

WELCOME

Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services
AUGUST 19, 2020

Please ensure all microphones remain muted.

--We will begin shortly--



INTRODUCTIONS

OPENING COMMENTS

OLD BUSINESS

HEALTH PROMOTIONS

Ms. Donna Tilley-Hess, Chair

HEALTH PROMOTIONS



Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Donna Tilley Hess	DHS, OMHSAS	Lori Murphy	Psychological Health
Angela Keen	VISN 4	Jennifer Hagaman	VSO, Clinton Cty.
Leslie Neal	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	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	Eastern Lead Military & Family Readiness Specialist, PAARNG	Perri Rosen	DHS, OMHSAS, Contractor
Laura Cunningham	Retreat	Michael Volz	VBA
Dr. Noretta Kime	PA Air NG	Lana Venue	VSO, Elk Cty.

Mission:

Using a holistic approach, the Health Promotions 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** 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:

- Resilience and Engage Distance Learning – **Sound Mind During Uncertainty**, 10 seats per class, 6 classes offered, 35 completions
- **Start Program by Living Works** (ASIST creators) 1.5 hour class, what intervention looks like
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (**ASIST**) - Completed in January, 18 Army personnel trained, and 22 in February completed. 20 registered for September program
- Ask Care Escort-Suicide Intervention (**ACE-SI**) - classes scheduled were cancelled for this year and will be **rescheduled with NEW CURRICULUM**
- Out of the Darkness Walks, projected to support 10 walks
- Master Resilience Trainers, trained 10 projecting another 14
- Master Resilience Trainers, Level II Facilitators, trained 3 Soldiers
- Supporting local community resource exchange 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).

UPDATE: PROGRAM HAS BEEN CONVERTED TO ON-LINE WITH CONTINUED USE OF PANG SOLDIER/AIR HAVING LIVED EXPERIENCES/SME.

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HEALTH PROMOTIONS



TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

Understanding the military experience

Providing care to service members, veterans and their families

Service members, veterans and their families make sacrifices for all of us. **STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS** offers training to help you better understand their experiences and an online registry that will help them find you.

Space is limited—register today!
Trainings & CEs are **FREE**.

The Center for Deployment Psychology is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Center for Deployment Psychology maintains responsibility for this program and its content. Please check with your licensing board to ensure it accepts APA CE credits.



..... **For more information or to register, visit www.starproviders.org**



Collaborators



Federal Partnership & Collaborative Efforts ongoing include VA Suicide Prevention initiatives; most recently added **Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinators (CEPC)**.

CEPC's, will be hired to integrate and join local VA suicide prevention teams as staff who are 100% administrative and who will collaborate at the community, regional and state levels, to implement evidence-informed community-based suicide prevention interventions, providing much needed expansion to local SPC's and the suicide prevention team's capacity to conduct outreach and education.

<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/> - **Vantage Point**

VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge:
To Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

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

PRIORITIES, PLANNING AND ACTION STEPS

PRIORITY 1: IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY LEVEL PREVENTION AND POSTVENTION STRATEGIES

PRIORITY 2: PROMOTE CONNECTEDNESS AND IMPROVE CARE TRANSITIONS

PRIORITY 3: INCREASE LETHAL MEANS SAFETY AND SAFETY PLANNING

Governor's Challenge Community Expansion – Mayors Challenge

Mayor Peduto and the City of Pittsburgh are part of the suicide prevention community expansion. Mayor Peduto appointed Mrs. Laura Drogowski to lead his team. Members of the Governor's Challenge will act as mentors to the Mayor's Challenge team. Engagement has begun and a technical assistance program is being held in August.

- **Second Lady Karen Pence**, joined by **Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) Robert Wilkie**, visited Pittsburgh VA Healthcare System, H.J. Heinz Campus and Forever Heart Farm, LLC, Wednesday, July 29, 2020.
- The Second Lady and Secretary attended an **Art, Dance/Movement, and Music Therapy** roundtable and observation where they heard from therapists and veterans who have participated in the **VA's creative arts therapies program**. The roundtable was followed by a **veteran suicide prevention discussion** with the head of the veteran suicide prevention program, staff, and veterans who have worked with the program. They shared an overview of the program and ways **the VA is engaging with patients and community partners**.
- Following the VA Campus visit, the Second Lady and Secretary visited the Forever Heart Farm, LLC to meet with **Navy veteran owner, Rob Mowery**, and visit the farm's apiary. There, they learned more about the **Bee Bootcamp program**, which is a pilot program designed to offer hands on beekeeping training for veterans.

<https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2020/07/29/second-lady-karen-pence-visits-pittsburgh/>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/second-lady-karen-pence-highlights-suicide-prevention-visits-veteran-owned-business-pittsburgh-pa/>

PATH & SOAR: Collaborations that assist Veterans

Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) is a key program for adults who are homeless and is administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA also funds the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance Program. Both programs serve people who have serious mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance use disorders who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. **Both programs incorporate essential components to assist adults to recover from homelessness and are complementary to each other.**

SOAR helps states and communities increase access to Social Security disability benefits for eligible adults and children. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are disability income benefits administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) that also provide Medicaid and/or Medicare health insurance to eligible children and adults. The application process for SSI/SSDI is complicated*. SAMHSA developed the SOAR model to address this critical need. SOAR-trained case managers submit quality applications that are approved quickly. **By maximizing income supports through benefits access and employment support, individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness can achieve housing stability.**

PATH & SOAR - Importance of SSI/SSDI for Veterans

SSA disability benefits can provide access to:

Income: Veterans can receive SSI/SSDI in conjunction with, or as an alternative to, VA disability benefits

Health insurance: Veterans can use the Medicaid and Medicare health benefits that come with SSI/SSDI to supplement VA health services

For Veterans with disabilities, SSI/SSDI can increase income and housing stability, and reduce their future risk of homelessness

Opportunity for staff serving Veterans to help with both SSA and VA disability benefits

***TRAINING COORDINATION & STATE CONTACT:**

Michelle Baxter, DHS, OMHSAS

Bureau of Policy, Planning, & Program Development

Phone: 717.346.0752

Pennsylvania Statewide Initiatives

- Trauma-Informed PA: A Plan to Make Pennsylvania a Trauma-Informed, Healing-Centered State, Governor’s Office of Advocacy and Reform, Dan Jurman, MAR - Executive Director, July 2020, reviewed the initiative.

“Trauma” is not singular, those who experience it are not identical, and the contexts and cultures within which each of us lives are as varied as the blades of grass in a field.”
– Margaret Blaustein & Kristine Kinniburgh

- Reach Out PA initiative



- SW Suicide Prevention TF Report, and State Suicide Prevention Plan Updating

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

- In March 2020, \$1 million in State Opioid Response grant funding, obtained by Governor Wolf's Administration through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, was awarded on behalf of DDAP and DMVA for supportive services to veterans and their families who suffer from opioid use disorders. The seven recipients of the grant funding 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)
- We continue to gain community partnerships such as New Vitae, Retreat, Strive, Just for Today, 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.

HEALTH PROMOTIONS



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-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>

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>

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

If you have BHRS/IBHS questions, please e-mail: ra-pwibhs@pa.gov

If you have COVID-19 related questions, please e-mail: ra-pwomhsascovid-19@pa.gov

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

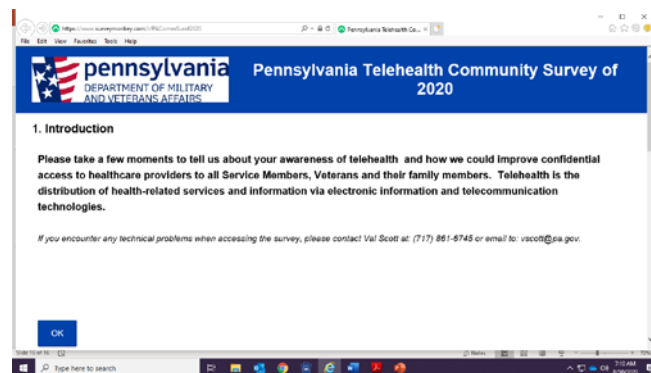
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/PA-Recovery/Pages/VeteransMilitary-Families.aspx>

PENNSYLVANIA TELEHEALTH SURVEY 2020

Please be a part of “our call to action” by completing the below survey, and also passing it along to other Service Members and Veterans – those who served in the military (National Guard, Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marine Corp, Navy).

You can support our interagency teams’ collaboration, planning and implementing suicide prevention best practices and policies for service members, veterans and their families statewide by completing the survey. Please help us better serve Pennsylvanians who stepped forward to serve Pennsylvania and the USA.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PACommSurof2020>



HOMELESS

Mrs. Samantha Cossman, 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 County 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 May GAC-VS quarterly meeting:

- Increased communication with, and participation from, VA homeless programs (including Bath and Martinsburg)
- All 12 SSVFs now engaged and about $\frac{3}{4}$ regularly participate
- About $\frac{1}{2}$ of CoCs participate and collaboration/communication with Balance of State has increased
- RPOCs are participating in housing/homeless meetings as able
- 250+ contacts with CoC and SSVF (between Homeless Committee and RPOCs)

Since May GAC-VS quarterly meeting:

- Discussed eviction moratoriums and potential issues when they are lifted, HMIS upgrade in 4 CoCs and some challenges with Coordinator Entry processes
- Finalized two information papers (SSVF, Funding Streams)
- Call with state lead for SOAR and PATH programs (7/29); assisted in connection to VISN 4
- Addressed recommendations from Expanding LTC Report about increasing awareness of case management programs for issues that often impact housing stability:
 - 6/10 - PACE/Clearinghouse
 - CHC is being rescheduled – originally supposed to be covered on 8/12
 - Upcoming on 9/9 - case management available for SUD through Single County Authorities and for MH through county offices (DDAP and OMHSAS)

Challenges and Opportunities:




- Veterans may bypass Coordinated Entry - not captured in that data; may miss out on other important referrals
 - *Formed a new workgroup to develop recommendations for best practices in referring homeless or at-risk Veterans for help (met 7/28, 8/17)*
- Lack of understanding about what CES is/does and barriers to making referrals
 - *Convened a group of SME to provide virtual training on CES in the Fall*
 - *Engage advocates about experiences with CES and barriers to referring*
- Lack of understanding about VA-funded homeless programs and need for increased communication between VA and CoCs/CES in some areas
 - *Promoting conversation between VAMCs and CoCs (esp. about HUD-VASH)*

Challenges and Opportunities:

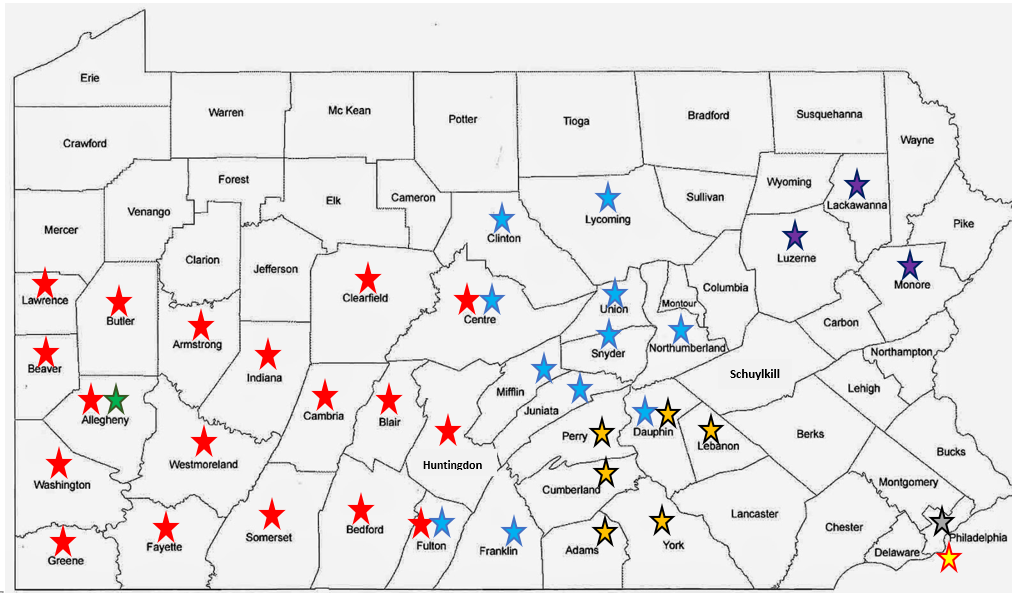
- Lack of affordable housing, especially single units
 - *Discuss landlord engagement in coordination with VA, SDHP, LHOTS, housing task forces*
- Many different systems capturing info on homeless Veterans in PA; statewide Veterans Master List does not yet exist
 - *Increase communication with DCED and VISN about data sources and reporting*
 - *Promote need for statewide Veterans Master List*
 - *Continue to engage entitlement CoCs via RPOCs*

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Protections Ending
 - Had legal aid provide education on the moratorium, tenant rights during and immediately following, and the eviction process (8/12)
 - Discussed best referral practices to help impacted Veterans
 - Will disseminate info through RPOCs

Federal Pandemic UC	Utility Shutoff Moratorium (applies to PUC-regulated only)	Eviction and Foreclosure Moratoriums
		
<p>\$600/week ended in July</p>	<p>Extends for duration of Gov's Emergency Declaration</p> <p>Does not apply to unregulated utilities although encouraged to institute their own and many did</p>	<p>Federal ended 7/24</p> <p>PA due to end 8/31</p>

Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP)



Source:
U.S. Department
of Labor
Veterans'
Employment and
Training Service
DOL-VETS
(news release
dated July 1,
2020)
<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/vets/vets20200701>

- Focuses on integrating homeless Veterans into meaningful employment.
- New grant period began 1 Jul 2020.

Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA, Inc. (18 counties) Hayley Miller (millerh@vlpwpa.org / 412-522-9554)	★	Veterans Multi-Service Center – Central (11 counties) Vandy Rider (vandy.rider@vmcenter.org / 844-226-0368)	★	Commission on Economic Opportunity of Luzerne County (3 counties) Jim McGinley (570-826-0510 ext 320 / jmcginley@ceopeoplehelpingpeople.org)	★
Veterans Place of Washington Blvd. (1 county) Rob Hamilton (rhamilton@veteransplaceusa.org / 412-363-05000 x. 218)	★	YWCA of Greater Harrisburg (6 counties) Bill Reed (wreed@ywcabhp.org / 717-234-7931)	★	Impact Services Corporation (1 county)	★
				Veterans Multi-Service Center – HQ (1 county) Frank Bilbao (francis.bilbao@vmcenter.org)	★

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

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Crystal Houser, Chair

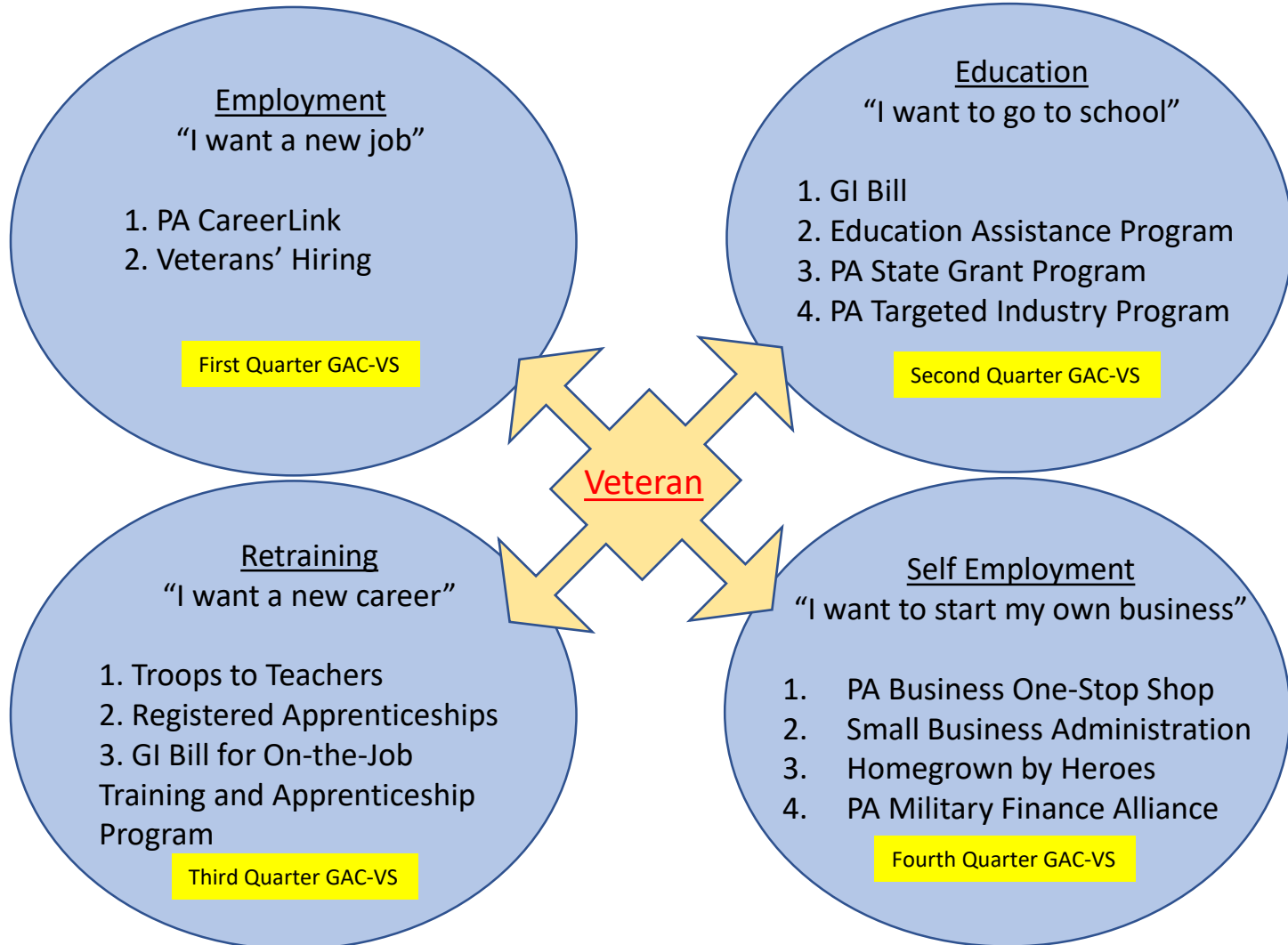
Name	Affiliation
Thomas Applebach	County Directors
Kory Auch	Administration
Cory Bender	Military & Veterans' Affairs
Crystal Houser	Labor & Industry
Lawrence Furlong	Fish & Boat Commission
Christina Kotsalos	Banking & Securities
Billy Lanham	US Dept of Labor/VETS
Terrell Martin	Community & Economic Development
Joshua Scheinberg	Department of Agriculture
Denise Verchimak	Department of Education
Kimberly Gerlach	Labor & Industry

VISION

To create greater awareness and synergy among government entities that serve veterans at the point they are asking themselves 'what do I want to do next' as it relates to employment, self-employment, education or retraining.

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 A NEW CAREER”

1. Troops to Teachers
2. Registered Apprenticeships
3. GI Bill for On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship Programs

Troops-to-Teachers

Concept

- Assist transitioning service members with meeting the requirements necessary to obtain teaching certification
- Provide individualized counseling to assist program participants in exploring and selecting the best pathway to teaching based on unique needs, goals and skills
- Address teacher shortage areas in the K-12 schools that service low-income families in critical shortage areas

State Participation

- Provide grant oversight to assure deliverables are met
- Provide leadership within the Department of Education to assure cooperation and support for the program
- Address barriers that prevent veterans from meeting teacher certification requirements

PA Key Data/Trends

- Over 3500 veterans have received specific and targeted information related to the program
- To date, 66 program participants have been hired
- Since the PA TTT grant pilot program, 113 individuals have completed the requirements to become a TTT participant. 100% of these individuals have received one-one counseling through personal emails or phone calls
- Over 800 veterans have been provided information regarding certification via phone calls, emails, up meetings

Key Changes/Initiatives

- Enhanced the Regional Partnership with Mercyhurst University as a key partner. Mercyhurst University offers a 1-year on-line teacher certification program and is a Purple Heart Institution
- Developed a Joint Transcript Review process to award academic credit for prior career experiences
- Partnered with the Pennsylvania National Guard Association to market the PA TTT program to more than 12,000 active and transitioning military personnel
- Moved to a virtual model for job fairs due to COVID-19 restrictions

Registered Apprenticeships

Concept

- Registered Apprenticeship is an “Earn while you Learn” training model
- Apprenticeship Program apprentices gain a National, portable credential upon completion
- Built-In Wage increases

State Participation

- Local, State, and Federal Workforce Development funds can be used to support On-the-Job Training and tuition reimbursement
- DCED, L&I, Dept. of Ed., OVR, DHS, Dept. of AG, and Corrections are all involved in apprenticeship initiatives
- To learn more about registered apprenticeships, contact us at RA-LIATO-PPPR-TRAIN@pa.gov

PA Key Data/Trends

- 18,000+ Apprentices and 800+ Apprenticeship programs (Top 10 Nationally)
- 800+ Apprenticeship programs (12th Nationally)
- Veterans make up 6% of all active apprentices
- The largest single occupation registered is corrections officers

Key Changes/Initiatives

- DOL VETS TAP Pilot 2020-2021
- identify, track, and increase the number of service members and their spouses that are hired prior to separation from the military into apprenticeship opportunities.
- Apprenticeship Placement Counselors (APCs) will be embedded at each of the eight pilot installations to provide personalized assistance to TSMs interested in exploring Registered Apprenticeship as a post-separation career pathway.
- APCs will work individually with the TSM to assist them in their pursuit of finding, connecting, and placing them in RAPs based upon their desired industry and post-separation location.

On The Job Training & Apprenticeship Programs

Concept

- Veterans may use their VA education benefits including the post – 9/11 GI Bill for qualifying On-the-Job (OJT) and apprenticeship training programs.

State Participation

- SAA is approval authority for Veterans Education Benefits.
- Determine if employer and program meet the qualifications for approval.
- Certifying Official will need to complete 1.5 hour training to be able to certify the veteran is employed in approved program.

PA Key Data/Trends

- Veterans in an approved program can use their GI Bill benefit and receive a tax-free stipend.
- 100% for the first 6 months then reduced 20% every 6 months.
 - OJT minimum 6 months to maximum 24 months.
 - Apprenticeship minimum 24 months to maximum 60 months.

Key Changes/Initiatives

- For more information:
[PDE, Division of Veterans and Military Education
https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/education/OJT.pdf](https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/education/OJT.pdf)

On The Job Training & Apprenticeship Programs

Denise Verchimak

Chief, Division of Veterans and Military Education

PA Department of Education

State Approving Agency (SSA) for Veterans and Military Education in PA

August 2020

On-the-job (OJT) and apprenticeship training programs are available for Veterans using their VA education benefits, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill. These programs allow Veterans to learn a trade or skill through training on the job rather than attending formal classroom instruction.

Wages/Stipend – both programs

Employers generally pay a reduced OJT/apprenticeship wage
Veterans in an approved program can use their GI Bill benefit and receive a tax-free stipend -
100% for first 6 months, then reduced 20% every 6 months

On The Job Training (OJT)

Minimum 6 months to maximum 24 months

Apprenticeship

Minimum 24 months to maximum 60 months

Approval Process

- The SAA is the approval authority for Veterans Education Benefits.
- The first step is to contact the SAA to determine if an employer and program meet the qualifications for approval
- (note: the veteran must already be approved to use his/her benefits).
- The SAA will help to complete an approval packet and submit to the VA for processing (45 days average approval timeframe).
- Certifying Official will need to complete online training which takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete and will be part of the approval packet.
- Once approved, the certifying official certifies to the VA that the veteran is employed in the approved program and thereafter submits the hours worked in that program.
- The veteran receives a stipend each month.

For more information:

[PDE, Division of Veterans and Military Education](#)

[https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/education/
OJT.pdf](https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/education/OJT.pdf)

WOMEN VETERANS

Constance Snavelly, Member

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
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
Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta	Director of Veteran & Military Affairs, Moravian College
Audrey Berstresser	Vietnam Vets of America

Goals:

- Adjusting focus from in-person town halls to providing a slide show which stands on its own (provides 90% of info; can contact us for situation-specific questions)
 - May record us briefing it to provide additional details

Critical Needs

- DMVA website needs better “tagging” so Women Veterans can find our page; difficult to find us currently
- Updated digital marketing materials (flyers, brochures, etc.)

Next Steps:

- Identify additional methods to spread word about DMVA’s resources for Women Veterans; must ensure we’re reaching our Women Veteran population

JUDICIARY

Mr. Ryan Yoder, Chair

JUDICIARY



Name	Affiliation
Ryan Yoder	PA Department of Corrections (Chair)
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)
Dan Lynch	University of Pittsburgh Police Department (Lieutenant)
Joe Daly	Springfield Township Police Department (Chief of Police)

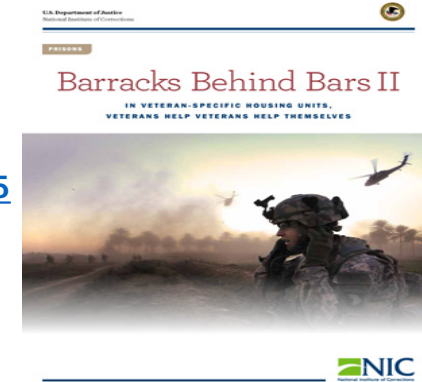
- GAC-VS committee leaders recently reached out to the PA Chiefs of Police Association in relation to the request from the Executive Deputy Secretary of Planning and Policy to have LE representation on the GAC-VS Judiciary Committee. The PCPA supports the inclusion and recognition of the contributions to the veteran community from law enforcement and the opportunity to improve the services provided to Pennsylvania veterans and their families, therefore providing a list of candidates. Upon review, the Judiciary Committee selected both, Lt. Dan Lynch and Chief Joe Daly to represent LE, and we welcome them to the committee.
- Tammy Ferguson, Regional Deputy Secretary, has been named as the designee for the PA Department of Corrections. Ms. Ferguson is also a Veteran. Welcome!!
- After 3.5 years, I have decided to step down as the Judiciary Chair and council designee in order to focus on my current position within the DOC. An update on my replacement will be forthcoming.
- It has been an honor and privilege working with the GAC-VS team over the last several years. Your work, professionalism and dedication towards our Military and Veteran community is truly appreciated. LEAVE NO VETERAN BEHIND! Ryan Yoder

DOC

- Due to ongoing COVID-19 related protocol, the DOC has temporarily suspended programming/services, visitors, and non-essential transfers at all facilities. This has affected VSU transfers as well as VSU/VSO programming statewide.
- VSU staff are currently unable to do group programming, however there are ongoing efforts to meet with the incarcerated Veterans individually for VA related issues, assisting with calls and written correspondences, and ongoing reentry preparation to include resume writing, home/employment plans, etc.
- The VA currently has an admissions block, however VSU staff are able to initiate the process and arrange follow-up contact with regional VISN-4 staff upon release.
- The VA is working on a soft admission. The veteran will need to be COVID-19 tested at his/her institution, then quarantined until a bed date is approved.
- Mr. Podguski continues to participate in various VA sponsored trainings and meetings regarding the Governor's Challenge to prevent Veteran suicides.



NIC Promotional Audio Clips: <https://info.nicic.gov/jiv/node/195>



The National Institute of Corrections presents the release of *Barracks Behind Bars II: In Veteran-Specific Housing Units, Veterans Help Veterans Help Themselves* (Prisons Version).

This paper is the fourth in the National Institute of Corrections justice-involved veteran compendium project. It highlights programs in prisons across the country that work to improve outcomes for justice-involved veterans, and - in doing so - increase safety for law enforcement officers, correctional officers, inmates, and the public. It illustrates the design/development, implementation, and sustainment of initiatives taken by enlightened, pragmatic corrections officials who have set up specialized housing—in pods, dorms, units, wings, or floors—and programming for military veterans.

NOTE: PADOC Veterans Service Unit Program is highlighted on pages 24-26 and 44-52.

To view this publication please go to the following link:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/033092.pdf>

AOPC Update

4th Annual Veteran Services Event - *hosted by Widener with AOPC co-sponsoring*

- Three virtual Zoom panels this year (9:00 - 10:00 am each day)
 - September 18: “Supporting Justice-Involved Veterans in Pennsylvania” (Bill Cress & Gelu Negrea, VJO-VISN4; Ryan Yoder, DOC; Andy Simpson & Angela Lowry, AOPC)
 - September 25: “Veterans Needs and Available Services in Pennsylvania” (Chip Gilliland, DMVA; Tom Snedden, PACE-DOH; Thomas Stark, PACHSA-CCAP)
 - October 2: Legal Services of Pennsylvania’s Veterans (Michele Vollmer, PSU Law; Daniel Kunz, Duquesne Law; Angela Drake, NLSVCC; Lisa Grayson, Cumberland County)
- Register at: commonwealthlaw.widener.edu/eventregistration

3rd Annual VA-VJO Workshop - *hosted by AOPC*

- Virtual event to be held late October or early November – TBD.

Statewide Veterans Treatment Court Symposium, Spring/Summer 2021 TBD

- Federal funding for the event was extended due to Covid-19.
- AOPC is partnering with Justice for Vets to coordinate the 2-3 day event.
- Stay tuned for more info as it becomes available.

Note on COVID Uncertainty

Events and developments have unfortunately been affected over the past few months and for the foreseeable future. Your patience and understanding are appreciated as we continue to monitor and support local courts as they “reopen” and navigate their operations during these uncertain times. We wish you well as you continue to improve the lives’ of veterans and their families across PA.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY VETERANS COURT (From the criminal court annual report for 2018)

- Veterans Court celebrated the graduation of 25 veterans at its annual graduation ceremony on November 1, 2018.
- The Veterans Court also worked in conjunction with the Allegheny County Jail to open a housing pod solely for veterans in April 2018. This partnership provides referrals of incarcerated persons to determine if they are eligible to participate in Veterans Court. Veterans classified as minimum or medium security are eligible to be housed on this unit and receive services from the Soldier On Program, Veterans Thinking for Change, PA Serves, Veteran Justice Outreach Workers, Veterans Job Club, Veteran's Leadership Program, Veteran's Outreach, Pittsburgh Immersion, and Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Veterans Court is also collaborating with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole in pursuance of a pilot reentry program that would allow military veteran offenders to transition through a unique program prior to being paroled.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY VETERANS COURT (From the criminal court annual report for 2019)

- The Westmoreland County Veterans Court program started on May 23, 2019. The program, which is 6 to 23 months long, offers Diversionary and Guilty Plea tracks to eligible defendants. Participants are involved with treatment professionals, undergo intensive supervision and attend monthly Court appearances before Veterans Court Judge Timothy A. Krieger. One Supervisor in the Adult Probation Office handles the duties of Veterans Court Coordinator and two Probation Officers supervise the participants in Veterans Court.
- 2019 Veterans Court Statistics:
 - Number of Referrals: 25
 - Total Number of Individuals Admitted to Veterans Court: 13
 - Number Admitted – Diversionary: 2
 - Number Admitted – Diversionary and Guilty Plea/Probation Sentence: 1
 - Number Admitted – Guilty Plea/Intermediate Punishment Sentence: 7
 - Number Admitted – Guilty Plea/Probation Sentence: 3
 - Number of Individuals who graduated from Veterans Court: 1
 - Number of Participants as of the last day of the year (12-31-19): 9 = 8 Males, 1 Females

VETERANS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Kory Auch, Chair

Name	Affiliation
Kory Auch	Planning Group ... OA
Lori Quigley	Planning Group ... PennDOT
Richard Nesbitt	Planning Group ... PSP
Ryan Yoder	Planning Group ... DOC
Jeff King	Planning Group ... DMVA
Kip Hursh	Planning Group ... DCNR

1. Commonwealth continues to identify employees with military service
2. Establish ViPS Committee structure and membership
 - Pull together small group of employees from select agencies
 - Refine intent, vision, and goals ... plot a way ahead
3. Open an internal communication network
 - Rules of engagement for outreach within respective agencies
 - Benefits, entitlements, programs, Veterans Registry, etc
4. Enable voluntary engagements
 - Stimulate unit cohesion and small group interactions
 - Awareness of public opportunity ... “veterans helping veterans”

Commonwealth continues to identify employees with military service

- ❑ 2019 inaugural recognition campaign for over 14K employees
- ❑ 2020 recognition campaign just underway ... culminates in November
- ❑ Potential for over 1K new employees & nearly 1K of self-disclosed
- ❑ Cleaned up data base by January 2021 ... shapes committee roll-out

TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Sandra Patterson, Chair

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
Robert Rounce	Dept. of Health
Joe Smolock	DMVA – Telecom
Kory Auch	Office of Administration
Brian Natali	DMVA – Office of Veterans Affairs
Matt McKenzie	Office of Administration, HR
Steven Wolf	Labor & Industry
Penni Bernard	PennDOT
Ryan Yoder	Dept. of Corrections

Committee Purpose

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

Voter Registration via Veterans Registry

This project has added a feature to the thank you page of a completed Veterans Registry asking the person if they would like to register to vote. If they select “yes” then we transfer name, address and county to the Department of State and the person will continue with the application to register to vote.

- Currently in the development phase of the project.
- Deployment changed from 07/08/2020 to 09/29/2020 at the request of Department of State

PA VETConnect Project enhancements

- Implemented process to allow non-state employees to access the tool and other information via the SharePoint site on 7/16/20
- New functionality developed, awaiting DMVA Executive approval.
 - Links to county directors, Veterans Registry, weekly Digest, and Federal VA
 - Registering for events
 - Identifying a presenter
 - Contact information for DMVA programs offices
 - Instructions to sign in to get the latest version of the tool on DMVA website
- Future plans are to automate forms on the DMVA website and to provide online search capability.

AGING

Mrs. Samantha Cossman, Member

AGING



Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Dr. Darryl Jackson	DMVA	Jonathan Bowman	DHS, Alternate for Hancock
Margo Coleman	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	Kit Watson	American Legion
Erin Walters	PDA	Raymond Soto	Claremont Nursing and Rehabilitation Center
Samantha Cossman	DMVA	Julia Chagnon	DMVA

Vision/Mission:

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.

Since May GAC-VS quarterly meeting:

- Updated goals and consolidated strategies (Outreach/PA VETConnect has been accomplishing several strategies organically)
- Introductory call scheduled between RPOCs and PDA's APPRISE program (8/21)
- PACE/DMVA Collaboration

Monthly check-ins continue. Outcomes as of 30 July =

- 202 PACE applications submitted for Veterans with 59 enrollments so far
- Other applications submitted for Veterans: 9 SNAP, 5 PTRR, 4 Extra Help
- 2nd request mailings sent in July and this will increase submissions/enrollments; new list of names provided to PACE in July
- PACE-funded outreach mailings have mentioned Veterans Registry (since Jan)
- PACE enrollments at Homes increased in FY 1920 compared to FY 1819
- PACE has been successfully connected to AOPC; their info has appeared in DMVA
- Digest; they presented at 6/10 Homeless mtg

Since May GAC-VS quarterly meeting:

- Protecting Aging Veterans workgroup (GOAL #3) – strategies refined; scheduled introductory meeting between RPOCs and PDA's PS and LTC Ombudsman programs for 8/27 to begin addressing 3.2 below

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

3.1 By Veterans Day 2020, send out the VA "Don't be a Victim: Be Aware of Pension Poaching Scams" electronic postcard to the entities that agreed to partner on increasing awareness about veteran pension poaching scams and the importance of referring veterans to accredited VSOs for veteran benefit application assistance.

3.2 By 9/30/20, hold a virtual meeting between PA VETConnect and PDA's PS and LTC Ombudsman programs to discuss cross-system awareness, to include:

- 1) how to increase awareness about Pennsylvania's Older Adult Protective Services and LTC Ombudsman programs among veteran advocates (e.g. Veteran Service Officers and Orgs, DMVA, VA, and Veteran non-profits),
- 2) how to increase awareness among PS and LTC Ombudsman staff of veteran systems and supports,
- 3) how to strategically disseminate PS and LTC Ombudsman materials like brochures and posters to veterans advocates,
- 4) how to strategically disseminate materials from veterans systems to PS and LTC Ombudsman staff,
- 5) how to strategically ensure that key phone numbers for both systems are known (e.g. PA Elder Abuse Hotline and the National Veterans Crisis Line),
- 6) how to systematically connect to County or Regional Elder Abuse/Elder Justice Task Forces to ensure Veterans representation exists on these groups

3.3 By 12/31/20, record a short webinar about the Older Adult Protective Services and LTC Ombudsman programs for educational use among veteran advocates.

3.4 During FY 2021, educate the local, state and federal veterans' systems about the Older Adult Protective Services and LTC Ombudsman programs and provide education about Veterans systems and services to the PS and LTC Ombudsman programs.

DMVA Regional Program Outreach Coordinators (RPOCs)

Region 1 – Chelsea Ellsworth
(O) 814.878.8080 (M) 814.323.8006
cellsworth@pa.gov

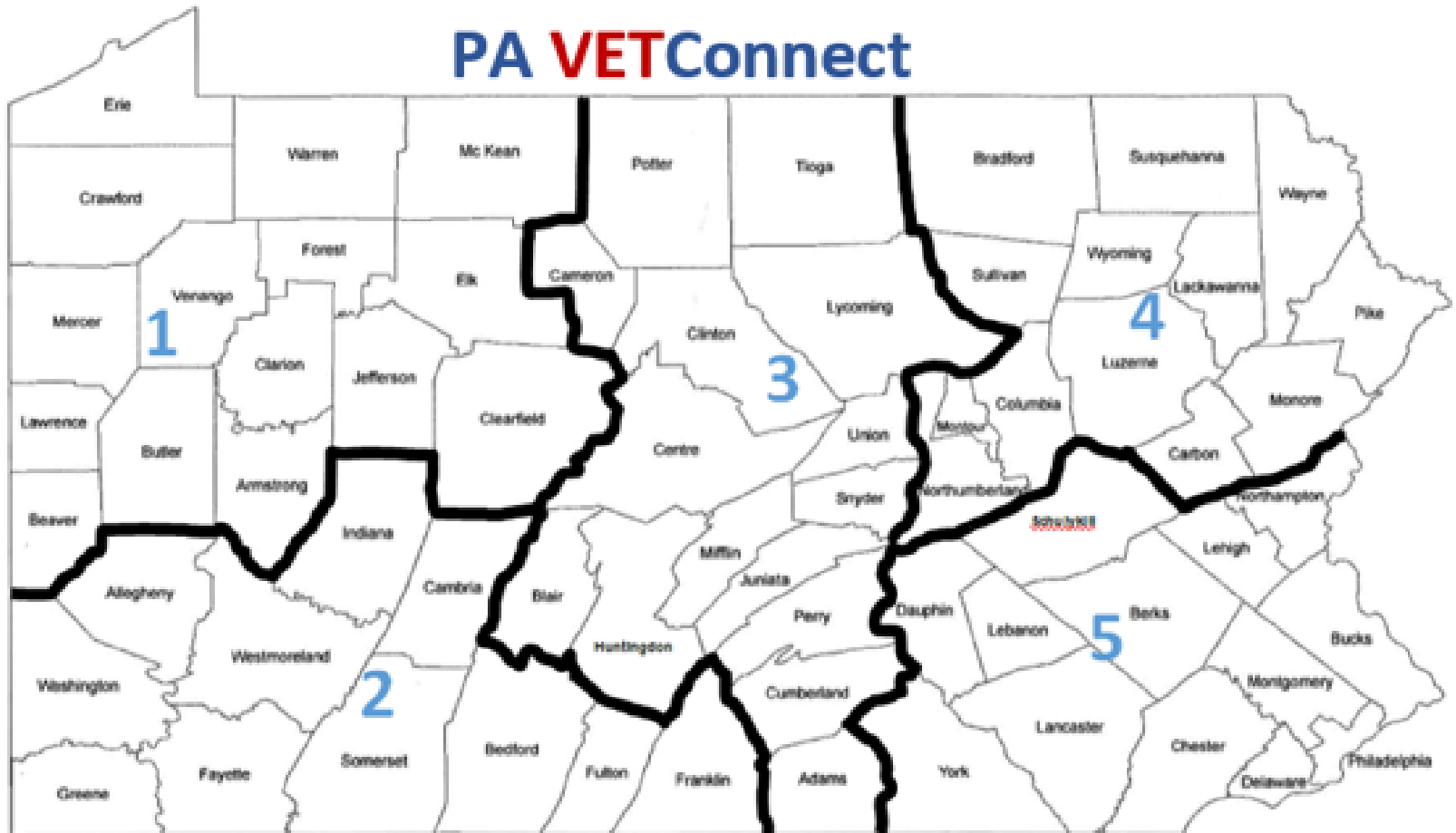
Region 2 – Mike Palarino
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Region 3 – Samantha Cossman
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Region 4 – Jennifer Spittler
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Region 5 – Erica Moore
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ericamoore@pa.gov

PA VETConnect



NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER

NEXT MEETING:

November 18 at 1:00PM
Arrowheads Community Club (Tentative)
Bldg. 9-65, Fort Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA 17003

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