VVFS Justice Involved Services (JIS)
Mission

The VVFS JIS provides services and resource connections for justice-involved veterans (JIVs) across the continuum of the criminal justice system from diversion to incarceration to re-entry and community supervision.
VVFS Justice Involved Services (JIS)

• Criminal justice continuum - diversion, incarceration, supervision

• Formalized referral process

• Dedicated VVFS Veteran Justice Specialist (VJS)
VVFS Veteran Justice Specialists

Role

Direct client services-
• Veteran docket team member (diversion)
• One-on-one meetings with JIV pre-release, post release, and on supervision (incarceration, re-entry); virtual meetings due to COVID-19 pandemic
• Identifying, referring, and connecting to services and resources
• Monitoring progress
• Timely documentation

Outreach services (pivoted to virtual due to COVID-19 pandemic)-
• Conduct information sessions and provide training to jail and prison staff
• Collaborate and network with community partners
• Participate on re-entry councils, workgroups, veteran docket teams
• Attend jail and prison resource fairs as time allows

Other duties-
• Participate in individual, regional, statewide VVFS supervision/team meetings
• Participate in and complete required position training
COVID-19 Impacts and Challenges

- Incarcerated veterans outreach (jail and prison)
  - Virtual intakes and appointments due to in-person visit suspensions
  - Referral gaps due to lack of staff in local and regional jails

- Early releases due to COVID-19
  - Short timeframe for re-entry preparation; gaps in discharge planning
  - Lack of notice from local and regional jails

- C&P in-person exams suspended for incarcerated veterans

- Re-entry gaps/challenges-
  - Housing barriers - biggest challenge for this population
  - Securing identification upon release from incarceration (DMV driver’s license, IDs, etc.)
  - Lack of veteran identification in local and regional jails
Future Strategic Opportunities and Re-entry Collaboration Efforts

- Continue engagement with local, state, and federal partners to coordinate housing for JIVs
- Collaborate with the VA Justice Outreach program to promote the VA’s Veterans Re-entry Search Service (VRSS); provide VRSS training to local jails to increase veteran identification
- Engage with VA-contracted vendors and VADOC to coordinate virtual C&P exams for incarcerated veterans
- Continue partnership with the VA and VADOC on the JIVs with Special Needs workgroup to address the needs of veterans with serious medical and mental health needs
- Conduct statewide collaborative meetings between VA Justice Outreach staff and VVFS VJS
Donna Harrison
Criminal Justice Director
Virginia Department of Veterans Services
(804) 225-4734
Donna.harrison@dvs.virginia.gov