



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

Steven J. Combs
Acting Commissioner

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December 5, 2019

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Carlos Hopkins
Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox
Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Stephen D. Newman
President Pro Tempore, Senate of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Delivered via electronic mail

Re: Annual report on the Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program

Dear Governor Northam, Secretary Hopkins, Delegate Cox, and Senator Newman:

The Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program is operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services in conjunction with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). Other state agencies, such as the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), the Department of Social Services (DSS), and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), are vital partners, as are Virginia's Community Services Boards (CSBs), homeless Continuums of Care (CoCs), and organizations such as the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association.

VVFS provides outreach, connection, and support to veterans, members of the National Guard and Reserves, and their families as they address the challenges of military and post-military service, transition, deployments, Post Traumatic Stress, and other behavioral health concerns, as well as Traumatic Brain Injuries and other physical injuries.

The Code of Virginia, §2.2-2001.1(D), directs:

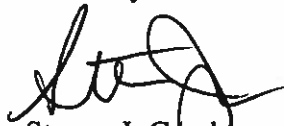
"The Department shall report annually program results to the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, the Governor, and the General Assembly. The report shall include the number of veterans, members of the Virginia National Guard and Virginia residents in the Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and family members affected by covered military

members' service and deployments for whom coordinated resources plans are developed and who are referred for services; information about services provided to veterans, members of the Virginia National Guard, members of the Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and family members, including information about the types of services provided and the quality of those services; and the number of veterans, members of the Virginia National Guard, members of the Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service, and family members identified by the program as in need of services but not referred for services."

The attached pages, excerpted from the DVS Commissioner's FY2019 Annual Report, provide the required information.

Please let me know if we may provide additional information.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Combs
Acting Commissioner

Cc: Ms. Mira Signer, Acting Commissioner, DBHDS
Ms. Kathryn A. Hayfield, Commissioner, DARS
Mr. Thomas Herthel, Deputy Commissioner, DVS
Ms. Carol Berg, Director, VVFS Program, DVS
Mr. Michael Dick, Chairman, Board of Veterans Services
Mr. Frank Wickersham III, Chairman, Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

Atch: Pages excerpted from the DVS Commissioner's FY2019 Annual Report (numbered Pages 13 and 41-52)



DVS at a Glance

BENEFIT SERVICES

Benefit Services provides Virginia's veterans and their family members with accurate, timely and ethical education and assistance in obtaining the federal and state benefits they have earned through service and sacrifice to our Commonwealth and Nation.

- 79,792*** Claims submitted to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in FY19
**Includes all claims submitted to the USDVA in FY19. Prior to FY17, only compensation claims were reported.*
- 18,419** Compensation and Pension claims submitted to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in FY19
- 223,965** Client contacts in FY19
- \$3.19B** Disability compensation and pension payments to Virginia veterans and dependents in FFY18

VIRGINIA VETERAN AND FAMILY SUPPORT

The Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program provides comprehensive coordination of and referrals to behavioral and rehabilitative health care and supportive services to Virginia's veterans, National Guard, armed forces Reserves, caregivers and family members.

- 1,904** Veterans and family members served in FY19
- 3,196** Total individual services provided in FY19
- 572** Total behavioral health services provided in FY19
- 2,549** Total rehabilitative/medical services provided in FY19
- 75** Total supportive services provided in FY19
- 351** Total group services provided in FY19
- 190** Veterans and family members served by *Mission: Healthy Relationships* and *Mission: Healthy Families* in FY19
- 1,799** Individuals trained in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) by VVFS
- 584** Individuals trained in Military Cultural Competency Training by VVFS
- 156** Veterans who received Behavioral Health Assistance through Veterans Services Foundation



Virginia Veteran and Family Support

MISSION

To monitor and provide resource connections and care coordination for behavioral health, rehabilitative, and other related supportive services to Virginia veterans, National Guard, Armed Forces Reserves, caregivers and families.

ACTIVITIES

The Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program is a focused response, creating a continuum of care for all veterans who are Virginia residents, members of the Virginia National Guard or Armed Forces Reserves (not in active federal service), and their family members (SMVF) coping with the impact of military service, including multiple deployments, operational stress, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), with behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services, ensuring there is no wrong door to quickly access services. VVFS is a service line of DVS, operated in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).

The purpose and priorities of the VVFS program are:

- Build awareness of veterans service needs and the availability of the program through marketing, outreach, and training for first responders, service providers and others;
- Collaborate with relevant agencies of the Commonwealth, localities, and service providers;
- Develop and implement a consistent method of determining how many veterans in the Commonwealth are currently in need of mental health, physical rehabilitation, or other services, or may be in need of such services in the future;
- Work with veterans to develop a coordinated resources plan that identifies appropriate service providers to meet the veteran's service needs;
- Refer veterans to appropriate and available providers on the basis of needs identified in the coordinated resources plan; and
- Monitor progress toward individually identified goals in accordance with the coordinated resource plan.

Mayor's Challenge & Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide

In FY19, VVFS continued partnering with the City of Richmond's Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans and their Families. In January 2019, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), partnering with the VA, began a [Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families \(SMVF\)](#). Seven states were selected for the inaugural year: Virginia, Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, and Texas.



The VA estimates that only 30% of eligible veterans use VA healthcare services, with 70% of veterans utilize community settings for health and behavioral healthcare, or go without such care. On average, the VA estimates that of the estimated 17 veterans who die by suicide every day, 11 were not connected with the VA prior to their deaths. As one of the top states for veteran population, it is so important for Virginia to be part of this groundbreaking Challenge.

Carlos Hopkins, Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, and Daniel Carey, Secretary of Health and Human Resources are the co-leaders of the Governor's Challenge team in Virginia. The team consists of federal agencies: VA and the DOD; state agencies: DVS, the Virginia National Guard, Departments of Health, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Social Services, Medical Assistance Services, State Police, and Education; local agencies: the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority; and other partners, including Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association and National Alliance on Mental Illness.

The theme of the Virginia's Governor's Challenge is: The 3C's – Care, Connect, and Communicate

- **Care:** The provision of accessible and culturally competent behavioral health services.
 - **Strategy:** Identify and support SMVF at risk of suicide through the Asking the Question, "Have you or a family member served in the military?" and suicide risk screening in community services.
- **Connect:** Bringing military/veteran specific and community services together; forming systemic partnerships.
 - **Strategy:** Increase engagement between the VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA), DVS, and partner organizations for SMVF referrals.
- **Communicate:** Educating the SMVF population on resources and behavioral health providers on military culture and suicide prevention best practices
 - **Strategy:** Expand lethal means safety training (particularly firearm safety) to community stakeholders.

Through the Mayor's Challenge and Governor's Challenge, VVFS has expanded Military Culture Competency (MCC) training and Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) to state agencies and community partners to enhance knowledge and resource connections. The Virginia team also developed strategies and best practices to help implement the VA's [National Strategy for the Prevention of Veteran Suicide](#), which provides a framework for a comprehensive public health approach to addressing the growing public health challenge among the veteran population. This summer, as part this initiative, the Virginia team hosted six Military Culture and Suicide Prevention Summits in five cities: Abingdon, Lexington, Fairfax, Suffolk, and Richmond, that trained 525 community services providers in military culture (delivered by VVFS staff), lethal means safety planning (delivered by VHA Suicide Prevention Coordinators), and provided federal, state, and local resources. DVS continues to host regional trainings in FY20. Presentations and resources can be found on the DBHDS website (<http://dbhds.virginia.gov/behavioral-health/military-service-members-veterans-and-their-families>).



In addition, DVS and VA created resource cards that list the VA Suicide Crisis Hotline on one side, and VVFS contact information for non-crisis services on the other. The same size and shape as a business card, they are an easy resource to hand out and for veterans and family members to discreetly accept. Over 500,000 cards were distributed in FY19 by state and local police, first responders, and other service providers across the Commonwealth. In April 2019, DBHDS staff briefed the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) on the Governor's Challenge, handed out cards to each VSO, and offered to include VSOs in the regional training summits. The JLC penned a letter to Governor Northam pledging support of the Challenge and its goals.

Each Region has listed their specific activities supporting the Challenge in their regional section below.

Outreach and Partnerships

Along with DBHDS and DARS, VVFS maintains valued partnerships with the local Community Service Boards (CSBs), Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) for an innovative art therapy program, Headstrong, Serving Together, Boulder Crest, and more.

DVS works closely with many departments at George Mason University, including the Veterans and the Arts Initiative at the Hylton Center, and the Center for Psychological Services, assisting to provide psych assessments at no cost to veterans. In FY19, 12 veterans were assessed by CPS staff, and 46 since the inception of this program.

In FY19, VVFS partnered with the Virginia National Guard (VaNG) as they work toward implementing their peer support training. A VVFS Senior Veteran Peer Specialist conducted a two-day training to provide in-depth instruction on how to initiate and maintain peer-level conversations with a person seeking help, how to engage with shared experiences (when appropriate), and how to best connect that person to VVFS. Additionally, VVFS has provided assistance to the VaNG Suicide Prevention Coordinator as the Guard reviews and rewrites current suicide prevention briefings to encourage help-seeking, early intervention, peer support, and suicide intervention.

VVFS also continued its partnership with the Department of Social Services and Virginia 2-1-1 to enhance the statewide system with additional call specialists, increased training, and increased collection of data to better connect veterans 24/7 to community, state, and federal resources. In FY19, 2-1-1 connected 6,713 veterans, active duty, and family members to services, with the majority of referral needs for utility and housing assistance, social services, and job-related services. In addition, 2-1-1 is looking to increase capacity and expertise through ASIST-trained call specialists to align with the Governor's Challenge.

CASE MANAGEMENT REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Each of the four VVFS regions provide the same core services of resource connections, peer support, care coordination, and individualized and group support to veterans and their family members.

West Region serves approximately 99,500 veterans and their families in Southwest Virginia, which includes 32 counties and 13 independent cities. The West Region team is comprised of 11 members including: a Regional Director, Senior Resource Specialist, Veteran Justice Specialist, Veteran Peer Specialist, and seven Resource Specialists, strategically located in five DVS offices: Big Stone Gap, Abingdon, Wytheville, Danville and Lynchburg; and three CSB offices: New River Valley, Piedmont, and Alleghany Highlands. The region also provides services at satellite offices across the region and monthly itinerates in the community.

Staff provide Crisis Intervention Trainings (CIT) to partner agencies and first responders throughout the region and work collaboratively with the New River Valley CIT faculty. Staff also assisted with the October 2018 Virginia CIT Conference in Blacksburg, providing DVS outreach to 300 attendees. The West Region closely collaborates with DBHDS and CSBs to provide Military Cultural Competency (MCC) training to partnering agencies, including regional CSBs, Radford University's Clinical Counseling Trauma graduate program course, Carillion Hospice, and the Virginia State Office of Rural Health State Conference. Staff provide trainings to other DVS employees on Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) throughout the Commonwealth.

This year, staff participated in a behavioral health panel with community members in Galax after the screening of the documentary *Suicide: The Ripple Effect*, which focused on the effects of advocacy, inspiration and hope helping millions heal & stay alive.

West Region has been involved in Secretary Hopkins' Southwest Virginia Coalition meetings, and continues to participate in strong collaborations with key stakeholders in the area, including the American Red Cross' Joining Forces collaboration meetings, Southwest Virginia Mental Health Institute, Southwest Virginia Behavioral Health Board, and many suicide prevention committees across the region. West Region also maintains ongoing partnership with the National Guard Community Health Promotion Council (CHPC) meetings. The West Region is actively involved with the Governor's Suicide Prevention Challenge, and partnered with DBHDS to train 200 behavioral health and key community stakeholders at regional Military Culture Competency and Suicide Prevention Summits.

Together With Veterans (TWV) was an exciting opportunity created from the Governor's Challenge, with over 30 community members and veterans in attendance, and led by the VA's Veterans Health Administration's Office of Rural Health and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. TWV is a community-engaged process for identifying, selecting, and implementing a variety of evidence-based, promising practices for the reduction of suicide and promotion of wellness among veterans living





in rural communities. TWV will continue through FY20, and include the implementation academy in October 2019 in Colorado.

The region continues to collaborate with three Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMCs): Salem VAMC in Salem, Virginia, Mountain Home VAMC in Johnson City, TN and Beckley VAMC in Beckley, WV. A 4-year partnership with Salem VAMC and Alleghany Highlands CSB continues to provide a unique tele-psychiatry program, reducing the barriers of transportation. Additionally, with several National Guard and Armed Forces Services installations in the region, VVFS provides a pathway to care and support for National Guardsmen and Armed Forces Reserves. The West Region continues to provide a resource group for veterans to meet bi-weekly in a confidential environment and learn coping and resiliency skills.

West region is excited to continue the annual Veteran and Family Therapeutic Recreation day at Claytor Lake State Park, a partnership with the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and several other community agencies. This year marked the eighth year of the event, with over 250 attendees coming together to enjoy a day of therapeutic recreation, camaraderie, and a chance to connect to various community resources at Claytor Lake, in Pulaski County.

Central Region serves more than 158,500 veterans and their family members in Central Virginia, encompassing 29 counties and 9 independent cities. The Central Region team is composed of 12 members: a Regional Director, a Senior Resource Specialist, the Senior Veteran Specialist, five Resource Specialists, one Justice Resource Specialist, and three Veteran Peer Specialists, strategically located in five DVS offices: Staunton, Charlottesville, Petersburg, Henrico, and Fredericksburg; and two CSB offices: Richmond and Region Ten. In the summer of 2019, a new office was opened in Chesterfield, and three positions are newly approved as of FY19, reflecting the region's increase in veteran numbers, case complexity and added outreach, training, and capacity building opportunities.

Central Region staff support nine regional Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) teams: Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Halifax/Mecklenburg, Hanover, Harrisonburg, Henrico, Richmond, Petersburg, and Staunton, representing law enforcement, emergency services, including occasionally dispatch, fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and Harrisonburg-Rockingham CSB, Valley CSB, Region Ten CSB, Crossroads CSB, District 19, Southside CSB, Chesterfield CSB, Richmond Behavior Health Authority, and Rappahannock Area Community Services Board. These relationships are instrumental in identifying veterans in crisis and connecting them to regional resources.

Central Region maintains relationships with three Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMC): McGuire VAMC in Richmond, Martinsburg VAMC in WV, and the Salem VAMC, and the VA's Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in Staunton, Harrisonburg, Charlottesville, and two in Fredericksburg. In FY19, staff assisted with the planning and delivery of two Mental Health Summits and associated resource fairs at McGuire VAMC, and supported open house events at the Staunton CBOC. Additionally, the Harrisonburg CBOC staff arranged an event to also be an itinerate site for both Benefits and VVFS staff.



Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney and the Mayor's Challenge team

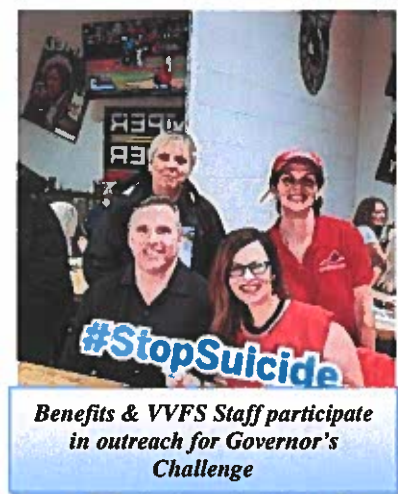
The Central Region has been part of the Mayor's Challenge in Richmond, as well as the Governor's Challenge. Staff provided training and outreach to the Richmond Police and Fire Departments. Staff conducted Military Cultural Competency (MCC) training to Chesterfield CSB, Health Planning Region 1 Emergency Services Clinicians, Virginia Department of Health's Rural Health staff, Rappahannock Area CSB, Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building, Crossroads CSB, and Health Planning Region clinical staff.

Central Region also worked closely with the University of Virginia's first two undergraduate "Veteran's Posse," for student veterans at UVA. Staff also worked with community college and university administrators to support the unique needs of their veteran students, including playing an integral role in Piedmont Virginia Community College's recent recognition as the #1 Military Friendly Small Community College in the United States.

East Region: The East region serves approximately 248,800 veterans and their families in the Greater Hampton Roads area, which includes 21 counties and 11 independent cities. The East Region is comprised of nine members: Regional Director, Senior Resource Specialist, Justice Resource Specialist, Veteran Peer Specialist, and five Resource Specialists. VVFS is strategically located in four DVS offices: Williamsburg, Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach; and two CSB offices: Colonial Behavioral Health and Western Tidewater CSB.

Staff currently participate in five of the seven Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) programs in the Hampton Roads area, providing community training to partner agencies and first responders through presentations. Along with CIT presentations, East Region provides Military Cultural Competency Trainings (MCC) presentations and Mental Health First Aid Trainings (MHFA) presentations.

In addition, team members routinely staff tables at community outreach events, providing information on DVS/VVFS services to veterans, family members, and community partners. Some of these events include the Remote Area Medical (RAM) Clinic, Native American Pow Wows, Aviation Institute of Maintenance, the Virginia Women Veterans Summit, and the Mental Health Joint Summit. Team members also attend community meetings such as the Norfolk Jail Re-Entry meeting, After TAPS Workshop, South Hampton Roads Veterans' Leadership Meeting, and Eastern Shore Veterans' Meeting.



Benefits & VVFS Staff participate in outreach for Governor's Challenge

Staff maintains an ongoing role to support the efforts of the Continuum of Care to assist homeless and at-risk veterans and their families in direct coordination with the Hampton VAMC homeless services team.



Team members also support this effort by attending the Greater Virginia Peninsula Homelessness Consortium and Southeastern Virginia Homeless Coalition, reviewing and selecting permanent supportive housing projects submitted to state and federal agencies for new and/or annual renewal funding the Tidewater region.

The East Region partners with Hampton VAMC's Clay Hunt Act Community Outreach Team (COT), which is one of five VAMC networks across the U.S. aiding transitioning service members in accessing health services at VA healthcare facilities and/or community healthcare services. Additionally, the East Region team continues to serve as a collaborative partner in a pilot project funded by the Virginia Department of Health, developing opportunities to bring behavioral health support to rural veterans residing on the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. This partnership has provided increased opportunities to expand training to students and staff at the Eastern Virginia Medical School and community/mental health providers, thereby providing an increased understanding of the military culture.

North Region serves approximately 218,200 veterans and their families in 14 counties and 6 independent cities in Northern Virginia. The North Region team is comprised of nine members: a Regional Director, Senior Resource Specialist, Veteran Justice Specialist, Veteran Peer Specialist, and five Resource Specialists, strategically located across the area in six DVS offices: Strasburg, Loudoun, Manassas, Fairfax, Springfield, and Fredericksburg; and one contracted office with the non-profit agency Service Source in Oakton. Staff also make monthly itinerate site visits in the community.

The Northern Virginia area provides a unique opportunity for interaction with large numbers of transitioning service members, veterans, Reservists, and National Guardsmen given the high volume of defense contractors, military bases, and the Pentagon in Northern Virginia. The North Region provides direct support and assistance at Transition Readiness seminars at Marine Corps Base Quantico, briefings at Fort Belvoir at the Soldier Family Assistance Center, itinerate sites on Naval Support Station Dahlgren, and more.

Staff provide community training to partner agencies and first responders through Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) in six current CIT programs: Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, North Western, Prince William, and Rappahannock. Resource Specialists coordinate mental health treatment through a variety of services, including local licensed clinicians at no cost with VSF funds.

Regional staff continue to support the efforts of six local Continua of Care (CoC) in direct coordination with the Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMCs) in Washington, D.C. and Martinsburg, WV, including the homeless services teams to maintain a targeted focus on meeting the needs of homeless and at-risk veterans and their families. Staff are active in the Unite-Us-Serving Together Collaborative and Homeless Veterans By-Name Housing to assist in care coordination with Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and other CoC partners. The region also continues to experience transportation issues that create barriers for receiving treatment, and a high demand for mental health treatment.

As part of Governor's Challenge, North Region staff were key members of a planning committee that hosted a Summit on Military Culture and Suicide Prevention in Fairfax for more than 120 in attendance from community providers and the CSBs. Due to the success of the summit, VVFS received requests from all the Health Planning Region 2 to provide additional MCC trainings to all CSBs.

Staff continue to be part of the treatment teams for both Fairfax and Prince William counties' Veterans Treatment Dockets (VTDs), working directly with judges, attorneys, probation/parole personnel, and the VA Justice Coordinator. In collaboration with veteran mentors, staff assist justice-involved veterans in accessing mental health services, substance abuse treatment, employment/vocational and education services to comply with, and successfully graduate from the VTD.

Staff facilitate weekly Veteran Peer Support (VPS) groups, providing a confidential environment for veterans to share post-military and transitional experiences with other veterans. North Region continues to experience a high demand for peer support services due to the region's veteran population. VPS has facilitated groups in Fairfax and Springfield for five years, but continues to receive requests for additional groups in Manassas and Loudoun. Additionally, the region started its first spousal support group in Fairfax, with plans to expand to Loudoun, when possible.



Participant in the Bull Run Ride holding a VVFS patch

VETERAN PEER SUPPORT SERVICES

The Veteran Peer Support is a program providing veterans support in behavioral and rehabilitative needs related to their pursuit of health, wellness and quality of life, resulting from military service. It is the most requested service within DVS, and demand is outpacing availability.

Veteran Peer Specialists (VPS) are matched to veterans to be relatable – partnering up with those who have similar or familiar military and post-military experiences. VPS assists veterans in identifying personal goals and objectives, barriers to be addressed in order to achieve those goals, and provides encouragement throughout the process. In addition, VPS promotes basic goals of movement towards self-reliance, identification of a community of support, behavioral health treatment as appropriate, recreational opportunities and connection to other relevant resources within the community. Throughout the process, the VPS acknowledges every success and encourages perseverance at every setback.

The program also facilitates veteran support groups, providing structure to promote personal growth, self-awareness, coping strategies, and the unique opportunity to interact with other like-minded veterans. The Senior Veteran Peer Specialist continues to support the strengthening of both the program's peer support personnel and increasing capacity for key partners.

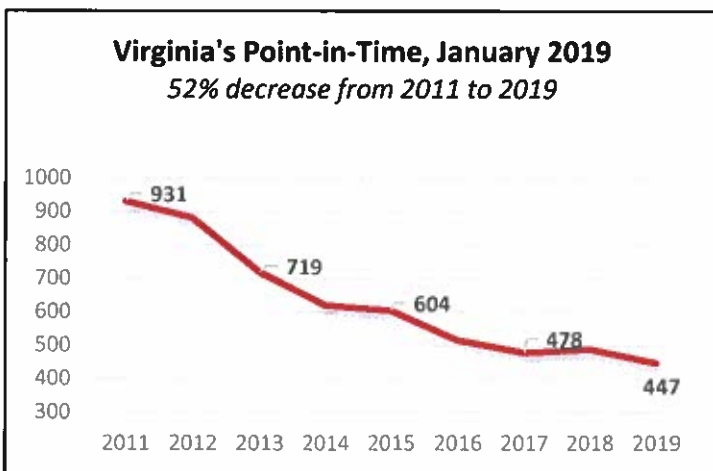


HOUSING AND HOMELESS SERVICES

VVFS continues to be a national leader, as well as supporting the Commonwealth’s sustaining efforts to ensure that veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. In FY19, 950 previously homeless veterans entered permanent housing. The VVFS Assistant Director continues to provide statewide coordination and leadership with federal, state, and community organizations and serves on the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans Executive Board.

The Governor’s Coordinating Council on Homelessness (GCCH), chaired by the Secretary of Commerce and Trade and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, continues to maintain the goals of the reduction and elimination of veteran homelessness as a key priority. As chair of the GCCH Veterans Committee, the VVFS Housing Director collaborates with three federal agencies, seven state agencies, and local Continuum of Care (CoC) partners to recommend strategies to the GCCH. In addition, the committee aligns priorities and works to fill gaps and remove barriers in housing homeless veterans. On June 12-13, 2019 the VVFS Assistant Director presented at the Virginia Housing Alliance’s Housing Virginia’s Most Vulnerable Conference on *Statewide Updates on Veteran Homelessness* and the *Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Military, Veterans and Family Members*.

The DVS Homeless Fund continues to partner with the Veterans Service Foundation (VSF) to fill gaps in housing, assist veterans experiencing homelessness or who were previously chronically homeless. In FY19, VSF funds assisted 292 veterans with \$215,000 in financial resources. Allowable expenses to be covered by VSF funds include: rental deposits/arrears, utility assistance, beds, and other one-time expenses that may prevent a veteran from being housed.



The annual Point in Time (PIT) Count was held the last week of January 2019. This year’s count showed there were 447 veterans experiencing homelessness – 355 sheltered and 92 unsheltered. This was an 8% decrease from the 2018 count of 485, and overall reduction of 52% since 2011. Women veterans experiencing homelessness had a 10% decrease from 2018, dropping from 63 homeless women veterans, down to 57. VVFS continues to work with communities in sustaining efforts of reducing veteran homelessness through coordinated entry and targeting of resources.

The Dominion Veteran EnergyShare program, administered by VVFS and SSVF providers across the state in conjunction with the DVS Homeless Fund, continued to provide utility assistance to homeless veterans who moved into permanent housing in FY19. The Veteran EnergyShare Program increased from \$500,000 annually in calendar year 2018, to \$800,000 in 2019. This partnership has received national recognition as a best practice and is vital to sustaining efforts in Virginia. In CY18, 1,386 EnergyShare vouchers were utilized for veterans experiencing or at risk for homelessness.

VVFS JUSTICE INVOLVED SERVICES (JIS) PROGRAM

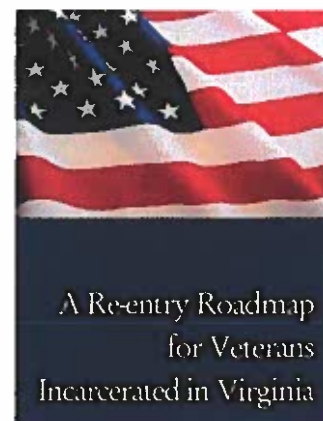
The VVFS Justice Involved Services (JIS) program offers direct assistance and resource connections to Virginia's veterans and service members of any era, regardless of discharge status, across the criminal justice spectrum: diversion, incarceration and reentry. The JIS team is comprised of a Criminal Justice Director and four Veteran Justice Specialists (VJS) – one in each region – to work with justice-involved veterans pre- and post-release.

A comprehensive pre-release needs assessment identifies areas of need related to behavioral healthcare, rehabilitative support, employment, education, benefits, peer support, or housing, and then the assigned VJS provides direct support and assistance to the veteran with connections to resources. VJS attend re-entry resource fairs at jails and prisons, re-entry council meetings, and provide assistance to criminal justice staff and community partners. The Criminal Justice Director (CJD) meets with the VJS quarterly to discuss cases, provide updates, and deliver technical assistance and training. In FY19, the CJD presented on the JIS program at the Office of the Attorney General's third annual statewide re-entry conference in October 2018, and *Virginia Business* magazine reported on the JIS program in May 2019.

In FY19, the CJD continues to promote the creation of veteran dockets in collaboration with the Supreme Court of Virginia, and provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions, including the cities of Richmond and Roanoke. As of FY19, newly approved veteran's treatment dockets include Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, Prince William General District Court, and Stafford County General District Court. VVFS regional staff are active members of the veteran docket teams and connect veterans to resources in the community. Virginia is one of only five states to receive the **Veterans Treatment Court Statewide Strategic Planning Technical Assistance Award** from the Center for Court Innovation (CCI). The CJD serves on the Veterans Docket Statewide Strategic Planning team and assists with statewide efforts to increase veteran identification in the criminal justice system at multiple intercept points, specifically in Virginia local and regional jails.

Additionally, the CJD collaborates with key partners, including the VA, DVS Benefits, the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC), the Virginia Regional Jail Association, the Virginia Sheriffs' Association, the Virginia Attorney General's office, and community partners. JIS maintains an electronic mailbox: justice.vvfs@dvs.virginia.gov for referrals and provides services to justice-involved veterans who are part of treatment dockets, in local jails and state prisons, and on probation or parole supervision. The CJD collaborated with Benefits, VADOC and the VA to create the Compensation and Pension (C&P) examination process for incarcerated veterans. A C&P mailbox was also created within DVS for the VA and VA-contracted vendors to request C&P exams for incarcerated veterans. VVFS monitors the mailbox and coordinates C&P exams for incarcerated veterans with the VADOC statewide representative.

In FY19, the revised *Re-entry Roadmap for Veterans Incarcerated in Virginia* guide, a collaborative project between DVS, VADOC, and the VA, was published. The *Roadmap* provides updated information on discharge requirements for VA services, what happens to benefits during incarceration, contacts for the VA's Homeless and Veterans Justice programs, all DVS



service lines, additional regional re-entry resources, and expanded housing and homeless services contacts and resources. Criminal justice staff and community providers use the guide as a resource for veterans involved in the courts, incarcerated or formerly incarcerated, and on probation and/or parole supervision as they return to the community. The guide is available in print, and electronically on the DVS and VADOC websites.

The Justice Involved Veterans with Special Needs Work Group was created in collaboration with the VA and VADOC to address the complex needs of justice-involved veterans with serious physical and/or mental health conditions. The work group has two subgroups designed to address the growing needs of this population: one is comprised of staff who coordinate discharge-planning efforts for veterans on their caseload; the other is a management-level group addressing larger systemic issues and barriers. The VJS are a part of the first work group, and the CJD is the facilitator for the management-level work group.

OPERATION FAMILY CAREGIVER (OFC)

VVFS continues to serve the needs of caregivers, even though our grant from the Rosalyn Carter Institute has ended. However, when the need is significant, VVFS continues to direct eligible participants to *Operation Family Caregiver*, an evidenced-based program coordinated by the RCI, to provide a more structured and curriculum-based program to assist caregivers with long-term health and wellness. The Riverside Center for Excellence and Lifelong Health is the coordinating agency for *OFC* in Virginia.

MISSION: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS & MISSION: HEALTHY FAMILIES

Mission: Healthy Relationships (MHR) and *Mission: Healthy Families* (MHF) retreats are held on weekends at various locations in Virginia, and focus on effective communication skills through the provision of individualized and group support in a workshop format.



Mission: Healthy Families

Mission: Healthy Families: In FY19, one workshop was held at Smith Mountain Lake, with 78 participants from 17 families in attendance.

MHF retreats enhance family well-being for veteran families by allowing the families to step away from daily stressors and support one another as a unit. *MHF* provides indoor and outdoor family-bonding time. The retreats allow adults and children to engage in activities, which help strengthen skill building, resiliency and communication skills within the family unit. The weekend provides time to engage in activities that strengthen relationships and the health and welfare of each family member.

Mission: Healthy Relationships In FY19, VVFS held three workshops (Richmond, Loudoun, and Roanoke), with 56 couples attending.

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MHR is a program focused on relationship enhancement and effective communication skills for couples. It was adapted from “8 Hours to a Lifetime of Relationship Satisfaction,” a workshop designed by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Couples who have experienced military transition, deployments, and/or are coping with the effects of operational combat stress, PTSD, TBI or other trauma-related experiences are taught a skills-based approach to relationship strengthening, enhancing relationship communication and resiliency skills and are provided connections to behavioral health, rehabilitative and supportive services. The goal is to improve the overall health and well-being and relationship satisfaction of the couples who attend the weekend-long workshop.



Mission: Healthy Relationships

Annual Services Provided	FY17	FY18	FY19
Individual Services Delivered	6,764	5,714*	3,196*
Outreach and Training Events	NA*	NA*	729
Budget **	\$3,973,448	\$5,370,564	\$4,866,878
Authorized Positions ***	24	59	47
Filled Positions	9	45	45

*VVFS shifted to a new data system in the middle of FY18 and changed how service data is collected. Previously, individual service contacts were counted separately, but starting in March 2018, all service contacts are collected under one individual service type within the Individualized Service Plan.

** Includes \$200,000 per FY for Granting Freedom Program. FY17 and FY18 include \$400,000 appropriation for dedicated special revenue – this appropriation was transferred to new program 46704 for FY19. FY17 and FY18 includes \$682,054 appropriation for federal funds – reduced to \$282,054 in FY19

*** Includes positions (FY18) that were transferred to other programs in FY19