

Virginia Board of Veterans Services
Point of Contact Report
Justice Involved Veterans Program and Veterans Treatment Dockets Update

1. Date of Report: August 2022
2. BVS POC: David Ashe and Senator Bryce Reeves
3. Service Area/Program: Justice Involved Veterans/Justice Involved Services and Veterans Treatment Dockets
4. VDVS Director/Program Manager: Donna Harrison
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?

The VVFS Veteran Justice Specialists (VJS) are members of the eight Veteran Treatment Dockets in Virginia. There are three new pending veteran treatment dockets in Virginia-Chesterfield, Loudoun, and Pulaski. The VVFS VJS continue to participate in the planning for veterans treatment dockets. The VDVS Criminal Justice Director provides technical assistance to jurisdictions interested in starting veterans treatment dockets.

In FY22, Virginia rolled out the new Virginia Veteran Treatment Docket Implementation Curriculum training. This training is required for all new veteran treatment dockets in Virginia. The Chesterfield County veteran treatment docket team was the first team to complete this training. Loudoun and Pulaski are scheduled to attend the training in FY23.

In FY22, the VVFS Veteran Justice Specialists participated in the quarterly collaborative meetings with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialists and Healthcare for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) team. The group discusses program updates, issues related to the justice-involved veteran population, and training opportunities.

In collaboration with the Supreme Court of Virginia Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) and the VA, the VVFS Veteran Justice Specialists and VVFS Criminal Justice Director conducted statewide training to local and regional jails on the VA's *Veterans Reentry Search Services* (VRSS) system in order to increase veteran identification in the local jails.

In addition, the VVFS Criminal Justice Director joined the Justice and Housing workgroup which is a group based on a grant received by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). The Justice and Housing workgroup is a national project with a geographic focus area to explore the need and address challenges for justice-involved individuals to secure housing. The group is conducting environmental scans to address barriers to accessing housing for justice-involved individuals, reviewing tenant selection plans, holding focus group meetings, and examining background screening criteria in housing.

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

Incarcerated veterans outreach-Due to COVID-19 restrictions, VADOC suspended in-person visits for individuals in state prisons for most of the FY22. For incarcerated veterans in state prisons (VADOC), the VVFS VJS staff have been conducting intake appointments via phone for needs assessments and re-entry planning. VADOC facility counselors are still available for service coordination and re-entry planning. Phone appointments are coordinated through the VADOC facility counselors.

Intake phone appointments have been more difficult for veterans incarcerated in local and regional jails due to the lack of staff available in the local jails. Most local jails do not have counselors or discharge planning staff to assist with re-entry efforts.

Outreach has been conducted to the jails by providing JIS program information to the Virginia Sheriffs' Association's list serv. The VVFS VJS have also maintained virtual contact with their jail staff contacts about the JIS program and referral process.

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

Incarcerated veterans outreach-Due to COVID-19 restrictions, VADOC suspended all in-person visits for individuals in state prisons. For incarcerated veterans in state prisons (VADOC), the VVFS VJS staff conducted intake appointments via phone for needs assessments and re-entry planning. VADOC facility counselors are still available for service coordination and re-entry planning. Phone appointments were coordinated through the VADOC facility counselors.

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C&P exams for incarcerated veterans- In-person Compensation & Pension (C&P) exams for incarcerated veterans have resumed in VADOC facilities. In addition, virtual C&P exams were conducted for individuals with behavioral health claims. Virtual C&P exams for behavioral health claims continue to be an option. The CJ Director is tracking on all C&P exams for incarcerated veterans in VADOC.

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

- ❖ **Housing** continues to be the biggest barrier for this population due to criminal history and lack of financial resources. This need has been exacerbated due to the rise in housing costs and the lack of housing resources in the community. Housing is the number one service request for the JIS program.
- ❖ Recently released individuals from jail and prison continue to have challenges **securing IDs** for housing, employment, and benefits/financial assistance due to stringent DMV ID requirements and delays in receiving supporting identity documents (birth certificates and Social Security cards).
- ❖ **Re-entry** for veterans being released from incarceration has been especially challenging due to the lack of housing options, program closures, and limited availability of resources.
- ❖ **Local and regional jail discharge planning gaps and veteran identification.** Jails continue to struggle with discharge planning due to limited reentry staff. Most referrals received from the jails are self-referrals from veterans recently released who normally need connections to housing, benefits, and employment. Local jails also have issues with **veteran identification**. Most jails are not using the VA's *Veterans Reentry Search Services* (VRSS) system.

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?

JIS program-specific strategic opportunities are centered around veteran identification in local and regional jails by marketing and training jail staff on using the VA's Veterans Reentry Search Services (VRSS) system. In addition, the program will be assisting the Virginia Supreme Court Office of the Executive staff on expanding veterans treatment dockets in Virginia and provide the Virginia Veteran Treatment Docket Implementation Curriculum training to interested jurisdictions.

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.