



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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RICHMOND, VA 23219

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American Ex-Prisoners
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American Legion
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Disabled American
Veterans
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Korean War Veterans
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Marine Corps League
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Purple Heart
Military Officers Association
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Navy Seabee Veterans of
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Officers Association
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Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association

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Position Paper 2015-04 **Virginia Homeless Veterans Programs**

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To sustain an effective program to eliminate homelessness within our Virginia Veterans population.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. Homelessness within the Virginia Veterans population has been a long-term issue predating the War in Vietnam. JLARC completed a significant study in June 2010 documenting a baseline size and nature of issue. That study also stated that significant long-term funding and a dedicated program would be required to solve the problem.
 - b. The General Assembly previously approved two positions within the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) to plan and coordinate an intensive program to dramatically reduce homelessness among veterans and their families. Staff in these positions has been active in coordinating solutions.
 - c. Since 2011, veteran homelessness has dropped 34 percent. From 2013-2014, veteran homelessness in Virginia has dropped 14 percent. Overall homelessness in Virginia has decreased during this same period as a result of coordinated actions within the Commonwealth. Agencies involved include the Departments of Veterans Services, Housing and Community Development, and Health and Human Resources.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - a. The state-level Homeless Outcomes Coordinating Council (HOCC) approved action steps to improve targeting of resources, coordination of services, and increased sharing of data towards the goal of ending veteran homelessness. A veteran sub-committee is responsible for implementation and monitoring the progress of these action steps.
 - b. In June 2014, Governor McAuliffe became the 4th Governor to sign the National Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, sending a clear message that ending veteran homelessness is a priority for the Commonwealth.
 - c. VWWP Housing Resource Specialists (HRS) provide outreach and care coordination to homeless veterans in Hampton Roads and Richmond. These positions have been successful in reaching high barrier, chronically homeless veterans and connecting them to both VA and mainstream housing and supportive services.
 - d. As noted in the JLARC study, barriers of housing and income need to be addressed for ex-offenders who are veterans, particularly those exiting correctional institutions. Access and coordination of resources for this population need to be improved.
4. **RECOMMENDATIONS:** That the Governor and the General Assembly support the further reduction of veteran homelessness by approving additional funding in FY16 for:
 - a. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to support increases in general statewide homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing funding to help veterans living in rural areas and/or ineligible for VA services.
 - b. DHCD for development of a statewide homeless data warehouse system to permit a better understanding of the needs of veterans accessing mainstream homeless services.
 - c. DVS/VWWP to add three new HRS positions in order to expand coverage to Roanoke and Northern Virginia, and to add a second HRS position in Hampton Roads.
 - d. DVS to add one position to work with the criminal justice system to facilitate statewide coordination of federal, state, and community resources.