

# WELCOME

## Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

MAY 20, 2020

**Please ensure all microphones remain muted.**

**--We will begin shortly--**



# INTRODUCTIONS



# OLD BUSINESS

# HEALTH PROMOTIONS

**Ms. Donna Tilley-Hess, Chair**

# HEALTH PROMOTIONS



Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Donna Tilley Hess	DHS, OMHSAS	Daniel Ramey	Psychological Health
Angela Keen	VISN 4	Jennifer Hagaman	VSO, Clinton Cty.
Leslie Neal & Lana Venur	VSO, Elk Cty.	Justin D Slep	VSO, Franklin Cty.
Frederick Nardei	Pittsburgh VA	Matthew Zamosky	VSO, West Moreland County
Jose Lopez	Resilience & Risk Reduction Prog. Coordinator, PAARNG	Ginny Mastrine	DHS, OMHSAS
Mark Todero	Suicide Prevention Program Contractor, PAARNG	Jessica Penn Shires	DHS, OMHSAS
Joann P Tresco	Alcohol & Drug Control Officer, Contractor, PAARNG	Lori Mentzer	DHS, OMHSAS
LTC Gerard M Wrazien	SMFS Director, PAARNG	Doug Snyder	DOH
Rick Hamp	DMVA	Govan Martin	Prevent Suicide PA
Joel Mutschler	DMVA	Liz Woodley	PMHCA
Jeff Geibel	DDAP	Roy Remone	Compeer/Vet2Vet
William A Charpentier	PAARNG-TAAS	Perri Rosen	DHS, OMHSAS, Contractor
Laura Cunningham	Retreat	Michael Volz	VBA
Dr. Noretta Kime	PA Air NG	Danny A. Osten	VSO, Cumberland Cty.

## 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.

Federal Partnership & Collaborative Efforts ongoing include VA Suicide Prevention Efforts:

#Be There Campaign, outreach toolkits, OPERATION S.A.V.E., REACH VET, Veteran X program, VA Solid Start, PTSD Consultation, VA Virtual Care, TeleUrgent Care, Mission Act, and Mental Health Summits (PA/VISN4).

VA Newest Support Tool:

**COVID Coach**



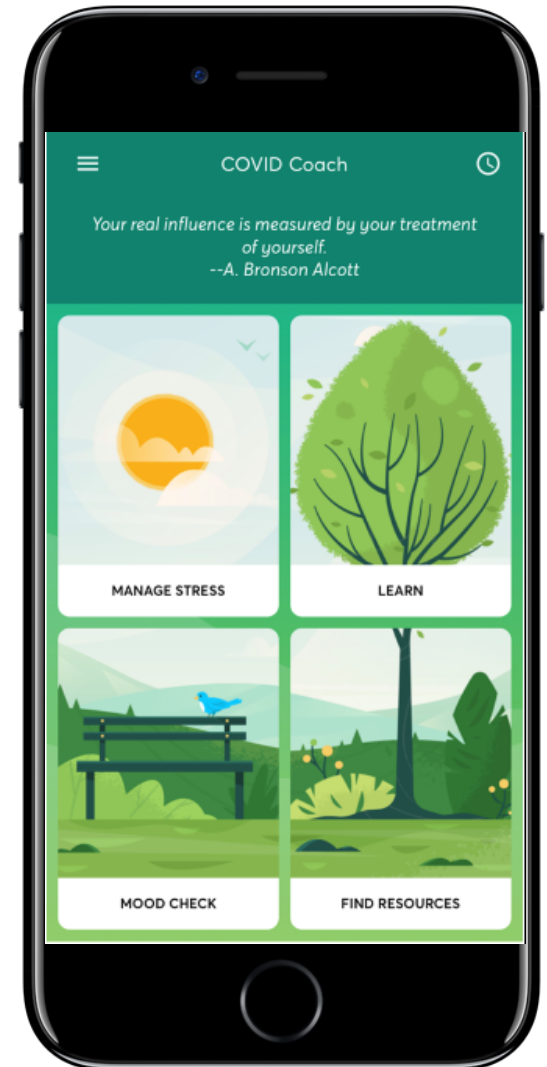
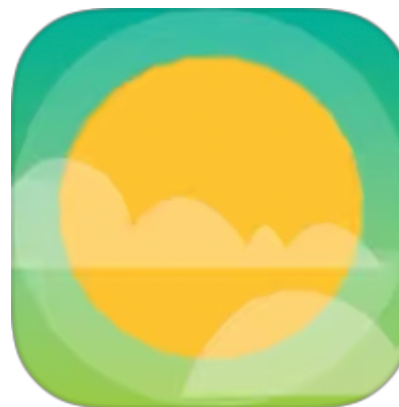
# COVID Coach

For managing stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic

## Uses:

- Learn ways to improve your well-being during this global pandemic
- Use trackers for mental health and personal goals
- Find tools for coping and self-care
- Follow links to additional resources

Learn more at the National Center for PTSD [website](#)



# COVID Coach

*A mobile application for Veterans, Servicemembers, and anyone affected by the COVID-19 pandemic*

## Features:

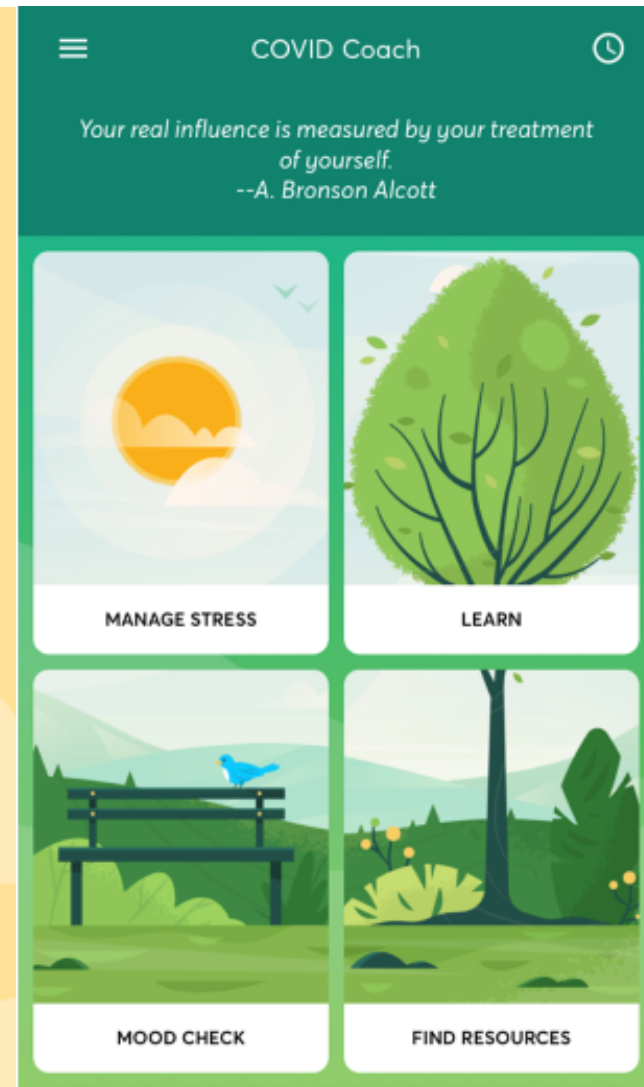
- Education to help you improve your well-being during this global pandemic
- Tools for coping and self-care
- Trackers for mental health and personal goals
- Resources for additional support

Developed by the Mobile Mental Health Apps Team at the VA's National Center for PTSD.

Contact our team with feedback to help us improve this app:

[MobileMentalHealth@va.gov](mailto:MobileMentalHealth@va.gov)

Learn more on the National Center for PTSD [website](#).



## **Governor's Challenge: To Prevent Suicide Among Servicemembers, Veterans, and their Families**

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has partnered with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to continue this initiative. SAMHSA's Servicemembers, Veterans, and their Families Technical Assistance (SMVF TA) Center works with states and communities to strengthen their behavioral health systems serving Servicemembers, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF). The Center provides support through the provision of technical assistance and the promotion of ongoing interagency collaboration.

### **Governor's Challenge Overview**

The *Governor's Challenge* is a call to action, asking state military and civilian interagency teams to embark on a process of collaborating, planning, and implementing suicide prevention best practices and policies for SMVF state-wide. Technical assistance offered through this initiative is designed to provide a forum for states to consider how existing policies, practices, infrastructure, and resources influence the effectiveness of the systems that support SMVF. Teams will develop state-wide plans for SMVF based on the comprehensive public health approach to preventing suicide.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Form an interagency military and civilian team of state leaders and policy makers to develop and implement a strategic action plan to prevent and reduce suicide
- Define and measure success, including defining assignments, deadlines, and measurable outcomes to be reported.

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

Accomplishments and pending events FY 2020:

- **VIRTUAL TRAININGS coming soon – Resilience and Engage trainings**
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) - 6 training scheduled: 1 Completed in January 18 Army personnel trained, and 5 projected with 150 seats available
- Ask Care Escort-Suicide Intervention (ACE-SI) - 1 training scheduled with 45 seats available
- Resource Fair at Fort Indiantown Gap, PA projected for the 11th of September
- Out of the Darkness Walks, projected to support 10 walks
- Master Resilience Trainers, trained 6, projecting another 24
- Master Resilience Trainers, Level II Facilitators, trained 3 soldiers
- Supporting local community resource fairs as well as other FRG events.

**Follow PNG Service Members & Family Support Division on Facebook  
to see upcoming events for Veterans and families.**

## Star Behavioral Health Providers Program (SBHP)

Pennsylvania National Guard joined SBHP December 2019

Star Behavioral Health Providers (SBHP) is a training and referral program. The goal is to expand access that NG members and their families have to high quality, evidence-based behavioral health treatment. Launched nearly 10 years ago, SBHP was developed as a partnership of 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).

- SBHP provides three levels of training for civilian behavioral health providers in your state and local communities who are interested in serving the military population, particularly NG members.
- SBHP offers a public online registry or listing that allows Service members, their families, military behavioral health providers, military leaders, and others to easily search for trained providers in their area.
- SBHP will expand your state behavioral health resources and maximize services available to your state. You will have access to more evidenced-based treatment options for your Service members through the SBHP registry. The registry will furnish necessary information about each provider so appropriate referrals can be made the first time, thus reducing the need to call multiple providers and decreasing frustration as you try to locate one.

Our first Tier One training was held in Pittsburgh, Jan. 21, 2020, w-approximately 21 PA licensed professionals participating. **On-line availability** information - user friendly.

# HEALTH PROMOTIONS



Pennsylvania National Guard joined SBHP December 2019 continued:  
<http://starproviders.org/>

Star Behavioral Health Providers (SBHP) is a resource for veterans, service members and their families to locate behavioral health professionals with specialized training in understanding and treating military service members and their families. Those listed in this registry have completed a series of trainings that are intended to make them better able to understand, assess and counsel members of the military. SBHP began in Indiana and is now offered in multiple states with more to come. *The states in purple are the ones currently offering SBHP. Please select your state below.*

**STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS**  
Civilian Professionals. *Military Sensitivity.*

Department of Human Services

**Veterans Peer Support**

initatives to meet the needs of service members, veterans, and their families. They will conduct evaluations of its initiatives and use consumer feedback to improve them. The task force also will identify avenues to bring resources to service members, veterans, and their families as well as respond to requests for assistance. For more information contact OH-6AS at 717-344-0338.

**Training**

**Star Behavioral Health Providers (SBHP)**

- Tue 8-Jan-20, 2020 — Pittsburgh, PA, Hotel Indigo
- Tue 8-Jan-20, 2020 — White Plains, NY, Crowne Plaza
- Tue 8-Feb-7, 2020 — Latham, NY, Division of Military and Naval Affairs
- Tue 8-Feb-10, 2020 — Millard, CT, Hilton Garden Inn
- Tue 8-Jan-29-30, 2020 — Online via Zoom

These regional trainings help to offer civilian providers a better understanding of the experiences of service members, veterans, and their families, as well as provide an online registry that will help provide the necessary care they need for issues associated with military services.

- [SBHP Training Series Event Registration PowerPoint](#)
- [SBHP Informational Page](#)
- [SBHP Frequently Asked Questions](#)

DHS OMHSAS, continues to work collaboratively with federal, state, county, and community partners/stakeholders to provide education, awareness, and training sessions that are known to promote health and wellness, and be effective in supporting trauma informed care, suicide prevention, and intervention. Updates and current supportive links are listed below.

OMHSAS COVID FAQ v2.0:

Online at this link: <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Documents/Coronavirus%202020/Final%20-%20OMHSAS%20COVID%20FAQ%20v.2%205.5.20.pdf>

OMHSAS COVID-19 Telehealth Expansion Memo (Updated 5/5/20):

Online at this link: <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Documents/Coronavirus%202020/OMHSAS%20COVID-19%20Telehealth%20Expansion-%20Final%203.15.20.pdf>

OMHSAS BHRS/IBHS Telehealth Bulletin – Bulletin OMHSAS-20-03:

Online at this link: <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/docs/Publications/Documents/FORMS%20AND%20PUBS%20OMHSAS/Final%20-%20OMHSAS%20BHRS-IBHS%20Telehealth%20Bulletin%20OMHSAS-20-03%205.5.20.pdf>

If you have any questions regarding behavioral health telehealth, please e-mail: [ra-pwtbhs@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pwtbhs@pa.gov)

If you have BHRS/IBHS questions, please e-mail: [ra-pwibhs@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pwibhs@pa.gov)

If you have COVID-19 related questions, please e-mail: [ra-pwomhsascovid-19@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pwomhsascovid-19@pa.gov)

Suicide Prevention Resources A-Z on PA Recovery below link:

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/PA-Recovery/Pages/VeteransMilitary-Families.aspx>

## Ongoing efforts and collaboration with State Agencies, County and Community partners.

- In March 2020, through funding obtained by Governor Wolf's Administration through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, DDAP awarded \$1 million in grant funding for supportive services to veterans suffering from opioid use disorder and their families. The seven recipients were:

Jarett Yoder Foundation (Berks County)

Just for Today Recovery and Veterans Support Services (Cumberland County)

Robert M. Jackson Veterans Center (Dauphin County)

Treatment Court Advocacy Center (Lackawanna County)

Valhalla Veterans Services (Lackawanna County)

Veterans Multi-Service Center (Philadelphia County)

Veterans Place of Washington Boulevard (Allegheny County)

- SW Suicide Prevention TF Report, and State Suicide Prevention Plan Updating
- Reach Out PA initiative
- We continue to gain community partnerships such as New Vitae, Retreat, Strive, Just for Tomorrow, York County Veteran POD, Allegheny County Veteran POD, and Veteran's Recovery Home
- We continue our efforts to grow the Veteran Fairweather Lodge Programs such as the Venango, Erie, and Cumberland/Perry lodges.



# HOMELESS

**Mr. Joel Mutschler, Co-Chair**

# HOMELESS



Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Joel Mutschler (co-chair)	DMVA	Samantha Cossman (co-chair)	DMVA
Bill Cress	VISN 4	Michael Wehrer	Erie VAMC
Missy Russell	Lawrence Co. Social Services; Western PA CoC Veterans Committee co-chair	Bill Reed	YWCA Greater Harrisburg
Laura Gleason	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	Tom Applebach	Lehigh Valley Veterans Affairs

## **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.

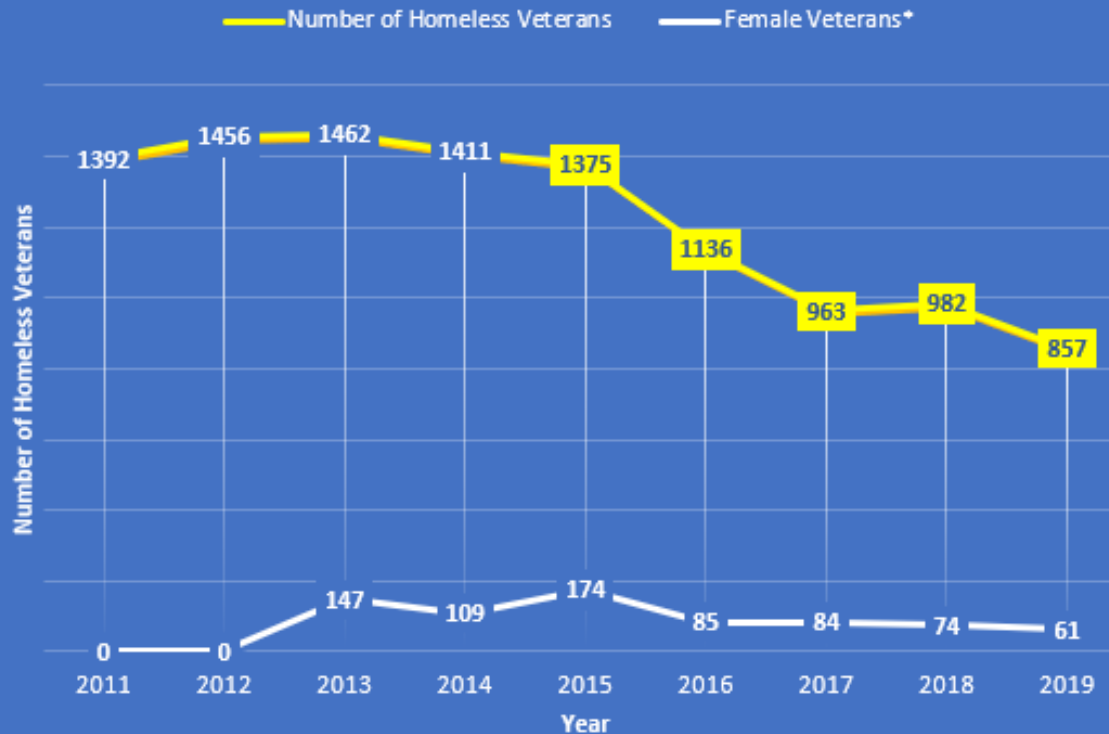
## Since March GAC-VS:

- 8 April call:
  - Increased participation from VISN, SSVFs and CoCs
  - Housing stability for re-entry veterans' conversation started
- 29 April call:
  - Continued conversation on re-entry veterans from local incarceration
  - VISN-wide VJO participation
  - Facilitated intro to PACE/Clearinghouse programs
  - VISN 4 reports full support of PACE and how it can help Veterans
- 13 May call:
  - Educated on DMVA programs and support available from CDVA offices and VSOs
- Homeless information paper updates
- 2011-2019 PIT count data and permanent housing estimates from VISN

# HOMELESS



## 2011-2019 PENNSYLVANIA HOMELESS VETERAN DATA



Total homeless Veteran population across all 16 Continuums of Care in PA during PIT counts 2011-2019. Data source: HUD Exchange

Female Veterans comprise roughly 7-8% of the overall homeless Veteran population in PA from 2016-2019.

Note: Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness was accepted by Gov. Wolf in Sept. 2015.

\*Female Homeless Veteran Data was not tracked until 2013

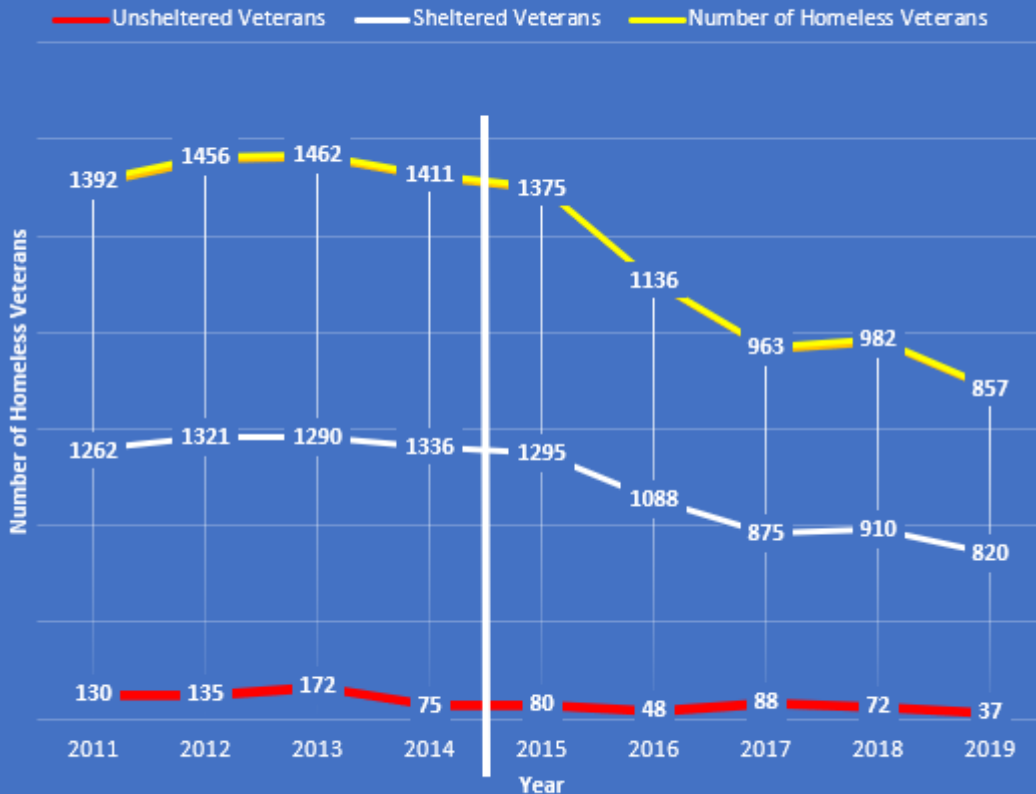
\*\*2015 Gov. Wolf joined the challenge to end Veteran Homelessness

\*\*\* <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5948/2019-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us/>

# HOMELESS



## 2011-2019 PENNSYLVANIA HOMELESS VETERAN DATA



Sheltered vs. Unsheltered Veterans encountered during PIT counts 2011 – 2019 across all 16 CoCs in PA.

Data source: HUD Exchange

Note: Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness was accepted by Gov. Wolf in Sept. 2015.

\*2015 Gov. Wolf joined the challenge to end Veteran Homelessness

\*\* <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5948/2019-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us/>

## Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF)

- According to the Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) [2018 Annual Report](#) issued in December 2019, SSVF served **502,191** veterans nationwide since its inception with rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention services.
- 2019 SSVF data for Pennsylvania is still being collected from grantees and HMIS.
- 10 SSVF providers have participated on at least one Homeless Committee call in 2020.
- Still need to engage Utility Emergency Services Fund and Community Action Agency of Delaware County, Inc.

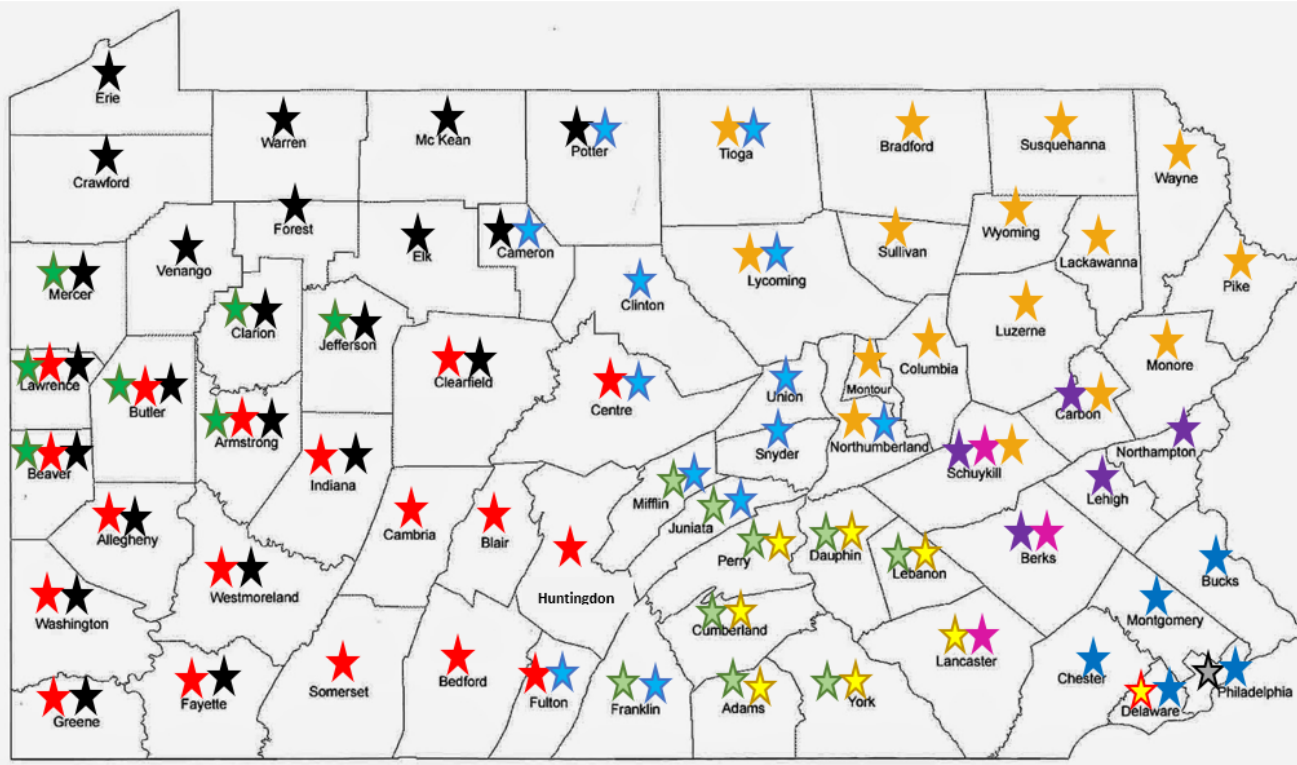
## SSVF

- According to information provide by the SSVF Regional Office, SSVF funding and # of awards over the last 4 years have been as follows:

Year	Amount	# Grantees
2017	\$16,915,708	16
2018	\$16,639,618.67	15
2019	\$13,798,751	12
2020	\$14,074,731	12
*\$2,840,877 less in 2020 than in 2017		



# HOMELESS



Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2020 SSVF Providers by State. Retrieved February 2, 2020, from <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.asp>

<b>Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA, Inc.</b> (18 counties) Hayley Miller ( <a href="mailto:millerh@vlpwpa.org">millerh@vlpwpa.org</a> / 412-522-9554)	★	<b>Commission on Economic Opportunity of Luzerne County</b> (16 counties) Noel Duffy (570-826-0510 / <a href="mailto:nduffy@ceopeoplehelpingpeople.org">nduffy@ceopeoplehelpingpeople.org</a> )	★	<b>Community Action Agency of Delaware County, Inc.</b> (1 county) Eileen Kemske ( <a href="mailto:ekemske@caadc.org">ekemske@caadc.org</a> / 610-874-8451)	★
<b>Lawrence County Social Services, Inc.</b> (7 counties) Missy Russell ( <a href="mailto:mrussell@lccap.org">mrussell@lccap.org</a> / 724-658-7258)	★	<b>YWCA of Greater Harrisburg</b> (9 counties) Bill Reed ( <a href="mailto:wreed@ywcabhg.org">wreed@ywcabhg.org</a> / 717-234-7931)	★	<b>Veterans Multi-Service Center – HQ</b> (5 counties) Tom Peters ( <a href="mailto:tom.peters@vmcenter.org">tom.peters@vmcenter.org</a> )	★
<b>Soldier On</b> (23 counties) ( <a href="http://ssvfintake@wesoldieron.org">ssvfintake@wesoldieron.org</a> / 1-866-406-8449)	★	<b>Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania, Inc.</b> (7 counties) Laura Gleason ( <a href="mailto:lgleason@voapa.org">lgleason@voapa.org</a> / 717-236-1440 Ext.14)	★	<b>Utility Emergency Services Fund</b> (1 county) ( <a href="mailto:aquishamarrero@uesfacts.org">aquishamarrero@uesfacts.org</a> / 215-814-6840)	★
<b>Veterans Multi-Service Center – Central</b> (13 counties) Vandy Rider ( <a href="mailto:vandy_rider@vmcenter.org">vandy_rider@vmcenter.org</a> / 844-226-0368)	★	<b>Opportunity House</b> (3 counties) Rhonda Bates ( <a href="mailto:rbates@oppouse.org">rbates@oppouse.org</a> / 610-457-1134)	★	<b>Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Allentown</b> (5 counties) Teri Dakuginow ( <a href="mailto:tdakuginow@allentowndiocese.org">tdakuginow@allentowndiocese.org</a> )	★

## Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP)

- Focused on integrating Veterans into meaningful employment
- Works in conjunction with SSVF; many grantees also operate an SSVF grant
- According to information provided by DOL-VETS:
  - New HVRP FOA closed 27 Apr for new grant period beginning 1 Jul
  - Current grantees include:
    - VLP, CEO, and YWCA Greater Harrisburg (also SSVF providers)\*
    - Veterans Place of Washington Blvd\*
    - Impact Services (HVRP and an IVTP grant)
  - \* grant ends 30 June 2020*
  - For PY 18, there were 28 counties plus the City of Philadelphia served by an HVRP grantee.

For more information on HVRP: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/hvrp>

## VA Homeless Programs

### Estimates of Permanent Housing Placements from VHA Homeless Programs (Jan 2015 – Mar 2020)

Programs include HUD-VASH, SSVF RRH, GPD, HCHV (excl. Case Management), DCHV and CWT/TR.

2015	2015 avg/mo	2016	2016 avg/mo	2017	2017 avg/mo	2018	2018 avg/mo	2019	2019 avg/mo	2020 (to Mar)	2020 avg/mo
2,726	227.2	2,241	186.8	2,039	169.9	2,023	168.6	1,712	142.7	414	138

\*Note: This chart reflects data compiled by S. Cossman using reports provided by VISN 4 and National Office. Data for Jan 2015 to Dec 2017 was pulled from a report provided by National Office to Bill Cress and was sourced from HOMES, SSVF Dashboard and Homeless Registry Data as of Jan 16, 2018.

Data for Jan 2017 to Mar 2020 was pulled from a report generated by Bill Cress and was sourced from HOMES, SSVF Dashboard and Homeless Registry Data as of 15 April 2020.

# HOMELESS



3/31/20	6/30/20	9/30/20	12/31/20	Ongoing
<p><b>1) Identify and engage points of contact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CoCs (15 Jan call)</b> Already on board:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eastern CoC</li> <li>✓ Western CoC</li> <li>✓ Allegheny CoC</li> <li>✓ Luzerne CoC</li> <li>✓ York CoC</li> </ul> <b>To Do: speak with remaining CoCs</b> </li> <li>• <b>SSVF Grantees</b> Already on board:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lawrence Co. Social Services, Inc.</li> <li>✓ Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania, Inc.</li> <li>✓ YWCA of Greater Harrisburg</li> <li>✓ Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA, Inc.</li> <li>✓ Soldier On</li> <li>✓ VMC x2 (both HQ and Central offices)</li> <li>✓ Comm. on Economic Opportunity of Luzerne Co.</li> <li>✓ Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Allentown</li> </ul> <b>To Do: speak with 3 remaining SSVF grantees</b> </li> <li>• <b>VA Homeless Care Teams</b></li> </ul>	<p>1) Inventory case management programs that can address SUD, MH, aging/ disability (eligibility, what is offered, how to access).</p> <p>2) Obtain and analyze data from CoCs, SSVFs and VA.</p> <p>3) Presentations from CoCs willing to share efforts and best practices are actively being scheduled.</p>	<p>1) Establish local-level working relationships with case management programs (SCA, MH, CHC, etc.). Discuss best practices and solutions to referral flow issues.</p> <p>2) RPOCs are engaging in local CoC veteran meetings as able.</p> <p>3) Draft of referral guide is ready for comment.</p>	<p>1) Ensure case management resources are in PA VETConnect tool and educate veterans advocates and stakeholders on these case management programs including how to find them in the tool and properly make referrals to them.</p> <p>2) Referral guide is finalized and distributed.</p>	<p>1) Routinely obtain and analyze data from VISN, SSVFs and CoCs.</p> <p>2) Serve as the forum for increased interagency/ cross-system collaboration on veteran homelessness.</p> <p>3) Identify needs, raise awareness of resources, and promote sharing of best practices.</p>

# EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Jeanne Block, Chair**

Name	Affiliation
Thomas Applebach	County Directors
Kory Auch	Administration
Cory Bender	Military & Veterans' Affairs
Jeanne Block	Labor & Industry
Lawrence Furlong	Fish & Boat Commission
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

## GOALS:

||| **WIDEN** Widen the impact of the agencies' efforts by collaborating on veteran-centric projects

|| **EVALUATE** Evaluate data-based strategies to enhance services to veterans by the EEWD Committee's agencies

| **ENHANCE** Enhance Council members' knowledge of how veteran customers are served by the EEWD Committee's agencies

## OBJECTIVES:

- Provide PA CareerLink® offices with County Directors' contact information to ensure a warm hand-off to PA CareerLink® staff.
- Inform agencies about apprenticeships, On-the-Job-Trainings, and other programs available to veterans through the Department of Education and Department of Labor & Industry.
- Explore ways to help DMVA publicize its PA VETConnect work.
- Collaborate on cross-agency roundtables, workshops, and seminars about veteran issues and initiatives.





## RIGHT NOW!

*FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (Denise Verchimak):*

- 03/21/20: Veterans' Administration allowed to pay education benefits when program changes from resident to online: ***SAME MONTHLY HOUSING ALLOWANCE PAYMENTS UNTIL 12/21/20*** (or until school resumes normal operations of resident training)
- 04/28/20: Congress passed Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act to further protect and extend benefits to veterans.
- Staff are working remotely to safeguard quality education & training programs for veterans and to protect integrity of GI Bill®.



## RIGHT NOW!

*FROM THE US DEPT OF LABOR/VETS (Billy Lanham):*

- USDOL/VETS has remained open since COVID-19 onset: regional staff and staff in all 6 states of the region continue to deliver their mission:
  - Preparing veterans, service members, and spouses for meaningful careers
  - Providing them with employment resources and expertise
  - Protecting their employment rights
  - Promoting their employment opportunities
- Anticipate more USERRA cases to be opened due to deployment of National Guard in support of COVID-19.



## FOR ACTION!

Questions for all Council members:

Does ***your*** agency or organization have an education, employment, or workforce development component?



Are any staff currently engaged in veteran-centric initiatives the EEWD Committee could learn about ?



# WOMEN VETERANS

**Colonel Christine Munch, Chair**

# WOMEN VETERANS



Members	Affiliation
Christine Munch	Department of Military and Veterans Affairs – PA Air National Guard
Lisa Kaye	County Directors for Veterans Affairs, U.S. Army Veteran
Jodi Zucco	U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) Retired
Constance Snavelly	State Veterans' Commission, U.S. Army Retired
JoAnn Tresco	Service Members and Family Support Branch, PA Army National Guard, Veteran Retired
Patricia Conroy	Women Veterans Program Manager, Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center
Rhonda Smith	Air Force Veteran, Veteran small business owner
Althea Cirillo	Mentor, Veterans' Court of Dauphin County, USAR Retired
Sierra Bilous	DHS, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services , PA Air National Guard

# WOMEN VETERANS



## Goals:

- Hold events to gather information on what special issues surround women veterans and educate the community on women veteran's resource
- Collaborate with other state agencies to address the issues of women veterans

## Critical Needs

- Funding:
  - For marketing materials
  - For travel/lodging expenses for outreach
    - Will work with local partners to mitigate this

## Next Steps:

- Continue to identify opportunities to reach women veterans and connect them with currently available resources

# JUDICIARY

**Mr. Ryan Yoder, Chair**

# JUDICIARY



Name	Affiliation
Ryan Yoder, M.S. (Chair)	PA Department of Corrections (PADOC Statewide Veterans Coordinator)
Richard Podguski	PA Department of Corrections (Chief of Reentry Programs)
Andy Simpson	Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC)
Nicholas “Chip” Gilliland	PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA)
Norm Marden	Office of the Attorney General
Jessica Penn-Shires	Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OHMSAS)
Lisa Grayson, Esq	Cumberland County Courthouse: Chair, PA Bar Association, Military & Veterans Affairs
Ward Adams	GAC-VS (Member at Large)



## COVID-19 Pandemic

- Due to COVID-19, the DOC has suspended programming, services, visitors, and movement at all facilities. This has affected VSU transfers as well as VSU/VSO programming statewide.
- On April 10, Governor Wolf ordered the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections to establish a temporary reprieve program, which would allow some nonviolent and medically vulnerable prisoners who met certain criteria to be momentarily released to help stop the spread of the coronavirus. The administration estimated that 1,500 to 1,800 people were eligible.
- Utilizing the most recent 2020 VRSS list, the DOC identified one incarcerated Veteran from the initial eligibility list for potential release. Ryan Yoder immediately contacted the Veteran's facility and confirmed preparations for a successful reentry. The inmate had participated in the VSU program and was processed for his DD-214, PA ID card, and 10-10EZ application for VA services. In addition, Mr. Ed Sesack (VA) was contacted to assist with transition services within the community.
- We will continue to closely monitor any revisions to the reprieve program and take every step possible to identify incarcerated Veterans who may be eligible for potential early release.

## **PA DOC/ Federal VA Compensation and Pension Exams for Incarcerated Veterans**

The Federal VA wanted to streamline incarcerated Veterans medical evaluations for C&P Exams much like they do for Social Security medical evaluations. These exams are for compensation claims only to include future exams and compensation increases. Exams will not be completed for treatment options because incarcerated Veterans fall under the PA DOC medical system. Shaunilla Harrod and Ayamia Nawahl from The Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation Service Guidance for Medical Disability Examination Program Office (MDEPO) will be the primary POC's for this initiative.

When the Federal VA determines that a C&P Exam is needed, the request is submitted into a routing tool that determines which vendor can perform the exam and assigns it to one of three vendors: Logistics Health Incorporated (LHI), Quality Timeliness Customer Service (QTC) and Veterans Evaluation Services. These vendors will coordinate scheduling with the medical team located within the specific SCI where the Veteran is located. All exams will be completed within the SCI; no Veterans will be transported to a VA Medical Facility.

At the time of scheduling, the contract vendors will determine the appropriate methods for the examination. One of the following methods will be used:

- Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) evaluation through review of medical records by a VBA contract vendor examiner.
- Video teleconference with incarcerated Veterans and a VBA contract vendor examiner.
- In person examination at the correctional facility by an examiner who works for the VBA contract vendor.

This service is at no cost to the state. Contract exams are completed at State and Federal facilities, no county facilities are part of this program. PA DOC has video conferencing capabilities in all their facilities.

The following PA DOC and DMVA staff participated in the meeting: Ryan Yoder, Rich Podguski, Chip Gilliland, Danny McIntyre, Lacosta Mussoline, Jodi White, Jason Stauffer, Deanna Norris and Tracy Smith.

## **Participation on VA/SAMHSA Suicide Prevention Team**

On February 19, 2020, SAMHSA's Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) Technical Assistance (TA) Center convened an initial team meeting of military and civilian stakeholders in Pennsylvania for the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (Governor's Challenge).

This 1-day meeting was to provide assistance for the following: introducing team members to one another; participating in an environmental scan as well as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis; introducing teams to three priority areas supported by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs' National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide (VA's National Strategy); and establishing priorities, strategies, and preliminary logic models ahead of the February Policy Academy.

**‘Time Served’ : Two very different ways that prisons and courts help some veterans.  
A new PA Post documentary looks at how some veterans get treatment instead of  
incarceration.**

For the many offenders who are sentenced to prison, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections created Veterans Service Units. The volunteer program takes eligible inmates – those with a military background – and places them in a housing unit that’s segregated from the rest of the general inmate population. Inmates benefit from counseling and a range of services and opportunities available through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Administration.

In “Time Served,” *PA Post* shows how prison diversionary programs work through the lens of Charles Aberegg’s experience, and then contrasts the diversionary program to the experience of an inmate at SCI Houtzdale, who is incarcerated for a crime similar to Aberegg’s.

You can watch the full documentary via the YouTube link below:

<https://youtu.be/UuPTteJp9kk>

# VETERANS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

**Mr. Kory Auch, Chair**

## EXECUTIVE ORDER 2019-03

Directs: DMVA establish ViPS Committee under the GAC-VS

Target Audience: Internal Commonwealth employees with military experience

Implied Intent:

- Information & assistance about benefits
- Opportunities for collaboration, esprit de corps and support
- Encourage patriotism, spark a call to service, and stimulate civic engagement

1. Commonwealth continues to identify employees with military service
  - 2019 Inaugural Recognition Campaign identified over 14k
  - 2020 Recognition Campaign will have a “clean up” bump ... then sustainment
  
2. Establish ViPS Committee structure and membership
  - Pull together small group of employees from agencies
  - Refine intent, vision, and goals ... plot a way ahead
  
3. Open up an internal communication network
  - Benefits, entitlements, programs, Veterans Registry, etc
  - Outreach within respective agencies
  
4. Enable voluntary engagements
  - Stimulate unit cohesion and small group interactions
  - Awareness of public opportunity ... “veterans helping veterans”

# TECHNOLOGY

**Mr. Tim Irvin, Member**



Name	Affiliation
Sandra Patterson, Chair	HHS Delivery Center CIO
Tim Irvin	DMVA – IT Director, DMVA
Manisha Arya	Health & Human Services Delivery Center - Project Manager
Eric Felty	DMVA – Project Manager/BRM
Shawn Moyer	DMVA – Applications Development
Joe Smolock	DMVA – Telecom
Kory Auch	Office of Administration

\* As projects dictate, members may be added to the Committee

## **Committee Purpose**

To support GAC-VS committees as requested to help facilitate business needs with potential IT solutions.

## Projects in Process:

- Voter Registration via Veterans Registry. *This project will add a feature to the “thank you” page of a completed Veterans Registry entry asking if the individual would like to register to vote. If they select “yes” their name, address and county transfers to the Department of State and the person will continue with the voter registration application.*
  - Voter Registration Project is on schedule:
    - Currently in the development portion of the project.
    - Testing scheduled to be completed on 07/07/2020.
    - Deployment scheduled 07/08/2020.
- PA VETConnect Project continues to be enhanced including:
  - Providing access to PA VETConnect via SharePoint to facilitate update of resources from remote locations.
  - Report development.
  - Latest changes/updates of tool scheduled to be released on 05/15/2020.

# NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

# **NEXT MEETING:**

**August 19 at 1:00PM**  
**Arrowheads Community Club**  
**Bldg. 9-65, Fort Indiantown Gap**  
**Annville, PA 17003**

**\*Meeting location subject to change, please remain flexible**