

JLC Point Paper
Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP)

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To sustain base funding for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program and to approve an additional full-time position.

2. **BACKGROUND (for additional background information, see Attachment 1):**
 - The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) was unanimously enacted by the General Assembly in 2008 in response to the growing need to improve and expand services to our nation's veterans and their families. It is operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services in cooperation with the other governmental agencies.
 - The VWWP supports veterans of all wars and their families on their road to recovery from the effects of stress related injuries, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as traumatic brain injuries.
 - Five regional VWWP consortia have been established consisting of brain injury and other service providers, area Community Services Boards, and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) providers.
 - The VWWP's first year was devoted to building infrastructure, increasing awareness of PTSD and TBI in the behavioral health community, and getting \$1.7 million in funding into the hands of service providers at the local level.
 - At the end of its first year, VWWP has three primary messaging goals:
 - To increase program visibility for sustainability.
 - Communicating Virginia's ongoing commitment to the quality of life for veterans and building a long-term vision for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program.
 - Trust building with DVS employees and partners.

3. **DISCUSSION (for further discussion, see Attachment 2):**
 - The first year of operation has been devoted to building quality, sustainable administrative and service support at both the state and local levels, educating communities about the program, and serving as many veterans and families as possible.
 - The General Assembly provided funding of \$2.4 million for the first year of program start-up and \$2 million to sustain the program and implementation in FY10.
 - Data collection regarding services being provided to veterans and their families in the community has begun; this was no small feat since data-sharing among disparate provider groups is difficult at best.
 - As a result of the VWWP efforts, unprecedented collaborations and partnerships have been established within the state, Department of Defense, the USDVA and local communities.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly ensure that the funding for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program in the amount of \$2 million for each fiscal year 2011 and 2012 remains in the base funding of the Department of Veterans Services.

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ATTACHMENT 1 – BACKGROUND

- The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) was unanimously enacted by the General Assembly in 2008 in response to the growing need to improve and expand services to our nation's veterans and their families. Operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department of Rehabilitative Services, this program has met or exceeded all implementation goals set forth in the original plan. In addition to the legislatively mandated partnership of these three state departments, the Adjutant General of the National Guard and the Veterans Healthcare Administration network director for Virginia have signed an interagency agreement and are active members of the VWWP Executive Strategy Committee.

- The VWWP supports the following persons on their road to recovery from the effects of stress related injuries, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as traumatic brain injuries:
 - Veterans of any era who are Virginia residents.
 - Members of the Virginia National Guard not in active federal service.
 - Virginia residents in the Armed Forces Reserve Components not in active federal service.
 - Family members of veterans and service members in the above categories.

- **Organization:** Five regional VWWP consortia have been established consisting of brain injury and other service providers, area Community Services Boards, and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) providers. All five consortia have received VWWP funding through a competitive grant process and are strengthening services in their local area that may include: case management; outpatient treatment; rehabilitative services; family support and linkage to other services such as benefits, housing, employment and education. These newly organized and functional consortia have been sorely needed to effectively and efficiently serve our veterans and their families. By USDVA estimates Virginia has moved up from eighth to seventh in veterans population among the states with an estimated veterans population of 819,490, as of September 30, 2009, and will hold relatively steady through fiscal year 2013.

- The VWWP's first year was devoted to building infrastructure, increasing awareness of PTSD and TBI in the behavioral health community, and getting \$1.7 million in funding into the hands of service providers at the local level so they can increase capacity and access to treatment and other support services for veterans with PTSD and TBI.

- At the end of its first year, VWWP has three primary messaging goals:
 - The first goal, to increase program visibility for sustainability, is critical for continued funding, increased participation by behavioral health and other service providers, fund raising, and support within the veterans community and by the general public.

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- The second goal, communicating Virginia's ongoing commitment to the quality of life for veterans and building a long-term vision for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, dovetails with the first and broadens the program's scope and reach by making it representative of statewide support for veterans and their families.
- The third goal, trust building with DVS employees and partners, focuses on continuing to build and strengthen the program's infrastructure, access to resources, and strong working relationships with program partners to ensure seamless and transparent service and care for veterans and their families.

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ATTACHMENT 2 – DISCUSSION

- The first year of operation has been devoted to building quality, sustainable administrative and service support at both the state and local levels, educating communities about the program, and serving as many veterans and families as possible. In April 2009, through a competitive grant process, the VWWP infused \$1.7 million into these newly established regional consortia of service providers to generate and expand behavioral health and rehabilitative services across the state.
- The General Assembly provided funding of \$2.4 million for the first year of program start-up and \$2 million for program sustaining and implementation in FY10 and beyond. To augment that funding, aggressive pursuit of grants and other funding streams have been explored with some early success.
 - Recently, a grant was secured through the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education's Partnership for People with Disabilities. The grant, worth \$398,700, enables the Partnership to be the training arm for the VWWP over the next three years. Initial training for community service providers within each of the five regions will be completed by the end of September 2009 with a statewide conference planned for February 2010.
 - Other grant applications are pending approval.
- Data collection regarding services being provided to veterans and their families in the community has begun; this was no small feat since data sharing among disparate provider groups is difficult at best. As the program matures, so will the quality of data captured. The VWWP has partnered with Virginia Tech which is conducting a state-wide needs assessment to help target the gaps of services for our veteran population. Results of that survey should be available in early 2010.
- Fully develop a Communication Plan that will:
 - Increase program visibility for sustainability.
 - Communicate ongoing commitment to quality of life for veterans and build long term vision for the VWWP to include need for continual funding.
 - Trust building with DVS employees and partners.
 - This Plan is near full development (Goal – December 31, 2009) and is in the process of concurrent execution
- As a result of the VWWP efforts, unprecedented collaborations and partnerships have been established within the state, Department of Defense, the USDVA and local communities. The value of having a quality and sustainable VWWP for our veterans is profound. The VWWP is the principal, coordinated, Wounded Warrior program that is supported by the Commonwealth. One out of every ten citizens in Virginia is a veteran. The frequency of deployments since the start of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, coupled with the known potential delay of onset of symptoms associated with combat stress and brain injury, makes sustaining of this effort essential if we are to meet the behavioral health and service demands of this population.

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