

BVS POC REPORT

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

1. **Date of Report:** July 2022
2. **BVS POC(s):** Senator Mamie Locke and David Ashe
3. **Service Area/Program:** Housing and Homelessness
4. **VDVS Director/Program Manager:** Deputy Director – Matt Leslie
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 continues to support housing and homelessness initiatives statewide as well as provide support for direct services to veterans in need.

VVFS worked closely with the Dept. of Housing and Community Development Rent Relief Program to make sure veterans who qualified had access to the program. This was an Emergency Relief Assistance (ERA) Program that assisted those facing evictions and help keep landlords whole during the pandemic. The DVS Homeless Fund partnered with homeless Continua of Care and veteran homeless providers to assisted 228 veterans experiencing homelessness gap assistance for permanent housing (Deposits, first month rent, etc) and previously chronically homeless veterans with maintaining permanent supportive housing (rent arrears) when not eligible for other federal , state or local resources.

The 2022 January annual Point in Time (PIT) count for veterans accounted for 392 homeless veterans (345 veterans in shelter, 47 unsheltered). This increased from 350 from 2021 (unsheltered count did not occur that year due to COVID). The PIT count in January 2022 was 395. The 2022 count is 58% lower than the 2011 count that had 931 veterans. However, with housing costs and inflation increasing, these numbers could increase in future years.

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

VVFS continues to outreach and collaborate with Homeless Continua of Care, the Veterans Affairs Medical Center Homeless Programs, Supportive Services for Veterans Families providers, and other housing/homelessness providers to serve veterans experiencing homelessness or unstably housed. VVFS also represents the agency on several statewide housing workgroups.

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

The VVFS Deputy Director has chaired the state Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Steering Committee (members include 7 state agencies and Virginia Housing). This committee is assisting with increasing coordination among PSH funding opportunities and increasing PSH for a range of populations including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, serious mental illness, the chronically homeless, and older adults. This includes veterans and their family members that fall within these populations. One of the key goals is leveraging Virginia Housing Low Income Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program set aside to increase the number of newly developed affordable housing units targeting those in need of PSH.

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.

<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2022/07/13/a-shortage-of-single-family-homes-is-casting-doubt-on-virginias-future-growth/>

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 will continue to collaborate with veteran specific and non-veteran housing and homelessness programs. Housing is the largest need that clients access VVFS support. This is an important area and as the administration builds out its housing priorities, VVFS is ready to assist.

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. Housing is a critical component of well-being, is a protective factor for suicide risk, and is essential for veterans and their families to Stay, Work, and Thrive in Virginia.

Prepared by:

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