

# WELCOME

**Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services**

**FEBRUARY 3, 2021**

**Please ensure all microphones remain muted.**

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

**Hover your mouse at the bottom of your screen to find these functions....**

### **Mute**

*Please remain muted.  
The host can also mute  
you.*

### **Exit Meeting**

### **Participant List**



### **Camera**

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wish*

### **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	DMVA	Jonathan Bowman	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:** *February 23, 2021*

**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.

“Expanding Long-Term Care Services to Pennsylvania Veterans”

Identify barriers in Long-Term Care when reporting potential financial exploitation and Collaborate with agency stakeholders to identify areas for judiciary or 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, next meeting January 21, 2021.*

\*Protecting Aging Veterans Work Group

\*\*Pension poaching initiative

\*\*\**Continues its effort to launch the Veteran Pension Poaching awareness initiative around June, 2021. This effort will result in community-level professionals being educated and therefore better able to direct Veterans and beneficiaries to free and safe assistance.*

## 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.*

## Protecting Aging Veterans Workgroup

- Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign in development
- Education on Older Adult Protective Services for Veteran Advocates
- Elder Protective Service Task Forces

# 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	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	Bill Reed	YWCA Greater Harrisburg

## **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**

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

## **Recommendation 5**

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

## **Recommendation 6**

- 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**

- 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

## Areas for consideration:

- Raise awareness of Veteran considerations among PHFA, DCED and other stakeholders involved in developing Veteran units.
- Education for Public Housing Authorities (PHA) on Veteran issues, systems and resources, especially for those Veterans who require wrap-around supports to be successfully housed.
- Raise awareness among PHAs of the importance in screening applicants for military service.
- Facilitate connections between advocates and those involved in developing veteran housing units to ensure proper considerations were taken into account when planning (e.g. income levels).

## **Upcoming presentations during homeless meetings (open invite)**

- 10 Feb – fair housing, accommodations and veterans considerations
- 10 Mar – evictions - process, protections, and legal assistance
- 14 Apr – S.A.V.E. training

## **Collaboration with other committees is underway**

- Women Veterans
- Judiciary
- Aging

\*Health Promotions – better support for homeless and at risk Veterans who are experiencing barriers to shelter access due to behavioral health or substance use

## **SSVF (Supportive Services for Veterans Families)**

- Healthcare Navigators are now on board with all SSVF grantees
- VLP's SSVF expansion

## **VISN 4 Homeless Program Update (Provided by Bill Cress)**

- “The National Defense Authorization Act was enacted into law on January 1, 2021 and includes a provision (Section 9103) that expands HUD-VASH eligibility to include veterans with an ‘other than honorable’ discharge status. The National HUD-VASH Program Office, in consultation with the Office of General Counsel, is actively working to develop implementation guidance to reflect this eligibility change. The National Homeless Program office will be sharing additional information soon, but in the meantime proceed with normal operations.”

## **HVRP (Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program)**

- new funding opportunity announced 19 Jan with applications due 1 Mar

# 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

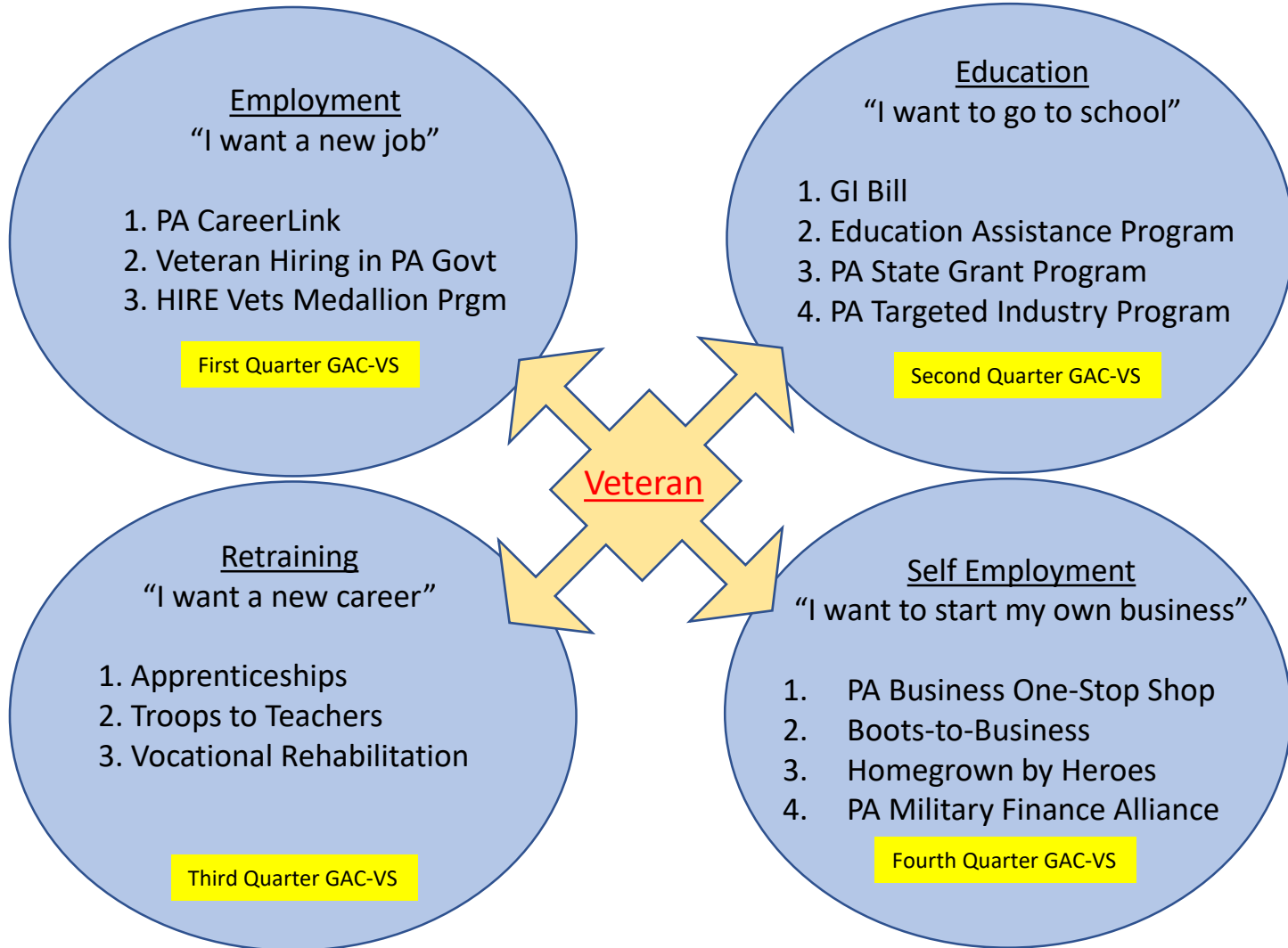


## VISION

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 A NEW JOB”

1. PA CareerLink
2. Veterans’ Hiring
3. HIRE Vets Medallion Program

## Concept

- 58 PA CareerLink® Offices
  - [www.pacareerlink.pa.gov](http://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov)
- 30 DVOPS across 29 PA CareerLink® Offices
- 25 LVERS across 23 PA CareerLink® Offices

## State Participation

- Network of:
  - Government Agencies
  - For-Profit Organizations
  - Non-Profit Organizations
- For Employment and Training Services

## PA Key Data/Trends

- State CY2020... over 13,000 veterans served; all veterans served-not only those with significant barriers to employment.
  - Served through Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Title I, and Trade workforce programs

## Key Changes/Initiatives

- Connecting to Resources:
  - Identify Resources in all areas
  - Identify PA CareerLink® as a resource in all areas
  - Outreach

## Veterans' Hiring in State Government

### Concept

- PA Military Code 51
  - Civil Service: exam points and preference
  - Non-Civil Service: preference
- Quals: CS minimum; NCS requisite

### State Participation

- Office of Administration
- DMVA
- Independent Agencies
- Agency Hiring Managers
- State Civil Service Commission

### PA Key Data/Trends

- State FY19-20 ... over 1100 vets
  - 15% of commonwealth hires
  - 4% PA's 18-64 pop are vets
- First good year of data to trend

### Key Changes/Initiatives

- Law Updated ... Oct 2020
  - Reinforcing/Clarifying
  - Transitioning from Active Duty
  - Experience & Training

## HIRE Vets Medallion Program

### Concept

- Recognition program for private businesses
  - Recruiting Vets
  - Hiring Vets
  - Retaining Vets

### Participation

- US Dept of Labor, VETS Office
  - Over 3 million employers contacted by Pennsylvania and surrounding states in 2019/2020
  - State UC Newsletter, emails
  - American Job Centers
  - Chamber of Commerce

### PA Key Data/Trends

- 2020 Participation in PA
- 35 self-nominated
- 27 recognized by DoL (6th most in US)
  - 9 small employer platinum
  - 22 small employer gold
  - 5 medium employer gold

### Key Changes/Initiatives

- 2020 Nomination Timeline
  - April 30: applications deadline
  - August 31: review finished
  - Oct 11: awardees notified
  - Nov 10: winners announced
- Website: [HIREVETS.gov](http://HIREVETS.gov)

# 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	Doug Snyder	DOH
Rick Hamp	DMVA	Govan Martin	Ret. PSP
Joel Mutschler	DMVA	Liz Woodley	PMHCA
Jeff Geibel	DDAP	Roy Remone	Compeer/Vet2Vet
Dr. Noretta Kime	PA Air NG	Perri Rosen & Lori Mentzer	OMHSAS SUICIDE PREVENTION
Laura Cunningham	Retreat	Michael Volz	VBA
AJ Byerly, Jolene Richardson, Lori Murphy	PAARNG Psychological Health	Dorothy Watkins	Resilience and Risk Reduction Program Coordinator



# HEALTH PROMOTIONS



## **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.

## Recommendations

**These efforts will be encompassing of all branches and types of SM/Veterans (whether deployed or not) for follow through, consistency, attendance, and community partners/stakeholders will be involved to provide available resources. Such efforts are known to help SM/Veterans fight the MH stigma. Education and awareness of various resources may help with the “wait time” factor discussed along with the ongoing challenge that service members continue to fear speaking up, thinking it may adversely impact their career.**

**RECOMMENDATION 1** - Regionally conduct a resource and information event quarterly focusing on Service Members/Veterans, their family members and significant others. The event will focus on, but not limited to, federal benefits, state benefits, county benefits, family programs, suicide prevention programs, drug and alcohol programs, and current health and wellness resources. This program will encompass all branches of service and components that are in Pennsylvania, deployment status not applicable, event is designed to support everyone. Must ensure that both military family assets for, both Army and Air Reserve are incorporated into program. It is essential for the chain of command and NCO support chain of command to have absolute buy in and be a stakeholder in supporting these events.

**RECOMMENDATION 2** – Work with Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) to include current health and wellness information at the initial “intake processing day”, within the enlistment packet provided. The recommendation is that state G1, with oversight from Chief of Staff Office take the lead on this initiative, and to ensure consistency the Inspection Generals Office can add this into their inspection cycle.

**RECOMMENDATION 3** – Work with Recruitment Sustainment Program (RSP) to ensure Service Members have current health and wellness information. In addition, provide suicide prevention and resiliency training to PA Recruiters, new recruits, Officer candidates, and Warrant Officer candidates.

**RECOMMENDATION 4** – Update Commander’s and First Sargent's courses with health and wellness resource information, at both the DMVA level and existing family member support assets.

**RECOMMENDATION 5** – Provide current updates, health and wellness resource information in digital form on television screens in every Pennsylvania Armory. This is a cost-effective technique that could have a quick turn around since the TV’s and DVD’s have already been purchased.

**RECOMMENDATION 6** – Place the VA Crisis Phone Line information on every State Agency’s webpage.

**RECOMMENDATION 7** – Provide a “Safety and Wellness” Brief at closing formations, drill, annual training or any other Pennsylvania Military event. Recommended topics are: resiliency, suicide prevention, drug and alcohol use, financial assistance, employment outreach, and wellness information.

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, 8 classes offered, 40 completions
- **Start Program by Living Works** (ASIST creators) 1.5 hour class, what intervention looks like (waiting on licensing)
- **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)** - Completed in January, 18 Army personnel trained, 22 in February completed, 11 in September completed. 5 workshop scheduled in FY21.
- **Ask Care Escort-Suicide Intervention (ACE-SI)** – 5 workshops scheduled for FY 21
- Out of the Darkness Walks, Not being conducted due to Pandemic
- Master Resilience Trainers, trained 22 in FY 20, projected another 24 in FY 21
- Master Resilience Trainers, Level II Facilitators, trained 3 Soldiers
- Supporting local community resource exchange as well as other FRG events.

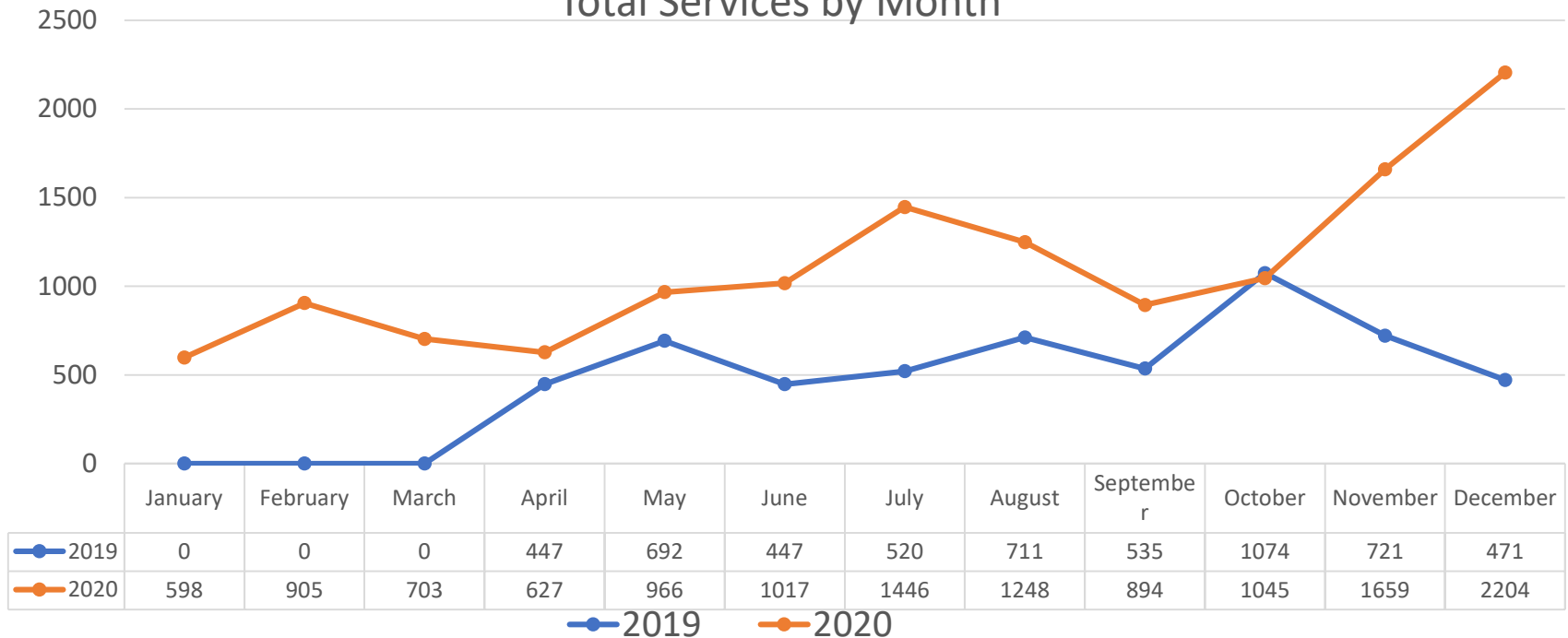
**Follow PNG Service Members & Family Support Division on Facebook  
to see upcoming events for Veterans and families.**

# HEALTH PROMOTIONS



The **Office of the State Surgeon** is where the PAANG Psychological Health Program is supported, coordinating and providing wellness services to Pennsylvania’s service members. The following data shows the total psychological health program services provided to the National Guard service members across the state of PA from initiation of the Behavioral Health Reporting tool at National Guard Bureau (NGB) in April 2019 to December 2020.

Total Services by Month

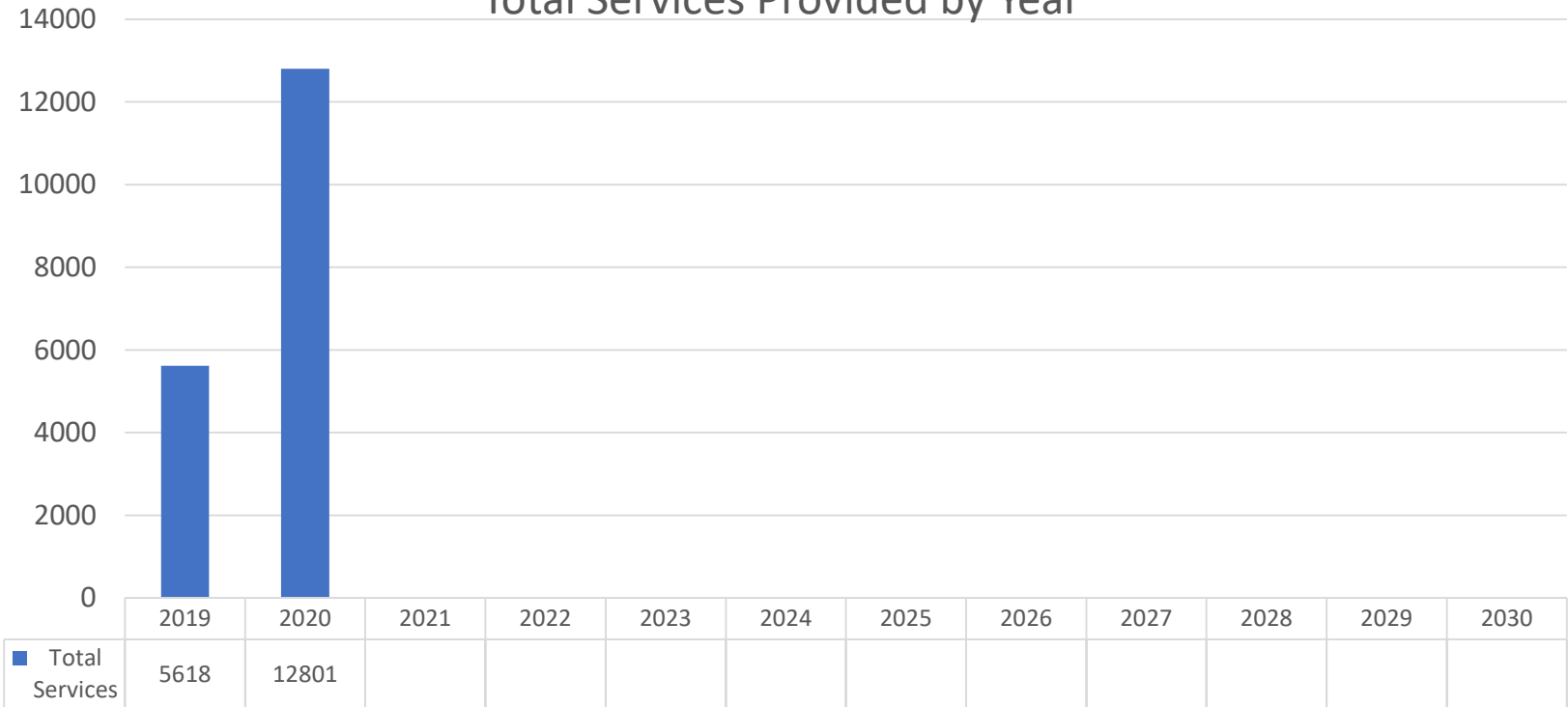


# HEALTH PROMOTIONS



## Psychological Health Program continued

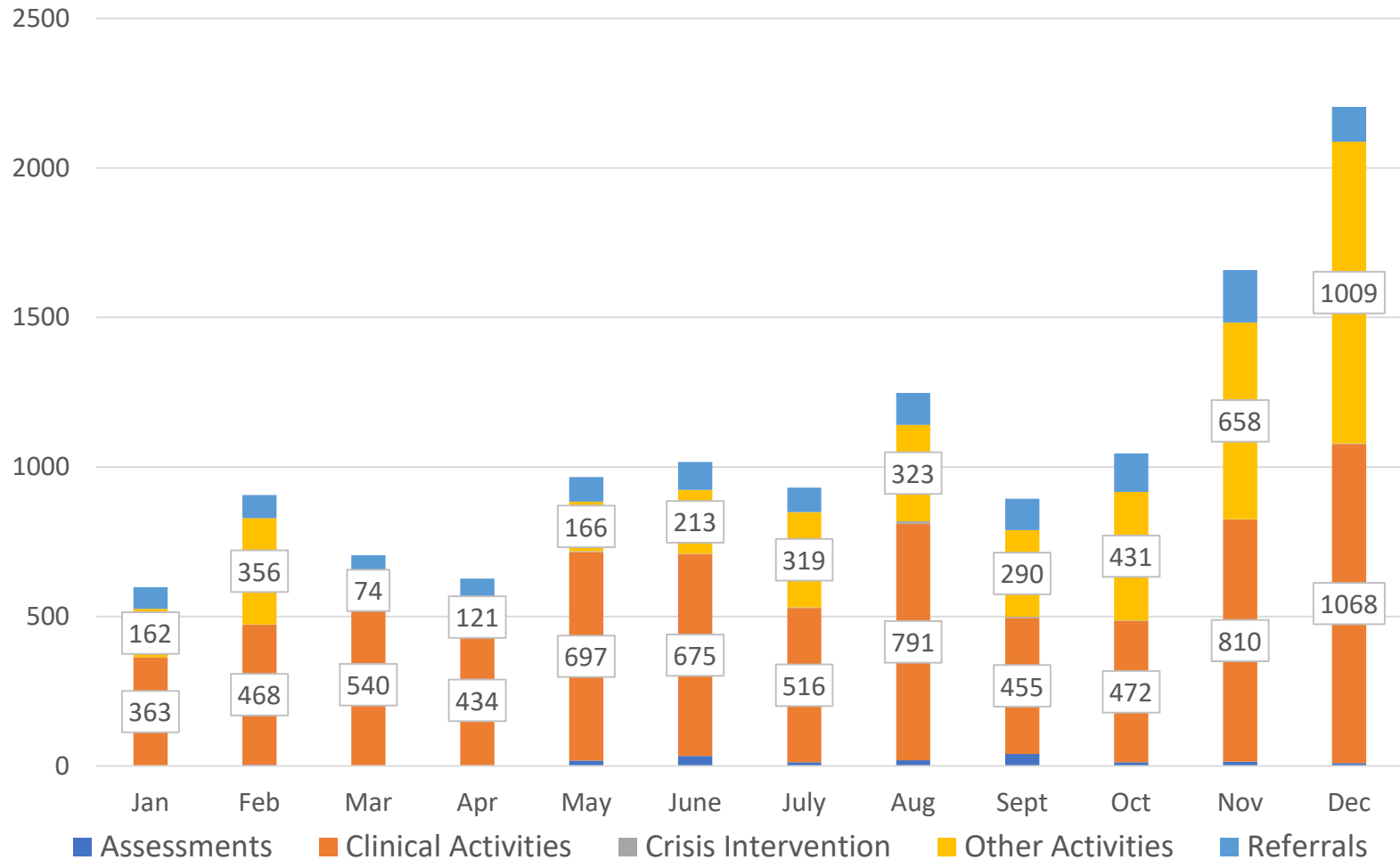
Total Services Provided by Year



# HEALTH PROMOTIONS



## Psychological Health Program continued





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

- The SBHP offers three levels of training (Tiers) for civilian behavioral health providers in state and local communities who are 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 in their areas.
- 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 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).

# HEALTH PROMOTIONS



PA SBHP DATA 8/2020 through present, 375 completed and upcoming Tier 1, 2, and 3 trainings.

9/28/2020	Tier 1 SBHP, Online 9/28/2020	29
10/26/2020	Tier 1 SBHP, Online 10/26/2020	40
11/2/2020	Tier 1 SBHP, Online 11/2/2020	29
12/2/2020	Tier 1 SBHP, Online 12/2/2020	60
9/1/2020	Tier 2 SBHP, Online 9/1-9/2/2020	46
10/8/2020	Tier 2 SBHP, Online 10/8-10/9/2020	24
12/3/2020	Tier 2 SBHP, Online 12/3-12/4/2020	51
9/14/2020	Tier 3: CPT SBHP, Online 9/14-9/15/2020	45
9/22/2020	Tier 3: CBTI SBHP, Online 9/22-9/23/2020	51

## Upcoming trainings

1/13/2021	Tier 1 SBHP, Online 1/13/2021	127
2/2/2021	Tier 1 SBHP, Online 2/2/2021	83
3/2/2021	Tier 1 SBHP, Online 3/2/2021	14
4/7/2021	Tier 1 SBHP, Online 4/7/2021	8
2/18/2021	Tier 2 SBHP, Online 2/18-2/19/2021	125
3/3/2021	Tier 2 SBHP, Online 3/3-3/4/2021	80
4/14/2021	Tier 2 SBHP, Online 4/14-4/15/2021	22

1/26/2021	Tier 3: CBTI SBHP, Online 1/26-1/27/2021	52
4/22/2021	Tier 3: CPT SBHP, Online 4/22-4/23/2021	76
3/16/2021	Tier 3: PE SBHP, Online 3/16-3/17/2021	78
2/22/2021	Tier 3: SUI SBHP, Online 2/22-2/23/2021	71

736

Total number of BH providers on the SBHP registry (from 16 states): 1043

Total number of PA BH providers on the SBHP registry: 6

Trainings will remain online until at least March 2021. SBHP is monitoring COVID-19 and will make decisions about later trainings when appropriate.

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## Federal Partnerships & Collaborative Efforts:

### Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinators (CEPC) Update

DMVA RPOC's will partner with the VISN 4 CEPC's on community efforts. The CEPC role is to build Veteran Suicide Prevention coalitions. They are currently working to complete landscape analyses, which is a precursor to some of this work.

Site	CEPC
Altoona	Olivia Luzier
Butler	Laura Newland
Coatesville	Shardae Wescott
Erie	Brandon Wiley
Lebanon	John Lucas
Philadelphia	Rhonda Hart
Pittsburgh	Bree Piper
Wilkes-Barre	Amanda Olaviany
Wilmington, DE	Matthew Jacobs

Pete Albert, MSN, RN  
Suicide Prevention Program Manager  
VA Healthcare – VISN 4  
1010 Delafield Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15215  
(Cell) 724-290-8573

## **Federal Partnerships & Collaborative Efforts:**

### **VA Video Connect (VVC) Update**

VISN 4 rapidly expanded use of VA Video Connect (VVC) in response to the pandemic. Mental Health programs developed new processes, affording Veterans the opportunity to meet with their providers/groups even when facilities limited face-to-face care. For instance, VISN 4:

- completed 1,400 VVC visits in February 2020 compared to 15,100 visits in October 2020 for a 985% increase.
- Over 96% of VISN 4 MH providers have completed video visits with Veterans in their homes.
- VISN 4 completed nearly 28% of their Mental Health encounters through video in December compared to 2% in February of 2020.

Sites also developed pathways and processes to replace in-person treatment groups with virtual groups. Although the virtual groups started as telephone conference calls, the providers moved the groups to video to mirror in-person experience.

## Federal Partnerships & Collaborative Efforts:

### VISN 4 COVID Vaccination Program

VA worked with the CDC to develop a phased distribution plan to maximize the benefit of COVID-19 vaccine. In these first weeks, there is limited vaccine available. As production increases, our goal is to offer a COVID-19 vaccine to all Veterans and health care workers who choose to be vaccinated. The different VISN 4 facilities are at different stages in the distribution plan.

- Week of December 14th, our Pittsburgh and Philadelphia VAs began receiving and administering the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.
- Week of December 21st, the seven other VISN 4 facilities began receiving and administering the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.
- Some community-based outpatient clinics have already begun administering the vaccine, and some parent facilities are still working out logistics for offering vaccines. We are working hard and carefully to ensure strict adherence to storage and preparation guidelines and timeframes as well as zero waste results.

VA has set up a website, which includes a **Keep Me Informed tool**, to update Veterans on vaccine distribution. While Veterans don't need to sign up for this (or anywhere) to receive the vaccine, it may be helpful for them, and their local facility (for planning purposes), if they do. As vaccine supplies increase and the distribution plan launches, care teams and local facilities will contact Veterans to let them know 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, and more than 132,000 health care employees as of Jan. 4.

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

## STATE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS & UPDATES



Rick Hamp, DMVA, Lori Murphy, Psychological Health, Mark Todero and Dee Watkins, PAARNG Suicide Prevention, spoke with The Veterans Channel Podcast reviewing PA's **Suicide Prevention** efforts and the collaborative work to reduce service member and veteran suicides.

The Podcast is a method of effective messaging to garner support for those in need. These podcasts are recorded so the public can listen to past discussions on Recovery, Military Sexual Trauma, Survivors, etc. (Use included logo to find the channel).

**Fairweather Lodge Update** - In 2016, the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) provided funding and partnered with three community providers to give homeless veterans the opportunity to live, gain employment and work on their recovery through the evidence-based model, Fairweather Lodge. The initial grant funded the start-up for four new lodges. This year, through "Money Follows the Person" grant funding, there is an opportunity to fund a new Veterans Fairweather Lodge (VFWL). As the contracted administrative agency, the Venango Training & Development Center, Inc. (VTDC) is coordinating the Request for Proposal process and working with the OMHSAS to expand this project. Deadline for application was 1/31/2021.

## **DHS OMHSAS 988 Planning Grant (1/8/2021 sbm.) – 8 Core Considerations:**

1. Call, text, and chat
2. Sustainability
3. 90% of calls answered in the state
4. Clinical and Performance Standards
5. Stakeholder Involvement
6. Use of County Specific Resource Guides
7. Expand Capacity
8. Messaging Strategy

## **HEAL PA - Healing and Preventing Trauma – 6 key areas:**

1. Ensuring that PA state culture is trauma-informed through universal training
2. Ensuring all state agencies' policies and practices are trauma-informed and more focused on prevention and healing
3. Mandating that all licensed and funded entities become trauma-informed
4. Building and supporting grass roots / community-based efforts to become trauma-informed in every part of the commonwealth
5. Recognizing and healing from the traumas of major crisis like COVID-19
6. Preventing and healing racial, communal and historical traumas, whether they be individual or systemic



## 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

Mayors Challenge – City of Philadelphia SP Task Force

SAMHSA Technical Assistance Learning Seminars

#### **Together With Veterans – Carbon County**

#### **Reach Out PA**

Updated Guidance from the Governor’s Policy Office will be 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 Multi-Service Center

Treatment Court Advocacy Center of Lackawanna County

Valhalla Veterans Services

Jarett Yoder Foundation

Robert m. Jackson Veterans Center

Veterans Place of Washington Blvd

#### **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
Constance Snavelly	State Veterans' Commission, U.S. Army Retired
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 PAARNG)
*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:

- Met with Co-Chair of the Homeless Committee to address the unique vulnerabilities regarding homeless women veterans; ID'd liaisons from both committees to address this growing issue
- Exploring the idea of holding virtual Town Halls on a regular basis to expand our connections with women veterans
- Awaiting development of link for woman-centric info section on PA VETConnect
- Reviewing Women Veterans Outreach Toolkit from CA to adapt for PA
- Reached out to PA VFW Women Veterans Committee chair to discuss upcoming women's retreat and connect on our mutual efforts
- Discussed establishing an annual event for Women's History Month in March

# 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)
Mike Palarino	Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (DMVA)
Norman Marden	Office of the Attorney General
Jessica Penn-Shires	Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS)
Ward Adams	Member at Large
Lisa Grayson, Esq.	Cumberland Co. Courthouse, PA Bar Ass., Military and Veteran Affairs
Lt. Dan Lynch	Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association (PCPA)
Chief Joseph Daly	Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association (PCPA)

## Department of Corrections

### Current Snapshot

- DOC Currently has 2441 *verified* veterans in custody which represents 6.2% of incarcerated population. However, there are likely many more veterans that have not been verified to date.
- There are five Veteran Services Units (hereafter "VSU") within the department; SCI Dallas, SCI Houtzdale, SCI Mercer, SCI Muncy, SCI Phoenix.
- Reports from VSU staff indicate a recidivism rate between 2% and 8% for those that have participated/been released from the program.
- There are more than 120 employees within the department that who have been appointed, or volunteered, to assist with veteran reentry services moving forward.

## Department of Corrections

### Pandemic Pause

- COVID-19 continues to hinder veteran services within state facilities.
- Most VSUs and Veteran Service Offices (hereafter "VSO") are unable to offer services due to COVID restrictions.
- Inmate transfers are limited and there are no VSO placements at this time.
- Currently, the inmate cohort size is 8 within the DOC, limiting veteran service opportunities.
- SCI Houtzdale's VSO continues to move forward due to creation of local programming curriculum that can be printed in packet form and worked on within cells:
  1. Houtzdale staff would like to share this information for possible statewide use
  2. VSO has utilized veteran peer assistants and CPS workers in order to produce workbooks, course outlines and publish their quarterly newsletter, "The Patriot Times"
  3. VSO inmates have remained intact at Houtzdale due to their VSO inmate numbers (170+)



## Department of Corrections

### Pandemic Pause...Positives

- Appointment of a new Statewide Veterans Coordinator; full-time position devoted to the needs of this important population
- Ability to consolidate and update the local veteran coordinator contacts across the commonwealth
- Virtual meetings with statewide contacts in order to address needs and barriers
- Planning sessions and implementation strategies are being completed in order to ensure a smooth(er) transition from pandemic to the "new normal"
- Rather than "reinvent the wheel," the agency will utilize VSU/VSO staff, along with inmate feedback, to identify program strengths and streamline measures; these will then be distributed and applied uniformly statewide
- Whether by appointment ("voluntolds") or personal commitment/desire (volunteers), staff support remains overwhelming from top to bottom, ensuring the rebound, recovery and reclamation of veteran services and programming throughout the agency.

## Department of Corrections

### Short-Term Goals

- Maintain and distribute the verified veteran's list to local coordinators on a quarterly basis
- Implement viable standards for VSU/VSOs until a return to normalcy
- Identify barriers to veteran services from local coordinators and create innovative solutions via strategic planning and information sharing
- Form a VSU/VSO subcommittee that will meet quarterly to ensure veteran services are uniformly and consistently implemented within state facilities
- Distribute VSU program curriculum and packets from SCI Houtzdale to local coordinators statewide for distribution to incarcerated vets in order to maintain/increase engagement levels

## 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, let's maximize our resources
- Reexamine the VSU placement checklist to ensure that we are a more inclusive veteran support agency
- 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 veterans' 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 Courts (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 - support for VTCs and veterans programming:**

- 1) Hosting trainings – Coordinator Symposium March 9-10, regular Lunch & Learn trainings for PSC teams, and training for treatment court judges - Rich Podguski's Motivational Interviewing training on April 15-16.
- 2) Statewide Veterans Treatment Court Virtual Symposium in 2021 with Justice for Vets.
- 3) Awareness Campaign – publications are being developed for MDJ offices (500+) and county courthouses to address early identification, recruit mentors, and raise VTC awareness.
- 4) Reviewing the feasibility of adding veterans/military field to criminal complaints and traffic citations to further the goal of identifying justice-involved veterans.
- 5) Encouraging justice-involved veterans to connect with their VJO specialists:  
<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO.asp>
- 6) Improving AOPC's communication and support for all VTC teams statewide.
- 7) 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.

# PA **VET**Connect



- Program launched on 11/09/2020! [www.dmva.pa.gov/vetconnect](http://www.dmva.pa.gov/vetconnect)
  - Dedicated log in for veterans advocates to collaborate and access the PA VETConnect I&R tool and other tools.
    - Over *1,500 resources, 250 veterans advocates and growing!*
    - Currently 7 Veteran Service Officers from Veteran Service Organizations
    - DMVA Staff
    - County Veterans Affairs Staff
    - VHA and VBA Staff
- Resource Information and Services Enterprise – or RISE PA – an upcoming statewide resource and referral tool integration. Selected Vendor: Aunt Bertha.





## Improve Essential Services for the Veterans Community

Understanding thematic community needs, DMVA applies for funding to assist targeted areas and provides assistance with regional challenges through the cross-agency collaboration of the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services (GAC-VS).



## Identify Appropriate Resources and Referral Mechanism

CDVA/VSO directs veteran to potential resources, ensuring issue resolution. Federal, state, and local veteran advocates are helping to break down silos, increase awareness of services, and educate front-line staff on resources that can address the unmet needs of our service members, veterans and their families.

# PAVETCONNECT

[dmva.pa.gov/VetConnect](http://dmva.pa.gov/VetConnect)



## Identify Individual Veteran Needs and Systemic Veteran Community Trends

County Directors for Veterans Affairs (CDVA)/ Accredited Veteran Service Officer (VSO) assesses veteran's critical needs, and provides area data and trends back to DMVA for analysis.



## Organize Known Resource Information

The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) continually researches, verifies and categorizes resources for more efficient use.



## Create, Enhance and Educate Networks

Regional Program Outreach Coordinators (RPOCs) outreach and build relationships with veteran advocates in their regions, providing assistance, cultural competency, education and awareness of veterans issues and benefits where possible.



**FASTER RESULTS**

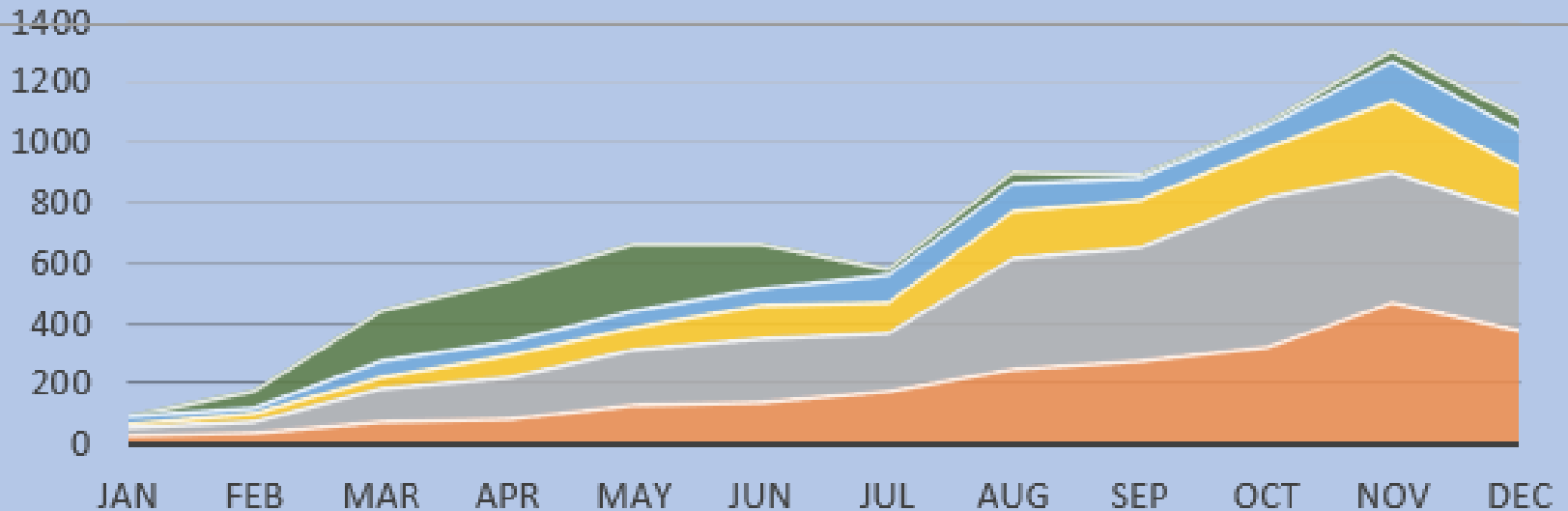


**WIDER NETWORK OF RESOURCES**



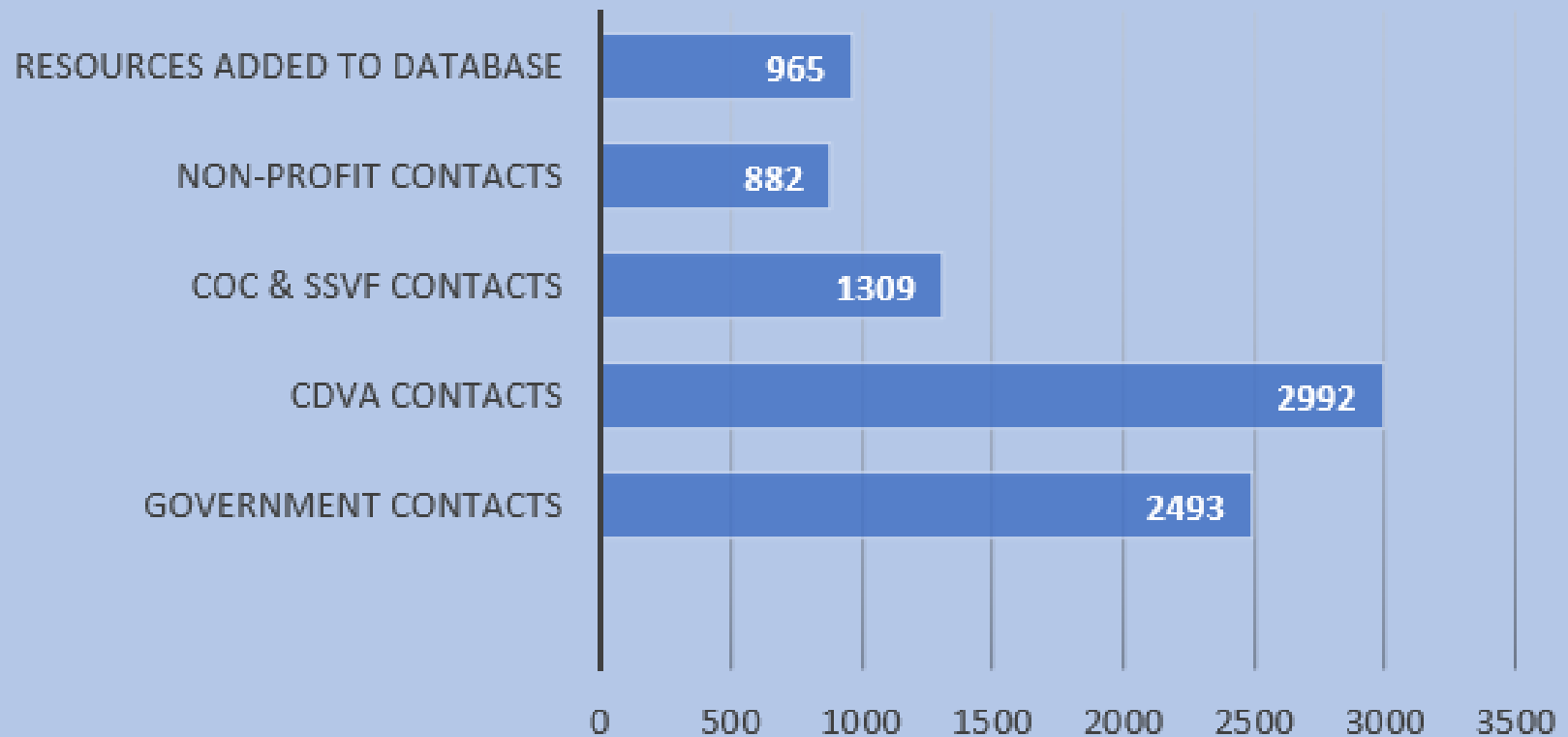
**BETTER SERVICE**

## RPOC Contacts



- Strategic Metrics
- CDVA Contacts Actual
- Non-Profit Contacts Actual
- Government Contacts Actual
- COC & SSVF Contacts Actual
- Resources added to Database Actual

## RPOC Collaboration 2020



Regional Program Outreach Coordinator Weekly/Monthly Performance Metric  
Year 2020/2021

	Performance Metric Title	Year-To-Date		Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Strategic Metrics	Target	Actual						
1	Develop/maintain relationships with Federal, State & County	Target	390	75	60	60	75	60	60
		Actual	1873	178	258	278	331	446	382
2	Meet/ Contact with County Directors	Target	260	50	40	40	50	40	40
		Actual	2247	198	366	383	490	421	389
3	Develop/maintain relationships with Continuum of Care (CoC) & Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)	Target	130	25	20	20	25	20	20
		Actual	973	100	152	154	165	245	157
4	Develop/maintain relationships with Non-Profit Organizations & Community Leaders	Target	260	50	40	40	50	40	40
		Actual	570	90	92	73	73	123	119
5	Develop/maintain relationships with Veteran Service Organizations	Target	105		20	20	25	20	20
		Actual	152		13	20	36	60	23
6	Number of community forums or events attended	Target	130	25	20	20	25	20	20
		Actual	111	9	8	28	29	14	23
7	Develop/maintain relationships with community	Target	0						
		Actual	322	28	35	54	92	61	52
8	Number of Town Hall style meetings attended	Target	130	25	20	20	25	20	20
		Actual	50	6	3	8	7	7	19
9	Number of resources vetted and/or added to database	Target	650	125	100	100	125	100	100
		Actual	165	21	43	10	15	30	46
10	Number of subject matter experts added to training	Target	130	25	20	20	25	20	20
		Actual	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
11	Number of advisory council/group meetings	Target	130	25	20	20	25	20	20
		Actual	162	20	31	23	21	30	37
12	Number of veterans and/or families provided direct service	Target	390	75	60	60	75	60	60
		Actual	139	13	19	18	28	25	36
13	Number of follow-ups with veterans and/or families	Target	260	50	40	40	50	40	40
		Actual	67	9	9	10	10	9	20
14	Develop/maintain relationships with Faith-Based Organizations	Target	130	25	20	20	25	20	20
		Actual	18	2	1	2	4	5	4
15	Possible funding resources identified	Target	130	25	20	20	25	20	20
		Actual	6	1	1	1	0	0	3

RPOC Metrics for  
Year-to-Date

## OVA Annual Report 2020/2021

	Performance Metric Title	Year- To- Date Total	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
	<b>Strategic Metrics</b>							
1	Federal Government Agencies							
	State Government Agencies							
	County & Local Government Agencies							
	Monthly Totals	2178	128	291	380	452	476	451
2	Meet/ Contact with County Directors	2080	76	264	398	514	428	400
3	Continuum of Care (CoC), Coordinated Entry System (CES), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)	892	74	127	124	165	245	157
4	Leaders	787	232	104	129	76	127	119
5	Veteran Service Organizations	274		54	58	48	81	33
6	Community forums, events and outreach	242	55	68	30	37	27	25
7	Community providers/agencies	349	55	34	54	92	61	53
8	Town Hall style meetings/SVC, GAC-VS, etc	899	253	166	92	197	116	75
9	Number of resources vetted and/or added to database	215	76	41	10	11	31	46
10	Number of subject matter experts added to training database	23	22	0	1	0	0	0
11	Advisory council/group meetings	265	44	59	52	34	34	42
12	Number of veterans and/or families provided direct service	694	25	70	83	268	128	120
13	Number of follow-ups with veterans and/or families	573	56	55	53	148	138	123
14	Faith-Based Organizations	39	21	2	2	5	5	4
15	Possible funding resources identified	4	0	0	1	0	0	3
16	Other	7	2	0	0	5	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9521</b>	<b>1119</b>	<b>1335</b>	<b>1467</b>	<b>2052</b>	<b>1897</b>	<b>1651</b>

[OVA Monthly Combined Metrics Year-to-Date.](#)

## RESOURCES WITHIN DATABASE

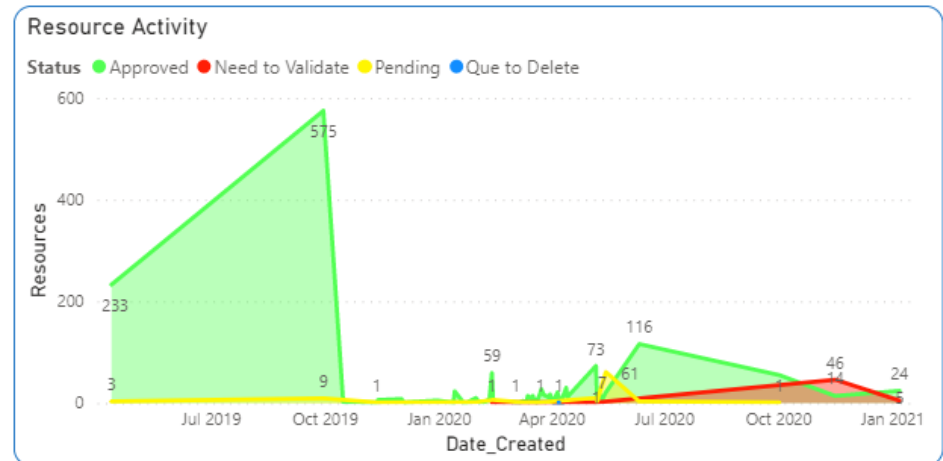
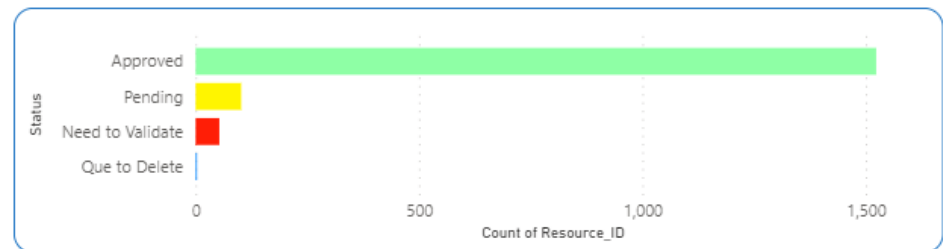
### Totals / Regional Totals

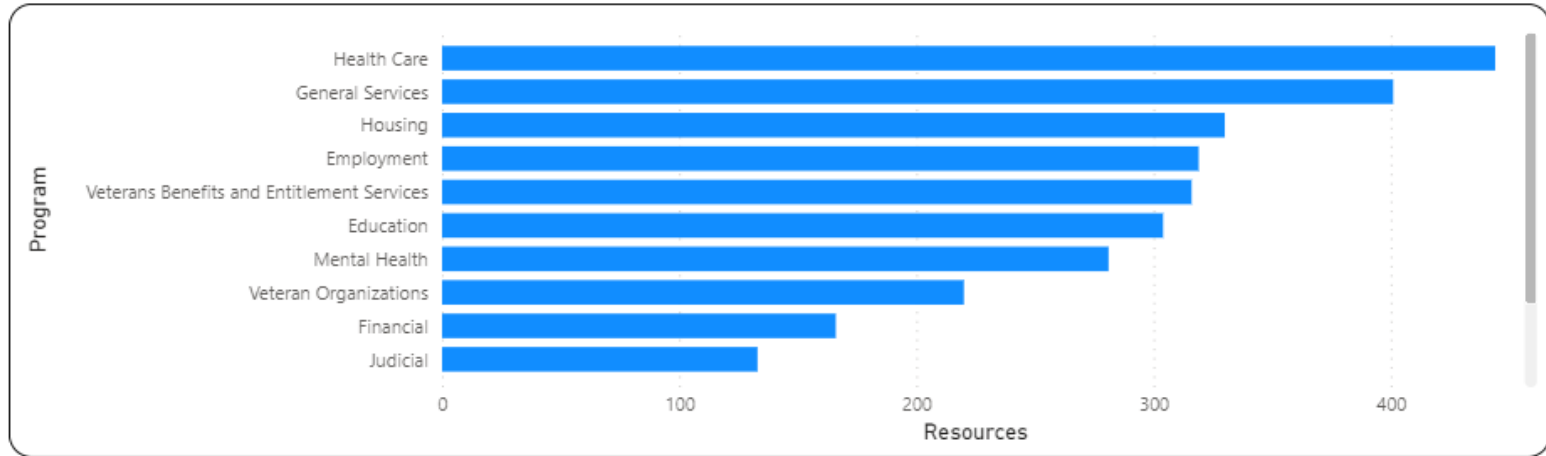
**1679**  
Total in System

**1523**  
Approved

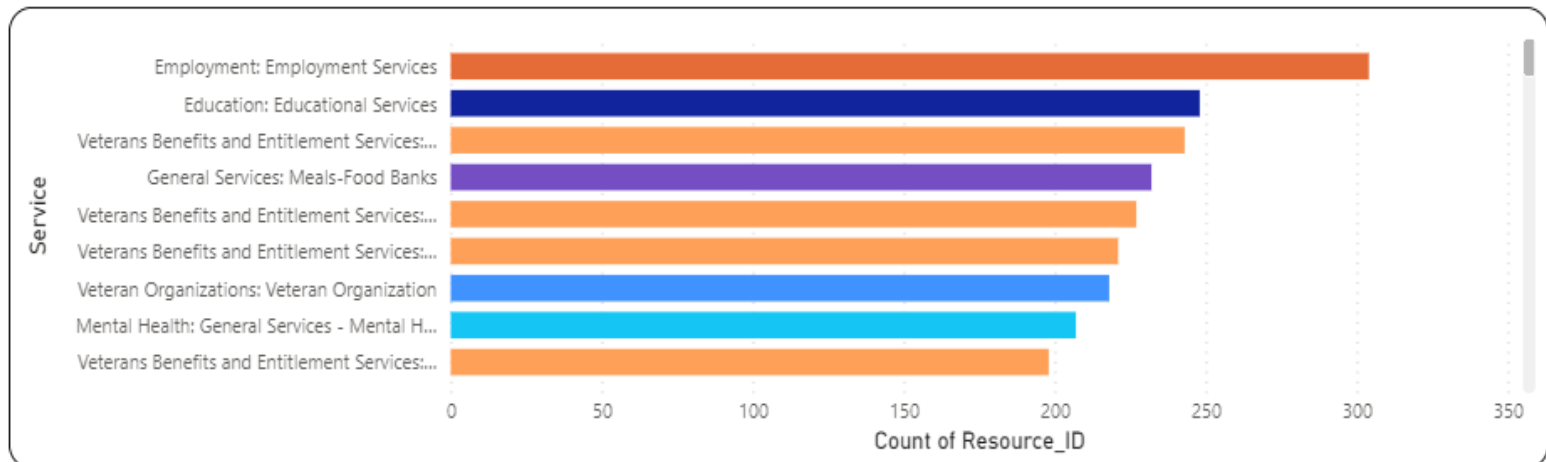
Status	Resources
Approved	1523
Need to Validate	53
Pending	102
Que to Delete	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1679</b>

### Resource Data Entry Activity





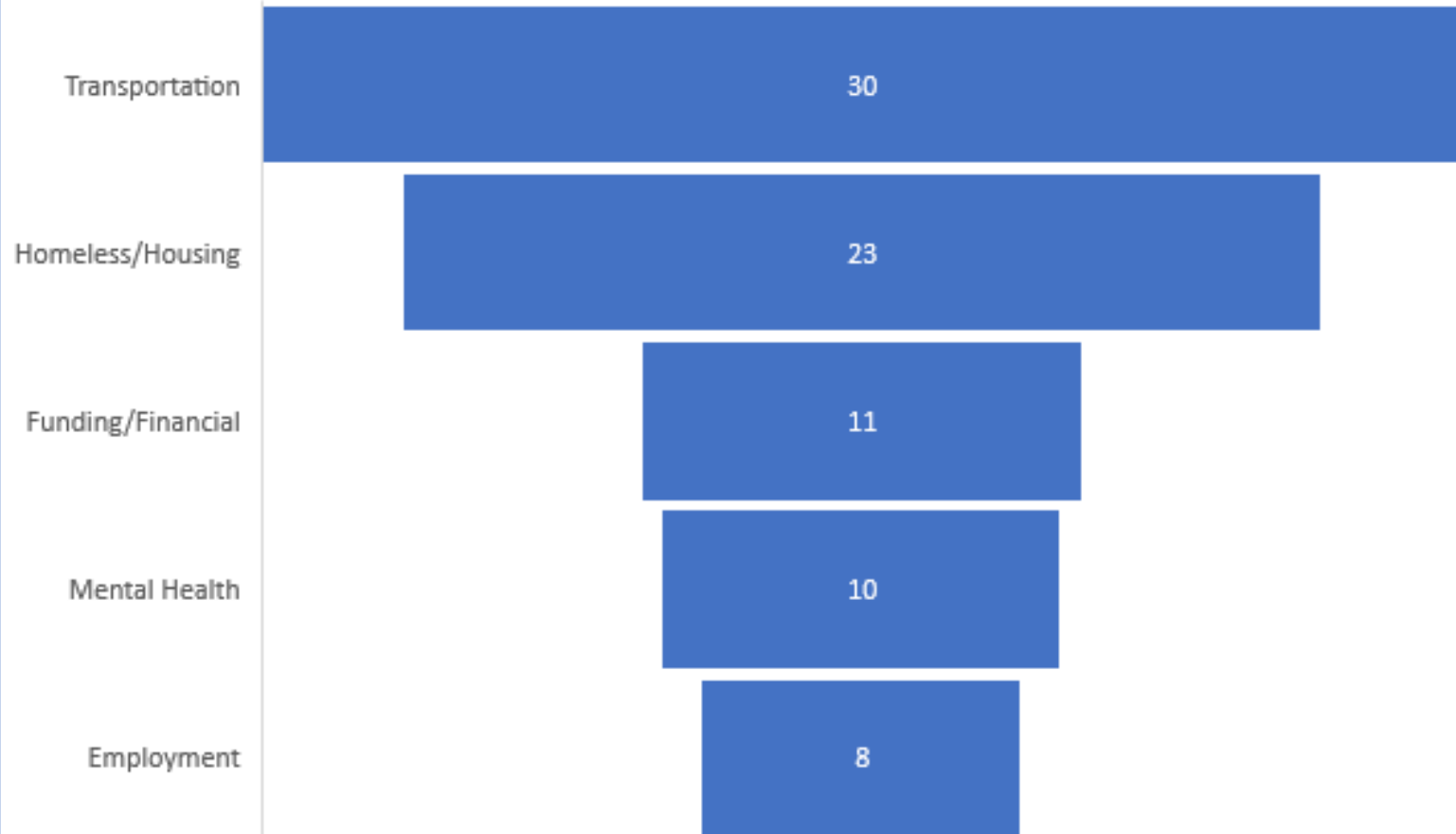
## Top Ten Programs With Resources In Database



## Top Nine Services With Resources In Database



## County Survey and Tracking Results



- “PA VETConnect is a best practice for other states to follow.”  
-**Dr. Paul Lawrence, Former Under Secretary of Benefits, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**
- “My office uses the PA VETConnect frequently to assist the more than 20,000 veterans in our county. The program is efficiently able to “drill down” to find helpful organizations that can help with a huge number of issues. We have gone from telling veterans and their families to try someplace else, to having points of contact at specific offices to get the help that is needed. Thank you for this invaluable resource!”  
-**Cumberland County VA Director**
- “The PA VETConnect and RPOCs are critical to ensuring county-level and regional success. Working in the Greater Philadelphia Area, PA DMVA’s efforts to create an infrastructure to connect resources within our communities is absolutely welcome and has been sorely needed for some time. As more service members continue to transition, we look forward to building out the future for veteran transition and support by increasing collaborating with veteran organizations across the board.”  
-**Philadelphia County VA Director**

- “As a regular user, we have been very pleased with the PA VETConnect Tool offered by the PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (PA DMVA) since its launch. The tool allows for an extensive and thorough list of resources and programs offered by county or region in Pennsylvania based on the individual needs of the veteran or their family. As a VSO, I have been able to identify and share resources quickly with veterans and their families, sometimes sharing resources of which I was not initially aware. The informative search results can also be shared with the veteran in a comprehensive excel spreadsheet report directly to their email address.”

**-Berks County VA Director**

- “The PA VETConnect program has been a great asset to our office. This will stop the veterans from having a difficult time finding the resources when they move back to any town USA. They will have everything they need at their fingertips. We also like the idea of having the RPOC in our back pocket for guidance and helping with all veteran matters. “

**-County Veteran Service Officer from Region 2**

# **NEW BUSINESS/ GOOD OF THE ORDER**

# **NEXT MEETING:**

**MAY 19 at 1:00PM**

**WEBEX Virtual Session**