



# 2013 ANNUAL REPORT



THE VIRGINIA WOUNDED WARRIOR PROGRAM VISION

*Enhancing the quality of life for Virginia's  
veterans, service members and their families.*



*Catherine Wilson, Deputy Commissioner and Executive Director, Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, Virginia Department of Veterans Services*

July 2013 marked the fifth anniversary of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program. In five short years, we have served over 17,000 Virginia veterans and family members providing countless hours of community service and connections to healthcare, behavioral healthcare, rehabilitative services and support. We have accomplished this with the support and collaboration of the Governor, Virginia General Assembly, community partners, sister state agencies, veterans services organizations and federal agencies. I am most proud of the men and women who serve with our Regional Consortia across the Commonwealth. These professionals, most of whom are veterans or military spouses, meet Virginia veterans and families at times when they are most vulner-

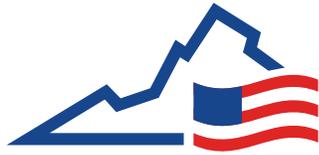
able and in need of assistance; often that is when they are returning home to their former lives and communities after deployment. Depending on the issue, it can be very difficult for military service members to ask for help, and it takes a great deal of courage to reach out for support and assistance. The VWWP regional teams make it easier because they understand the struggle and the sacrifice, and they have devoted their professional lives to ensuring that no Virginia veteran is left behind. Our staff members provide care coordination and case management that does not quit until the issue is resolved or the problem is addressed.

This year is the last year of service for one of our “plankowners,” Regional Director Jim Thur. Jim has been with us since the inception of the VWWP, participating in planning and organizational meetings even prior to its full execution. Among his numerous contributions: he has helped build and improve relationships with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; was instrumental in developing the effort to end veteran homelessness in Virginia; and was a leader in the development of our Data Management System. We will miss Jim. His positive impact will benefit Virginia veterans and their families for years to come.



*VWWP Regional Director, Jim Thur*

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**Virginia Wounded Warrior Program**  
Virginia Department of Veterans Services

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As we say a fond farewell to Jim, we welcome our Housing Development team, Brandi Jancaitis and Matt Leslie. As leaders of this important area of VWWP focus, they have already had a positive impact on the health and well being of our homeless and at-risk for homelessness veteran population in a very short period of time. We also welcome two new Regional Directors, Carol Berg and Shane Fletcher for Greater Hampton Roads and Southwest Virginia, respectively. VWWP continues to be blessed with knowledgeable, talented and passionate individuals who continue to pay it forward to a community we love.

Lastly, my gratitude goes to Martha Mead for her incredible work on this voluntary Annual Progress Report, our VWWP grant pursuit and the numerous special projects she takes on. Martha and the talent of this incredible team, combined with the continued support from our Commonwealth's leadership and General Assembly, is what makes Virginia a leader when it comes to military and veteran support.

*With Gratitude and respect,*

*Catherine A. Wilson, Executive Director*

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On October 18, 2013, under a beautiful afternoon sky and the serene majesty of the Virginia War Memorial Shrine of Memory, the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program celebrated its Fifth Anniversary. Governor Robert F. McDonnell praised the program, its leadership and its staff. In a Proclamation issued under his hand, Governor McDonnell said, “the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program is recognized across the Commonwealth for including a safety net of healthcare, behavioral healthcare, rehabilitation and community support services for not just veterans, but members of the Virginia National Guard and Reserves and their families.” Calling VWWP a “national model”, Governor McDonnell stated that the program has served over 17,000 veterans and family members in the past 5 years.

Commissioner Paul Galanti, said, “This program has gone from nothing to world class in 5 years. The reason the program has been so successful in such a short period of time is that it’s a good program!” Deputy Commissioner and Executive Director, Catherine Wilson, recognized and praised the staff of VWWP who work tirelessly across the state to connect veterans and their families to services. She said, “The VWWP is second to none. It is comprised of a group of people who have so much passion and devotion to taking care of our men and women who have worn the uniform. We now support veterans and families who may be at risk of homelessness or who are homeless. We support veterans involved with the criminal justice system with the goal of preventing incarceration. We reach out into communities, in person and virtually, to encourage veterans and their families to seek help early, to take advantage of the healthcare and behavioral healthcare available to them.”



*Governor McDonnell, Deputy Commissioner, Catherine Wilson and Commissioner, Paul Galanti*

## **VWWP MISSION**

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## **VWWP VISION**

*Enhancing the quality of life for Virginia’s veterans, service members and their families.*

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If a picture is worth a thousand words, the following picture of the entire VWWP statewide team illustrates the growth and professionalism of the team in five short years. The VWWP was established by legislation and funding in 2008. The Executive Director came on board at the end of August. By December, the leadership team comprised the Executive Director, the Special Projects Coordinator, an Executive Assistant and three Regional Directors. After distributing the majority of funding to the five localities for the establishment of Regional Consortia, the regional structure formed with dedicated staff and local infrastructure. Today the program boasts 38 staff statewide, including Resource, Family Support, Reentry and Housing Specialists. Four Regional Directors now lead the progress in the regions.

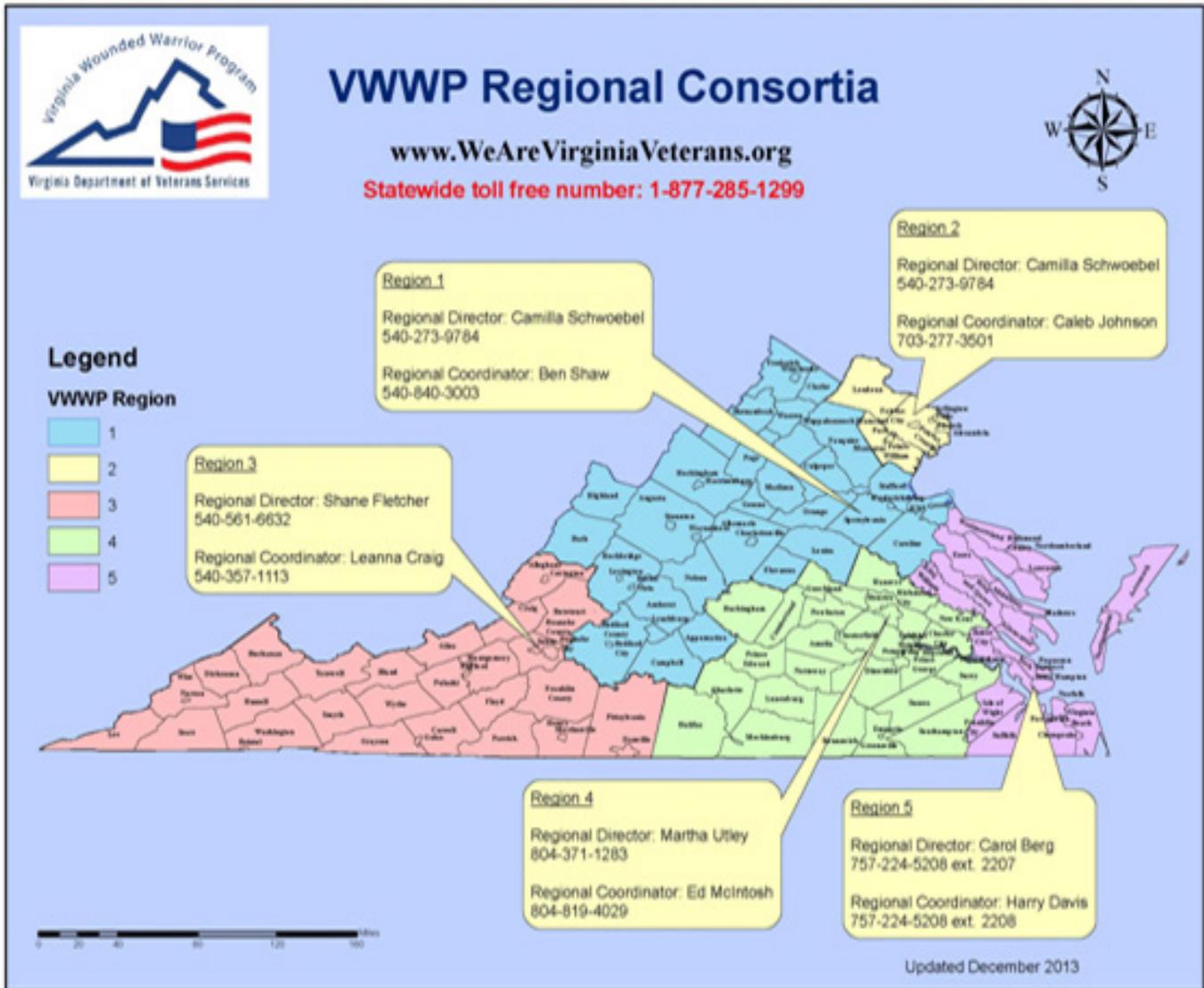


*VWWP Regional Consortia at the Fifth Anniversary Celebration, October 18, 2013*

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The chart below shows the regional consortia boundaries across the Commonwealth and lists contact information for both the Regional Directors and Coordinators.



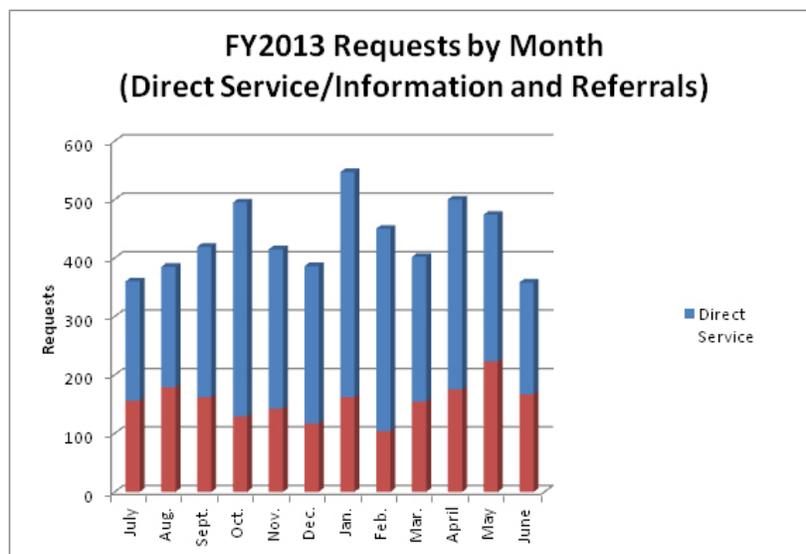
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VWWP has grown into a statewide delivery and response system for behavioral health, rehabilitative, and support services for veterans, service members and their families. The regional consortia serve all counties and cities in the state and address a wide array of health and wellness issues. Veterans do not have to be wounded physically to be eligible for care-coordination services. The VWWP provides comprehensive assessment of individual and family needs; direct referral and linkages to needed services including behavioral healthcare, veterans' benefits, disability compensation, housing, employment and other public and private assistance programs. Peer and family support groups, resilience-focused training, events for veteran couples and families, and specialized outreach and assistance to particularly vulnerable veterans including homeless (or at risk) are available. Assistance is provided also to incarcerated veterans preparing for reentry from local jails and state prisons.

An Interagency Executive Strategy Committee composed of the heads of the veterans, human services, employment and public safety agencies in Virginia state government as well as the Adjutant General of Virginia and the Director of VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6) provide policy guidance and resources for the program.

The VWWP Executive Team has successfully fostered extensive partnerships at the federal, state and local levels to expand awareness of services for veterans and families and to generate additional resources. Each region has a network of mental health professionals, case managers, and specialists who are available to work with veterans and their families connecting them to services in their areas. In state fiscal year (SFY) 2013 (July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013) the VWWP provided 5381 individual services to 2444 veterans and family members across the Commonwealth. The following chart illustrates the total information and referral services and total direct services provided.



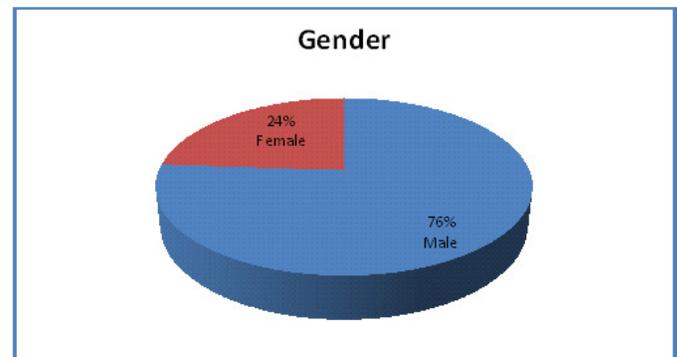
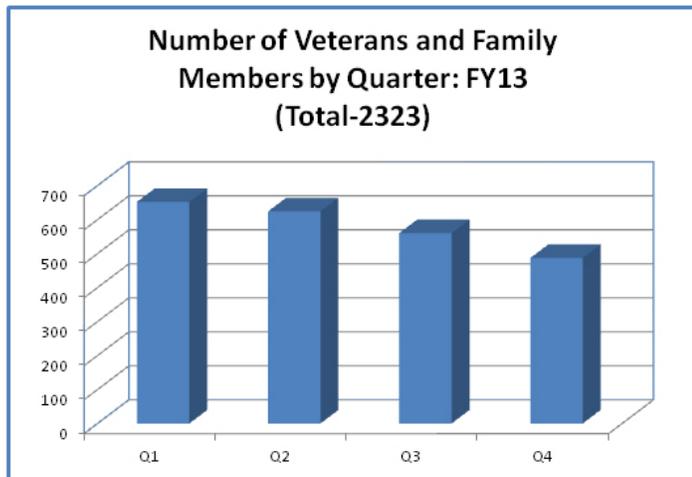
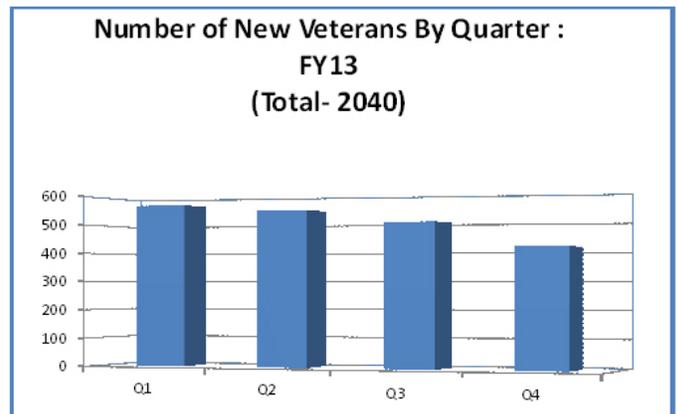
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Since its inception, VWWP has worked to improve data collection and management. Development of an automated Data Management System (DMS) has enabled the Executive Team to analyze services data for performance management and quality improvement. Fiscal year 2013 was devoted to ensuring the quality of data input and integrity. Training staff for data entry, and the refinement and testing of the system were all essential activities. The VWWP Team will continue to refine the system in fiscal year 2014.

## NEW CLIENTS

Utilizing the DMS, VWWP tracks new veterans and families served, reflecting the focus on services to families. Below are charts showing, by quarter, the numbers of new veterans and family members served, and the gender of the new clients (veterans only) served by the regional teams.



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Community Services Boards (CSBs) track the numbers of active duty military, veterans and family members that they serve regardless of whether the individual is a client of VWWP. The following chart shows these numbers. VWWP believes that these numbers may be under-counted because many people do not identify themselves as veterans. Family members may not identify their service-related connections as well.

**Active Duty Members, National Guardsmen, Reservists, Veterans Served or  
Their Family Members Served By Community Services Board**

	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Active Duty Members, National Guardsmen, Reservists or Veterans Served	3096	4050	4442	4601
Family Members Served	540	928	931	931
Total	3636	4978	5373	5532

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*Brandi Jancaitis, Director of Housing Development for Veterans, and Matt Leslie, Associate Director*

This year brought the addition of two seasoned professionals to the Department of Veterans Services and the addition of a housing development focus that addresses affordable housing needs, housing instability and homelessness among veterans and their families. Brandi Jancaitis who previously served as Lead Case Manager in VWWP Region 4 (Central and Southside) became Director of Housing Development for Veterans. Matthew Leslie, previously Policy Analyst for the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development was hired as Associate Director. The addition of staff specific to ending veteran homelessness represents DVS and VWWP's commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable Virginia veterans.

In 2010, the Joint Legislative and Audit Review Committee (JLARC) released a report entitled, "Reducing Veteran Homeless in Virginia," that recommended collaboration among state agencies, and Continuum of Care (CoCs) to improve advocacy, access to treatment and supportive services, and targeting resources for veterans. VWWP's new housing development team is actively working to ensure that the vision of ending veteran homelessness becomes a reality.

This partnership provided VWWP with homeless services and housing development expertise from the local level as well as from the state level. Quickly establishing the parameters of their office, the Director and Associate Director set about to strategically plan how to end veteran homelessness in Virginia, reflecting the goal of the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Eric K. Shenseki, to end veteran homelessness in the U.S. by 2015. Their focus is coordination of federal, state, and local resources for at risk and homeless veterans. They also advocate for policies and services to support the overall affordable housing needs of Virginia veterans. The housing development team plays an active role in the Homeless Outcomes Coordinating Council (HOCC), an interagency work group comprised of all of the major partners at the state and local level identified in the JLARC Report. The team assists the DVS Commissioner to provide a constant presence for the agency in the HOCC and leadership of homeless veteran service initiatives. The team serves on all of the HOCC subcommittees, addressing key issues including: mental health and substance abuse services access, statewide data collection, discharge policies, supportive services, and workforce development to ensure that homeless veterans are at the forefront in all service areas.

Early in their tenure they set about enhancing the awareness of all service areas within DVS regarding the problem of veteran homelessness in Virginia, including the problem of veterans and families who are only one step away from homelessness, i.e., at risk.

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Definitions of homelessness among the veteran community and the general population include four major categories that are critical to determining service delivery:

- **(1) literally homeless (unsheltered)**, those living in places not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport or camp ground;
- **(2) literally homeless (sheltered)**, a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, including hotels, motels, congregate shelters, transitional housing or hospitals (if the person was unsheltered prior to entry);
- **(3) imminently losing their housing** defined as housing loss in 14 days for an individual or family; and
- **(4) unstably housed or at-risk of homelessness**, meaning that the individual or family may have one or more temporary housing options but lack the resources or support necessary to retain or obtain permanent housing.

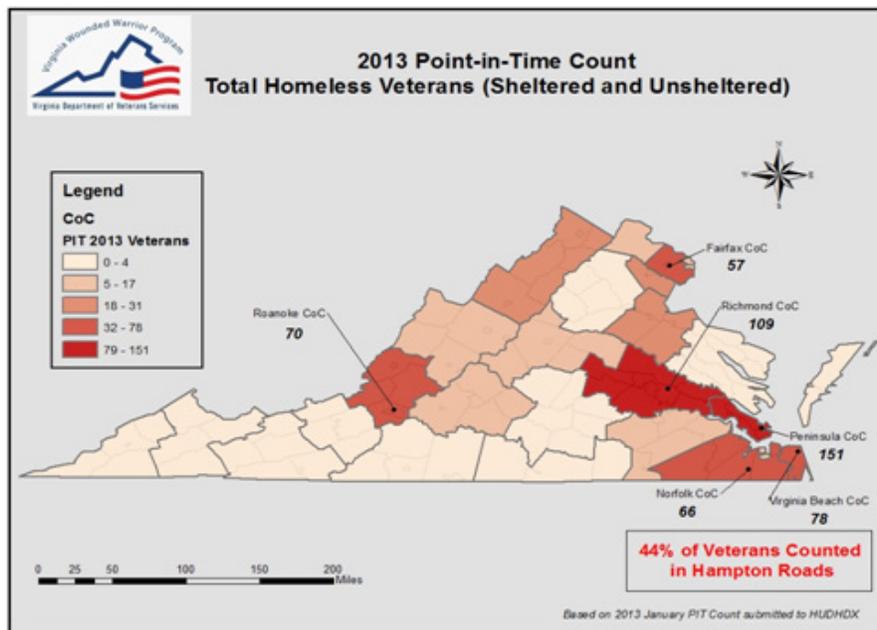
The team identified a range of solutions for each of these categories including shelter, rapid re-housing<sup>1</sup> and permanent supportive housing (eg. HUD-VASH<sup>2</sup>) resources for those identified as literally homeless whether sheltered or unsheltered. The housing development team advocates for a Housing First approach to veteran homelessness, in that veterans are housed as quickly as possible and then support services are provided as needed. The Housing First model ensures that there is an immediate and primary focus on helping individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing. For those imminently at risk or unstably housed and at-risk, the primary solutions are prevention, shelter, and rapid re-housing. The challenge in Virginia is how to bring those solutions and resources to bear for the right veterans and families at the right time. The housing development team provides statewide data and technical assistance to CoCs and other local providers to assist in identifying at risk and homeless veterans and for targeting resources.

A major strategy is identifying and eliminating the barriers to permanent housing for veterans and their families. These barriers include lack of sufficient or livable income (employment and/or disability, insufficient education, financial difficulties, health and behavioral healthcare issues with insufficient access to treatment, shortage of affordable housing, lack of family or community supports, inability to navigate the criminal justice system and the increasing need for targeted community support. It is critical that veterans facing these challenges link with available treatment and supportive services to prevent their situations from deteriorating.

<sup>1</sup> Rapid Re-Housing: the practice of focusing resources on helping families and individuals quickly move out of homelessness and into permanent housing, usually in the private market. Services include housing search and landlord negotiation, short-term financial and rental assistance, and the delivery of home-based housing stabilization services, as needed.

<sup>2</sup> HUD-VASH voucher: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development housing subsidy combined with VA case management.

According to the 2013 Virginia Point in Time (PIT) count that provides a snapshot of homelessness statewide, 719 Virginia veterans were homeless on a single night in January 2013, of those 66 were female. The homeless veteran population accounts for 17% of the total homeless adult population in Virginia. Ninety-four (94) veterans were living in places not meant for human habitation, and 625 were living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs. Annually, it is estimated that 3-5 times the number of veterans in the PIT count experience homelessness. During 2013, in Richmond, Virginia alone, at least 336 veterans accessed emergency and transitional housing due to homelessness. Many more are at risk of homelessness. These individuals have complex services needs and often need hands-on assistance to navigate housing and supportive services. Their needs include complex medical and mental health needs, the need for legal assistance with discharge upgrades, financial arrears, fines and court fees. They also need help with family issues such as childcare and family counseling. A major concern is employment. Unemployment and underemployment is high among this population. VWWP is working to enhance community support to assist Virginia veterans with sustaining permanent affordable housing for themselves and their families. The following map illustrates the locations of homeless veterans in Virginia. It is important to note that homelessness may look very different in rural areas. Individuals who may not have a permanent residence may be staying with friends, relatives, local faith-based organizations, etc., and may not show up in the PIT counts. These areas cannot be neglected in addressing the needs of homeless veterans and their families.



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The DVS, VWWP Housing Development Team is building strong alliances with the Continuums of Care (CoCs)<sup>3</sup> and with local homeless, housing, and support services coalitions, organizations and agencies. These agencies have expressed a willingness to work with VWWP to assist and connect veterans and their families to community resources and services. Research supports this integrated approach to reaching homeless veterans and preventing the downward spiral of those who might be at risk. In a recent study, researchers confirm that among veterans, risk factors for homelessness include unemployment, disability, poor physical health, psychiatric disorders, substance use disorders, and negative childhood experiences.<sup>4</sup> The housing development team works closely with the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness, the state's homeless coalition, and area CoCs to provide information on veteran specific resources, improve counts of homeless veterans, and encourage CoCs to take an active role in ending veteran homelessness, mirroring the federal goal.

The VA offers a number of programs designed to prevent and end veteran homelessness, including; Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF); HUD-VASH vouchers; the Grant and Per Diem program for transitional housing; Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV Coordinators and Homeless Services Teams at the VA medical centers); Healthcare for Reentry Veterans; the Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative; and Domiciliary Care. Other essential services provided by the VA include Compensated Work Therapy that assists homeless veterans to return to work and the Homeless Veteran Supported Employment program. The VA also offers the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans 1-877-424-3838 that refers individuals and professionals to local resources. The U.S. Department of Labor funds programs via the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP). Grantees provide assessment of employment needs, intensive employment case management and support services for homeless veterans. Virginia has one HVRP grantee in Richmond. The DVS Veteran Housing Development Team trains VWWP Resource Specialists to link veterans to these essential services and to Virginia state agencies that provide supportive services and referrals, such as the Virginia Employment Commission and the Virginia Department of Corrections. The Housing Development team encourages community providers to apply for federal grants to enhance housing services and provides technical assistance and letters of support to increase the resources available to Virginia veterans.

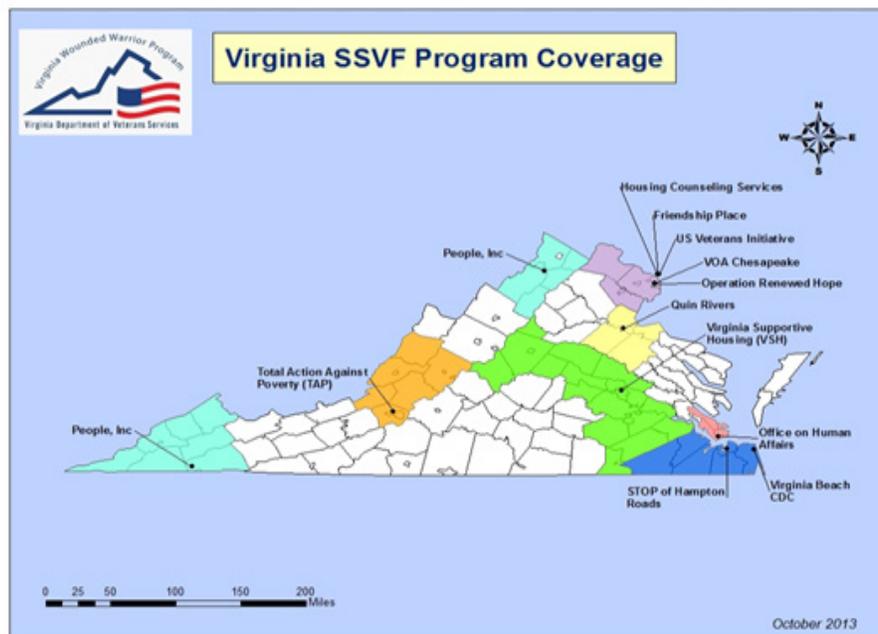
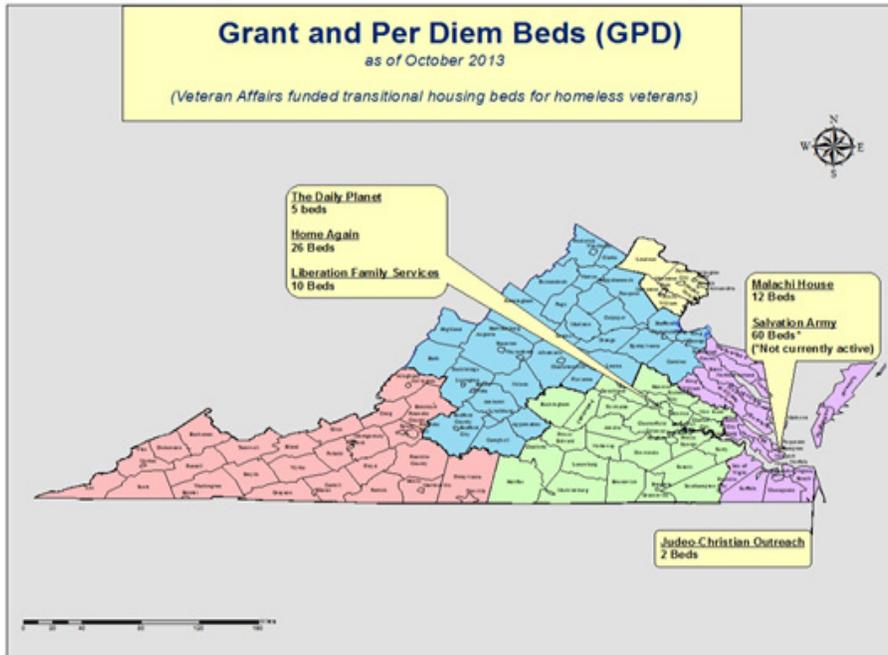
<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development mandated local planning bodies for homeless and housing services. There are 16 in Virginia.

<sup>4</sup> Tsai, et. al., Latent Homeless Risk Profiles of a National Sample of Homeless Veterans and their Relation to Program Referral and Admission Patterns, American Journal of Public Health, October 22, 2013.

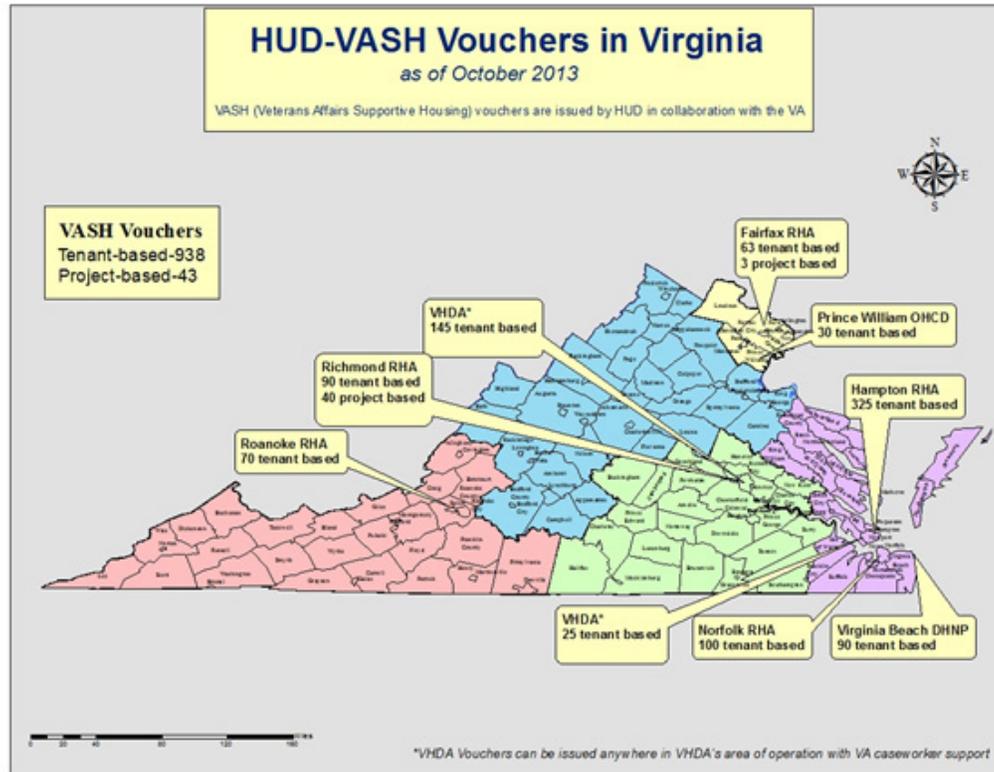
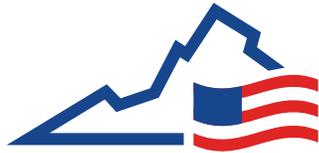


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The maps that follow show the VA and HUD funded housing initiatives currently operating in Virginia.



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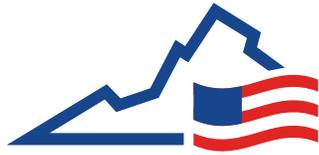


The same study cited earlier found that for veterans in the study sample who connected with the VA homeless services teams noted above, the most common initial point of contact was through self-referrals and street or community outreach. This supports the outreach and hands-on care coordination services of VWWP to alert veterans and their families to available services and decrease access barriers they may encounter. Other referrals occurred through contact with the criminal justice system and hospital emergency rooms. The housing development team is working to expand VWWP's existing regional staff to include Housing Resource Specialists (HRS) to assist unstably housed or homeless veterans and families with obtaining and maintaining permanent housing and supportive services. The VWWP HRSs will provide targeted outreach to at risk and homeless veterans and work closely with area jails, prisons, and hospitals to assist with housing and support services linkages during critical transitions from medical and/or psychiatric care, the jail or prison system.

Among the goals of the Housing Development Team are to:

- To enhance direct homeless and housing services delivery through VWWP with the creation of Housing Resource Specialists positions dispersed throughout the Regional Consortia. The HRS positions will address the basic needs of veterans and families for food, shelter and safety and to link to employment, community support and permanent housing.

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- Provide a full-time Reentry Coordinator for VWWP to address the needs of veterans reentering communities from jails and prisons.
- Enhance partnerships with the VA Medical Centers and Veterans Integrated Services Networks that serve Virginia.
- Collaborate with federal homeless program grantees for expanding services to Virginia veterans and families.
- Collaborate with other state agencies that address homelessness among the general population.
- Coordinate direct services implementation and technical assistance for veterans and their families who need assistance with housing, and
- Develop targeted veteran housing development training and collaboratives for Virginia localities.

## **MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES: FOCUS ON STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AND FAMILY WELL-BEING**

On May 21, 2013, VWWP partnered with faculty from Virginia Commonwealth University and the Virginia Commission on Youth to host the 2013 Virginia Family Impact Seminar. The Seminars, held annually, are a series of briefing reports and discussion sessions for state policy makers. The seminars provide non-partisan, solution-oriented research on family issues. Collaboratively, the partners brought in three nationally renowned social science and military researchers, Dr. Robert Rosenheck, Dr. Bradford Booth and Dr. Mady Segal.

The researchers presented information for military and veteran family support programs and homeless veteran services, emphasizing the importance of program evaluation. Key state legislators, including Delegates Kirk Cox, Robert Brink, Betsy Carr, Chris Peace, Brenda Pogge, Peter Farrell and Senators Toddy Puller and Chris Stolle attended the discussion. Legislative assistants representing Delegates Jennifer McClellan, Roslyn Tyler and Senator Mark Obenshain participated. Key legislative staff, staff from the Governor's Policy Office, community services providers, Virginia Wounded Warrior Program staff from across the Commonwealth, officials from the Virginia National Guard and active duty military installations attended and engaged in the discussion. After the presentations, the researchers participated in a roundtable discussion with the legislators and legislative staff reviewing ideas and questions related to public policy.

Dr. Bradford Booth, Vice President, ICF International, designs and conducts social science research and evaluations focused on military personnel, military families, veteran populations and the programs designed to support them. His most recent publications include "Supporting Military Families in an Era of Persistent Conflict, *Oxford Handbook of Military Psychology*, and "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Deployment Reintegration Programs for the National Guard and Reserves." Dr. Booth shared an evaluative study of Minnesota's implementation of the National Guard's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, implemented in all states, including Virginia. The data indicate that soldiers who participate in reintegration training report more favorable outcomes than those who

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do not participate. Dr. Booth noted that best and promising practices include those programs that “offer choices, emphasize mental health, and collaboratively search for creative solutions for de-stigmatizing mental health concerns.” All of these are key program components of VWWP.

Dr. Mady Segal is a distinguished researcher and scholar who is a Professor Emerita at the University of Maryland. She was formerly the Associate Director of the Center for Research on Military Organization, and associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies. Her research focuses on military women, military families, and race/ethnicity in the military. Her publications include “The Military and Family as Greedy Institutions” (Armed Forces and Society, 1986) and “Moving with the Military: Race, Class and Gender Differences in the Employment Consequences of Tied Migration” (Race, Gender and Class, 2011). In her presentation, she focused on the disadvantages of military spouses who must move their homes and families to accompany the service member. In her presentation, Dr. Segal urged policy makers to pay attention to the need for well-paying jobs for military spouses since Virginia is home to more than 10% of all military wives in the U.S. Her research shows that military wives earn less than civilian wives in every region of the U.S. This holds true regardless of full time work status and their levels of education. These findings are concerning because discrepancies in employment satisfaction and lower levels of compensation experienced by spouses while their significant other is on active duty can have lasting social and economic impacts on the family unit and the community.

Dr. Robert Rosenheck is Professor of Psychiatry, Yale Medical Center and Senior Investigator, VA New England Mental Illness, Research, Education and Clinical Center. He is a leader in cost-effectiveness studies of behavioral health interventions, especially those for homeless people with mental illness. He is the founding Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Northeast Program Evaluation Center and has been a prime architect of national VA collaborative programs. He has published more than 600 scientific papers including performance evaluations of large homeless services systems, the causes of homelessness, and the cost-effectiveness of programs for homeless persons with mental illness. He has received numerous awards for his research. Dr. Rosenheck said that programs for homeless people with mental illness have proven effective, although outcomes are typically modest and incremental. “Program costs can be substantial and are only offset by savings when high-cost, high-risk populations are targeted, or when the duration of treatment is limited.” His primary message for legislators and policy makers is that addressing issues of homelessness is a complex and potentially costly endeavor. Scientific research has not yet proven a clear solution that can be deployed on a large scale with the hope of eliminating homelessness, but incremental change is possible.

After the seminar, a roundtable discussion about program evaluation and best practices with Dr. Robert Rosenheck was led by Cathy Wilson, Deputy Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services and Executive Director, VWWP. This dialogue was a key opportunity for regional staff to interact with a renowned researcher in homeless and housing services for veterans. VWWP strives to ensure that policymakers and community partners are prepared to meet the needs of military and veteran families in the Commonwealth.

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## **Regions 1 and 2, Northwestern and Northern**

VWWP Regions 1 and 2 were consolidated under the leadership of Regional Director, Camilla Schwoebel in 2013. Each region continues to host VWWP Regional Coordinators and regional staff.

### ***Region 1***

Region 1 serves nearly 126,000 veterans and their families in North-western Virginia in a geographical area covering 12,504 square miles, spreading from King George County in the east to Winchester in the northwest, and Bedford County to the south. The region encompasses the major cities of Fredericksburg, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Winchester, Lynchburg and Lexington and covers 28 counties, including the highly rural area of Highland County.

One hallmark of the Region 1 staff is that all of the staff are veterans or the spouse of a veteran, with the majority being combat veterans. The staff boasts veterans from all branches of the service. Additionally, four staff members continue to serve in the Virginia National Guard, and Reserve components. Ben Shaw, a Marine Corps veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, is the Regional Coordinator.

This team has been particularly effective because of its focus on training and peer services. The regional support groups, facilitated by the Veteran Peer Specialists and the Family Resource Specialist, provide information sharing and networking, as well as a place to discuss transition, combat and service experiences. Several are located on community college campuses, some in local churches and other community facilities.

One Veteran Peer Specialist has focused on helping incarcerated veterans within three months of release. He responds to referrals from eight local jails, ten regional jails and four federal facilities. He helps the veterans find housing, obtain personal identification credentials, access healthcare and behavioral health services and access veterans' claims and benefits assistance. The regional staff are also active in participating in all of the Crisis Intervention Team Trainings (trainings for law enforcement regarding how to approach or assist persons with serious mental illness) within the region.

The Family Support Specialist was hired in a full time capacity to address the increased need for family assistance in the region. She collaborates with camps for veterans and service member families such as Operation Military Kids and Camp Corral. She is an active member of several Joining Forces roundtables.



*Regional Director Camilla Schwoebel, with VWWP Regions 1 and 2 Teams*

Region 1 also took the lead in promoting the use of *Family of Heroes*, an online interactive resilience training program for families developed by Kognito, Inc. The easily accessible training module allows families to learn how to manage the common challenges associated with adjusting to post-deployment life.

## ***Region 2***

The Region 2 team serves veterans and their families, as well as members of the Guard and Reserve, in four counties and five cities located in the densely populated area of Northern Virginia. Approximately 192,000 veterans reside in these jurisdictions. Caleb Johnson, a U.S. Army Iraq war veteran, was hired in 2013 to serve as VWWP Region 2 Regional Coordinator. In July, 2013, the VWWP Region 2 team shifted from a clinical model to a veteran peer specialist model consistent with the other regions. The team comprises the Regional Coordinator and three Veteran Peer Specialists. Building on excellent community partnerships, staff are housed in the City of Alexandria Job Center, the SkillSource Center in Woodbridge and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Offices in Fairfax.

Since student veterans are a highly vulnerable population, a VWWP Peer Specialist provides both individual and group support to student veterans on six campuses of the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC). As the number of service members transitioning to civilian life increases over the next five years because of downsizing of the military, many will take advantage of the GI Bill and there will be an increased demand for supporting student veterans.

Northern Virginia has developed a highly collaborative model for serving veterans and their families who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. The major participants in this collaborative model are: VWWP, the VA HUD-VASH program through public housing authorities, the VA Community Resource and Referral Center for homeless veterans, Volunteers of America Chesapeake Supportive Services for Veteran Families, Friendship House Supportive Services for Veteran Families, US VETS, Inc., Housing Counseling Services, Operation Renewed Hope and the Warrior Bridge Program of ServiceSource. This effort was supplemented by dedicated volunteers who routinely reached out to veterans in homeless encampments. A companion initiative provided linkage to VA services for veterans who were being released from incarceration to ensure that they had some support services upon release from prison.

Since many veterans experience unemployment or underemployment, VWWP participated in the development of a well-coordinated network of agencies and employers committed to either employing veterans or assisting veterans to gain the necessary skills to become successfully employed. Participants in this initiative included: the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), SkillSource, JobLink, Virginia Values Veterans, Operation IMPACT Network of Champions, Corporate Immersion, three Chambers of Commerce and numerous businesses. This approach allows VWWP staff to make seamless referrals to employment specialists and focus their attention on the multitude of other issues such as counseling for individuals and families, housing, and access to VA benefits.

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### Region 3, Southwestern

VWWP Region 3 serves Southwest Virginia, home to nearly 101,000 veterans. Veterans and their families living in this region are geographically spread from Roanoke to Bristol and outlying areas from Tazewell, the New River Valley, Covington, Danville, and as far west as Big Stone Gap. In July of 2013, three positions that had been funded by the HRSA grant were converted to general fund positions. This allowed the region to grow to four full time Veteran Resource Specialist positions and a Regional Coordinator all funded by on-going state general funds. A trademark for Region 3 is that all VWWP employees are either veterans or spouses of a veteran.



*Former Regional Director, Matt Wade, with VWWP Region 3 Team*

The Region 3 team specializes in advocating and providing resources for veterans and their families by increasing, improving, and building partnerships within the community to expand services. The team also provides community awareness and education to assist in eliminating barriers to services for veterans and their families. The Regional Team enjoys collaborative partnerships with local veterans' services organizations, including the Military Family Support Center, VFW, American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, DAV posts, and MOAA chapters. The coordination and partnerships also include numerous state agencies including local Departments of Social Services, Probation and Parole, law enforcement, correctional facilities, and community action initiatives. These partnerships allow the Region to work together to expand services and resources for veterans and their families.

Region 3 has taken the lead for VWWP by implementing Telehealth programs within the Community Service Boards. Telehealth programs promote quicker access to care and eliminate transportation barriers in the rural Southwest Virginia area. They are also working on implementing Telehealth programs with neighboring VA Medical Centers which would allow psychiatric service to be provided between the VAMC's and veterans in their communities, reducing another travel barrier to obtaining care. Due to the rural nature of southwestern Virginia, Region 3 continues to expand its array of services and networking partnerships with community organizations and councils. Grant resources have significantly expanded services to veterans and families across Southwest Virginia and the team is working with Virginia Tech's Institute for Policy and Governance to provide focus groups to veterans for broadband initiative research in Southwestern Virginia.

The Region 3 staff has formed relationships with various transportation providers including the Disabled American Veterans at Salem VAMC and the Mobility Management Grant Awardees through the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. Cliff Roop, Veteran Resource Specialist who serves in the Martinsville area has been meeting and working with a transportation initiative called the Miles 4 Vets program.

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The goal of this partnership is to link local veterans to transportation to the Salem VAMC. While transportation remains a service need, these relationships have helped create a great pool of resources for Region 3 veterans and family members.

With the increase of veteran students, Region 3 staff have become more visible and supportive in providing services to colleges and universities in the area. Southwest Virginia is home to Radford University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), as well as several community colleges. Virginia Tech has been recognized by Military Advanced Education as one of America's Top Military-Friendly Colleges and Universities for the third consecutive year. The Region 3 Coordinator now serves on the National Association of Veterans Program Administrators with VT's institutional membership. Together, they promote veteran and family awareness, employment, and military cultural trainings as well as maximizing the use of existing programs and infrastructure. All of the Veteran Resource Specialists are visible and provide outreach to student veterans on the local community college campuses in their service areas.

Region 3 is involved in a number of veterans employment initiatives, including the DVS Virginia Values Veterans Initiative held at Virginia Tech in 2013. The Regional Team refers veterans to and assists them with local linkages to Veterans Employment Commission Representatives (VEC), the Hiring Heroes initiatives, local Goodwill programs, and the Workforce Development veteran employment resources. Recently Region 3 partnered with American Electric Power on direct veteran recruitment in the Southwest Virginia area.

To expand on the state wide veteran incarceration initiative, each Region 3 staff member actively participates in Reentry councils, outreach to correctional facilities and law enforcement, and Cross Systems Mappings where regional teams come together to develop a plan for addressing gaps in services. Team members also provide education to professionals working in the criminal justice system, and work with local CIT programs. The Regional Coordinator, Leanna Craig, is a member of the New River Valley Community Services CIT Faculty.

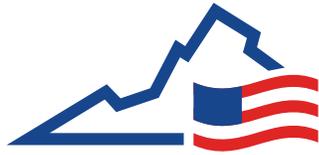


*Veteran Families Involved in 5K Mountain Race Benefitting VWWP*

Region 3 has built a strong relationship with the local VAMCs and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) that service the region. The team participates in several outreach events with the VA Rural Health teams including providing health and wellness classes to rural areas. The team also attends the Salem VAMC Post Commander meetings.

Region 3 has veteran and peer support groups in the catchment areas across the region. These groups serve veterans of any era and provide an opportunity for veterans to connect with other veterans to share experiences, gain knowledge on resources, and enjoy

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## Virginia Wounded Warrior Program

Virginia Department of Veterans Services

camaraderie. A beginning partnership in the Mt. Rogers area with the community and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) resulted in hunting trips for members of the group. This partnership has spread across the region. Consequently, veterans and their families have benefitted from outdoor activities, trips to memorials, fishing events, and other family and community outings. Partnerships with local Law Enforcement, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and several community partners, promotes camaraderie and connections among the veterans and families.

Region 3 is home to the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery. This is the third cemetery in Virginia dedicated to veterans and their families. Working relationships between the cemetery's operational staff and the region's Coordinator and Regional Director have provided referral sources as well as assistance in accessing information on each other's programs. This partnership has also provided a shared opportunity for the staff to share community programs and outreach to the communities. In December 2013, the Regional team participated in the 1st Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony at the cemetery.



*BassMaster Volunteers with VWWP Team and DGIF Organizers at 2nd Annual Veterans Fishing Day*

### Region 4, Central and Southside

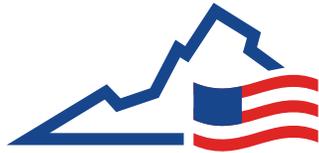


*Martha Uitley, Regional Director, with VWWP Region 4 Team*

Region 4 serves more than 125,000 veterans and their families in Central Virginia in a geographical expanse covering 22 counties and 5 cities including Richmond, Petersburg and down to the state line in Emporia.

The Regional Team has seen continued growth in staffing including the addition of a Family Support Specialist, a Housing Resource Specialist and a Re-Entry Specialist. These specialists are focusing on the unique needs of veterans and families, including veterans experiencing homelessness or those who are at-risk, and on the needs of veterans transitioning from incarceration. With the addition of these positions, Region 4 has become a true "one-stop shop" addressing the full spectrum of needs of veterans and their family members.

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**Virginia Wounded Warrior Program**  
Virginia Department of Veterans Services

Hallmarks of Region 4's services are programs for relationship and family resiliency skills building called "*Mission: Healthy Relationships*" and "*Mission: Healthy Families*." Two couples' workshops, *Mission: Healthy Relationships (MHR)*, have been conducted each year serving more than 80 couples since 2010. MHR is a relationship enhancement program, focused on effective communication skills for couples. The program is crafted for the military experience, emphasizing both communication skills and health issues of veterans and spouses who are coping with the effects of stress-related conditions including PTSD and TBI.

Region 4 has hosted two weekend family retreats each year, called *Mission: Healthy Families (MHF)*, with more than 50 families attending since 2012. MHF utilizes a 10- hour curriculum that teaches and reinforces resiliency skills for military families who have experienced, or who expect to experience, deployment of a veteran. This event brings together various partner organizations with a common mission to serve and support veteran families. The adult curriculum focuses on strategies for enhancing personal and family resilience and is delivered by Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Rehabilitative Counseling. The youth and family activities focus on resilience skills-building, such as positive communication, coping with change, and healthy stress management. The workshops are delivered by Project Youth Extension Services from North Carolina State University and the Virginia Joint Family Support Assistance Program.

These programs assist families in coping with barriers to communication and conflict resolution due to strain put on their families from combat deployments and associated invisible wounds, frequent moves and/or absence of the veteran from family life.



*Kerri Gerke, Resource Specialist, with the Lucas Family in Their New Home*

Region 4 has been integral in connecting families to critical resources for housing assistance. Over the course of the last fiscal year, the Regional Team has assisted nearly 200 veterans seeking housing resources. This included linking the Lucas family to a permanent home. Mr. Lucas, a wounded serviceman who served in Iraq, his wife and their 1 year old daughter were connected to several community resources including the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development; Pathways - a Petersburg Community Development Group and Homes For Hearts Inc. – a non-profit organization that builds or modifies homes for veterans and elderly. The result of this collaboration was that Pathways rehabilitated a home that was sold to the Lucas family for \$1. The family pays no mortgage and receives a clear title in 15 years.

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Other housing assistance activities include partnering with Habitat for Heroes, a subsidiary of Habitat for Humanity that addresses the needs of veterans. Region 4 linked the Dismuke family to the program. They became the first military family to receive a Habitat home in the Richmond area.

With the addition of the Homeless Resource Specialist, Region 4 has been able to formalize its presence in the homeless services community with participation in many Continua of Care and building alliances with local homeless, housing, and support services coalitions, organizations and agencies. In the city of Richmond, Region 4 is a participating member of VetLink – a subgroup of the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care focused solely on the needs of veterans. Through this partnership, Region 4 has committed its presence at the Homeless Point of Entry and serves as an onsite resource to any homeless veteran seeking assistance. Region 4 has solidified its relationship with the Richmond VA Medical Center’s Homeless Services Team through on-going cross collaboration and case management support.

The Regional Team has also expanded its service provision into serving the needs of veterans involved in the criminal justice system or those who have been incarcerated, by participating in several Cross Systems Mapping processes including the counties of Halifax, Mecklenberg, Brunswick, and Hanover. Four staff members have become permanent members of Crisis Intervention Training teams supporting Henrico, Hanover, Richmond, Petersburg and South Boston. They provide training to law enforcement personnel on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury and other behavioral health issues related to military service that affect veterans entering or going through the criminal justice system. Similar ongoing training funded by VWWPs Criminal Justice Partner’s Training grant is provided to other criminal justice program personnel including, judges, magistrates, lawyers etc.

Region 4’s expanded staffing and service provision have allowed staff to expand the number of hosted support groups. The Region now hosts four groups held in Richmond, Chesterfield, Prince George and South Boston. There are plans to add additional groups in the coming year in the Emporia area as well as additional topic-specific groups, including homelessness and incarceration.

## **Region 5, Greater Hampton Roads, Southeastern**

Region 5 encompasses Greater Hampton Roads, Eastern Shore and Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. Regional staff provide care coordination and support services to veterans in the most veteran dense area in the state where nearly 1 in 5 citizens is a veteran. In addition, the area boasts the nation’s largest Department of Defense (DOD) population (active duty military and DOD civilians)



*Brandi Jancaitis, Director of Veterans Housing Development and Interim Regional Director with Region 5 Team*

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in the nation with 13 of the 19 Virginia military installations in a 40-mile radius. With a concentrated military and veteran population, resources in the Region are numerous. The VWWP Regional Team provides critical coordination of these resources while maintaining strong collaborative partnerships with community organizations serving veterans and families.

Key to providing a comprehensive approach to the needs of veterans are the partnerships with the Hampton VA Medical Center, area Military Affairs Committees, the Veteran Service Organizations, military treatment facilities and Brain Injury Clubhouses operating in the region. The regional staff focuses on service to newly transitioning military service members, veterans who have separated from service and their family members. They ensure a coordinated system of care, focusing on behavioral health and support services.

Region 5 also addresses two specific needs for at-risk populations in the Hampton Roads area, including veterans who are homeless or who have been incarcerated and are now re-entering the community upon their release. The region has a full time Re-Entry Specialist committed to assisting veterans who are exiting correctional facilities and who may face challenges in housing, employment or the ability to re-establish their benefits upon release. The Re-Entry Specialist assists the veteran with discharge and support service needs while serving on re-entry councils and other veteran subgroups dealing with this population. In addition, the Re-Entry Specialist conducts community trainings and provides resources and technical assistance for the VWWP Regional Consortium on veteran re-entry services. Region 5 has the highest number of homeless in the entire state with nearly 50 % of the homeless veteran population located in Hampton Roads. The entire Regional Team participates regularly with the Continuum of Care organizations. By utilizing the regional network of service providers and support from the Virginia Veteran's Services Foundation, Region 5 has helped prevent and end homelessness for countless veterans and families in the Greater Hampton Roads area.

Region 5 VWWP staff remain committed to the ever-changing needs of the veteran population. The Regional Team continues to speak at events such as the Virginia Community Criminal Justice Association and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Annual Conference presenting information regarding Brain Injuries and PTSD to raise awareness and understanding of the needs of veterans and their families across the region. In addition, Region 5 provides outreach, training, and services linkages through AmeriCorps navigators with the Virginia Veteran Corps program to military installations and organizations serving the military such as Operation First Response, and Navy Fleet and Family Support.

In the summer of 2013, a veteran served by Region 5 became the proud owner of a refurbished vehicle courtesy of Progressive Insurance and the National Auto Body Council. As part of their national *Keys to Progress* event, the Tidewater veteran



*Presentation of refurbished vehicle to veteran and his wife.*

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whose car had become inoperable received the keys to a handicapped accessible van that assists with his disability and accommodates his family. This is an example of the type of partnership community supporters provide to help Virginia veterans.

Region 5 also actively participates in events and activities across the Region that recognize the service and sacrifice of military service members and first responders. Each year the VWWP participates in the Freedom Walk, a commemoration of the events of Sept. 11th. The Freedom Walk helps to engage the community in recognizing the service and sacrifice provided every day of the year to keep our nation free. Although not intended to be a solemn event, it brings individuals and organizations together on the day that changed the course of the American way of life forever

### ***Virginia Veterans Corps***

The problems of adjusting to post-deployment life for returning military services members, veterans and their families continues to justify the need for the highly successful Virginia Veterans Corps (VVC) funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service through state formula funding in 2011. By linking service members, veterans and their families to their federal, state and local benefits, including community support providers, they benefit from improved access to healthcare, behavioral healthcare, financial assistance, employment and housing.

During the 2012-13 service year, direct services were provided to 8,423 individuals from the military community. VVC Navigators identified 1,367 of these as veterans and 83 referrals were made to Resource Specialists in Region 5. Of these, three veterans were enrolled successfully in the VA healthcare system.

Navigators come from all walks of life. Nine Navigators who served in the program were veterans themselves, having served in combat situations from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan. Eight of the Navigators were family members of veterans or active duty service members. Their ages ranged from 19-64. Ten were college graduates who possessed a variety of professional experience. While performing their AmeriCorps service, the Navigators served nine different organizations throughout Greater Hampton Roads. These were the Armed Services YMCA, Community Services Boards in Hampton-Newport News, Eastern Shore and Middle Peninsula-Northern Neck, Operation Homefront in Newport News, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Portsmouth Area Resources Coalition, United Way of Greater Williamsburg, and the Volunteer Center of the Virginia Peninsula.



*VVC AmeriCorps Members with Catherine Wilson, Executive Director*

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**Virginia Wounded Warrior Program**  
Virginia Department of Veterans Services



*Navigators serve with community organizations in Gloucester to build a ramp for a WWII veteran.*

VVC also provides a wide array of training to the AmeriCorps service members. During the 2012-2013 service year, members participated in a variety of trainings that focused on issues such as suicide awareness and prevention, domestic violence, stress management and conflict resolution, as well as, service site presentations. In addition, all members received their CPR/ AED certification and were trained in emergency preparedness. During the emergency preparedness training members were faced with a potential “Zombie Apocalypse” and received hands-on instruction on how to deal with various crises within this environment.

The AmeriCorps motto is “Getting Things Done.” In 2012-13, members completed 16,679 hours of service. The majority of the service projects were designed to improve the lives of military personnel and their families living in Hampton Roads. In recognition, of the Martin Luther King Holiday, members packed and sorted over 1,200 pounds of food for the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia. Members serving at the Volunteer Center of the Virginia Peninsula assisted in rebuilding a ramp for an elderly WWII veteran. Also, members served at a number of community events such as the Military Family Fall Festival, Spartkya Race, Celebration of the Military Child Festival and Operation Homefront’s Toy Distribution Drive.



*Emergency Preparedness Training*



*VVC Members Serving at the Foodbank*

Members have started the 2013-14 program year with a bang! In recognition of September 11, members served at Operation Homefront’s Freedom Walk where they provided assistance with registration; counting walkers; managing resource tables; and event set-up and break-down. Members attended an exciting AmeriCorps launch in Staunton, VA. This event highlighted AmeriCorps’ 20th Anniversary and encouraged members to wear their gear and proudly represent AmeriCorps in their communities!

VWVP has applied for funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service to continue the VVC in Region 5 and to expand into Region 4, engaging AmeriCorps members who can assist with outreach and support for homeless veterans and families as well as those at risk of homelessness.

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### **Common Ground: Linking Wounded Warriors and Community Support Providers**

FY 13 was the third and final year of grant support for the training program provided by the *Virginia Commonwealth University Partnership for People with Disabilities (VCU/PPD)*: Common Ground: Linking Wounded Warriors and Community Support Providers. VWWP will continue this partnership in FY 2014 utilizing other funding sources.

In May 2013, VWWP offered Prolonged Exposure Therapy Training to 50 clinicians across the Commonwealth. The 2-day intensive training was provided by the Center for Deployment Psychology of the Uniformed Services University for the Health Sciences in Bethesda, MD. Evaluations of this type of in-depth clinical training were outstanding, with many clinicians requesting more opportunities for networking and training with VWWP.

In August, VWWP provided five Regional Trainings on Evidence Based Practices in Substance Abuse Treatment for Veterans and in Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Presenters included Tom Durham, JBS International, Inc., and MST experts from the VA. In addition, representatives from the Virginia Employment Commission and the Virginia Values Veterans Initiative (V3) discussed efforts to address veterans' employment. Again, the training was rated highly by all participants with requests for more training and networking opportunities at the local and regional levels.

### **VWWP Criminal Justice Partners Training (CJPT)**

VWWP, in partnership with DBHDS was awarded a federal grant of **\$71,250** per year for four years from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services to fund a targeted educational program for judges, court personnel, and other criminal justice partners across the Commonwealth. This grant is in its 4th year of execution. Project goals for this year include continued CJPT trainings, presentations; development of a CJPT webinar for judiciary; advanced trainings for CIT officers on veterans' issues and evaluation of the project.

### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources Health Resource Services Administration Flex Rural Veterans Health Access Program-- VWWP Expansion in Southwest Virginia, VWWP Region 3**

Partnering with the Virginia Department of Health, the State's Office of Rural Health, VWWP was awarded a federal grant of **\$296,667** renewable for 3 years from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for *The Flex Rural Veterans Health Access Program*. This grant is in its third year of execution. VWWP has been granted a No Cost Extension to complete the year with the installation of telehealth sites in Community Services Boards in Southwest Virginia. Grant resources have significantly expanded services to veterans and families across Southwest Virginia.

**VWWP Mission:** the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP), in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, monitors and coordinates behavioral health and rehabilitative services and support through an integrated, comprehensive and responsive system of public and private partnerships. VWWP facilitates these services for Virginia veterans, members of the Virginia National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves (not in active federal service), and their families affected by stress related conditions or traumatic brain injuries resulting from military service.

## **VWWP Virginia Veterans Corp (AmeriCorps)**

VWWP in partnership with the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service within the Virginia Department of Social Services received initially a **\$133,000** federal pass through grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2011. The grant required a 24% match. The AmeriCorps grant funds the Virginia Veterans Corp (VVC) cited earlier. VWWP has been approved for its third year of funding under this grant. CNCS grants \$146,300 in federal resources and VWWP matches it with \$53,892. As noted earlier, VWWP has recently applied for expansion of this program

## **VISTA**

In August 2012, VWWP was awarded five VISTA positions by the State Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service. VISTAs were placed in Regions 1, 4 and 5. The VISTAs have worked with VWWP over the past year to increase outreach and marketing of the program and to develop a long-term marketing plan and volunteer services plan. The value of the VISTA staffing was \$182,804 in federal funding.

## **CONCLUSION**

Fiscal Year 2013 was productive and rewarding for VWWP and for the veterans and families benefitting from statewide, comprehensive services and support. We look forward to continued success and to providing even more outreach and support in the coming year.