	Tom Applebach Brian Querry Danny Osten	Lehigh County Veterans Affairs Centre County Veterans Affairs Cumberland County Veterans Affairs
Laura Maggiorini	Volunteers of America; Eastern PA CoC VLEC co-chair	Hayley Miller	Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA; Eastern PA CoC VLEC co-chair
Angela Susten	DCED	Danielle Rudy	PHFA
Jeff Geibel	DDAP	Donna Tilley-Hess	OMHSAS
Tom Snedden	PACE		

Vision:

Be the premier forum for seamless communication and collaboration in effectively understanding and responding to Veteran homelessness within Pennsylvania.

Mission:

Build collaborative intergovernmental and community-based relationships to identify and promote awareness of the resources that could help veterans experiencing or at risk for housing instability.

Recommendation 1

- Consider action on issues deemed most pressing by stakeholders: lack of warming shelters, lack of emergency shelter beds, lack of affordable housing

Recommendation 2

- Advocate for the expansion of Coordinated Entry Sites to more VA Medical Centers

Recommendation 3

- Seek to uncover more resources for National Guard who do not qualify for SSVF or traditional Veteran homeless programs

Recommendation 4 - completed

- Have PA VETConnect RPOCs routinely engage in CoC scrub calls and homeless Veteran list reviews

Recommendation 5 – workgroup established; first meeting held; Erica Moore lead

- Collaborate with Women Veterans committee to seek more solutions for women Veterans (and those with children) experiencing homelessness

Recommendation 6 – first meeting held

- Partner with Aging Committee to discuss potential solutions for aging Veterans who experience housing instability and discuss ways to promote better communication with Long-Term Care industry

Recommendation 7 – workgroup established; Jen Spitler lead

- Partner with Judiciary Committee to discuss potential solutions for hard-to-place Veterans exiting incarceration who have been historically hard-to-place

Recommendation 8

- Obtain data from all CoCs, all SSVFs and all VA Medical Centers on a quarterly basis to better understand Veteran homelessness across PA

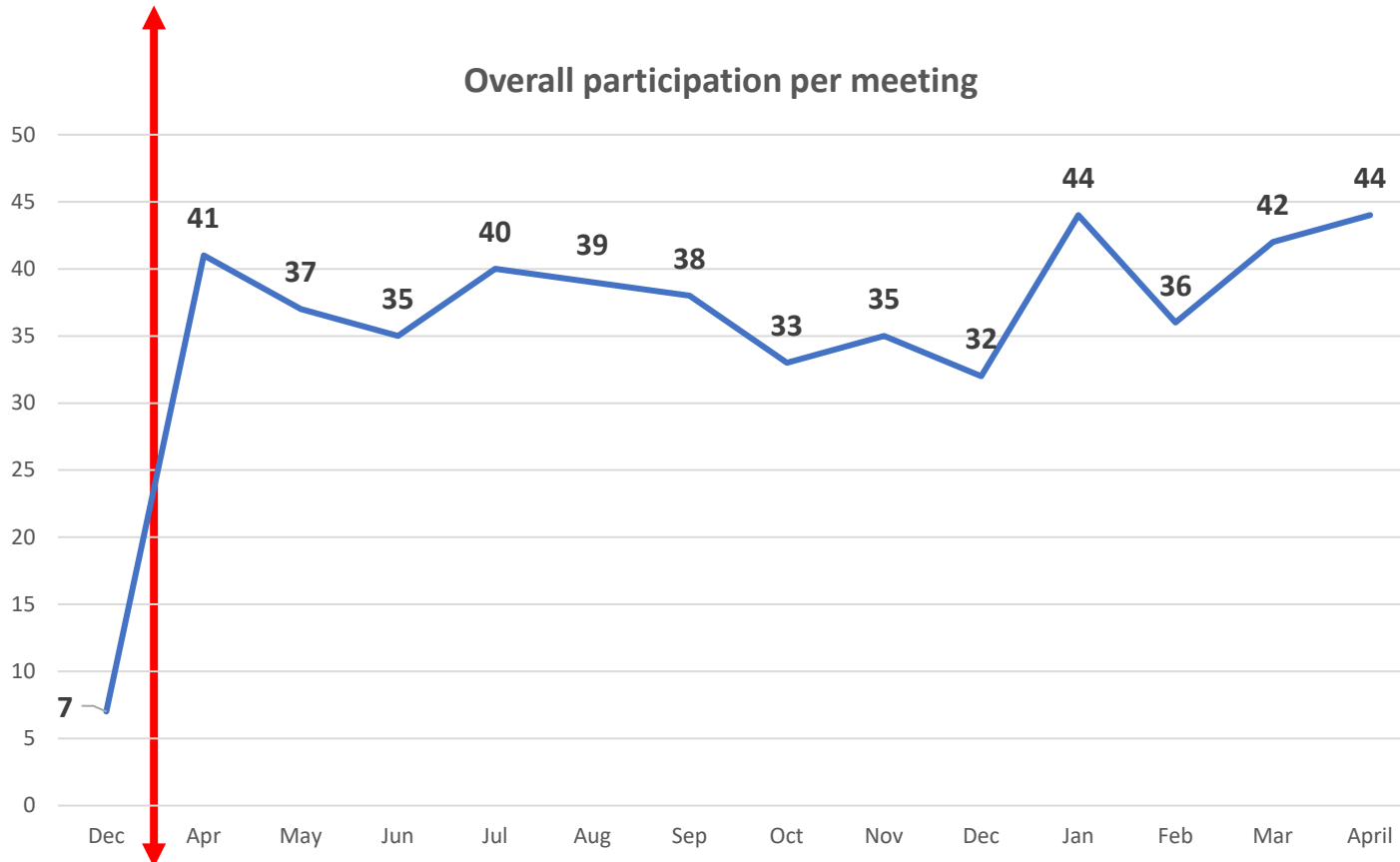
Recommendation 9

- Provide DCED, PHFA and PHAs with insight on veteran advocates who can speak to the need for veteran-specific housing and help developers plan wisely regarding location and tenancy plans

HOMELESS



Participation in monthly committee meetings continues to hold steady with an average of 38 attendees per meeting this state fiscal year. Stakeholder representation is robust - SSVFs, VISN 4, VAMCs, CoC, CDVA, Service Org, and sister-state agencies *(Data source: Homeless Committee meeting summaries)*



*Note:
The red arrow represents a 3-month period when the committee focused on outreach to specific systems for increased engagement.*

Spotlight presentations during homeless meetings (open invite to participate)

- 10 Feb – Fair housing, accommodations and veterans’ considerations
- 10 Mar – Evictions - process, protections and legal assistance
- 14 Apr – Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) from DCED
- 12 May – VA Homeless Programs Office 5-year strategic plan
- 9 Jun – USDA Single Family Housing Programs

SSVF (Supportive Services for Veterans Families)

- PA VETConnect 101 for 17 SSVF Healthcare Navigators on 23 Feb
- Veteran Leadership Program SSVF expanded into 7 counties in Erie catchment
- VMC Central SSVF expanded into Dauphin and Lebanon counties
- VMC has become a Coordinated Entry Access Site for Veterans in the Eastern CoC 33
- Over 50 SSVF staff were educated on Older Adult Protective Services in April/May

VA Homeless Programs

- New VHA Homeless Programs Office 5-year strategic plan released 27 April:
https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/VHA-Strategic-Plan-External-Final_508.pdf
- Medical Foster Home discussion scheduled for 2 June with VA representatives and Aging Committee co-chairs
- Additional HUD-VASH vouchers issued recently to Lebanon VA (6); Altoona (10); Wilkes-Barre (19); Philadelphia (43); Coatesville (68)

VA Homeless Programs

- 2021 VA CHALENG survey is open for responses through at least 30 Sept 2021 - <https://www.va.gov/homeless/challeng.asp>
- 2020 CHALENG Fact Sheet – **national insights**; issued April 2021 (~10% of Veteran respondents were from VISN 4)

Top Ten Highest Unmet Needs, Male Veterans

Rank	Male Homeless Veteran Highest Unmet Needs
1	Registered Sex Offender Housing
2	Legal Assistance for Court Fees/Court Fines
3	Child Care
4	Legal Assistance for Credit Issues/Debt Collection
5	Family Law (i.e. divorce, child custody)
6	Legal Assistance to Expunge a Criminal Record
7	Tax Issues
8	Discharge Upgrade Appeals
9	Legal Assistance for Child Support Issues
10	Family Reconciliation Assistance

Top Ten Highest Unmet Needs, Female Veterans

Rank	Female Homeless Veteran Highest Unmet Needs
1	Registered Sex Offender Housing
2	Child Care
3	Family Law (i.e. divorce, child custody)
4	Legal Assistance for Court Fees/Court Fines
5	Legal Assistance for Credit Issues/Debt Collection
6	Legal Assistance to Expunge a Criminal Record
7	Tax Issues
8	Family Reconciliation Assistance
9	Credit Counseling
10	Legal Assistance for Child Support Issues

- *Notes: - 9 of top 10 unmet needs were the same for both groups (red arrows denote difference).
- 5 of the top 10 unmet needs in both groups were for some type of legal assistance.

New Committee Recommendation: Promotion of CHALENG

- Raise awareness of and promote participation in the annual VA CHALENG survey
- Work with VISN 4, 2 and 5 to obtain survey results pertinent to PA counties
- Analyze reports by catchment for unmet needs and resource gaps
- Assist VAMCs as able in their CHALENG meetings

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Crystal Houser, Chair

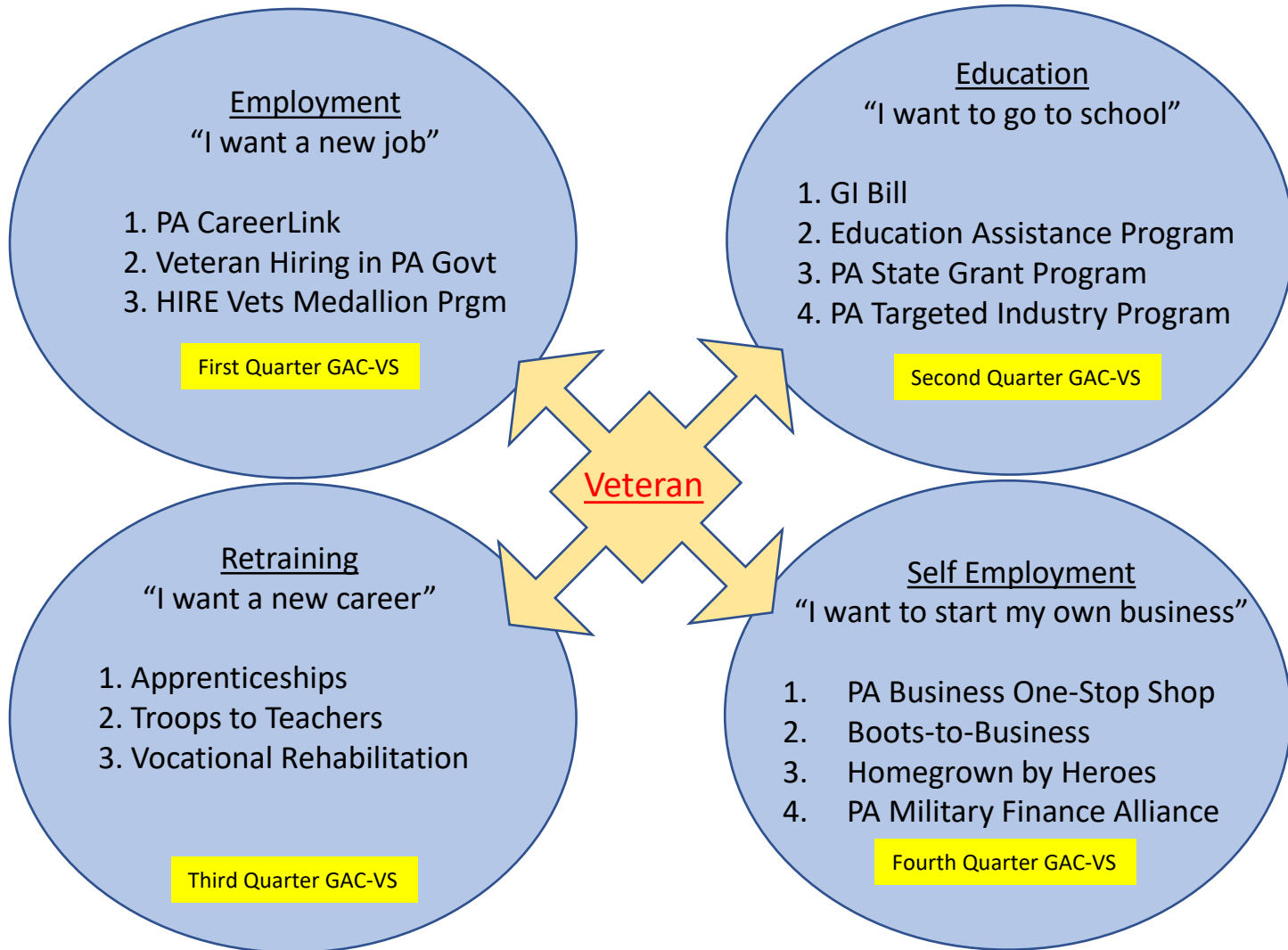
Name	Affiliation
Thomas Applebach	Country Director
Kory Auch	Office of Administration
Chelsea Ellsworth	Military & Veterans Affairs
Lawrence Furlong	Fish & Boat Commission
Tara Okon	Labor & Industry
Crystal Houser	Labor & Industry
Christina Kotsalos	Banking & Securities
Billy Lanham	US Dept of Labor/ VETS
Terrell Martin	Community & Economic Development
Joshua Scheinberg	Department of Agriculture
Denise Verchimak	Department of Education

VISION

Create greater awareness and synergy among agencies serving veterans when they are asking themselves “What do I want to do next?”

GOALS

1. Establish a recurring rhythm to present program information, magnitude, results and initiatives to the GAC-VS
2. Use program understanding to better connect the information to the entities that need it most ... those that engage veterans daily
3. Fully synergize agency programs into the PA VETCONNECT model



“I WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL”

1. GI Bill
2. Education Assistance Program
3. PA State Grant Program
4. PA Targeted Industry Program

GI Bill®

Concept

- Earned Education Benefit
- US Dept of VA eligibility/funding
- 6 programs for Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, and Dependents

State Participation

- PDE = “State Approving Agency”
- 685 Active Facilities in PA
 - 258 Non-College Degree Training
 - 256 Degree Granting Institutions
 - 171 On the Job Training/Apprenticeship Sites

PA Key Data/Trends

- FY19 = 22,549 Beneficiaries
 - 82% using Post 9/11 GI Bill
- FY19= \$325M VA Expenditure

Key Changes/Initiatives

- Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA):
 - Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP)
 - VA Oversight Memo
 - New Legislation

Education Assistance Program

Concept

- State Funded Program
- Provides educational assistance to eligible members of the PA National Guard
- EAP funding awarded regardless of need

State Participation

- Amount of award based on:
 - Enrollment Status: FT/PT
 - Tuition charged
- Limited to:
 - 10 full-time semesters, or
 - 120 part-time credits

Participating Schools

- 14 State System of Higher Education schools
- All Community Colleges

Key Changes/Initiatives

- Application Process:
 - Log into www.pheaa.org
 - Complete an EAP Form 2
 - Must be done yearly

PA State Grant Program

Concept

- PA's primary need-based grant program for postsecondary education
- Students apply by submitting:
 - FAFSA
 - PA State Grant Form
- Provides access and choice

State Participation

- Administered by the PA Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) since 1966
 - No cost to taxpayers
 - Administrative costs funded by PHEAA's business earnings

PA Key Data/Trends

- More than \$12 billion in grant awards since inception
 - Approx. 7.4 million awards
- 2019-20 award year
 - Approx. 130,000 recipients
 - \$3,106 average award
 - Veterans qualify for max award

Key Changes/Initiatives

- 2020-21 award year
 - \$4,525 maximum award
 - DE max award also \$4,525 at HQD institutions
- 2020-21 COVID accommodations
 - Non-HQD schools with adapted coursework due to pandemic

PA Targeted Industry Program (PA-TIP)

Concept

- Need-based grants for high-demand industries (energy, health, advanced materials & diversified manufacturing, agriculture & food production fields)
- 2019-20 average award: \$3,549
- 2019-20 maximum award: \$4,123

State Participation

- Administered by the PA Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)
- Funding appropriation from the General Assembly beginning in 2019-20
- Key partnerships:
 - PA Labor & Industry
 - PA Dept of Education (PDE)

PA Key Data/Trends

- 19,778 unique applicants
- 11,200 unique award recipients
- 53 schools with recipients
- \$43,027,497 in grants awarded
- 91% of graduates gained employment
- 76% of recipients graduated
 - Does not include recipients who reapplied

Key Changes/Initiatives

- 2019-20 expansion to select health programs of study
- 2020-21 re-alignment of eligible programs using PA-IDOL
- Proposed 2021-22 commonwealth funding for PA-TIP at \$6.3 million

HEALTH PROMOTIONS

Ms. Donna Tilley-Hess, Chair

HEALTH PROMOTIONS



Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Donna Tilley Hess	DHS, OMHSAS	Ginny Masrtine	DHS, OMHSAS
Angela Keen	VISN 4	Jennifer Hagaman	VSO, Clinton Cty.
Leslie Neal & Lana Venur	VSO, Elk Cty.	Danny A. Osten	VSO, Cumberland Cty.
Frederick Nardei	Pittsburgh VA	Matthew Zamosky	VSO, West Moreland County
Jose Lopez	Resilience & Risk Reduction Prog. Coordinator, PAARNG	Mark Todero	Suicide Prevention Program Contractor, PAARNG
Jennifer Spitler	DMVA - RPOC	Jessica Penn Shires	DHS, OMHSAS
Joann P Tresco	Alcohol & Drug Control Officer, Contractor, PAARNG	William A Charpentier	Eastern Lead Military & Family Readiness Specialist, PAARNG
LTC Gerard M Wrazien	SMFS Director, PAARNG	Vacant	DOH
Rick Hamp	DMVA	Govan Martin	Chair/Executive Director – Suicide Prevention Alliance
Joel Mutschler	DMVA	Liz Woodley	PMHCA
Jeff Geibel	DDAP	Roy Remone	Compeer/Vet2Vet
Dr. Noretta Kime	PAANG	Perri Rosen & Lori Mentzer	OMHSAS SUICIDE PREVENTION
Laura Cunningham	Retreat	Michael Volz	VBA
AJ Byerly, Jolene Richardson, Lori Murphy	PAANG & PAARNG Psychological Health	Dorothy Watkins	Resilience and Risk Reduction Program Coordinator, PAARNG

Mission:

Using a holistic approach, the Health Promotion Committee will identify physical, behavioral health and other wellness service providers to foster relationships and build resource awareness among service members, veterans and their families across the Commonwealth. Ongoing collaboration with federal, state, local government and community partners will facilitate and identify effective prevention and treatment approaches, share training and education resources and promote communication of these resources to Pennsylvania Service Members, Veterans, and their family members to assist in reducing unhealthy behaviors and the number of suicides in Pennsylvania.

Vision:

Our overarching vision is to see thriving Service members, veterans, and their families across the Commonwealth with zero suicides among those who have served our nation.

Goals:

1. Continued provision of trainings such as: Mental Health First Aide (MHFA), Question Persuade Refer (QPR), and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). Trainings will occur through DMVA's regional program, 3 per quarter annually (1 per month based on region would be a minimum starting point).
2. Create 2 Fairweather Lodges annually.
3. Hold evidenced-based training annually providing a specific modality known to be an effective treatment for veterans, and continue collaborative MH/BH training summits in PA.

The Health Promotion Branch of **Service Member Family Support** collaborates with community resources to ensure our Service members, who are community members 28 days out of the month, can recognize risk/warning signs and get the next level of needed care.

Accomplishments and pending events FY 2021:

- Resilience and Engage Distance Learning – **Sound Mind During Uncertainty**, 10 seats per class, 8 classes offered, 40 completions – workshops currently suspended.
- **Start Program by Living Works** (ASIST creators) 1.5hour class, what intervention looks like (waiting on licensing). SFC Lopez working with South Carolina on licensing.
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (**ASIST**) – Since January 21, two of our ASIST T4Ts trained 41 members of their unit while being deployed. Another 27 Soldiers were trained here at FT Indiantown Gap. We have two more workshops currently scheduled 18-19 May and 7-8 SEP.
- Ask Care Escort-Suicide Intervention (**ACE-SI**) – Since January 21 we conducted two classes training 20 Soldiers. We have two more classes currently scheduled for 20 MAY and 10 SEP.
- Master Resilience Trainers, trained 8 in FY 21, projected another 16 for remainder of FY.
- Master Resilience Trainers, Level II Facilitators, trained 3 Soldiers in 21.
- Suicide Prevention/Resource event. These events focus on small group discussions and connectedness. Since July 2020 we meet w/12 units and personally spoke w/ 936 Soldiers and leaders.
- Continued support of local community resource exchange and other military efforts.

Follow PNG Service Members & Family Support Division on Facebook for upcoming events.

<https://www.pa.ng.mil/Offices-Programs/Service-Member-Family-Support/Resiliency-Risk-Reduction-Suicide-Prevention/>

HEALTH PROMOTIONS



PENNSYLVANIA NATIONAL GUARD (PNG)

ALWAYS READY, ALWAYS THERE

Founded when Ben Franklin formed The Associators in Philadelphia in 1747, the Pennsylvania National Guard (PNG) is comprised of both the PA Air National Guard (**PAANG**) and PA Army National Guard (**PAARNG**). Together we serve our community, commonwealth and country. The Pennsylvania National Guard Joint Force Headquarters is located at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa.

PENNSYLVANIA NATIONAL GUARD PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

ARMY

Lori Murphy, LCSW Director of Psychological Health Office of The State Surgeon Fort Indiantown Gap Office: (717)861-3930 Gov't Cell: (717)507-2849 Lori.L.Murphy13.civ@mail.mil	Emily Roxberry, LCSW Clinical State Social Worker Office of the State Surgeon Fort Indiantown Gap Office: (717) 861-7826 Gov't Cell: Pending Emily.M.Roxberry.civ@mail.mil
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REGIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS

Lisa Brame, LSW – Harrisburg
Samantha Foster, LCSW – Johnstown
Elizabeth Hayman, LCSW – Allentown
Junie Kacer, LCSW – Scranton
Jessica McDonald, LSW – Horsham
Christy Nyakana, LCSW – Erie

AIR FORCE

Julia Catanzarite, LCSW Director of Psychological Health PA Air National Guard 171 st Air Refueling Wing 300 Tanker Road Corapolis, PA 15108 Office: 412.776.7631 Fax: 412.776.7635	A.J. Byerly, LCSW Dir. of Psychological Health, 193 rd SOW 67 Hercules Way, Room 109 Middletown, PA 17057 Comm: 717.948.2508 Cell: 717.943.3110 DSN: 423.2508 alissa.byerly@us.af.mil
Mark Obenour, S-LPCC Dir. Of Psychological Health Programs 111 th Attack Wing Biddle Air National Guard Base 1364 Griffiss, Bldg 335, Office #111 Horsham, PA 19044 215.323.8435	Jolene Richardson, LCSW, LISW-CP, CCTP, CSAM Dir. Of Psychological Health, 193 rd SOW Community Action Team (CAT) Chair I-23 O-Neil St., Lower-Level Room 1 Annville, PA 17003 Voice: DSN: 423.1192 Comm: 717.861.1192 jolene.richardson@us.af.mil
Matt Dalrymple DPH 171 AF (Currently Deployed)	

Star Behavioral Health Providers Program (SBHP – PAARNG joined Dec. 2019)

Provides three tiers of training for civilian behavioral health providers in state and local communities interested in serving the military population, particularly NG members. SBHP offers a public online registry that allows service members, their families, military behavioral health providers, military leaders, and others to easily search for trained providers by area. The goal is to **expand access by providing culturally competent, evidence-based behavioral health treatment through this training program.**

Launched nearly 10 years ago, SBHP was developed in partnership with the Indiana National Guard, National Guard Bureau, Indiana’s Family and Social Services Administration, Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP), and Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University (MFRI).

- Program has steadily expanded since PA joined in 2019
- Online and in-person workshops (we are hoping to resume in-person sessions in 2022)
- Offers free CE to providers
- Over 450 training workshops completed
- Has provided 142,000+ training hours
- Nearly 1,000 providers on the registry in approximately 20 States (PA #s are unknown at this time)
- Workshops significantly increase BH providers confidence to treat service members and veterans
- Significant gains in participants’ knowledge about military culture, treating military populations and evidence-based psychotherapies (EBPs)
- Monthly engagement calls between registered providers and PAARNG

HEALTH PROMOTIONS



STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS REGISTRY

We are Expanding!

Offering free training for local mental health providers and an easily searchable website for military members, veterans, and families. This unique registry exclusively features providers who have completed training in military culture and evidenced based psychotherapies.

Collaborators:



Helping military members, veterans, and families

Local mental health providers

Free & Confidential

Customized search capability

Featuring direct provider referrals

New providers being added regularly so check back often.

For More Information Visit:

StarProviders.org

or email:

Christy Collette
Christy.Collette.ctr@usuhs.edu

Star Behavioral Health (SBHP) Train the Trainer training is in May. Five additional staff for the ARMY National Guard have enrolled to take the training, giving us a total of 6 individuals trained (including Lori Murphy) to provide in-person and online trainings across the State starting this summer.

Upcoming Trainings

- Tier One:** May 6, 2021- Online Via Zoom
June 3, 2021- Online Via Zoom
June 17, 2021- Online Via Zoom
- Tier Two:** May 11-12, 2021- Online Via Zoom
June 8-9, 2021- Online Via Zoom
- Tier Three:** CBT- Depression: May 25-26, 2021- Online Via Zoom
CBTI: June 15-16, 2021-Online Via Zoom

For more information: <https://deploymentpsych.org/STAR-CE-Mem>
To register, visit www.starproviders.org

HEALTH PROMOTIONS



Accredited, Veteran-Focused Competency Courses Available Online

Please share with anyone communicating with public health providers!

[Community Care Provider Opioid Safety Initiative](#) – Combines efforts between VA and non-VA care providers, promote evidence-based management of Veterans with chronic pain, improve patient outcomes and decrease incidence of complications when prescribing opioids. No accreditation.

[Community Care Provider: A Perspective for Veteran Care](#) – An introduction for community providers to diagnoses that are more common in Veteran patients. Accreditations offered: AAPA, ACCME, ACCME-NP, APA, ANCC, ASWB, NYSED SW and JA IPCE.

[MISSION Act 133: A Core Training on Military Sexual Trauma \(MST\) for Community Medical Professionals](#) – Offers community medical professionals brief training related to the care of Veterans who experienced MST. Accreditations offered: ACCME, ACCME-NP, ANCC and JA IPCE.

[MISSION Act 133: A Core Training for Military Sexual Trauma \(MST\) for Community Mental Health Providers](#) – Offers community mental health providers with training related to the care of Veterans who experienced MST. Accreditations offered: APA, ASWB, NBCC and JA IPCE.

[MISSION Act 133: Traumatic Brain Injury](#) – Provides community providers with general training and resources for military culture, traumatic brain injury, suicide prevention and other related topics. Accreditations offered: ACCME, ACCME-NP, ANCC, AOTA, APA, APTA, ASWB and JA IPCE.

[MISSION Act Section 133: PTSD Course](#) – Gives community providers basic information on the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD. Accreditations offered: ACCME, ACCME-NP, APA, ANCC, ASWB, NBCC, NYSED SW and JA IPCE.

Community providers must be registered in [VHA TRAIN MA Curriculum](#) with a National Provider Identifier (NPI number). An account offers 24/7 access to hundreds of accredited courses on numerous subjects to meet the learning needs of caring for the Veterans.

Registered users also have access to over 5,000 accredited courses in VA's main VHA TRAIN site. Click [here](#) to access a catalog of VHA TRAIN MA courses available and [here](#) for VHA TRAIN courses.

For help with course subjects or competencies, please contact the VHA TRAIN help desk at VHATRAN@va.gov. For further information about the MISSION Act courses above, please contact support@missionact.org.

VISN 4 COVID Vaccination Program

VA and the CDC worked to develop a phased distribution plan to maximize the benefit of COVID-19 vaccines. On April 7, 2021, the VHA fully implemented the SAVE LIVES Act ahead of schedule. Depending on local supply, vaccinations offered to all Veterans, spouses, caregivers and CHAMPVA recipients. You can find the updated resources in the Keep Me Informed tool.

The VA website has the **Keep Me Informed tool**, for updates regarding vaccine distribution. While Veterans are not required to sign up anywhere to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, it may be helpful to do so. As vaccine supply increases, care teams and local facilities will contact Veterans to let them know of their options. VA announced earlier this month that it had administered initial COVID-19 vaccine doses to more than 14,000 Veterans at high risk of getting COVID-19 infection, and more than 132,000 health care employees as of Jan. 4.

<https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed>

- Community-Based Interventions for Suicide Prevention (CBI-SP) continue to serve as a unifying model for all community-based efforts, throughout all national and community levels, in support of VA's Mission to end Veteran suicide.
- VISN 4 remains an active and ongoing participant in the PA Governor's Challenge work groups and the NW PA Veteran Suicide Prevention/CDC Advisory group.
- Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinators (CEPC's) at each VISN 4 facility continue efforts toward the establishment of community coalitions to impact Veteran suicide across the commonwealth.
- Participants from across the commonwealth will be attending the virtual 2021 DOD/VA Suicide Prevention Conference, "Make Every Connection Count: Putting the 7 Strategies for Suicide Prevention to Work", May 18-20, 2021.
- Currently 249 Residential Treatment beds are open, as part of VISN 4's moving forward plan.
- VISN 4 continues to provide video-based MH treatment, and is expanding face-to-face care options.

STATE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS & UPDATES

VETERAN FAIRWEATHER LODGE (VFWL)

Through “Money Follows the Person” grant funding, an opportunity to fund a new VFWL arose. As the contracted administrative agency, the Venango Training & Development Center, Inc. (VTDC) is coordinating the Request for Proposal (RFP) process and working with OMHSAS to expand this project.

The Human Services Center (HSC) of New Castle, Lawrence County, was chosen to open a new VFWL, with a plan to create a lodge that can accommodate six Veterans. The lodge site is to be renovated starting July 1, 2021, but the search is active now to find Veterans who can become lodge members.

HSC has five lodges which are 97% full so they are a valued asset to the project. Currently, there are two Veterans’ Fairweather Lodges in Pennsylvania. The other is located in Franklin, Venango County. The lodge coordinator, Tim Detal, is a veteran and perfectly matched for this project. There are current efforts to connect all FWL veterans across the state.

FWL Coordinators are being asked to identify and promote engagement of veteran members to participate in ongoing, virtual meeting forums that will connect, support, and educate. There is a tiered eligibility system prioritizing Veterans as lodge candidates, with allowance for non-veterans also.

CONTINUED IS THE VFWL TIERED SYSTEM:

Tier one-Veterans

Tier two- Friend or family member of a Veteran or other Veteran connection

Tier three-First Responders

Tier four-All other candidates

Randall Loss, MA, CRC

Human Services Program Specialist

Program Development and Policy

Office of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

Department of Human Services

303 Walnut St., Commonwealth Tower, 11th Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17101

Phone: 717.214-8198 | Fax: 717.772.7964

www.dhs.pa.gov

Ongoing PA Partnerships & Collaborative Efforts

State Suicide Prevention Plan

State Suicide Prevention Task Force

VA/SAMHSA Governors Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among SMVF

Mayors Challenge – City of Pittsburgh / City of Philadelphia SP Task Force

SAMHSA Technical Assistance Learning Seminars

Together With Veterans – Carbon County

Reach Out PA

Updated Guidance from Governor’s Policy Office incorporated into Governor’s Challenge Priority Team 2 initiatives

CDC Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Grant (\$1M/5 Years or \$5M total)

PA VETConnect Region 1 (15 counties)

Includes VA/SAMHSA Logic Models and Priority Action Plans

USDVA Tele-Town Halls

USDVA Veteran Experience Office (VEO)

VA Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEB)

Virtual Veteran Engagement Action Center (V-VEAC)

Rally Point

DDAP Substance Use Disorder Grants (\$2M)

-Just For Today Recovery

-Veterans Place of Washington Blvd

-Jarett Yoder Foundation

-Treatment Court Advocacy Center of Lackawanna County

-Veterans Multi-Service Center

-Valhalla Veterans Services

-Robert m. Jackson Veterans Center

Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinators (CEPC)

WOMEN VETERANS

Colonel Christine Munch, Chair

WOMEN VETERANS



Members	Affiliation
Christine Munch	Commander, 111th Mission Support Group, PAANG
Lisa Kaye	County Director for Veterans' Affairs, U.S. Army Veteran
JoAnn Tresco	Service Members & Family Support Branch, PA ARNG, Veteran Retired
Rhonda Smith	Air Force Veteran, Veteran small business owner
Althea Cirillo	Mentor, Veterans' Court of Dauphin County, USAR Retired
Audrey Bergstresser	Former VFW Service Officer, Vietnam Vets of America
Sierra Bilous	DHS, Office of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services, PAANG
Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta	Director of Veteran & Military Affairs, Moravian College, Retired PAARNG
Dwaneen Hicks	DHS, Office of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Elizabeth Cooper	DVOP Specialist, PA CareerLink – Adams & Franklin Counties, U.S. Army Veteran (active duty and PA ARNG)
Erica Moore	PA DMVA, Bureau of Veterans' Programs, Initiatives, Reintegration, and Outreach, Regional Program Outreach Coordinator (SE)
Ivy Lloyd	Veteran Service Officer, Philadelphia, PAARNG Veteran

Actions since last meeting:

- Exploring the idea of holding **virtual Town Halls** on a regular basis next year to expand our reach and connections with women veterans
- Discussing information to include on the DMVA website Women Veterans tile that will be generated during the site overhaul later this year
- Reviewing **Women Veterans Outreach Toolkit** from CA to adapt a draft for PA
- Reached out to **PA VFW Women Veterans Committee** chair to discuss upcoming women's retreat in October and connect on our mutual efforts
- Discussed establishing an annual event for Women's History Month each March
- Established a Trauma Workgroup

Trauma Workgroup for Women Veterans – Elizabeth, Joann, Ivy, Erica

- This workgroup will combine members of the Women Veterans, Homeless and Health Promotions Committees.
- Our plan is to connect women veterans with specific needs to supportive services which are not currently offered throughout the entire state, to fill these gaps.
- We plan to reach out to all 67 CDVAs, Domestic Violence county staff, DOC, DDAP and the PANG. A list of individuals and services will be added to the Women Veterans tile on the DMVA webpage, when the website overhaul occurs by the end of 2021.
- The ultimate goal is for women veterans to have a one-step referral to locate peer-to-peer support counselors if they are struggling with hard times or situations.

JUDICIARY

Mr. Michael Carrington, Chair

JUDICIARY



Name	Affiliation
Tammy Ferguson	Department of Corrections (DOC)
Michael Carrington (Chair)	Department of Corrections (DOC)
Richard Podguski	Department of Corrections (DOC)
Andrew Simpson	Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC)
Nicholas "Chip" Gilliland	Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (DMVA)
Lisa Grayson, Esq.	Cumberland Co. Courthouse, PA Bar Ass., Military and Veteran Affairs
Norman Marden	Office of the Attorney General
Jessica Penn-Shires	Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS)
Ward Adams	Member at Large
Chief Joseph Daly	Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association (PCPA)
Lt. Dan Lynch	Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association (PCPA)

Department of Corrections (DOC)

Current Snapshot

- DOC Currently has 2,360 *verified* veterans in custody which represents 6.2% of the incarcerated population. These numbers are gathered through the Veteran Reentry Search Service (VRSS) through the VA. There are likely many more Veterans within the DOC that have yet to be identified.
- There are five (5) Veteran Service Units (hereafter "VSU") within the department; SCI Dallas, SCI Houtzdale, SCI Mercer, SCI Muncy (female), SCI Phoenix.
- Current VSU statewide bed capacity is approximately 554 (328 filled)
- There are more than 7,000 employees within the DOC and Pennsylvania Parole Board (PPB) with military backgrounds

Department of Corrections

COVID Updates

- COVID-19 continues to hinder Veteran services within state facilities; however, services and programming are expected to reopen in the 2nd and 3rd quarter of 2021.
- Most VSUs and Veteran Service Offices (hereafter "VSO") are unable to offer services due to COVID precautions.
- Inmate transfers are on hold for VSU placements at this time.
- Currently, the inmate cohort size is 32 within the DOC.

Department of Corrections

Short-Term Agency Goals

- Maintain and distribute the verified Veteran's list to local coordinators on a quarterly basis
- Identify barriers to Veteran services via staff surveys; work with local Veteran coordinators to create innovative solutions via strategic planning and information sharing
- Develop a plan to authorize VA approved contractors to enter state facilities for Compensation and Pension interviews/evaluations in order to ensure benefits are in place upon release.
- Post and hire local Veteran Service Unit Managers at each of the five (5) VSUs in order to effectively manage, maintain, and develop a quality-controlled program for the participants.

Department of Corrections

Long-Term Goals

- Ensure that all VSU/VSOs are offering veteran-specific programming and reentry services with a measurable degree of consistency and uniformity
- Fill the VSU beds; there are plenty of incarcerated veterans who meet the program standards
- Reexamine the VSU placement checklist to ensure that all Veterans have the ability to benefit from support services
- Open additional VSUs within state and county facilities
- Assist in the expansion of Veteran's Courts within the counties
- Create a means of measuring success rates of VSU/VSO reentrants while participating within the institution as well as recidivism rates under field supervision.
- Allow inmates involved in VSU/VSOs to temporarily transfer to high-functioning VSUs in order gain insight and personal experience that can be shared and reflected on when they return to their parent institution



Are you an incarcerated veteran with verified military service, who is looking to be part of an all-Veteran transitional housing unit specifically designed for Veterans?

Are you 12-36 months from your minimum or release date, who has maintained a positive institutional adjustment record?

Are you a long-term incarcerated Veteran looking for an opportunity to contribute to the Veteran community as a peer facilitator and mentor?

Are you interested in obtaining all your entitled VA benefits as well as your DD-214, PA I.D. Card, Birth Certificate and Social Security Card?

Are you interested in learning more about the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Vet Center, VFW and other veteran- related organizations?

Are you program compliant and willing to voluntarily participate in various re-entry workshops specifically oriented towards Veteran's needs and services as you transition back into society?

The Department of Corrections currently offers Veterans Service Units (VSU's) in each region. If you are an incarcerated Veteran who meets the minimum criteria and wants to volunteer for the VSU, please contact your Unit Management Team or your Facility Veterans Coordinator for additional information.

AOPC Update

25 Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) in operation – possibly more on the way

- *Note: 51 out of 67 counties (76%) currently have at least one treatment court (Drug, DUI, Mental Health, VTC, etc.) available for eligible participants.*

303 veterans admitted into a VTC in 2019 (stay tuned for 2020 data)

- Male 92% & Female 8%
- Average age: 44 years old
- Army (41%), Marines (19.5%), Navy (11.5%), Air Force (11%), Coast Guard (2%), Unreported (15%)

189 successful graduates with a 46% increase in employment in 2019

Statewide data:

<http://www.pacourts.us/news-and-statistics/research-and-statistics/>

AOPC Update continued – Statewide Support cont.

- 1) May 20-21: Statewide VTC Virtual Summit with Justice for Vets.
- 2) Awareness Campaign – publications for MDJ offices (500+) , county courthouses, etc., to address early identification, recruit mentors, and raise VTC awareness.
- 3) Encouraging justice-involved veterans to connect with their VJO specialists:
<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO.asp>
- 4) Improving AOPC’s communication and support for all VTC teams statewide.
- 5) Supporting president judges and officials in counties looking to start VTCs and other veterans programming. See: Senate Bill 976 & Title 42 Section 916.

PA Problem-Solving Courts:

<http://www.pacourts.us/judicial-administration/court-programs/problem-solving-courts>

Committee Initiatives 2021

- Develop Instrument(s) to identify veterans from date of arrest (DOA), through the court systems, and (when applicable) to correctional institutions/community supervision.
- Expansion of Veteran Courts/Veteran Tracks/Veteran Service Units at the county level.
- Compensation & Pension (C&P) exams taking place within confined settings.
- Reporting measurable outcomes (program success/recidivism rates) from state and county veteran service programs/units.

VETERAN PENSION POACHING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

WHAT IS A VA PENSION?



- Needs-based benefit
- Specific eligibility criteria; either eligible or not
 - wartime veteran or survivor, age/disability, income and net worth limits
- Monthly payments meant to offset recurring medical expenses
- Not a source of retirement funding
- May be eligible for enhanced pension benefits (Aid & Attendance or Housebound Allowance)
- According to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report (10/2019), as of 2018:
 - 95% of Aid & Attendance recipients were age 65 and older;
 - 68% of recipients were age 85 and older

WHAT IS PENSION POACHING?



- Perpetrators are scammers, unscrupulous players or dishonest financial planners
- Poaching activity takes many forms:
 - Pay for forms or help to complete and submit applications
 - Buy financial products of questionable value (e.g. restructure assets to “qualify”)
 - Pay for a promise
 - Pay for a lump sum or advanced loan against a future awarded pension
 - Buy in-home care that is overpriced or never actually provided
 - Pay large upfront fees to be represented as claimant before VA and then required to pay a portion of back payment from VA as ultimate fee
 - Unsolicited cold calls; taking credit card information over the phone; often aimed at veterans or families who would not actually qualify for benefit; pay back government
- This is financial exploitation against veterans and their beneficiaries!

THE PROBLEM



- Application process and documentation required can be complicated
- Apply at point of intense need or crisis
- Unaware free and safe help exists
- Not connected to VA or another veteran service or program
- Unknowingly engage scammers and dishonest financial planners for “help”
- Full extent in PA is unknown, but one Veteran harmed is one too many
- The good news? Awareness and education can reduce scams and fraud against veterans.

THE PLAN



- Many receive healthcare and social service supports from mainstream providers
- Are these providers aware of free and safe assistance?
- #1 intent: educate these entities and their staff; more awareness = better guidance
- Collaborate to leverage existing communication channels (electronically)
- 31 participating entities outside of veterans' systems!
 - sister state agencies, trade and membership orgs, statewide human service systems
 - reaches all counties and many mainstream service sectors
- Secondary benefit: they may choose to proactively educate clients and community
- Pre-launch meeting 20 May at 1000
- Launch 1 June
- Feedback form
- Revisit annually

PARTICIPATING ENTITIES



Dept of Aging
Dept of Human Services
Office of Long-Term Living
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Dept of Drug and Alcohol Programs
Dept of Health
Labor and Industry
Dept of Education
Dept of Agriculture
Dept of Community and Economic Development
Dept of Corrections
PennDOT
Fish and Boat
State Parks (DCNR)
PA Council on the Arts
Employee Bulletin Board (OA)
Dept of Banking and Securities
PA Housing Finance Agency
Attorney General
AOPC

PA Bar Association Military and Veteran Affairs Division
PA Assisted Living Association
PA Homecare Association
Hospital and Healthsystem Association of PA
PA Association of Community Healthcare Centers
Brain Injury Association of PA
MAX Association
Rehabilitation and Community Provider Association
AARP Pennsylvania
United Way
PA 211

- “Welcome” message for providers to aid in educating staff and raising awareness among clients and community by utilizing toolkit materials
- Business card, postcard, flyer, social media messages (English and Spanish)



(Business card front)



(Business card back)

THE TOOLKIT



VETERANS: AVOID BEING SCAMMED!



**NEVER PAY TO APPLY FOR
VETERAN BENEFITS!**

GET THE ASSISTANCE YOU NEED FOR FREE!

Visit: www.dmva.pa.gov/vetconnect to find your County Office of Veterans Affairs or another Accredited Veteran Services Officer near you!



SUSPECT A SCAM?

Call 717-783-1944 or email PAvets@attorneygeneral.gov or submit a complaint online at www.attorneygeneral.gov



(Postcard front)

(Postcard back)

VETERANS: AVOID BEING SCAMMED!

**LEARN ABOUT AND APPLY FOR VETERAN BENEFITS
FROM AN ACCREDITED VETERAN SERVICES OFFICER!**



- NEVER PAY FOR FORMS OR TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION
- NEVER PAY TO RESTRUCTURE ASSETS IN ORDER TO "QUALIFY"
- NEVER PAY FOR THE PROMISE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR A PENSION
- NEVER PAY TO RECEIVE A LUMP SUM PAYMENT ON A PENSION



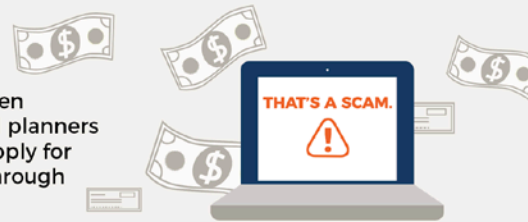
(Flyer)

VETERANS: AVOID BEING A VICTIM OF A PENSION POACHING SCAM!

NEVER PAY TO APPLY FOR YOUR VETERAN BENEFITS!

WHAT IS VETERAN PENSION POACHING?

Veteran pension poaching is when scammers or dishonest financial planners prey on those seeking help to apply for the benefits they have earned through their military service.



HOW CAN YOU HELP VETERANS AVOID PENSION POACHING?



**FREE, SAFE
HELP IS
AVAILABLE!**

Be sure that a veteran you advocate for always uses assistance from a County Director of Veterans Affairs or another Accredited Veteran Services Officer (VSO) when applying for veteran benefits.

A VSO will help explain, complete and submit federal or state veteran benefits applications for free, so veterans should never pay to apply for benefits they earned thanks to service to our nation.

Contact information for County Director of Veterans Affairs and other accredited Veterans Services Officers can be found at www.dmva.pa.gov/vetconnect.

SUSPECT VETERAN PENSION POACHING OR KNOW SOMEONE WHO EXPERIENCED IT?

Victims of pension poaching should file a report immediately with the Pennsylvania Attorney General's office via one of the following:

Call 717-783-1944

Email PAvets@attorneygeneral.gov

File a complaint online by clicking the "Submit a Complaint" tab from any page of the www.attorneygeneral.gov website.



NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

Sign up for the Veterans Registry and DMVA Digest!

www.register.dmva.pa.gov

NEXT MEETING:

AUGUST 11 at 1:00PM

WEBEX Virtual Session