

## **BVS POC REPORT**

### **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & REHABILITATIVE SERVICES**

1. **Date of Report:** July 2022
2. **BVS POC(s):** Del. Mike Cherry, David Ashe, and Carl Bess
3. **Service Area/Program:** Behavioral Health & Rehabilitative Services
4. **VDVS Director/Program Manager:** Director - Brandi Jancaitis
5. **Mission of service area/program:**

The Virginia Veteran and Family Support Program (VVFS) is operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services and provides OUTREACH, CONNECTION and SUPPORT to veterans and their families as they address the challenges of military service, transition, deployments, Post Traumatic Stress, and other behavioral health concerns, as well as Traumatic Brain Injuries and other physical injuries.

**SERVICES THEY PROVIDE:** VVFS provides peer and family support, care coordination, and resource linkages to Service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF). Referrals are coordinated with Community Services Boards, community nonprofits, brain injury service providers, VA medical facilities and other public and private agencies. VVFS also provides outreach and support to justice-involved service members and veterans interfacing with courts, diversion/veteran treatment docket programs, during incarceration in jails and prisons, and while on probation and/or parole supervision.

6. **Who does the service area/program serve?**

Veterans of any era (regardless of discharge status) who are Virginia residents; members of the Virginia National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves; and family members and caregivers of those veterans and service members. They work hard to provide a "no wrong door approach", meaning if they can't provide that service within the program, they'll do their best to connect them to a resource/provider that can.

7. **What are the service line's primary objectives?**

Provide care coordination, peer and family support services to Service Members, Veterans, and their families (SMVF).

Facilitate access to behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services at the Federal, State, and local levels for SMVF.

**8. What are the key results that support the objectives?**

In FY22, VVFS served 2180 clients. Of these clients, 1223 were new clients. This included connecting veterans and their family members for resources to approximately 2,700 service needs. These include housing needs (37%), behavioral health support (14%), benefits assistance (10%), employment (8%), and homeless assistance (8%). In addition, VVFS provided 76 trainings (e.g. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Military Cultural Competency, Crisis Intervention Training, Mental Health First Aid) to approximately 2,700 participants (community partners and providers).

**9. What specific objectives (end of FY2022, end of FY2025) has the service line established and what progress has the service line/program made toward achieving the objectives?**

**FY22 Data Overview**

- 90% of all new VVFS clients will have a needs assessment completed in 7 days of initial client contact for the purpose of creating a coordinated resource plan (98% out of 1392)
- 90% of veterans with a identified behavioral health need will be connected to an appropriate resource (98% out of 331)
- 90% of veterans experiencing literal homelessness will be connected to a shelter/housing resource (94% out 187)
- VVFS and Benefits will screen 95% of new SMVF for suicide risk (93% out of 6,809)

**10. What are some operational highlights from the past year?**

VVFS continued both virtual and in-person services despite challenges with COVID in the past year. Creating this flexibility has greatly increased the number of clients the program is working with and in some months exceeding pre-pandemic levels. VVFS also has been screening clients for suicide risk and has been integral in training and supporting DVS Benefits staff in these efforts. Over 1000 veterans monthly are now being screened for suicide risk.

**11. What type of outreach did the service line conduct and what are the results?**

VVFS continues outreaching to state and community partners and building resource connections to assist clients. The outreach consists of both in-person and virtual events as well as training on Military Cultural Competency and resources for veterans. VVFS trained more community providers in FY22 than in any year previously. VVFS also regularly participants in state workgroups for behavioral health and suicide prevention, housing/homelessness, peer support, and criminal justice.

**12. What, if any, new initiatives / innovative solutions were launched during the past year?**

In FY22 VVFS started screening all clients for suicide risk and trained Benefits staff to screen as well. Since January 2022, VVFS and Benefits staff screened approximately 6350 veterans and family members (93% of total new clients). If screened positive, VVFS develops a safety plan with the client and connects them to the appropriate behavioral health services. Of the total clients screened, 11% screened positive for suicide risk and less than 1% were at high risk.

For FY23, VVFS received funding to hire a new Suicide Prevention Director who will oversee new funding (\$5 million) to develop a Suicide and Opioid Addiction Prevention Program within DVS. This senior leader position will have a five million dollar operating budget, a team of 3-4 staff, and build a behavioral health grant program for community services providers. This position is currently in the process of being hired and expect to on-board in September 2022.

Another important highlight is the roll out of the new 988 crisis and suicide lifeline number. This will replace the previous suicide crisis hotlines and will streamline access to those needing behavioral health support. VVFS will be working with 988 to increase military cultural competency and resource connections. The Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) is still operational, and veterans can dial 1 after dialing 988 (or the full 1-800-273-8255) to access the VCL. Here's more information on the connection between 988 and the VCL: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/about/what-is-988>

**13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area / program at present?**

Affordable housing continues to be a challenge as well as the impact on inflation to our clients. As COVID funding is ending, particularly in eviction prevention, this is putting a strain on staff and clients. Statewide rents have increased on average about 15% and production issues have slowed the development of affordable housing. Stable housing is a key protective factor for behavioral health and in-turn suicide prevention. VVFS has also experienced significant direct services staff turnover (~40% since 2020) so will have a decent amount of new staff onboarding in the next few months.

**14. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?**

VVFS helps Service Members, Veterans, and their families access care and support for behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services needs. Often this can prevent a crisis and/or suicide. VVFS staff strive to help SMVF link to services and benefits in federal, state and local systems. In addition, leadership team members serve on statewide advisory committees (on justice, housing, peer support, behavioral health and suicide prevention services) and form strategic partnerships that enhance systems of care for SMVF.

**15. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?**

By helping the veteran, it helps the Commonwealth by continuing to ensure Virginia is the most military and veteran friendly state and provides comprehensive and wrap-around services for those residing in Virginia. Ready access to care and supportive services helps veterans and families Stay, Work, and Thrive in Virginia.

**16. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?**

VVFS has expanded efforts on preventing veteran suicide through supporting other programs (community partners, DVS Benefits, etc.) to screen for suicide risk.

In the coming months, VVFS will be working with DVS Veterans Education, Transition, and Employment (VETE) programs to increase the number of veterans screened for suicide risk and connect them to resources. With the passage of the state budget, VVFS is anticipating adding a new Suicide Prevention Director position in FY23 and \$5 million in additional funding for suicide prevention and opioid addiction services, which will assist in supporting and expanding these efforts.

**17. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?**

VVFS assists a range of veterans and their family members with complex needs including criminal justice involvement, caregiver support, homelessness and other housing issues, and behavioral health needs. VVFS staff are a crucial touchpoint and provide support to navigate through complex systems of care.

Prepared by:

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