

News Release

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Virginia Wounded Warrior Program Awarded Grant for Community Criminal Justice Partners Training

RICHMOND--The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) in partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), a lead agency for the Commonwealth Consortium for Mental Health and Criminal Justice Transformation (Consortium) was awarded a \$71,200 grant in federal funds from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services for the development and implementation of a targeted educational program for judges, court personnel, and other criminal justice partners across the state. The training will focus on the unique characteristics, symptoms and options for addressing the needs of active duty military personnel, Guardsmen, Reservists, and veterans affected by the spectrum of combat stress, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and the veterans who are at risk for involvement or involved in the criminal justice system. It is predicted that with the continuation of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that service men and women will continue to return home with the “invisible wounds of war” that if not addressed adequately may put them at risk of involvement with criminal justice.

Paul Galanti, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, said, “This grant will continue to strengthen the Commonwealth’s ability to support service members as they return from war. Our goal is to support them as they return home and to prevent further stress on veterans and their families.” In 2010, the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Services Organizations called for the consideration of special court interventions to recognize the unique needs of service members with combat stress or TBI. Among their recommendations was the development of training for anyone involved in the criminal justice system on recognizing the signs and symptoms of PTSD and TBI and how to intervene appropriately. “When a service member becomes involved with the criminal justice system, it is important that our courts have the tools needed to intervene in a manner that accounts for

their unique injuries and experiences,” said DBHDS Commissioner Jim Stewart. “This grant will help us build skills in our court system to recognize PTSD and TBI so service members can be better linked to any needed behavioral health care.”

VWWP Executive Director, Catherine Wilson, said “We know that our service men and women have committed their lives to protecting our liberty and freedom. The least we can do is to support them when they return home. The training will help us to link our state level and regional VWWP program staff with criminal justice system partners so that we can ensure ready access to existing treatment services through the VA and other channels.”

The training curricula will build on existing and emerging practices for interventions with justice-involved veterans and research available from the U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, the Veterans Administration and other military and civilian sources. It will be piloted in the first year and then presented across the state in subsequent grant-funded years.

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