

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
BIENNIAL OUTREACH REPORT TO CONGRESS
December 1, 2020**



Submitted in accordance with 38 U.S. Code § 6308

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Introductory Letter from the Secretary

I am pleased to submit this Biennial Outreach Report, which outlines the outreach programs conducted by all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administrations and special staff offices during Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 and 2019. This report focuses on actions taken to increase awareness and access to benefits and services our Veterans have earned.

Serving America's Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors is a noble endeavor. Increasing awareness and access to VA's many benefits and services is essential to helping Veterans lead productive lives in the country they served.

VA takes seriously the "affirmative duty" under Federal law to make it easier for Veterans to access VA services and benefits instead of placing the burden on the Veterans. The Department reaches Veterans in numerous ways, whether it's connecting with them directly where they live, serve or receive care, or working with non-VA organizations, such as state-and-local governments, Veterans Service Organizations and other non-profits.

Outreach to Veterans is especially important when it comes to providing health care, as VA offers specialized services that cannot be replicated anywhere in the private sector. VA care can make a world of difference in a Veteran's life, and trust scores show the Department is making excellent progress when it comes to Veterans' trust in VA.

The outreach efforts by the Department in 2018 and 2019 covered in this report directly contributed to the significant and positive customer service and Veterans experience results we have realized in 2020.

Other notable examples of VA progress include the following:

- Studies show VA compares favorably to the private sector on wait times and quality of care – and in many cases exceeds it.
- In FY 2019, VA completed more than 59.9 million internal appointments – a record high and about 1.7 million more than the year before.
- VA has implemented the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act of 2018, greatly expanding Veterans' health care choices.
 - Eligible Veterans now have the permanent choice to seek care in their community from more than 1 million non-VA providers across the country.
 - The MISSION Act also created a new urgent care benefit that gives Veterans easy, local access to medical services for things like a sore throat or a sprained ankle. This is a huge step forward in terms of convenience for our patients, as eligible Veterans do not need prior authorization from VA to visit an urgent care provider in our network.
- VA opened the White House VA hotline, quickly helping address Veterans' VA-related concerns.

- The 24/7 service is principally staffed by Veterans and family members and has fielded more than 455,000 calls and emails with an average time to answer of 13 seconds.
- VA adopted a public-health approach to suicide prevention that focuses on connecting Veterans to local resources.
 - The public-health approach is central to VA's first ever National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide, which was published in 2018, as well as the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) executive order signed in March, 2019.
 - That roadmap, released in June 2020, is bringing together stakeholders across all levels of government and the private sector to address suicide nationally and provide Veterans with the specific mental health and suicide prevention services they deserve.

None of these accomplishments could have happened without a talented and motivated staff that worked very hard to reach out to our Veterans, family members, survivors and caregivers in 2018 and 2019. I am proud to work with them every day to carry out VA's mission to fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

VA is adapting to be more flexible, responsive and mindful of our Veteran population needs, and the Department's ongoing outreach programs for women, minority and tribal Veterans and faith-based partnerships are prime examples of dedicated efforts underway to reach and serve an ever-changing Veteran population demographic.

I look forward to working with Congress to further VA's outreach goals and thank you for your steadfast support of our American Veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert L. Wilkie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert L. Wilkie

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA)

At A Glance:

- Beginning in 2018 and through 2019, the ChooseVA national awareness campaign placed more than \$9 million of paid media advertisements, which resulted in approximately 2.7 billion impressions, \$31 million of added value and donated media, and a return on investment (ROI) of 4:1. This success is due to the response by television and radio networks and stations to donate ad space and airtime to accomplish ChooseVA's goals of enrolling Veterans for VA benefits and services as well as recruiting and retaining qualified VA employees.
- In 2019, OPIA edited and distributed the annual Federally-mandated guide, "Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors." The 70-page booklet is available online at <https://www.va.gov/getstarted/>. OPIA printed and distributed 100,000 copies VA-wide as well as across major Veterans Service Organizations (VSO).
- OPIA's overall digital strategy has significantly increased awareness of VA benefits and services across all social media channels, resulting in more than double the average monthly audience, from 2,344,538 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 to an average of 4,844,719 in FY 2020 to date.
 - In FY 2019, OPIA's Digital Media Engagement (DME) office ramped up its video efforts, resulting in about 10 million video views for the year, eclipsing the less than 3 million views recorded in FY 2018.
- In FY 2018 and 2019, outreach conducted by the Homeless Veterans Outreach and Strategic Communication Office resulted in the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans receiving 134,490 and 127,860 calls, respectively, from or on behalf of Veterans who were homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

ChooseVA National Advertising Campaign

In 2018, OPIA initiated a national advertising campaign, ChooseVA. This campaign was designed around the following two pillars: informing Veterans of the benefits that they have earned and attracting and retaining a highly qualified workforce. The primary target audiences are Veterans in their mid-twenties to mid-forties, who reside within the United States and have had limited or no contact with VA as well as prospective employees in key markets. The campaign's development relied upon data, research and experiential insights to form integrated awareness campaigns focused on available benefits and employment opportunities. The campaign elevates VA's ChooseVA brand through large-scale measurable and targeted advertising, using various mediums that positively engage audiences. Placements during the initial campaign year concentrated on traditional media (e.g., billboards, transit, television, radio, print ads) in key regional and national markets and partnerships with professional sports teams. Currently, the campaign is employing a mix of traditional and digital media advertising approaches.

Campaign Objectives/Approach:

ChooseVA objectives include spotlighting and humanizing the foundational benefits provided by VA, showcasing all that VA offers to Veterans at key stages of life, and attracting and retaining a motivated, high-performing workforce to effectively deliver care, benefits and services to Veterans. The campaign illustrates modernization, innovation and high-quality customer service within VA. OPIA combined research into Veteran population data along with information from tools and services that provide a well-rounded view of U.S. media markets and media consumption habits, including Nielsen Scarborough, Nielsen Audio, Nielsen Home video, and GfK MRI (Mediamark Research and Intelligence). Through analysis of media preferences and consumption habits at both the market and macro-levels, OPIA identified the right tactics and channels to reach the target Veteran audience where they are, both in terms of population distribution and media engagement. OPIA designed a suite of advertising materials to support these tactics, including billboards, transit ads, magazine ads, digital ads, television and radio ads, and in-stadium LED (light-emitting diode) ribbons for target markets and national campaigns. These ads feature personal stories of success told by Veterans and VA employees, VA benefits and programs, and the innovation and service VA delivers.

Accomplishments:

In 2019, the campaign placed more than \$9 million of paid media ads, resulting in approximately 2.7 billion impressions, \$31 million of added value and donated media, and a return on investment (ROI) of 4:1. This success is due, in large measure, to the willingness of Out of Home (OOH) vendors and television and radio networks and stations to donate ad space and airtime to ChooseVA in recognition of VA's critical mission and the quality of the campaign.

[National Veterans Outreach Office](#)

In October 2014, OPIA's National Veterans Outreach (NVO) began reaching out to VSOs, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the private sector to collaborate on web-based events to educate Veterans and their family members on VA benefits and services. For 2018-2019, NVO held 37 events on social media sites belonging both to partners and VA. For these events, VA continued to leverage VSO's and NGO's Facebook platforms to hold Facebook Live events and began to take advantage of VA's considerable audience on the Department's Facebook Page, while continuing to utilize VSO representatives as moderators. These are virtual office hours during which VA subject matter experts and VSO staff work together to answer the questions Veterans have about VA benefits, including questions on eligibility and how to apply. According to data analysis, these events reach hundreds of thousands of Veterans each year.

A May 2019 event, highlighting changes to VA health care as a result of the MISSION Act, was the largest event during this time period. The event took place on VA's Facebook page and began with a live video discussion featuring representatives from American Legion, AMVETS and Wounded Warrior Project speaking to VA experts presenting the plan to roll out the MISSION Act, connecting Veterans with the best

online information, and detailing dates different portions of the Act would be implemented. After the video, VA experts answered Veterans' questions typed in the comments section of the post. This event was widely viewed, reaching over 55,000 Veterans' Facebook pages. Some 22,000 unique visitors viewed the live video, and 1,000 questions were posted during the event.

Through 2018 up to July 2019, VA continued to utilize Explore VA, its comprehensive digital outreach program commenced in 2013 to inform and educate Veterans about VA benefits and services they earned and deserve and encourage them to apply for those benefits. As part of US Digital Service's government-wide digital modernization and consolidation project, the Explore website functions were incorporated into a redesigned VA.gov homepage in July 2019. All NVO digital outreach efforts transitioned accordingly to direct stakeholders to the revamped VA.gov homepage and its specific benefits pages.

NVO is the Department's lead coordinator for participation in the Department of Defense (DoD) led 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration program www.vietnamwar50th.com. DoD began the 10 year-long 50th anniversary commemoration program in 2015 (ending in 2025) to honor and remember United States Forces that fought in Southeast Asia from 1965 through 1975. There are approximately 400 commemorative partners throughout the Department who each pledge to conduct a minimum of two events annually to thank Vietnam-era Veterans and their families. During FY 2018 and 2019, VA conducted more than 1,000 events and presented more 190,000 lapel pins to Vietnam era Veterans in ceremonies across the Nation. More than 1,000 events were covered by local and regional news media.

NVO also planned and executed VA's participation in the National Observances for the 2018 and 2019 Memorial and Veterans Day programs conducted at Arlington National Cemetery. The NVO also supported more than 50 regional site programs around the Nation where special Veterans Day ceremonies and events were hosted by local governments. In partnership with VA, local communities often present programs to assist Veterans and family members with learning about VA's services and benefits at: www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/.

Digital Media Engagement

Engagement across VA's digital media channels continue to grow through the efforts of VA's Office of Digital Media Engagement (DME). The team continues to test, measure and implement new ways to share content and information with Veterans and others through the Department's flagship blog, Vantage Point, and its social media channels including Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Borne the Battle podcast, YouTube and Flickr.

In FY 2019, DME ramped up its video efforts resulting in about 10 million video views for the year, eclipsing the less than 3 million views recorded in FY 2018.

DME, in partnership with the Veterans Experience Office, distributed #VetResources, a weekly newsletter to 11 million Veterans, caregivers and other subscribers. Each email provided links to important news, information and resources located on VAntage Point. The #VetResources email campaign significantly amplified VA content and in turn brought additional awareness to VA policies, programs, benefits and services.

Intergovernmental Affairs

OPIA's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs is responsible for all relations between VA and state, county, municipal, international and tribal governments. The primary function of the office is to provide strategic advice, guidance, and information to the Office of the Secretary, Under Secretaries for Health, Benefits, and Memorial Affairs, and all other VA Staff Offices by fostering and enhancing government partnerships and acting as liaison between VA and the White House, Federal, state, county, municipal, tribal, insular, and international governments and faith-based leaders. The Executive Director for Intergovernmental Affairs has oversight of the Office of Tribal Government Relations, the Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiative and the Office of State & Local Government Affairs.

Office of Tribal Government Relations

The Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) works to strengthen and build closer relations between VA, tribal governments and other key Federal, state, private and non-profit partners to effectively and respectfully serve Veterans across Indian Country. This work is done in the spirit of government-to-government consultation and collaboration, respectful of the political relationship that exists between the United States and tribal governments. OTGR efforts focus on the following three important goals: facilitating VA's Tribal Consultation Policy; facilitating increased access to health care; and promoting economic sustainability (highlighting opportunities for Veterans to access fiscal, educational, housing and other special programs and benefits through VA).

At A Glance:

- In 2018, VA held 33 claims events in partnership with 24 tribes across 12 states. An estimated 1,100 Veterans participated and submitted a total of 730 claims for VA benefits during the 2018 campaign. For FY 2019, there were a total of 30 claims events involving 25 tribal governments in 13 states. An estimated 1,000 Veterans were served, and 472 claims taken.
- Since inception in FY 2012, the Veterans Affairs-Indian Health Service (VA-IHS) and Veterans Affairs-Tribal Health Program (VA-THP) reimbursement agreements provided \$104.68 million to IHS and THPs for care of 10,696 VHA enrolled American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Veterans. In FY 2019 alone, VA paid IHS and THPs \$20.49 million for the care of more than 5,100 enrolled AI/AN Veterans.

In late 2017, VA sent letters to tribal leaders across the Nation to invite them to participate in a 2018 campaign in which VA visited tribal lands to share information and encourage Native American Veterans to submit claims for disability compensation and

other benefits. In 2018, VA prioritized outreach to AI/AN Veterans who have disabilities or illnesses that VA presumes are related to their military service, such as Vietnam Veterans with conditions tied to exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. VA engaged with tribes and AI/AN Veterans in FY 2018 and FY 2019 to bring benefits to Veterans who experience presumptive conditions.

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Through all the claims events held throughout Indian Country, VA assisted with compensation, pension benefit claims, dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) claims, and service-connected ratings, reviews and upgrades. These events also provided a forum for connecting Veterans and their families with benefits ranging from health coverage to housing and education assistance. This outreach effort created opportunities for networking and relationship building between VA and tribal governments and Veterans. VA is committed to continued outreach and collaboration with tribal governments and Veterans in Indian Country.

In 2012, VA and IHS entered into the VA-IHS Reimbursement Agreement that facilitates VA payment to IHS for care delivered to VA enrolled (AI/AN) Veterans at 74 IHS facilities without prior authorization. On June 29, 2018, agency leaders signed amendment three to the agreement, extending the service to June 30, 2022. In addition, VA has 114 separate reimbursement agreements with THPs. The VA Office of Community Care (OCC) administers these agreements and is responsible for their execution.

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OTGR facilitated the following VA leadership engagements with tribal governments, national tribal conferences, and tribal town halls:

- 1) October 18-20, 2018: SECVA site visit to Alaska and remarks at the Alaska Federation of Native Convention in Anchorage, AK. Site visits included the following: Alaska Native Medical Center, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Alaska Native Health Board, and Southcentral Foundation.
- 2) November 28, 2018: SECVA site visit and remarks at the Tribal Nations Town Hall hosted by the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma in Ada, OK. Site visits included the following: Chickasaw Nation Veterans Lodge and Chickasaw Nation Medical Center.

- 3) August 14, 2019: Deputy Secretary site visit to the Indian Health Care Resource Center of Tulsa. Deputy Secretary did a tour and leadership briefing with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- 4) July 6, 2019: Under Secretary of Memorial Affairs did a site visit to Pawnee Nation of OK.
- 5) September 21, 2019: SECVA did remarks at the groundbreaking ceremony at the National Museum of the American Indian.

Office of State and Local Government Affairs

The Office of State and Local Government Affairs (SLGA) manages VA's collaborative participation in intergovernmental affairs activities and policy initiatives and provides assessments on the concerns of state, local, and municipal elected officials, as well as VA's operations and policies affecting state and local jurisdictions. SLGA serves as VA's primary liaison in all intergovernmental affairs matters and is the primary point of contact with Federal IGA partners, states (governors' offices and State Veteran Affairs Departments), and local government officials (mayors' offices and county officials). SLGA facilitates government-to-government relations with State and Local leaders on VA policy initiatives to develop partnerships that enhance access to services and benefits for Veterans and their families. SLGA manages VA's International Affairs program and is the primary point of contact with the State Department and foreign governments or entities. Highlights of SLGA's outreach activities during this reporting period include the following:

- Facilitated 75 calls and meetings with the Secretary of VA and state and territorial governors to provide direct coordination and key discussion on VA state or territorial-wide programs and initiatives.
- Facilitated 33 calls and meetings with the Secretary of VA and state Veterans directors to provide direct coordination and key discussion on key Veterans support programs.
- Facilitated an additional 33 calls and meetings with the Secretary of VA and state and municipal mayors to provide direct coordination and key discussion at the "grass roots" level on local Veterans support programs.
- Received, coordinated and facilitated multiple requests from 16 foreign governments for VA Secretary meetings and VA facility site access that resulted in educating and informing our international partners on VA activities and sharing of best practices.

Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiative (CFOI)

The Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiative's (CFOI) mission is to provide faith-based and community organizations (FBCO) and stakeholders with an opportunity to collaborate to support the needs of Veterans, their families, survivors and caregivers. CFOI works with the White House and other Federal Faith and Opportunity Directors to support the alleviation of poverty; improve religious

liberty; strengthen families and marriage; develop solutions for substance abuse and addiction; improve crime prevention; assist with prisoner reentry; and improve the delivery of health and humanitarian services.

CFOI shifted from the Office of the Secretary to the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in October 2018. CFOI connected with faith-based organizations nationwide to equip them with resources and information to better serve the Veterans and eligible dependents in their local communities. The center collaborated with various faith-based, non-profit, and community organizations nationwide to provide the latest resources and information to that specific community. CFOI utilizes internal partnerships with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Experience Office (VEO), Center for Minority Veterans (CMV), Center for Women Veterans (CWV), and the Office of the Chaplaincy to support numerous collaborative non-denominational outreach events across the Nation. Major CFOI outreach activities during this reporting period include the following:

- Coordinated suicide prevention training by a trained VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) to over 100 clergy and faith-based leaders throughout the nation – 10% increase in clergy trained since the previous events in 2017.
- Planned and participated in 26 collaborative outreach events, (consisting of 123 meetings) which brought together leaders from key components at the Federal, state and local government level combined with leaders from professional associations and industry to focus on providing support to Veterans and their families. Total attendance at these events exceeded 1,200 attendees.
- Represented VA at the Values Action Team meeting on Capitol Hill that briefed members on the current and future initiatives of the VA Center for Faith.
- Established and fostered new partnerships with external faith-based, nonprofit and organizations with Veterans programs; Music City Baptist Church; Google; USAA; Salvation Army; Volunteers of America; City of Dallas; Workforce Solutions; Red, White and You; and numerous houses of worship nationwide.
- In FY 2019, CFOI engaged and collaborated with the National Council of Churches (NCC) and hosted the 2nd Annual VA CFOI Information Roundtable which represented 100,000 denominations and over 40 million congregants. CFOI collaborated to leverage their networks to serve the needs of Veterans, their families, survivors, caregivers and other beneficiaries.
- CFOI was featured on two podcasts that reached the over 50,000 weekly listeners with KLOVE radio station and The Warriors Journey (TWJ) highlighting CFOI, current programs and the role faith plays in the ongoing health and recovery of our Veterans.
- In FY 2019, CFOI collaborated with Workforce Solutions-Dallas, and Red, White, and You which led to over 2,100 interviews, over 200 contingent offers and nearly 20 on-the-spot hires for more than 14,000 Veteran job seekers.

CFOI developed several partnerships with the University of Utah, Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, Google, National Council of Churches, TWJ, Mighty Oaks

Foundation, Reid temple, Music City Baptist Church and numerous other houses of worship from an ecumenical position to support community specific collaborative outreach.

Homeless Veterans Outreach and Strategic Communications Office (HVOSCO)

HVOSCO is responsible for expanding awareness of VA programs for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes purchasing advertising in national media outlets as authorized by section 809 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-389). The office leverages VA's internal and external-facing communication assets such as its websites, social media properties, newsletters, blog posts, magazines and a variety of communication tools and tactics, such as webinars, news releases, and media roundtables, to make the public aware that help is available at each VA medical center for Veterans who are facing housing crises. All recipients of the communication products serve as VA's secondary messengers to ensure that anyone who encounters a Veteran who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness knows where to direct that Veteran for help.

All outreach materials distributed by HVOSCO include the following two calls to action:

- Contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV) at (877) 4AID-VET or visit the closest VA medical center for assistance if you are or know a Veteran who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.
- Visit <http://www.va.gov/homeless> for information about VA programs for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Major HVOSCO outreach activities during this reporting period include the following:

- In FY 2018 and 2019, there was an average of 131,000 calls per year to NCCHV by or on behalf of Veterans who were homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. There was a 5% decline in calls to NCCHV between FY 2018 and FY 2019, from 134,490 to 127,860, respectively, which coincided with a 2% decline in Veteran homelessness during the same period.
- In FY 2018, nearly 700,000 unique users visited the VA Homeless Programs website, www.va.gov/homeless, generating two million pageviews.
- Although fewer than the prior year, the number of visitors to the VA Homeless Programs website and number of page views in FY 2019 were both significant. In FY 2019, nearly 410,000 unique users visited the VA Homeless Programs website and more than 1.1 million-page views.
- HVOSCO produced four short documentary style videos in FY 2018 and 2019 that showcased various VA homeless programs and celebrated the successes of select Veterans enrolled in those programs. The videos were posted on YouTube affording vulnerable Veterans, and caregivers' information about VA resources and assistance available at local VA medical centers.

- With assistance from the VA Office of Digital Media Engagement, HVOSCO published more than 54 social media posts on VA's digital channels about available resources for Veterans facing housing instability in FY 2018. In total, the posts reached more than 860,000 Facebook and nearly 24 million Twitter accounts, resulting in more than 22,000 shares or likes by Facebook users and nearly 4,000 by Twitter users.
- During FY 2019, HVOSCO published 49 social posts. In total, the Facebook posts reached 753,873 accounts, with more than 30,000 shares or likes. The Twitter posts reached more than 17 million user accounts, with 2,497 engagements.
- Published more than 50 blog posts, magazine articles and other content, excluding social media posts, highlighting success stories, partnerships and key programs and services for homeless and at-risk Veterans.
- Convened four webinars for personnel at all levels of VA to learn about VA's efforts and prevent and end homelessness among Veterans and find out what to do if they encounter a Veteran in the community or at a VA facility who is facing a housing crisis. The webinars were voluntary; yet, more than 400 employees attended.

In FY 2018 and 2019, VHA and HVOSCO jointly collaborated with nearly 40 organizations to advance VA's goal of preventing and ending homelessness among Veterans by providing resources and services that are critical to economically vulnerable Veterans. Partner organizations complemented the array of services provided by VA and its grantees, often filling gaps in areas such as employment, affordable housing and move-in essentials that VA cannot easily provide, if at all, due to fiscal constraints or statutory prohibitions.

Some of the collaborative relationships were new, but many have been ongoing. Below are noteworthy examples of HVOSCO and VHA's recent formal and informal collaborations with for-profit and non-profit organizations to help prevent and end homelessness among Veterans:

- In September 2018, VHA and the HVOSCO collaborated with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and American Student Council Association (ASCA) to organize the first annual "End Veteran Homelessness Challenge," a friendly competition among schools across the United States to collect cookware, flatware, cleaning supplies and other household essential items from for Veterans who recently exited homelessness. Schools in six states participated in the challenge in 2018 and in five states in 2019. In addition to providing essential household items to Veterans who needed them, the initiative encouraged civic engagement among school-age children-- the leaders of the future. NAESP and ASCA have committed to convening donation drives each year.

- Turner Construction, one of the largest construction management firms in the world, fully furnishes the homes of a few Veterans each year who exit homelessness but cannot afford furniture, cookware or other household essential items. The project began in 2018 when employees of the company furnished the home of a formerly homeless Veteran in the District of Columbia during the company's 2018 Founder's Day of Service. This event evolved into multiple events each year in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area.
- Mission BBQ, a Veteran-owned restaurant chain with an active social media following, began amplifying information about VA programs for homeless Veterans on the company's digital channels in 2018. The organization also works with VA's community employment coordinators in many locations to consider job-ready Veterans who are exiting homelessness for employment opportunities.
- Vehicles for Change, an organization that provides free or low-cost vehicles to families facing economic challenges in Detroit and Baltimore, provides free automotive training to a small number of qualified Veterans who are exiting homelessness. The goal of the collaboration is to ensure that Veterans who have or will soon exit homelessness are equipped with skills that will allow them to achieve financial independence so they will never be without stable housing again.
- The National Apartment Association published articles on its blog site and in its magazine at VA's request to educate landlords about the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), a joint program administered by VA and HUD. Under the HUD-VASH Program, HUD provides housing choice vouchers to eligible Veterans to help make market-rate housing affordable to Veterans who qualify. VA provides supportive services to help enrollees resolve the underlying issues that caused them to become homeless to decrease the likelihood that they will ever become homeless again. The National Apartment Association's magazine and website have a combined reach of more than 100,000 readers.
- Wegmans and Publix grocery stores agreed to consider job-ready Veterans who exited homelessness for employment opportunities.

Department of Veterans Affairs
Special Staff Offices

Veterans Experience Office (VEO)

At A Glance:

- Since April 2019 – VetResources has sent more than 550 million emails which were opened more than 175 million times, with more than 23 million clicks to VA and non-VA resources.
- On January 17, 2019 VEO hosted the largest LIVE virtual Secretary of VA community townhall event (blog and video) in the history of VA resulting in 60,000 viewers; 1,400 comments; and 95,000 downloads of the welcome kit.
- VEO outreach and engagement since 2018 has resulted in direct contact with 213,589 Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors via community outreach events and physically distributed 12,594 VA Welcome Kits.
- VEO established 22 formal partners and more than 20 informal partners with industry and non-government organizations resulting in more than 8 million engagement opportunities to increase access to VA health care services via the MISSION Act.
- During this reporting period, VEO established 160 Community Veterans Engagement Boards to increase local leaders and resources that resulted in more than 213,589 Veterans and family members to receive VA Welcome Kits to learn about and apply for VA benefits and services.

New ways to communicate with Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors:

The mission of VEO is to enable VA to be the leading customer service organization in government so that Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors choose VA. VEO implements solutions based on Veteran-centered designs and industry best practices while aligning VA services with the Secretary's five priorities.

- In April 2019, VEO, in partnership with OPIA, created the [VetResources Newsletter](#) – VA's first enterprise-wide digital communications reaching all known VA customers with email addresses, accounting for over 11 million Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.
 - Since April 2019, VetResources has sent more than 550 million emails which were opened more than 175 million times, with more than 23 million clicks to VA and non-VA resources.

Connecting with the Veterans and their families, where they live and work:

- VEO supports and engages with 160 Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEB) across the country. CVEBs are community-based collaboratives that maximize the collective impact of local services, stakeholders, and Federal/state/local agencies to improve the outcomes of Veterans and military families where they live, work and raise their families.

- CVEBS enable VA leaders, Veteran advocates, service providers, Veterans and stakeholders to convene and have a voice in identifying their community goals and work to resolve issues at the local level to improve service delivery for Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.
- VEO engaged or had direct contact with 213,589 Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors via community outreach events and physically distributed 12,594 [VA Welcome Kits](#).
- In 2019, VEO launched Veterans Experience Action Centers (VEAC) across the country. VEACs are a Veteran resource event in collaboration with local VA facilities and local communities for Veterans, their families, caregivers, survivors and service providers to access resources in-person with community partners, CVEBs, and VSOs/MSOs.
 - Attendees are able to go from zero contact with VA to having a claim decision or being enrolled in VA services by the end of the day.
 - 9 VEACs were held ([video](#)) ([blog](#)) in 2019.
 - 6,895 attended these events;
 - 721 claims were processed;
 - More than \$2 million in retroactive VBA claims awarded; and
 - 150 VHA enrollees created.
- VEO has presented 76 Veteran Friendly Community certificates to communities across the country. This recognition includes a presentation of a Secretary of VA signed certificate of appreciation to thank the local community for their support and success a Community Veterans Engagement Board.
 - Veteran-Friendly Community Appreciation events build momentum and show support for local communities and CVEBs in fostering “Veteran-Friendly Communities.”
- VEO hosted or supported 29 local community VetTalkX, Storytelling events to shift the Veteran perception, focusing on Veteran successes obtained by diverse experiences.
 - These events were seen by 47,438 people, both online and in-person.
- VEO supported (in partnership with VHA’s Office of Rural Health) 30 Community Clergy Training Programs (CCTP), training 558 members of clergy. This program provides training at community houses of worship, who often have limited knowledge about the unique health issues and readjustment difficulties common with some Veterans. 25% of Veterans seek assistance from their faith provider first.

- VEO hosted 8 Lunch N Learn community outreach events, with 1,229 community leader attendees.

Designing products to help Veterans and their families navigate VA benefits and services:

- The VA Welcome Kit is a navigation aid to assist Veterans, family members, caregivers and survivors access the benefits and services they have earned. The VA Welcome Kit is accessible at the following: <https://www.va.gov/welcome-kit/>.
 - Since launching in 2018 ([blog](#)) the VA Welcome Kit has been downloaded 542,509 times.
 - VEO also produced 15 [quick start guides](#) to provide quick access steps in to VA, including the following:
 - Get Started with VA Health care;
 - Apply for Educational Benefits;
 - Apply for a Disability Rating;
 - Apply for Mental Health Services;
 - Understanding Care in the Community;
 - Accessing Urgent Care;
 - Get Started with Caregiver Benefits;
 - Apply for Survivor Benefits;
 - Appeals Modernization Act;
 - State Benefits QSG Template;
 - CVEB Quick Start Guide (QSG) Template; and
 - Apply for Burial in a VA National Cemetery.

Building outreach partnerships with VSOs and industry leaders:

- VEO collaborates with the Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships (SCSP) to create bold, community-based partnerships that support customer experience, SECVA priorities, outreach, and to improve access to care in the community and mental health resources. These come in the form of informal outreach partners and formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOU).
 - VEO has 22 formal partners and more than 20 informal partners, including the following:
 - National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations (NAVSO) MOU signed June 2019;

- Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) MOU signed September 2019;
- American Legion Auxiliary and LinkedIn Partnerships renewed; and
- Facebook and American Red Cross MOAs signed.
- Established a VA Customer Experience (CX) Partnership Working group across the Department to develop a MOU Public-Private Partnership Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).
 - Completed four CX Partnership Roundtables with 22 community partners to create a community of practice with shared interests, domain, and practice.
- Conducted outreach with VA's MOU partners to share information, brochures, and booklets on the MISSION Act creating over 8 million potential engagement opportunities with Veterans, families, caregivers and survivors.

Office of Management – Debt Management Center (DMC)

At A Glance:

- In FY 2018, outreach resulted in the direct engagement and training with 9,600 attendees at 53 events.
- In FY 2019, outreach resulted in the direct engagement and training with 10,900 attendees at 59 events. This represents a 14% increase in our training and assistance function.

DMC Mission Summary

The VA Debt Management Center (DMC) provides a centralized and compassionate debt collection program for the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA), offering every collection tool available to Federal agencies. DMC facilitates the collection process but does not establish debts: debts are established at the VBA processing office with jurisdiction over the benefit.

DMC notifies Veterans of their options for debt resolution if they are unable to pay in full (including waivers, payment plans, compromises and disputes) and processes the incoming requests associated with these options. DMC's contact center Debt Counselors answer Veterans' questions about their options and assist them in choosing the option that best meets their needs. VHA uses DMC's administrative offset services to refer delinquent first-party medical debts for internal offset against active VA benefits.

Most events provide training to key stakeholders who work with Veterans daily and promote a strong overall understanding of DMC processes and the importance of encouraging and assisting Veterans to contact DMC. Training events include presentations at VSO conferences at the national, state and local levels about debt

collection processes and resources available, tools that are available to Veterans with debt and the DMC's role in VBA's and VHA's debt procedures. DMC has presented at conferences for many organizations, including Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO), and is looking to add events in currently underserved regions.

To support local School Certifying Officials, DMC is collaborating with Education Liaison Representatives (ELR). Every Veterans Service Officer or School Certifying Official has the potential to interact with numerous Veterans who will then reach out to DMC, so training these stakeholders has a critical impact on the Veteran experience. DMC assists in training School Certifying Officials by presenting at their organizations' training conferences. Some of the organizations that DMC presents for include Western Area Veterans Education Specialists, Association of Veteran Education Certifying Officials and National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators.

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)

At A Glance:

- OSDBU outreach and collaboration during FY 2018 and FY 2019 resulted in directly participating in over 90 outreach events and directly engaging 16,000 Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB). This outreach further resulted in 10,350 VOSBs being verified – a 20% increase in applications.
- OSDBU outreach in combination with education and training FY 2018 and FY 2019 resulted in over 7,148 VOSBs becoming procurement ready to do business with VA.

The VA OSDBU mission is to enable Veterans to gain access to economic opportunity by leveraging the Federal procurement system and expanding participation of procurement-ready small businesses. This mission will be achieved by changing how Veteran-owned and other small businesses, who are procurement-ready, gain access to economic opportunities. Current transformation efforts will increase awareness, reduce risk, enhance access, improve procurement mechanisms, and promote better performance in meeting small business goals.

Program Areas:

Verification

Obtaining verification through the Vets First Verification Program, managed by Center for Verification and Evaluation (CVE), extends eligibility for set-asides and sole source contracts to Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) and VOSBs. This process also helps Veterans learn more about the VA verification process and how Public Law 109-461 relates to the Veterans First Contracting Program.

Acquisition Support

VA OSDBU gathers market research, oversees VA subcontracting, provides overall direction on small business program policies and procedures, and works with contracting staff to help small businesses maximize VA procurement opportunities.

Direct Access Program

The Direct Access Program (DAP) offers SDVOSBs, VOSBs, and other small businesses unique opportunities to develop partnerships, maximize networking, and secure connections at nationwide procurement events. Gain direct access to valuable resources to help build and grow a small business.

Strategic Outreach and Communications

Strategic Outreach and Communications (SOC) offers awareness, education, training to small businesses interested in doing business with VA. Through its two-way communication and outreach efforts, SOC connects with the small and Veteran business communities to assess and meet needs.

OSDBU collaborated with the following entities and programs to provide outreach about doing business with VA, to include updates and general information on the Veterans First Contracting program, VA's Verification program, and insights on procurement readiness to maximize VOSB potential contracting opportunities:

- Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families;
- 25 State Departments of Veterans Affairs, offices of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs;
- University of Maryland Entrepreneurial Development Center;
- Procurement Technical Assistance Counselors;
- Small Business Administration Small Business Development Centers;
- International Franchise Association and other Franchises;
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program collaboration with universities, colleges, vocational-technical schools in certifications programs to assist VOSBs with training courses on underserved business;
- State Opportunity Showcases for SDVAs to collaborate with U.S. VA in providing potential procurement opportunities to VOSBs;
- Local, state and national organization partnerships to educate VOSBs on procurement readiness criteria and marketing techniques;
- Montgomery County, MD Veteran Institute for Procurement; and
- National Veteran-Owned Business Association.

OSDBU collaboration with the following programs included education on VA's verification program and services, connecting external stakeholders with VA staff to resolve contracting issues, connecting VOSBs with procurement decision makers, and participating in outreach events sponsored by these stakeholders:

- Commercial Fortune 500 companies;
- Women Impacting Public Policy;
- Women's Business Enterprise National Council;
- Women Veterans Interactive;
- National Veteran-Owned Business Association;
- VSOs, Veterans of Foreign Wars, The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, VETFORCE, National Association of Black Veterans, and Military Officers Association;
- National Chamber of Commerce;
- Procurement Technical Assistance Counselors;
- Congressional Black Caucus;
- Federal Asian Pacific American Council;
- National Congress of American Indians;
- Montgomery County, MD Veteran Institute for Procurement;
- GOVConnect;
- Military Business Groups (Warfighters, Hiring Our Heroes);
- Prince George's County Veterans Commission;
- District of Columbia Office of Veterans Affairs;
- Maryland State Department of Veterans Affairs; and
- Affinity Groups (e.g., Department of Housing and Urban Development, Defense Intelligence Agency, and Department of Labor).

OSDBU collaborated with the following state and local employment organizations to promote how small businesses can increase employment for Veterans:

- Eight State Departments of Veterans Affairs on employment and transition to employment for Service members (Arizona, California, District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia);
- National Association of Senior Veterans, Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides direct assistance to support better living and health services for

American Senior Veterans and their surviving spouses by operating a Veteran's support center;

- Combat Wounded Veterans of South Mississippi, a nonprofit organization that provides local wounded warriors of all services support including financial resources, assistance with VA benefits, and support for Veterans transitioning back to civilian life;
- Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, which provides services to meet the employment needs of disabled Veterans and other eligible Veterans;
- Local Veterans' Employment Representatives, who conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for Veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled Veterans and generally assist Veterans to gain and retain employment; and
- Veterans Chamber of Commerce representing Veteran business owners.

Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships (SCSP)

At A Glance:

- In the fall of 2018, VA entered into a partnership with Sanford Heath, the largest rural health care organization in the country. Sanford donated a total of \$50 million to VA for pharmacogenomic testing. The test helps determine which medications will be most effective for patients, improving access to appropriate treatments and reducing adverse drug reactions.
- In December 2018, SCSP convened the *Anywhere to Anywhere, Together* summit at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, DC. The event brought together over 300 national leaders from the public and private sectors - Philips and Walmart announced partnerships with VA to increase access to care for Veterans. There were 728 total mentions of the Anywhere to Anywhere summit between December 1, 2018 and December 10, 2018. Media coverage had 10 million total potential impressions for Telehealth Summit content, there were 486 VA Twitter and partner posts on the day of event. #A2ATelehealth hashtag was used 414 times between December 1, 2018 and December 10, 2018. The #A2ATelehealth hashtag had 8.8 million total potential impressions. The Anywhere to Anywhere summit was mentioned across 125 news outlets, including Military Times and Federal News Network. The Military Times article reached 947,280 readers and the Federal News Network article had a reach of 31,912.
- In September 2019, our Amazon point of contact reached out and asked if SCSP would like to share in a promotion that Amazon ran for Veterans Day (FY 2020). Our office engaged with VEO and we worked to include the Amazon promotion in

the November 2019 newsletter that reached almost 10 million Veterans, family members, caregivers and survivors.

FY 2018 Accomplishments

Staff from the Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships (SCSP) served on the Ensuring Veterans Food Security Workgroup. Through this workgroup and in partnership the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) stakeholders, took on a project to help coordinate the development of Veteran-centric Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) education materials. The materials developed were disseminated in VA clinics to provide education to staff and Veterans about how to enroll in SNAP.

SCSP assisted with the coordination of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's (EDF) 2018 Hidden Heroes event, and supported the development of outreach materials to Veterans and their caregivers. SCSP also assisted EDF with the development and execution of a new initiative, the Campaign for Inclusive Care, to better educate the public and caregivers on inclusive care.

SCSP worked with VBA, VEO, and VHA Caregiver Support to develop a partnership with LinkedIn that gives 5,000 caregivers a one-year free premium subscription that includes valuable resources – a library of over 14,000 business, technical and creative courses on LinkedIn Learning. This means that courses on software development, graphic design, leadership, data science, photography and more are all available to eligible Veterans.

In the fall of 2018, VA entered into a partnership with Sanford Health, the largest rural health care organization in the country. Sanford donated a total of \$50 million to VA for pharmacogenomic testing. The test helps determine which medications will be most effective for patients, improving access to appropriate treatments and reducing adverse drug reactions. The major announcement was held in March of 2019 and involved strategic engagement in the planning for a joint press conference with VA Secretary Robert Wilkie and Sanford leadership. The event resulted in seven national news articles and nearly 7,000 social media impressions. In addition, there was a press announcement at the first testing site in Durham, North Carolina, in which three media outlets covered and a Sanford-VA [video](#) was shot and produced to raise awareness about the program. Interviews were conducted with a Veteran candidate for the testing and VA doctors. The interviews resulted in increasing awareness about the program, as well as 50 shares on social media and three positive news stories.

Increased SCSP's online presence through use of the @VAPartnerships Twitter account. Since April 2018 until the end of September 2018, acquired over 300 new followers to the SCSP Twitter account and earned 30,000 Twitter impressions.

FY 2019 Accomplishments

In December 2018, SCSP convened the *Anywhere to Anywhere, Together* summit at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, DC. The Summit fostered innovation and

facilitated national, partnership-based solutions to promote forward-thinking dialogue and collaboration among world-class remote care leadership – Secretary Wilkie was the keynote speaker. Through accelerated teamwork and partnering exercises, SCSP worked to identify critical solutions related to digital access, connectivity, and telehealth delivery systems. Tremendous work was done in advance to establish mission critical partnerships leading to significant announcements. The event brought together over 300 national leaders from the public and private sectors - Philips and Walmart announced partnerships with VA to increase access to care for Veterans. There were 728 total mentions of the Anywhere to Anywhere summit between December 1, 2018 and December 10, 2018. Media coverage had 10 million total potential impressions for Telehealth Summit content, there were 486 VA Twitter and partner posts on the day of event. #A2ATelehealth hashtag was used 414 times between December 1, 2018 and December 10, 2018. The #A2ATelehealth hashtag had 8.8 million total potential impressions. The Anywhere to Anywhere summit was mentioned across 125 news outlets, including Military Times and Federal News Network. The Military Times article reached 947,280 readers, and the Federal News Network article had a reach of 31,912.

Major U.S. telecom providers, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon made commitments to supporting VA to help bridge the digital divide for Veterans to access Telehealth services more affordably. The providers enabled their Veteran subscribers to use VA Video Connect on their networks, without these sessions counting against their high-speed data. All three providers also made significant investments to help VA reach Veterans through positive messaging about their partnership with VA. For example, in May 2019, T-Mobile committed to a \$14 million campaign to communicate the availability of their VA Zero rating partnership. The [commercial](#) aired on both prime-time TV and in movie theatres for the entire month of May, garnering more than 817 million potential views. Through this campaign, the carrier helped VA communicate with Veterans who are not enrolled in VA benefits, an audience that VA has difficulty reaching. In fact, during the month of May when the T-Mobile commercial ran, VA Video Connect received nearly 19,000 total page views, a nearly 80% increase from the previous month.

In May 2019, Deborah Scher, Executive Advisor to VA Secretary Wilkie, served as the keynote speaker at the IDGA VA Healthcare Conference. Ms. Scher led an engaging discussion about the future of VA, the power of partnerships, and how one single idea can have a tremendous impact on a Veteran's life as it relates to Telehealth. VA Healthcare 2019 brought together as many as 400 senior level leaders in VA, military, academia and industry executives to discuss policies, innovating practices, program and facility modernizations and advancements in emerging technologies. Social media coverage of the event garnered 1,133 impressions on Twitter and was posted on VA's blog site.

In late spring/early summer 2019, VA, along with partners Philips Healthcare, began co-creating and subsequently testing in local VFW and American Legion halls the delivery of health care by way of remote telehealth exam rooms. The VA-led project, called

Advancing Telehealth through Local Access Stations (ATLAS), demonstrates how VA is reaching rural Veterans and providing patient-centered care to a digital generation.

As part of the ATLAS initiative, VA partnered with Walmart to donate equipment and a Health Services Room at five locations across the country as part of a pilot initiative allowing Veterans to meet with a VA provider in a private room via video technology. VA telehealth clinical services vary by location and may have included the following: primary care, nutrition, mental health and social work.

Also, in late FY 2019, Verizon committed funding to support a positive, public facing [commercial](#) that featured a Veteran and his caregiver wife about the zero-rating offer while using VA Video Connect. The commercial was part of “Salute to Veterans Series” that ran on Veterans Day weekend on major networks including NBC, CNBC and American Forces Network. Sprint, too, committed nearly \$100,000 to produce a public facing [video](#) that communicated the offer to Veterans. All three marked a major milestone in partnering with VA to create public-facing materials, free of charge to VA, to help effectively reach more Veterans and their families with the services available to them thanks to SCSP-initiated partnerships.

In September 2019, our Amazon point of contact reached out and asked if SCSP would like to share in a promotion that Amazon ran for Veterans Day (FY 2020). Our office engaged with VEO and we worked to include the Amazon promotion in the November 2019 newsletter that reached almost 10 million Veterans, family members, caregivers and survivors.

Office of Operations, Security and Preparedness (OSP)

At A Glance:

- In 2019, OSP updated the [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) website to consolidate all information related to benefits available to Veterans after a disaster on to a single webpage titled “Veterans.” This resulted in critical VA emergency outreach information being made available in Spanish and section 508 compliant for Veterans with disabilities.

OSP coordinates VA's emergency management, preparedness, personal identity verification, physical security, personnel security and suitability, police services and law enforcement activities to ensure the Department can continue to perform the mission-essential functions under all circumstances across the spectrum of threats. OSP directs and provides oversight for VA's overall operations for planning, response, and security and law enforcement programs in support of the National Response Framework, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12, and other related Executive Orders and Federal regulations.

OSP has primary responsibility for building our internal capacity to serve Veterans, their families, our employees, and other stakeholders efficiently and effectively by ensuring that VA environments for care and administration are safe, secure, and as free as possible from the threat of physical danger or property loss.

Outreach is conducted to assist Veterans, family members, survivors, employees and visitors increase understanding and awareness of emergency programs and procedures while utilizing VA benefits and services.

The outreach is performed at major VSO conventions, the Pentagon Emergency Preparedness Fair and the International Association of Emergency Managers Conference. OSP staff engaged with OPIA and the National Veterans Outreach office to share information, provide emergency notification information during natural disasters and to increase awareness of their programs. Information was distributed via traditional and social media.

In 2018 and 2019, OSP outreach representatives attended the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention and distributed disaster assistance and emergency preparedness information to Veterans, their family members, caregivers, and VFW Leadership. During the 2019 VFW Convention, OSP further distributed new Disaster Assistance waterproof information cards to attendees.

In 2019, OSP updated the [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) website to consolidate all information related to benefits available to Veterans after a disaster onto a single webpage titled "Veterans." This page is now available in Spanish and is section 508 compliant. The creation of a waterproof business-size card with disaster assistance information and VA Call Center numbers was printed to distribute to Veterans, their family members and caregivers.

Center for Minority Veterans (CMV)

At A Glance

- Over 500 minority Veterans attended the 2019 National Minority Veterans Summit. Over 270 Minority Veteran Program Coordinators – located in every VA Medical Center, Regional Office, and National Cemetery along with a staff of 5 minority Veteran program analysts directly engaged minority Veterans through national conferences, town halls, job fairs, and other professional collaborations. Collectively, they directly engaged more than 630,000 minority Veterans to provide information on VA benefits and services. This increased applications for benefits and services by more than 10% compared to the five previous years.
- The Minority Veteran Program Coordinator (MVPC) program across VA, CMV supervised activities of over 270 MVPCs located at every VA Medical Center, Regional Office and National Cemetery. In 2018 and 2019 MVPCs and CMV staff members participated in 190,404 outreach activities; engaged 1,747,464 Veterans including 633,824 minority Veterans. The following serve as examples:
 - Responded to Veterans and family member inquiries telephonically and by manning the Inquiry Routing & Information System (IRIS) inquiries and providing pertinent information in a timely manner.
 - Speaking at meetings conducted by minority-serving VSOs (e.g. Women Veterans Inc, Women Veterans Interactive and National Association of

Black Veterans (NABVETS)), and other minority-serving community organizations.

- CMV staff coordinated Veterans Resources Fair at Fort Meade, Fort Belvoir, Defense Intelligence Agency, Pentagon, National Geospatial-intelligence Agency, U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development Veterans Day and Memorial Day Programs, and National Archives and Records Administration Veterans Day and Memorial Day Programs.
- CMV staff coordinated VA Programs, Benefits and Services Lunch and Learns with various Federal agencies Veterans Affinity Groups, Faith-based and Veterans centric private sector organizations.
- CMV staff conducted Veterans Resource Fair at the Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club Central Maryland Chapter annual Buffalo Thunder event.

The CMV Staff participated in Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and other commemorative community events that recognize Veterans to increase awareness of benefits and services. In addition, the CMV made direct contact with Veterans and dependents at military events, VSO events, CMV events (lunch/learn), job fairs, conferences, and virtually via IRIS/email/telephone. Veterans were subsequently referred to VHA/VBA representative or referred to their local MVPC for follow up. Also provided fact sheets and on-line resources to increase awareness; Contact information was always provided.

A major function of the CMV is to oversee the Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPC) across the three Administrations (VHA, VBA and NCA) to ensure targeted outreach is consistently conducted to minority Veteran stakeholders. This responsibility was conducted in the following ways:

- Drafted articles for CMV Newsletter.
- CMV staff coordinated with the League of Union of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Veterans Committee and Federal Training Institute on meaningful outreach and innovative strategies to provide a positive Veterans experience, to include pilot programs, grant opportunities, and updates to VA programs and services.
- CMV staff participated in and conducted Veteran outreach during LULAC career fairs, Hispanic Heritage events, and Veterans benefits workshops as part of their State and National Conventions.
- CMV staff participated in and conducted Veteran outreach during American G.I. Forum Veterans benefits workshops as part of their State and National Conventions.
- CMV staff served as an ad hoc speaker bureau, securing keynote speaking engagements for the Executive Director and Deputy Director at VSO and NGO events.

- Provided distribution of materials during events, distribution of materials (whether hard copy or online) during MVPC calls to coordinators and utilized the CMV website for direct contact with you visitors.

The CMV established collaboration efforts with state and county programs to increase awareness of VA benefits and services targeting all Veterans. Our close relationship with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs further served to educate Veterans on State Veterans benefits and eligibility requirements. In addition, the CMV staff accomplished the following:

- CMV staff collaborated with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs on Hospice of the Chesapeake Annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event.
- CMV staff worked closely with the Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas in conducting virtual Town Halls with county service officers.
- CMV staff actively took part in the Anne Arundel County (Maryland) Veterans Affairs Commission Resource Expo.
- Congressman Elijah Cummings Annual Job Fair- Manned table and provided outreach to approximately 120 Veterans/family members. 2019 Minority Veterans Summit Vendors.
- More than 60 Diversity & Inclusion Partnership meetings.
- Increased collaborative partnerships with Historically Black Universities to conduct outreach to minority Veterans student population.
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) – CMV staff serve on the planning committees for LULACs annual Federal Training Institute and Veterans Committee in the development of VA benefits workshop.
- American GI Forum (AGIF) - CMV staff served on the planning committees for in the development of VA benefits workshop as part of their National Convention, in addition assist in securing keynote speakers for various events.
- National Image - CMV staff has served on the planning committees for in the development of VA benefits workshop as part of their National Training Conference.
- Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club of Central Maryland Chapter CMV staff provided VA benefits and service information during Buffalo Thunder event.

Center for Women Veterans (CWV)

At A Glance:

- In FY 2018 and FY 2019, CWV social media followers grew by more than 10,000. Meanwhile, the CWV's newsletter continues to disseminate information for women Veterans, reaching a current audience of over 50,000 Veterans.

- CWV interest has increased significantly. CWV inquiries for benefit information increased from 1,082 in 2018 to 2,491 in 2019: an increase of 130%.

A large part of CWV's mission is to serve as an advocate for cultural transformation both within VA and communities nationwide and engages in several initiatives highlighting the important contributions of women Veterans, as well as initiatives encouraging women Veterans to self-identify as Veterans. The CWV continues to support and ensure that women Veterans' requirements are being met. Through the dedicated use of technology enterprise-wide, an overarching VA media marketing campaign, outreach through training and briefings nationally by the Executive Director, and the widespread sharing of outreach promotional items, women Veterans are being heard more, recognized and understood culturally on a wider scale.

Number of Collaborative Meetings, Forums, Outreach and In-reach Events 2018-2019: 475.

- "I AM NOT INVISIBLE" (IANI) Campaign:
 - Throughout 2018 and 2019, the CWV actively supported the "I AM NOT INVISIBLE" Campaign to showcase women Veterans. IANI events were held in 41 states, helping gather local news coverage and distributing information among thousands of community members (non-Veterans and Veterans), VA employees, and women Veterans. The goals of the IANI Campaign are to create an open dialogue and raise awareness of the contributions, experiences, and needs of women who have served in the military.
- Social Media Outreach:
 - The CWV continues to prioritize social media as a key method of outreach and sharing information to a wider audience. The center posts information including but not limited to, women Veterans research, women Veterans' events, and leadership empowerment conversations. During this reporting period, CWV followers grew by more than 10,000. Meanwhile, the CWV's newsletter continues to disseminate information for women Veterans, reaching a current audience of over 50,000 Veterans. The CWV posts about the Women Veterans Call Center and Veteran Crisis Hotline and shares this information during outreach events and briefings to ensure the widest dissemination. The unique ability for CWV to ensure a top-down link for women Veterans experiencing issues was leveraged when a call from a women Veteran contemplating suicide was averted due to the newly appointed CWV Communication Manager.
- In both 2018 and 2019, the CWV hosted three meetings of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. These meetings are open to the public and are an opportunity for the Committee to examine health services at VA medical centers nationwide and whether women Veterans are receiving equitable, accessible care in alignment with congressional and VA policy.

- The CWV recognizes the use of strong partnerships in every industry and field is paramount to success in reaching all women Veterans. Therefore, the Director instituted Partner Breakfasts, which initially hosted only 25 partners but through 2019 grew to nearly 75 partners, allowing partners to discuss and share information regarding women Veterans' topics. Partners include the following:
 - Internal VA leaders;
 - National Association of State Women Veteran Coordinators;
 - Faith-based organizations;
 - VSOs;
 - Women Veteran Organizations;
 - Minority Veterans of America; and
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) Veteran coordinators.
- CWV interest has increased significantly. CWV inquiries increased from 1,082 in 2018 to 2,491 in 2019: an increase of 130%. These inquiries come from women Veterans and family members, as well as occasionally male Veterans, who have need of support or have complaints. Each is an opportunity to represent VA in a positive manner and establish or re-establish connections to identify the value of VA services, support, and care for all women Veterans.

A small example of collaborative meetings, forums, outreach and in-reach events attended by the CWV in 2018 – 2019 is listed below. While these events collectively included attendance by over 100,000 individuals during that biennial period, the CWV had personal connections with an estimated 10,000 each year and provided approximately 4,000 CWV marketing products during that same time-period.

- Anchorage Outreach Campaign, Anchorage Alaska;
- Women's Congressional Policy Institute 2019 Gala;
- DAV National Conference;
- VA National Wheelchair Games;
- National Association of State Women Veteran Coordinators Conference;
- Women's Rock Policy Day on the Hill;
- WVI Diversity and Leadership Conference; and
- Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) National Conference.

Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO)

At A Glance:

- VESO partnered, collaborated, and assisted VA's Office Information and Technology (OIT) and the National Talent Acquisition Consultant team in attending (24) recruiting events/career fairs generating over 5,800 candidates, resulting in qualifying and referring (253) Veteran candidates for consideration to fill mission critical positions.
- In collaboration with VHA and VBA, VESO coordinated the attendance of representatives to attend 85 career fairs to provide as a resource to Veterans, transitioning Service members, and military spouses and resulted in reaching over (4,000) military spouses uniquely seeking employment and training information and internships with VA.
- VESO partnered with a non-government firm Sage Solutions, LLC hosting a *Skills to Pay the Bills* television broadcast in honor and recognition of Veterans Day to highlight VA's employment and training programs and services to include explaining the use of special hiring authorities during the Federal hiring process. This segment was shown in over 76 markets across the United States with over 1,000 YouTube downloads of the segment resulting in reaching over 20 million viewers with the goal of increasing awareness in the Veteran and military communities about available programs and benefits in VA.

VESO aggressively promoted VA's employment programs and benefits (e.g. Career-Counseling on the Federal Hiring Process; VA Careers; Veteran Readiness and Employment (VRE); claims support, housing assistance; use of education programs and benefits (i.e., Post-9/11 GI Bill), and training programs/benefits for training (e.g. Apprenticeships; Pathways Internships; Technical Career Field (TCF) programs, etc.) to include other benefits (e.g. Health care; Vet Center services; Veterans Crisis Line; 4-Aid Homeless Veterans, etc.) through a comprehensive outreach strategy that included collaboration and partnership with VA stakeholders, Federal, state, and VSOs and VA outreach coordinators nationwide. Efforts included both in-person and virtual outreach.

This action included in-person participation at 229 career, internship, and resource fairs; conferences, summits, workshops, and other local and state outreach events, with over 60,000 Veterans, transitioning Service members, and their dependents in attendance.

VESO partnered, collaborated, and assisted VA's OIT and the National Talent Acquisition Consultant team in attending 24 recruiting events and career fairs generating over 5,800 OIT candidates, resulting in qualifying and referring 253 Veteran candidates for consideration to fill mission-critical positions. VESO established a customer service phone line and electronic shared mailbox advertised on VA for Vets website, Facebook page, fact sheets, and flyers, resulting in improving the customer experience by providing more than one avenue to contact the VESO office and the added opportunity to speak to a live person. This customer service line and shared email box resulted in three full time employees whose primary duties include operation

and program management, responding to over 300 emails and phone calls monthly giving a combined total of 8,000 inquiries from Veterans, transitioning Service members, and their spouses seeking information on VA employment and training opportunities, the Federal hiring process, unique support to disabled Veterans seeking Federal employment, transitioning Service members and spouses. The majority of which resulted in repeated contacts from these customers.

In collaboration with VHA and VBA, coordinated the attendance of representatives to attend 85 career fairs to provide as a resource to Veterans, transitioning Service members and military spouses. In support of Executive Order 13832 (Enhancing Noncompetitive Civil Service Appointments of Military Spouses), implemented the Military Spouse Training and Resources page on the VA for Vets website to provide employment, training, career resource information and digital outreach tools to assist military spouses in finding employment opportunities with VA. This action resulted in reaching over 4,000 military spouses seeking employment and training information and internships with VA.

VESO researched and posted daily employment and training opportunities, benefits, tips, career-coaching strategies on the VESO Facebook page resulting in Veterans, transitioning Service members, and their dependents who “liked” and “shared” the page, increasing VESO digital reach to over 8.7 million Veterans and dependents. VESO also provided links to other VA programs, benefits, services, and resources on the VA for Vets website resulting in an increase of over 6,000 unique page reviews from Veterans, transitioning Service members, and dependents seeking additional benefits information. VESO partnered with the VA Media Services Office to update and create new posters, fact sheets and flyers (e.g. VESO Fact Sheet, Tips for Transitioning Service members; Tips for Military Spouses, Pathways, Special Hiring Authorities, etc.) to be displayed at each VA exhibitor booths along with other brochures, literature, pamphlets and posters. This action resulted in marketing materials being advertised at Veteran outreach events, to increase awareness of VA benefits, programs and services to over 60,000 Veterans, transitioning Service members and military spouses.

The office hosted 22 virtual employment town halls via Facebook Live Chats to include posting VA partners videos and advertisements (e.g. Becoming an Entrepreneur: Business 101; VA Acquisition Internship School Warriors to Workforce; MISSION Act; More Choices for Veteran Care; and VA Nursing Careers) to increase awareness of VA employment and training programs, benefits, and services in VA. This action resulted in reaching over 275,000 Veterans, transitioning Service members and military spouses.

VESO partnered with the VA Center for Minority Veterans Dallas Summit as guest speakers to provide employment and training information, opportunities, benefits, and services to include career-coaching assistance to Veterans, transitioning military Service members, and military spouses seeking Federal careers with VA. This action increased awareness of VA employment and training opportunities to more than 500 in attendance.

VESO partnered with the Student Veterans of America Chapter at Bowie State and the University of Maryland Global Campus Student Career Fairs to provide military and Veteran students information on employment and training opportunities at VA for students and recent graduates offered through the Pathways Program (e.g. internships, recent graduates and Presidential Management Fellows Program).

This effort increased the knowledge of 100 military and Veteran students seeking employment and internship opportunities in VA while in school and after graduation. VESO partnered with the Virginia Department of Veteran Services and participated in the 2018 Virginia Women's Veteran Summit. Here, VESO provided guest speakers to increase knowledge of VA employment and training programs to more than 1,000 women Veterans during the general assemblies and exhibitor booths. VESO also participated in the break-out mentoring session to engage and empower 69 women Veterans seeking assistance with resume coaching, networking, marketing/rebranding oneself, employment and training resources to assist with job search for Federal careers in VA. The survey results showed 95% were satisfied with the information provided.

VESO partnered with a non-government firm Sage Solutions, LLC hosting a *Skills to Pay the Bills* television broadcast in honor and recognition of Veterans Day. The show's participants discussed VA's employment and training programs and the use of special hiring authorities during the Federal hiring process. This show was shown in over 76 markets across the United States with over 1,000 YouTube downloads which reached over 20 million viewers. VESO participated in the American Heroes Radio Network segment to expand outreach to Veteran and military communities who did not have access to the internet. The purpose was to provide employment and training information and resources in VA to include special hiring authorities. This outreach resulted in the segment reaching over 200,000 Veteran and active military radio listeners.

VESO partnered with the State of Maryland Veterans Commission Office and the Women United Committee, Inc. to participate in the 2018 Summit Series telephone conference as guest speakers. Discussion included various training internship opportunities, benefits, programs and services available in VA for women Veterans. This action resulted in 39 women Veterans receiving the tools and resources needed to search for Federal careers in VA.

A partnership with Women of Good Works as guest speakers in the Woman Veterans Step-By-Step Conference trained 30 women Veterans about VA career opportunities.

Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction (OALC)

At A Glance:

- Procured printing and mailing services to notify 8.7 million enrolled Veterans of the new MISSION Act while saving nearly \$400,000 in costs through improved management.

- OALC assisted the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) with the procurement of 746,000 gun-cable locks as part of a major Department initiative to save lives.

Throughout FY 2018 and 2019, OALC continued to participate in various state university and community college career fairs to explain the Federal recruitment process and hiring preferences to Veteran candidates.

In FY 2018 and FY 2019, OALC Strategic Acquisition Center (SAC) personnel packaged bags for homeless Veterans to include small snacks (peanut butter crackers and tuna packets) and toiletries (socks, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hand sanitizer and baby wipes). The care packages also included information cards with resource information for Veterans.

MISSION Act Mailer: Procured printing and mailing services to notify 8.7 million enrolled Veterans of the MISSION Act; coordinated services with senior leaders at the Government Publishing Office (GPO) to facilitate urgent printing; saved VA approximately \$400,000 by internally managing the United States Postal Service (USPS) account. This procedure allowed VA to avoid handling any undeliverable mail while still determining why the mail was undeliverable.

MISSION Act Booklet: Worked with senior officials within VHA to procure the printing and distribution of 270,000 multi-page booklets to more than 400 VA facilities. Logistics Support Services (LSS) Publications Division worked closely with the GPO to process this last-minute request and ensured the entire quantity was delivered to all sites by the MISSION Act launch date of June 6, 2019. The project was completed ahead of schedule.

VA Welcome Kit: Procured a VA Welcome Kit to guide Veterans to the benefits and services VA provides. This VA Welcome Kit was featured and touted by the Secretary of VA. LSS set up an ordering process that allowed VA regional sites to request kits, aggregated all the orders into a single bulk order and managed a cost savings per piece. If each site had ordered the kits independent of other sites, VA would have spent an additional \$100,000 for kits.

Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 15 Mailing: Procured mailing services inviting 20,000 Veterans to enroll in VA medical services.

Notice of Privacy Practices (NOPP) mailing: Procured printing and mailing services to notify 8.7 million enrolled Veterans of changes to VA's privacy practices. LSS Publications Division worked with the GPO to create a print contract to complete the task. The letters went out on time and LSS saved VA approximately \$170,000 by internally managing the USPS postal account.

VCL Suicide Prevention Gun Cable Locks: Procured 746,000 gun cable locks for the VCL. The LSS Publications Division first had to manage a protest to the initial request and then a second protest to the revised request. The initial protest was submitted to the Government Publishing Office (GPO) and LSS had to coordinate a response with both GPO and VA Office of General Counsel (OGC). The initial protest was upheld by

the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which required LSS to revise the requirements. LSS worked with OGC on the revised language and resubmitted the procurement package to GPO. When the revised procurement was also protested, VA had to wait for a ruling from the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). DOJ ruled in VA's favor, which allowed LSS to proceed with the revised procurement. The VCL gun cable locks are a very popular item and are key for VA's Suicide Prevention Month outreach events.

All OALC Offices

- July 2019 – Office of Procurement, Acquisition and Logistics (OPAL) employees participated in the National Contract Management Association's 2019 World Congress Career Fair. Target audience included Veterans interested in a Federal contracting career with VA and government wide.
- FY 2018 and FY 2019 – All OPAL offices participated in the Feds Feed Families campaign by collecting and donating non-perishable items to local area food banks.
- FY 2018 and FY 2019 – All OPAL offices participated in the VA2K Walk, a nationwide event benefitting homeless Veterans and raising awareness for National Employee Wellness Month.

Strategic Acquisition Center (SAC)

- November 2018 and November 2019 - SAC worked with the local Salvation Army in Fredericksburg, VA to provide a Thanksgiving meal to homeless Veterans and other members of the local community.
- November - December 2018 and November - December 2019 - SAC personnel facilitated a Hats and Mittens drive for homeless shelters in the Fredericksburg, VA area.
- March 2019 - SAC personnel collected essential toiletry items, which were donated to local homeless shelters in Fredericksburg, VA.
- April 2019 - SAC used 'Take Your Child to Work Day' to prepare letters of encouragement for hospitalized Veterans.

National Acquisition Center (NAC)

- April 2019 – NAC participated in the Small Disadvantaged Business Opportunity Council's (SADBOC) 20th Annual SADBOC Government Procurement Fair, a matchmaking event, which included the National 8(a) Association's pre-scheduled meetings. This event allowed small business owners to meet one-on-one with the Federal Supply Schedule Procurement Resource Specialist, with an emphasis on SDVOSB and Veteran-owned VOSB as well as other socio-economic small businesses.
- July - August 2019 – NAC held an employee engagement shoe drive to collect and donate shoes for Hines VA Medical Center (VAMC) Veterans Health and Women's Health Clinic.

- August 2019 - NAC partnered with the Director of the Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (SARRTP) at the George E. Whalen VAMC, which operates a Creative Wellness Program for Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The SARRTP Program Director was invited to attend via teleconference to speak about the program, the importance of creative wellness in treating Veterans with PTSD, and some of the health benefits, to include reduced anxiety.
- August 2019 - NAC conducted an Art Supply Drive for donations to the SARRTP Program.
- A NAC employee volunteered with Veterans in hospice care; visiting 2 Veterans a week with 3-4 volunteer hours per week working with Vietnam-era Veterans.
- September - October 2019 – NAC participated in Veterans Day Service Project to collect donations for local VA Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC) for Homeless and At-risk Veterans.

Technology Acquisition Center (TAC)

Through the “TAC Employees Give Back,” employees did the following:

- Raised funds and collected donation items for Veterans in need;
- Hosted Veteran coffee socials where TAC employees visited a local VAMC to serve refreshments, play games and engage in conversation with Veterans;
- Participated in VA2K Walk and Roll, a nationwide VA event to benefit homeless Veterans and raise awareness for National Employee Wellness Month;
- Participated in the Feds Feed Families food drive by delivering food donations to the food bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties;
- Participated in activities to support the Austin VAMC;
- Participated in Thanksgiving Day and holiday groceries food drive to support Monmouth County One-Stop Career Center for Veterans and their families; and
- Collaborated with the “Suit-Up” program to donate over 70 gently used business suits for Monmouth County Veterans.

Logistics Support Service (LSS)

LSS Transportation and Logistics Division collaborated with National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) and National Veterans Golden Age Games (NGAG):

- Arranged shipments of specialized wheelchair equipment for more than 600 paralyzed and senior Veteran athletes to participate in the 39th and 40th NVWG and to participate in the 2018 and 2019 NGAG. Since Veterans require ample preparation and training leading up to the events, many of these shipment requests required expedited services. LSS used years of industry experience to leverage service providers to move three 40-foot containers of NGAG general sporting

equipment from Arizona to Alaska and avoided \$20,000 in shipping costs. Results were zero delays/damage and timely arrivals ensured all Veteran athletes were able to participate in events.

- Coordinated and provided NVWG and NGAG national chairpersons with detailed shipping and packaging tutorials and plans for VA stations shipping equipment through the VA Transportation and Logistics Division. LSS provided detailed packaging plans for collapsible, reusable containers for multi-year shipment and saved VA an estimated \$25,000 in packaging supplies and significant amount in labor hours.
- Improved support by providing a national map of ship “no earlier than” and “no later than” dates for shipping from anywhere in the US. LSS pushed the need for advanced planning, which ensured the successful arrival and storage of all Veteran equipment, which resulted in efficient use of vital real estate at host VA stations.

All OALC offices participated in state university and community college career fairs to recruit candidates for vacant positions. Engagement included outreach with potential Veteran candidates and explaining the Federal recruitment process and hiring preferences.

National Acquisition Center (NAC)

- November 2018 – NAC participated in “ChallengeHER Chicago” to provide small business integration and outreach, focusing on business opportunities for SDVOSBs, VOSBs and other socio-economic firms.
- September 2019 – NAC participated in the 14th Annual Greater Minnesota Government Procurement Fair, and provided outreach to small businesses, focusing on SDVOSB and VOSB.
- September 2019 – NAC partnered with Rocky Mountain VA Community Resource & Referral Center (CRRC) to identify possible volunteer opportunities for future employee engagement efforts aimed at providing an enhanced Veteran focus to employees. Based on this partnership, NAC’s Commodities & Services Acquisition Service, located in Golden, Colorado, held a donation drive for homeless Veterans, which included clothing, food and hygienic supplies needed by the CRRC. Clothing donations included female business attire.

Veteran Health Administration

Health Care for Homeless Veterans

At A Glance:

- In FY 2018 and FY 2019, approximately 12,300 Veterans exited Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Community Reintegration Services (CRS) programs to permanent housing.
- In FY 2018 and FY 2019, HCHV supported over 670 Stand Downs which provided outreach to over 156,500 Veterans.
- In FY 2018 and FY 2019, over 151,000 Veterans visited a Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC).

HCVC outreach workers regularly canvass areas frequented by homeless persons to attempt to identify homeless Veterans. These areas include soup kitchens, under bridges and public libraries. They also participate in Veteran Stand Downs, local community meetings, other outreach, and civic engagement events.

HCHV gives Veterans attending Veteran Stand Downs items such as toothbrushes, waterproof document boxes, hats and handkerchiefs that display the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans' phone number.

HCHV participates in employment fairs, homeless conferences, annual Point in Time counts of homeless persons and other events that target the homeless population. Staff also continue to reach out directly to first responders, employees of homeless shelters, food pantries, social service organizations, hospitals and VSOs to request their assistance identifying Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

During FY 2018 and FY 2019, HCHV efforts reached hundreds of thousands of Veterans. Participation in local Stand Downs and Veterans visiting CRRC resulted in the most contacts with homeless and at-risk Veterans.

CRRCs, which are part of the larger HCHV program, are centers located in strategically selected areas to provide both a refuge from the streets and a central location to provide homeless Veterans with VA services. CRRCs are the product of collaboration between the VA, communities, service providers and agency partners.

HCHV's collaboration efforts with non-governmental Veteran outreach organizations focus on participation in Veteran Stand Downs. Stand Downs are intended to be collaborative, grassroots events involving local VAMC staff, other non-profit entities and community agencies which serve homeless Veterans. Typically, these community partners and stakeholders are smaller community-based service organizations who take the lead role as sponsors of these events, with assistance from VA. Staff from local VA facilities also provide volunteer support for local Stand Downs, particularly in health screening, triage, mental health assessments and referrals, and screening and referrals for housing placements.

HCHV does not maintain relationships with non-governmental Veteran outreach organizations that focus on education, vocational training or employment at a national level; these collaborations occur at the state and local level.

Veterans Justice Programs (VJP)

At A Glance:

- The active users of the Veterans Reentry Search Service increased by 10.3% from 363 active users in 2018 to 400 active users in 2019.
- In FY 2018 and FY 2019, VJP Specialists directly contacted 117,434 Veterans through direct outreach with criminal justice locations.
- VJP partners with the Federal Bureau of Prisons, all 50 states' Departments of Corrections, and over 1,000 county jails to provide education directly to Veterans.

VJP identifies Veterans not enrolled with VHA through direct outreach to county jails, state and Federal prisons and courts at all levels of government. VJP also utilizes the Veterans Reentry Search Service, which compares lists of inmates and defendants provided by criminal justice organizations to the VA and DoD Identity Repository under the protection of the VA's firewall. The results are used to reach out directly to Veterans not enrolled with VHA. Organizations that actively used the Veterans Reentry Search Service increased 10.3% from FY 2018 to FY 2019.

VJP partners with the Federal Bureau of Prisons, all 50 states' Departments of Corrections, and over 1,000 county jails to provide education directly to Veterans. Through those partnerships VA staff are allowed access to secure correctional facilities to meet with Veterans preparing to reenter their communities.

The VJP partners with national organizations to collaborate on large scale education events, including webinars for national audiences of criminal justice practitioners and community-based providers of housing-related and other services. Examples of these partners include National Association of Drug Court Professionals-Justice for Vets, Legal Services Corporation, National Legal Aid and Defender Association, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, and the U.S. Department of Justice's National Institute of Corrections and Bureau of Justice Assistance. At the local level, VJP's partners include universities and their associated law schools, organizations focused on ending homelessness and VSOs.

Notable employment partners for VJP are the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) Division Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees, who are authorized to serve both homeless and incarcerated Veterans. VJP staff in the field build local partnerships with individual grantees to coordinate outreach in jail and prison facilities. VJP staff also collaborate with DOL's Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, through which DOL funds employment specialists to work in state and local employment offices, focusing on disabled Veterans.

Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD)

At A Glance:

- Over 59,600 Veterans were served as a result of \$197 million GPD grants in FY 2018 and \$202 million in FY 2019.

- Over 45,900 Veterans entered GPD transitional housing in FY 2018 and FY 2019.

GPD funded community organizations contacted homeless Veterans in a variety of community settings including, but not limited to, homeless shelters, hospitals and on the street. They also participated in Stand Downs, local community meetings and other outreach and civic engagement events. The community-based organizations also collaborated with local VA Homeless Program staff. In both FY 2018 and FY 2019, about 69% of Veterans exiting GPD funded housing transitioned to permanent housing.

Beginning in FY 2018, the Department awarded \$197 million in per diem funding for 556 projects to community agencies that provide transitional housing and supportive care for homeless Veterans. Awards were made to programs in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In addition, approximately \$3 million in grant funding were in FY 2018 awarded to 13 community agencies that provide services for homeless Veterans with special needs.

Beginning in FY 2019, the Department awarded \$202 million in funding to support more than 13,000 transitional housing beds for its GPD program.

Veterans were informed through partner organization outreach to homeless Veterans about GPD transitional housing and supportive services. Organizations were placed in contact with a GPD liaison, who authorized payment of per diem for the GPD transitional housing services.

GPD collaborated with local VAMC, VBA, VSOs and a variety of community based supportive services that serve homeless persons in their local communities.

GPD funded programs referred to VBA, state, and local employment resources as appropriate. Some of the grantees also received funding from or coordinated with Department of Labor-funded Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project Programs.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

At A Glance:

- Throughout FY 2018 and FY 2019, SSVF assisted over 230,900 individuals; over 153,100 of those assisted were Veterans.
- 82% of individuals discharged from the SSVF program obtained permanent housing.
- In October 2019, SSVF expanded the Rapid Resolution (diversion) pilot nationally from the original 11 sites.

In February 2019, SSVF launched SQUARES 2.0. This revised web application version of SQUARES includes important upgrades from the current version, including detailed discharge status for most inquiries, allowing instant determination of program eligibility and status of VHA enrollment. Although SQUARES cannot be used as a substitute for VHA enrollment, programs such as SSVF and GPD that do not require VHA enrollment may use SQUARES as documentation for purposes of determining eligibility, much like a DD-214.

SSVF grantees made direct contact with homeless and at-risk Veteran families throughout the country. In addition to direct outreach, SSVF grantees have been active participants in coordinated entry and assessment efforts being developed in Continuums of Care (CoC) throughout the country. SSVF has facilitated national and regional trainings to bring together stakeholders in this effort.

SSVF University was developed to allow the public to identify SSVF resources, including grantee contact information, performance information, training materials and an overview of SSVF services.

On August 2, 2019, SSVF awarded \$426 million in grant funding to community-based non-profit organizations. This includes \$50 million for a new shallow subsidy initiative that can provide a 2-year subsidy in 10 high-cost urban areas with large numbers of unsheltered Veterans. SSVF grantees providing shallow subsidies have partnered with the Department of Labor's Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program with the goal of significantly raising participants' incomes over the 2-year shallow subsidy term. A total of 271 grants are now in operation for FY 2019 and provide services in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam.

SSVF grantees publicize their services through outreach and coordination with VA and other community organizations. Rapid re-housing and homeless prevention services materials developed by SSVF have been used by national advocacy groups, such as the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Materials have also been used to develop national accreditation standards by independent agencies including Joint Commission, the Council on Accreditation and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. These partners have widely distributed program standards and information developed by SSVF, educating the public and establishing standards for providers throughout the country.

SSVF has charged all grantees to develop comprehensive community plans in collaboration with local partners that assess SSVF total capacity, compare SSVF total capacity to estimated demand and take down targets, and identify gaps and local barriers and how improvements could be made. In partnership with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), SSVF sponsored three national conferences on permanent housing in October and November 2019. These conferences were attended by 1,200 participants including SSVF grantees, CoCs and VA staff (HUD-VASH and HCHV Coordinated Entry Specialists) from almost every VAMC. One-to-one technical assistance (TA) has been provided for communities who face greater challenges. SSVF has developed a mentoring program that pairs successful, experienced grantees with newer providers. Ongoing webinars and conference calls have also been used for TA support.

SSVF has worked with Federal partners, HUD and USICH, in developing a national Rapid Resolution (diversion) effort designed to help Veteran households avoid homelessness. In a Rapid Resolution intervention, SSVF and its partners work to help a household identify an immediate safe place to stay within their own network of family, friends and other social supports.

Geriatrics and Extended Care (GEC)

At A Glance:

- 332 Veterans are enrolled in the Mobile Adult Day Health Care Program (ADHC), commonly known as Mobile Veteran Program (MVP).
- The GEC website has approximately 50,000 visitors annually.

The Mobile ADHC, also known as MVP, is a partnership with VSO and VA to provide ADHC programs at VSO locations. Working directly with field commanding officers of local VSOs, who offer their property locations for ADHC services, VA identifies Veterans who qualify for services and provides them with ADHC services at the VSO location. The Hospice and Palliative Care Program has engaged more than 4,000 community hospice agencies in determining Veteran status at the time of admission to hospice, linking Veterans to resources at nearby VA facilities and disseminating Veteran-specific training on quality end-of-life care.

GEC offers the public a guide to medical and nursing care services, as well as long-term services and support, through the GEC website. The website includes resources for Veterans as well as caregivers, explains eligibility requirements and helps individuals locate resources closest to them. This includes VA and non-VA community resources. The GEC website has approximately 50,000 visitors annually with the most visited pages being Home and Community Services, Residential Settings and Nursing Homes, and Paying for Long-term Care.

More than 4,000 community hospice staff have been provided resources and opportunities for training through VA's We Honor Veterans program on how to assist Veterans and their families in accessing VA benefits and hospice services for terminally ill Veterans.

GEC coordinates the Veterans Community Partnership (VCP) program, which engages VA staff and community organizations to collaborate and educate one another and make available resources for Veterans and their families within the community. VCPs work with over 33 different community organizations which include Aging and Disability Resource Centers, hospice agencies, VSOs and senior centers. VCPs work with VA staff from various services such as social work, public affairs, outreach, mental health and chaplain service. As a result, community partners have working knowledge of VA benefits and services so they can assist any Veteran with coordination of their care. VCPs also educate Veterans, families and their caregivers about services and benefits.

Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP)

At A Glance:

- Unique visits to [MentalHealth.VA.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov) increased by 64.2%, and the number of sessions increased by 86.4% during April 2018 due to website enhancements. Total monthly pageviews increased by 100.8%, reaching a high for FY 2019 of 124,980 views.

- Information from the National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD) website has been cited by over 8,912 news publications, with an estimated reach of 21.3 billion individuals.
- Coaching into Care (CIC) staff came in direct phone contact with approximately 5,800 new families in FY 2018 and FY 2019.

OMHSP has two main programs that identify Veterans and dependents eligible for VA benefits: CIC and NCPTSD.

CIC is a national VA family call center designed to receive calls from family and friends of Veterans who are concerned that a Veteran they know might need mental health treatment. CIC provides information about VA mental health services as well as coaching to aid the caller in improving communication and encouragement in both autonomy and engagement in services. CIC asks all callers if the Veteran they are calling about is enrolled in VA health care. If they are not (or are unsure), CIC educates callers on how to find benefits information and how to access enrollment information and contacts.

NCPTSD worked with news and radio to reach out to Veterans and family members with the PTSD treatment public service announcement, which received 28,662 airings with 86,052,231 impressions from April 2018 to December 2019. Information from NCPTSD's website about PTSD and PTSD treatment has been cited by over 8,912 online news publications, with an estimated reach of 21.3 billion people. PTSD is the only health condition searched on Google that returns a VA website in the top 10 results: [ptsd.va.gov](https://www.ptsd.va.gov).

OMHSP increased awareness of VA mental health resources on the Vantage Point and VA Insider blogs. The [MentalHealth.VA.gov](https://www.MentalHealth.VA.gov) was restructured to provide an overview of many mental health topics in clear language, including discussion of VA programs and resources and treatment options. OMSHP also published an updated version of its guidebook to [MentalHealth.va.gov](https://www.MentalHealth.va.gov). NCPTSD implemented a "Get Help" section on its website, which received over 200,000 unique views in calendar years 2018 and 2019. CIC educates Veterans' families and friends through direct outreach, direct in-reach, promotional materials, social media, web presence, online advertising, partnerships with other VA and non-VA call centers and partnerships with VSOs. During FY 2018 through FY 2019 CIC created over 150 social media posts using encouraging text and captivating imagery. This newly focused content helped generate 5,000 new Facebook followers and drove increased engagement with CIC's 29,600 followers.

CIC's local partner organizations include Veteran's Bridge Home and Mecklenburg County Suicide Prevention in North Carolina. CIC also presented about its services at events in New Hampshire, Washington state and North Carolina. Targeted mailings about CIC were sent to local service providers such as Vet Centers, Veteran's Justice Outreach officers, Caregiver Support Coordinators, Suicide Prevention Coordinators, National Guard family services staff, VSO contacts, the Veterans Crisis Line and the Caregiver Support Line.

NCPTSD worked with over 40 state and local organizations in FY 2018 and FY 2019 to provide outreach to Veterans during PTSD Awareness Month. The Center provided a

toolkit of materials that have been distributed to these partners, including the VA Campus Toolkit, resources that help educational institutions meet the needs of Veterans who have enrolled in higher education.

At the national level, CIC collaborated with national VSOs such as Wounded Warrior Project, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Operation Family Caregiver, Operation Engage America, Soldiers Project, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Military Officers Association of America and Easter Seals. CIC also provided trainings at VA and non-VA partner call centers to educate paraprofessionals about VA and CIC services in general as well as to help responders at partner sites choose between referral sources so that they can better direct Veterans and their families to VA services. CIC collaborated with multiple NGOs through direct programming, outreach calls, online partnerships and distribution of promotional materials such as posters, mugs, flyers, business cards, magnets and notepads. CIC staff have also presented at the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies' national convention in 2017 and the American Psychological Association's national convention in 2019.

NCPTSD provided resources that help employers meet Veterans' needs in the workplace to 32 state and local organizations, including the VA Employer Toolkit.

OMHSP Make the Connection

At A Glance:

- Over a two-year period, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube generated 109,800,112 total social media engagements (reactions, comments, shares, saves, link clicks and video views).
- The website [MakeTheConnection.net](https://www.maketheconnection.net) had a total of 6,470,822 visits within the past two years.
- The Make the Connection campaign reached new audiences and introduced Veterans and their families to candid stories of mental health recovery, generating 116,653,313 video views across the campaign's website and social media channels.

During FY 2018 and FY 2019, the Make the Connection team researched and contacted organizations and education institutions with Veterans' programs to provide educational and promotional materials for distribution to their members. The team collaborated with these organizations through a variety of methods. Active Minds, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Student Veterans of America and University of California-Davis Mental Health Conference received educational and promotional materials. Make the Connection team members also met with leaders of student affairs offices and Veteran student organizations at Carnegie Mellon University, Carroll College, Community College of Allegheny County, Duquesne University, Helena College, University of Kansas Medical Center, Southwestern College, University of Arizona, University of California-San Diego, University of Missouri-Kansas City, University of Montana and University of Pittsburgh. The team wrote content highlighting OMHSP programming to be shared by Confidential Government Solutions, East Carolina University, Eastern Kentucky University, Eastern Illinois University, Georgia State University's Military Outreach Center, Northern Virginia Community College,

Portland State University, University of Alabama's Office of Veteran and Military Affairs, University of Maine, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, University of New Mexico and University of San Francisco.

During FY 2018 and FY 2019, the Make the Connection team connected with hundreds of non-governmental partner organizations to raise awareness of VA's mental health initiatives and resources. The team collaborated with key partners by providing training and sharing digital content such as social media posts and web graphics, as well as promotional materials, such as Buff headwear, stress balls, brochures, wallet cards and tote bags for distribution to Veterans in their networks. These partners include VSOs, organizations dedicated to helping Veterans and their families, community-based health care organizations, other types of community organizations, private companies, major and minor sports leagues and individual influencers in the Veteran community.

The Make the Connection team contacted and collaborated with national employment organizations that have established Veterans' programs through a variety of methods. At events for National Association of State Workforce Agencies, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Department and "RecruitMilitary," the Make the Connection team distributed promotional materials. Team members met with leaders from Black and Veatch, Kino Veterans Workforce Center, Montana Veterans Foundation and Victor App to educate their members about VA mental health resources. Make the Connection wrote online content for American Job Centers, Bob Woodruff Foundation, Capitol Post, Helmets to Hardhats, JVS SoCal, National Association of State Workforce Agencies, National Resource Directory, Suiting Warriors and Veteran Owned Collective to promote VA mental health resources.

OMHSP Tobacco & Health Policy

At A Glance:

- Observance-specific website tabs for the Great American Smokeout, the Great American Spit out, and World Tobacco Day garnered 1,286 visits, and the materials were downloaded 1,804 times.
- SmokefreeVET published advertisements on Google Search, Facebook, and Instagram, gaining 744 signups and 1.1 million views among Veterans, which resulted in 4,000 engagements (likes, comments, and shares).

During FY 2018 through FY 2019, the Tobacco and Health Policy National Program Office and the OMHSP Communications team increased promotions to Veterans and their family members to build awareness of VA's tobacco use treatment resources available to them. The team used internal and external VA channels including the Tobacco and Health website, newsletters, emails, social media, blog posts, podcasts, videos and a national news release to inform Veterans of the benefits and services administered by VA.

The Tobacco and Health Policy Office and the OMHSP Communications team planned and executed a communications campaign targeting tobacco users with information about VA resources to encourage them to quit during tobacco cessation observances. Efforts of the campaign included developing written and graphic content for newsletters, emails and social media. They also wrote a national news release for each of the

following observances: The Great American Smokeout (November), the Great American Spit Out (February) and World No Tobacco Day (May).

Several videos and the *Borne the Battle* podcast were created to promote SmokefreeVet and Quit VET. The team produced two animated videos in English and Spanish on the Tobacco and Health website. The videos promoted counseling and medication, which is evidence-based treatment outlined in the clinical practice guidelines to combat withdrawal and relapse triggers. SmokefreeVET was also promoted as it sends users daily text messages that provide support, encouragement, and tips for quitting tobacco products like cigarettes and chew. In addition to their website, they featured videos on the Stop Smoking VHA YouTube playlist.

The Tobacco and Health Policy Office and the OMHSP Communications team streamlined and drafted new content on the Tobacco and Health website to highlight and prioritize the resources for visitors. This resulted in more user engagement with Quit VET, SmokefreeVET and the subpages; this is demonstrated by the increased average time on page and the decreased bounce rate. They also created blog posts for VAantage Point and VA Insider to promote tobacco cessation resources and observances.

Social media posts, graphics and advertisements were successfully used to engage users. The team created monthly social media posts and graphics for VA entities to share on their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts. They also created a social cutdown of a public service announcement featuring the success of Mike, a Veteran, in using counseling and nicotine replacement therapy to quit tobacco. Through advertisements on Facebook, Twitter and Google Search, SmokefreeVET gained 744 signups and garnered 1.1 million impressions among Veterans, resulting in over 4,000 engagements (likes, comments, and shares).

During FY 2018 through FY 2019, the Tobacco and Health Policy National Program Office and OMHSP Communications teams increased the volume of promotions to build awareness among Veterans and their families and encourage them to adopt VA's treatment and resources for ending tobacco use. The team planned and executed a communications campaign to increase awareness and foster open dialogue about VA resources and services to support tobacco cessation. Observance-specific website tabs garnered 1,286 visits, and materials were downloaded 1,804 times. The team increased engagement and added content to the Tobacco and Health website. This resulted in more user involvement on the subpages, as demonstrated by the increased average time on page and a lower bounce rate. Additionally, they developed and launched SmokefreeVET digital ad campaigns to help encourage Veterans to sign up and utilize its resources. Cumulatively, the campaigns drove 744 sign-ups and garnered more than 1.1 million views among Veterans, which resulted in over 4,000 social media engagements (including likes, comments, and shares).

OMHSP: BeThere Campaign At A Glance:

- The #BeThere Facebook campaign, run by the Suicide Prevention Program (SPP) and AMVETS (American Veterans), reached 1,900 individuals, which resulted in 101 comments and 80 shares. Meanwhile, the #BeThere hashtag had 23,538 uses on Twitter, resulting in a 137% increase from September 2018.
- In collaboration with the American Legion, a letter was sent out to one million Veterans to discuss the prevention of suicide.
- Dr. Matthew Miller, Acting Director of Suicide Prevention, participated in 26 interviews related to Veteran suicide prevention and the promotion of the #BeThere campaign, which resulted in 71 million impressions.

In FY 2019, SPP informed Veterans and their dependents of the modifications made on the benefits administered by VA during their speaking engagements at meetings, conferences and other events. SPP began hosting quarterly Suicide Prevention Consortium meetings to engage internal VA stakeholders in suicide prevention and raise awareness of the communications campaign. SPP's Research and Program Evaluation Team began publishing monthly From Science to Practice (FSTP) literature reviews, which help clinicians put suicide prevention research into action. The series translates evidence-based research into informative and practical steps that health care providers can use to help support their Veteran patients. By the end of FY 2019, SPP published 16 FSTP reviews. SPP also engaged field leaders and staff through monthly educational webinars on suicide prevention efforts and programs, including areas such as media training, postvention, enhancing partnerships with homeless and employment programming. SPP presented at numerous locally held conferences and events that were attended by Veterans from across the country. These included locations in Eastern Kansas, Arkansas, VISN 19 in Colorado, VISN 10 in Michigan, and VISN 1 in New Hampshire. During these presentations, the team shared materials and resources with these Veterans and field staff and helped answer any questions about VA programs and suicide prevention.

In FY 2019, SPP worked with multiple state and local governments to provide outreach to Veterans by expanding on their "Mayor's Challenge." VA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration expanded the "Mayor's Challenge" in FY 2019 to include the launch of the "Governor's Challenge." The existing "Mayor's Challenge" called for action from mayors across the United States to implement suicide prevention plans in their communities. The inaugural "Governor's Challenge," which involved seven state teams took place in February 2019, replicating the "Mayor's Challenge" effort on the state level. Three academies and two conferences were held in Washington, DC in FY 2019 to assist teams with the tools and technical assistance they need to act on the local and state levels and implement suicide prevention plans. Through the Mayor's and Governor's Challenges, leaders from the participating states, cities and counties create tailored plans for their communities to implement VA's National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide, which provides a framework for

identifying priorities, organizing efforts and contributing to a national focus on Veteran suicide prevention.

VA's SPP and AMVETS collaborated to extend VA's outreach and spread awareness about suicide prevention. In August 2018, VA and AMVETS announced a partnership to expand ongoing Veteran suicide prevention efforts and establish intervention programs for at-risk Veterans. The partnership's keystone program is AMVETS' HEAL, which stands for health care, evaluation, advocacy and legislation. VA works with AMVETS to assist HEAL's team in intervening directly on behalf of Service members, Veterans, and their families and caregivers to help them access high-quality health care, including mental health and specialized services, for conditions including traumatic brain injury, polytrauma and PTSD. In September 2019, SPP and AMVETS partnered for a Facebook Live to promote ways to #BeThere for Service members and Veterans during Suicide Prevention Month and beyond. To date, the event and its recording has been viewed by over 1,900 individuals, resulting in 101 comments and 80 shares. Also, during the live recording, there was a peak of 122 viewers.

SPP also collaborated with American Legion to reach out directly to Veterans. In April 2019, as part of an ongoing outreach effort to provide suicide prevention resources to American Legion Veteran members, VA worked with the VSO to distribute a co-authored letter from SPP Director Keita Franklin and American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad. The letter was sent to one million Veteran members, and it discussed the importance of VSO partnerships and the organizations shared dedication to preventing Veteran suicide. The letter included links to the National Strategy on Preventing Veteran Suicide, and to suicide prevention toolkits on [mentalhealth.va.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov). The letter was also posted on the American Legion website. In September 2019, SPP partnered with the American Legion on an article promoting the public health approach to suicide prevention and how to support Veterans in the community.

SPP expanded its partnerships portfolio to include additional technology-focused organizations to promote social connectedness and provide lifesaving resources through online platforms and mobile apps. These resources are ready for use now and are free for Service members, Veterans, and their caregivers or families. In June 2018, SPP collaborated with PsychArmor Institute to launch a free, online suicide prevention training designed to help equip anyone who interacts with Veterans to demonstrate care, support and compassion. This removes unnecessary risks for when they are interacting with a Veteran who could be at risk for suicide and the video now has over 19,000 views. In January 2019, SPP announced a new partnership with a global nonprofit social network, CaringBridge, to help Service members, Veterans, their caregivers and families communicate with and support loved ones during their health journeys using free personal websites. The [CaringBridge](https://www.caringbridge.com) website is used to share updates and coordinate support for Service members, Veterans, their caregivers and families during any mental or physical health event. Individuals can also start or connect their personal fundraisers to their CaringBridge site using CaringBridge's Ways to Help page. SPP is also partnering with the social networking company RallyPoint to connect Service members and Veterans, so they can discuss military life, share information and exchange stories. The platform is free and open to military families, spouses, caregivers and Federal employees, and allows users to build out their own professional network,

share resources, and connect with other members of the military community in a safe, secure social media environment.

In FY 2019, SPP partnered with the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) to fund outreach and Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) for localized approaches to suicide prevention. VCL staff attended 86 outreach events, sharing information about VCL resources, suicide prevention, and the VCL mission. VCL's outreach budget provided \$2.5 million to fund necessary materials to support Suicide Prevention Coordinator and SPP outreach efforts in the promotion of warm hand offs of Veterans to VCL care. SPP's media efforts drove 20,879 calls, 17,609 chats, 22,027 tests, and 16,272 self-check quizzes to the VCL. The VCL also filmed an educational video and Public Service Announcement (PSA) that are both now ready for distribution. VA partnered with VISN 23 to initiate a pilot program to improve the effectiveness of its localized public health approach by reaching Veterans through proactive, community-based measures. Supported by academic researchers and implementation specialists from the University of Pittsburgh's Program Evaluation and Research Unit and VA leadership, the pilot program has supported the development and expansion of local coalitions to implement suicide prevention goals.

SPP made additional efforts to promote Veteran suicide prevention through media and communication initiatives. The Facing the Challenge PSA was broadcast from September 2018 until second quarter of FY 2019. In total, 115 stations aired the PSA a total of 19,456 times, and these broadcasts amounted to an equivalent media value of \$2,646,016. SPP initiated a satellite media tour where Dr. Matthew Miller, Acting Director of Suicide Prevention, participated in 26 interviews to address questions related to Veteran suicide prevention, and to promote the #BeThere campaign. These interviews resulted in over 71 million total views. From March through September 2019, SPP organized paid media efforts, which drove 20,879 calls, 17,609 chats, 22,027 tests, and 16,272 self-check quizzes to the VCL.

SPP also partnered with Twitter to launch a custom icon in the form of an orange awareness ribbon. The ribbon is linked to the #BeThere hashtag to connect Veterans to the global Twitter conversation around Suicide Prevention Month. There were 23,538 uses of #BeThere on Twitter in September 2019. The number of #BeThere posts that mentioned Veterans increased 137% from September 2018. Additionally, there were 273 accounts with more than 100,000 followers that used #BeThere in September 2019.

SPP participated in speaking engagements and events that included formal meetings with partners, stakeholders, external audiences and internal audiences and required preparation of talking points, slide decks or other materials. SPP attended over 100 high-profile speaking engagements to position VA as the leader in evidence-based suicide prevention care, including with key partners and organizations such as the EDF Convening, the American Legion Annual Conference, the Disabled American Veterans National Convention, and more. In FY 2019, SPP participated in 136 total events where 27 were national outreach, 27 were local outreach, 45 were internal VA outreach, 14 were specific to suicide prevention, 17 were Congressional outreach, and 6 other miscellaneous events.

Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders (SCI/D)

At A Glance:

A study found that VA's SCI/D System of Care provided the most comprehensive care as compared with commercial plans, Medicaid, Medicare, the SCI Model Systems.

The VA SCI/D System of Care has the largest, most comprehensive system of care in the United States; it provides lifelong resources and care to optimize physical and mental health, educational and vocational opportunities, community reintegration, and resumption of social roles. No other SCI/D program offers the full array of inpatient, outpatient, and home care services. VA's SCI/D System of Care is unparalleled; it offers primary and specialty care from the time of injury throughout the Veteran's lifetime. SCI/D interdisciplinary teams of experts from many disciplines (including medicine, nursing, occupational, physical and recreation therapies, psychology, social work, nutrition, pharmacy) work with Veterans with SCI/D to improve their lives, outcomes, and quality of life. Care focuses on self-management and healthy behaviors, which are important for Veterans with SCI/D to maintain the best possible health, prevent complications, maintain function and optimize well-being.

The VA SCI/D System of Care provides care from the time of injury through the entire lifespan of each Veteran. Comprehensive rehabilitation using state of the science techniques and equipment are provided after the onset of a new SCI/D. All aspects of health care are provided to maintain the best possible health and quality of life while living in the least restrictive environment possible. Unique aspects of this system include the provision of primary and specialty care by trained SCI/D teams; non-institutional long term care to support Veterans in their homes; the best prosthetics program in the country, which provides Veterans what they need to function at their highest capacity; and respite care. Delivering primary and preventive care along with specialized care by trained teams is available in the VA SCI/D System of Care. Highly specialized care is provided for such things as Veterans who are on ventilators, have complex wounds, and for Veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as ALS.

There are currently 25 SCI/D Centers (hubs) across the VA SCI/D System of Care. The hubs are regional SCI/D Centers that offer a full range of comprehensive care provided by large SCI/D interdisciplinary teams. SCI/D Centers are affiliated with VA facilities within their geographic catchment areas that do not have SCI/D Centers. These facilities are known as SCI/D spokes; they provide smaller SCI/D teams and focus on primary care closer to the Veteran's home. The hub and spokes organizational design provides accessible, high quality care throughout the country. A study a few years ago found that VA's SCI/D System of Care provided the most comprehensive care as compared with commercial plans, Medicaid, Medicare, the SCI Model Systems.

A unique aspect of the VA SCI/D System of Care is the SCI/D Long Term Care program. There are dedicated SCI/D Long Term Care beds at six SCI/D Centers for institutional extended care for Veterans with SCI/D. Two additional centers in San Diego and Dallas have additional SCI/D Long Term Care units in planning and construction. Although the first commitment is to always try and send Veterans with SCI/D to live in the community, when Veterans with SCI/D need institutional care, these facilities offer high quality extended care with a focus on maintaining health and quality of life. Nothing

like this exists outside VA. And surveys of Veterans in these facilities along with analyzing outcomes have demonstrated excellent outcomes in these facilities.

Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT)

At A Glance:

- OPCC&CT expanded outreach opportunities with the National Veteran Sports Programs, reaching a total of 1,594 participants.
- Over 28,000 participants completed the Whole Health Facilitated Group program orientation sessions, including about 2,400 of which being transitioning Service members.
- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA staff attended approximately 10 physical health and wellness expos each quarter, reaching nearly 2,000 Veterans.

One method of OPCC&CT's efforts to inform eligible Veterans and dependents of modifications to the benefits and services available to them from VA is through their Whole Health initiative. Whole Health is an approach to health care that empowers and equips Veterans to take charge of their health and well-being, and to live their life to the fullest. The Whole Health delivery system includes three components. The first component is called Empower: "The Pathway – In partnership with peers, Veterans explore their mission, aspiration, and purpose, and begin their overarching personal health plan." The second is called Equip: "Self-care through Well-being Programs – With a focus on self-care, skill building and support: these programs are not diagnosis or disease based but support the personal health plan of each individual. Services include proactive, complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches such as stress reduction, yoga, tai chi, mindfulness, nutrition, acupuncture, and health coaching." The third is called Treat: "Whole Health Clinical Care – In VA, the community, or both, clinicians are trained in Whole Health and align the Veteran's clinical care with their mission and personal health plan, the foundation of which is the Veteran's selfcare." While these methods are designed to provide patient care and cultural transformation through Whole Health, they also communicate modifications of the benefits and services under the program.

OPCC&CT established a team that focuses on two lanes of effort to strategically engage with Veterans in their communities to identify eligible Veterans and dependents who are not enrolled or registered for benefits or services administered by VA that are available to them. The first type of effort focuses on transitioning Service members, DoD, and military community partnerships. OPCC&CT's external website va.gov/wholehealth provides information and education available to all Veterans about personalized, proactive, patient-driven care and how health and well-being can be enhanced through a whole health approach. The team developed videos and print products that were used to educate and inspire Veterans, caregivers, public, and others to explore Whole Health. These products were used for outreach via community forums and VSOs. Additionally, they expanded outreach opportunities with the National Veteran Sports Programs (total of 1,594 participants). OPCC&CT participated in the VA National Golden Age Games, providing Whole Health sessions for attendees.

Other efforts for reaching out to eligible Veterans and dependents by OPCC&CT are through VSOs and Community Partnerships. Both efforts involve national and local collaboration. OPCC&CT has developed a Whole Health Facilitated Group program that trains Veterans to provide Whole Health orientation to other Veterans. Since these orientation sessions began in March 2018, over 28,000 participants have completed it through FY 2019. Nearly 2,400 participants were transitioning Service members. The office has identified opportunities to leverage Veteran stories, testimonials, and positive media coverage of Whole Health. There has been a continued participation in the VA Creative Arts Festival and the outreach team hosted three educational events with a total of 26 teams that demonstrated the linkage of the arts and humanities with a Whole Health approach to enhancing health and well-being. A Whole Health Mobile App is under development that will support Veteran engagement with Whole Health exploration and planning.

OPCC&CT also communicates the modifications of benefits and services through collaborations and presentations. There is an ongoing collaboration with VBA to integrate Whole Health message and resources in Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Additionally, the office holds strategic partnerships with VA Voluntary Service, Vet Centers, National Veteran Sports Programs, Transition Care Management, Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, Office of Nursing Service, and many other Program Offices provided opportunities for integration and outreach to targeted Veteran populations. Keynote presentations and Whole Health experiential activities were provided to many internal and external VA audiences. An example of combined outreach and education occurred at the VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee where many VSOs, as well as VA Voluntary Service Chiefs and other staff engaged in a Whole Health Experience and partnership opportunities.

OPCC&CT established a formal partnership with Americans for the Arts to provide outreach to Veterans through local education and training programs. This agreement expanded community relationships that supported Veteran participation in the arts and humanities to enhance their health and well-being. This partnership was established in 2015, and very successful FY 2018 and FY 2019 workshops resulted in alignment of Whole Health with the Arts within VA and focused on building community partnerships.

OPCC&CT partnered with numerous nongovernmental organizations to provide outreach to Veterans. The office has partnered with the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) and VA staff attended approximately 10 physical health and wellness expos every quarter; reaching nearly 2,000 Veterans during FY 2018 and FY 2019. The WWP Physical Health and Wellness National Director attended and presented at a Whole Health educational course. OPCC&CT also collaborated with Veterans of Foreign Wars, where VA staff attended the 2019 National Convention, including over 15,000 Veterans and auxiliary members attendees. The convention also provided 6 Whole Health Experiential Workshops providing Whole Health information, classes, and experiences that included yoga, chair yoga and nutrition.

Another outreach partnership includes the American Legion. VA presented to the Health Administration Committee leadership group at the 101st American Legion Annual Conference on the Whole Health initiative and staffed a booth to share information about Complementary and Integrative Health and Whole Health with the leaders and

participants of the convention. At the American Legion Suicide Prevention Panel in September 2019, OPCC&CT staff participated on the “Shedding Light on the Path to Recovery and Resiliency” panel that included a compelling Veteran story about Whole Health and suicide prevention.

OPCC&CT also has partnered with several organization for local outreach. Partnerships with the YMCA have been formed to provide local Whole Health resources for Veterans through an established Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This collaboration increases Veteran and family awareness of YMCA programs, activities, and events. These include volunteer and community service opportunities, healthy living programs, Whole Health groups, Veteran benefits and services clinics, and youth programming. The MOA created opportunities to offer Whole Health groups and services for Veterans within their communities at the local YMCA. Through a collaboration with the Americans for the Arts, the MOA expanded community partnerships that support Veteran participation in the Arts and Humanities. Annual training events were co-sponsored and resulted in the development of local partners to support Veteran health and well-being through participation in the arts.

OPCC&CT also partnered with the US Healthy Collaborative and Take Care Campaign and established a national MOA that supported collaboration on this national campaign that is aligned with Whole Health. This film and outreach campaign is currently in the pilot phase, including community engagement strategies in four communities where Whole Health Flagship facilities are located. Additionally, the Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs presentation on the concept of Whole Health and the transformation of Healthcare within VA was given as requested.

Office of Member Services

At A Glance:

- Concierge for Care (C4C): VA completed 25,295 Concierge for Care calls* in FY 2018 and 37,530 calls in FY 2019.
 - From September 29, 2017 – December 17, 2019 service level of calls completed within 13 days was 98.39%.
- Welcome to VA (W2VA): VA completed 698,793 Welcome to VA calls* in FY 2018 and 769,056 calls in FY 2019.
 - From October 1, 2018 – November 17, 2019:
 - Service level of calls completed within 5 days was 98.4%.
 - Newly Enrolled Appointment Referral was 87.63%.
 - Customer satisfaction was 4.9 on a scale of 1 to 5.

**Completed calls within 5 days (W2VA) or 13 days (C4C) include 3 attempts to make contact.*

VHA Member Services team identified eligible Veterans and dependents who were not enrolled or registered with the Department for benefits or services through their

Concierge for Care, “Welcome to VA” calls, VA “Welcome Kits,” and Pending Applications programs.

C4C launched on October 1, 2017, and is currently contacting transitioning military Service members to inform them of available VA benefits. C4C continues to engage recently separated Service members via outbound telephone calls to walk them through the enrollment process on the phone, if they desire, or provide options for enrollment by means such as mail, online, or face-to-face at their local VAMC. Member Services made 12,235 more calls in FY 2019 than they did in FY 2018.

“Welcome to VA” calls are made to Veterans that have recently been enrolled in VA health care to advise on the health benefits package available to them, connecting Veterans with additional resources, and assisting them with scheduling appointments with their VAMC if desired. These calls are made within 5 days of VA completing the Veteran’s enrollment processing. Member Services made 70,263 more calls in FY 2019 than they did in FY 2018.

VHA Member Services collaborated with the VA Veterans Experience Office to efficiently and effectively disseminate “Welcome Kits” to new Veterans providing “Quick Start” guides, informing new Veterans of VA benefits available to them.

Also, Member Services conducts outreach to Veterans who have initiated an application for VA health care but have not yet completed their application. This outreach includes sending up to three letters in the mail from the Health Eligibility Center. Five days after VA completes the registration, an initial pending letter is generated from the enrollment system to the Veteran if the registration is still in a pending status, “pending verification” or “pending means test.” If no response is received at the end of the 335th day, a “365-day pending closure” letter is sent. When no response is received by the 366th day, the application is closed. A final “closure” letter is then sent to the Veteran.

In addition to mailing, Member Services makes up to five phone calls from the Health Eligibility Center. If no response is received to complete the application, outbound calls are made throughout the duration an application is in “pending” status at different intervals (8-day, 30-day, 90-day, 180-day, 310-day).

Member Services utilizes two booklets and a handbook that are available to Veterans to inform them about modifications of the benefits and services administered by VA. Member Services collaborated with the VHA health care field and program business lines to provide an update of the Health Care Benefits Online (HCBO) booklet informing Veterans of the available VA health care benefits. The 2018 version was updated and implemented in March 2018. The 2020 version is currently in the approval process. In March 2018, and in collaboration with MyHealthVet and eBenefits principals, the Veteran Personalized Health Care Benefit Handbook was made available in an accessible, online format. Veterans who have a Premium eBenefits account, may access their personalized handbook through the secure VBA eBenefits site. Member Services continues to collaborate with VBA principals (owners) to provide current VHA health care benefit information to include in the annual Federal Benefits Booklet.

Member Services holds several collaborations with state and local education and training programs to provide outreach to Veterans. Member Services continues to collaborate with and expand upon VA Medical Center, VISN staffs, and local VSO

contacts to provide Member Services business overview, products, services, and benefits to stakeholders. In addition, they ensure operational and support SMEs are available to answer questions. In September 2019, Member Services participated in VA's Minority Veterans Summit held in Dallas, Texas to provide enrollment and eligibility education to attendees which included VA employees, VSOs and Veterans.

Member Services continues to collaborate with and expand upon national VSO contacts to provide Member Services business overview, products, services, and benefits to stakeholders. In addition, they ensure operational and support SMEs are available to answer questions.

Office of Community Care (OCC)

At A Glance:

- Released 34 unique products, accessed over 1.2 million times, to support the launch of the MISSION Act including blogs, videos, webpages, guides, flyers, fact sheets and infographics.
- Supported or hosted three live webcast events, with over 72,000 attendees, to support launch of the new Veterans Community Care Program under the MISSION Act.
- Provided more than 7,000 responses to Members of Congress, the White House, and VA leadership related to casework for Veteran and family member community care programs.

OCC uses a wide number of methods to communicate with Veterans, beneficiaries, community providers and payers. Methods include blog articles, social media, newsletters, videos, infographics, websites, press releases, fact sheets, flyers and letters.

OCC's main website, www.va.gov/communitycare, hosts most of the aforementioned resources and provides information about eligibility for and access to community care programs such as the following:

- Veterans Community Care Program, including emergency care and urgent care;
- Foreign Medical Program;
- Indian Health Services/Tribal Health;
- Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Camp Lejeune Family Member Program;
- Children of Women Vietnam Veterans Health Care Benefits Program; and
- Spina Bifida Health Care Benefits Program.

OCC maintains a YouTube playlist for community care, which hosts a portfolio of short, explanatory videos on key topics such as community care eligibility, making appointments, urgent care, filing community care claims, foreign medical care, Veteran health insurance and Veteran copayments.

OCC regularly engages key partners such as hospital systems, trade organizations, national associations, state hospital associations, along with state and local

governments to share information, collaborate on improvements to processes, and address challenges, such as billing and payment issues. OCC also works with tribal health groups and meets regularly with VSO representatives.

Office of Rural Health

At A Glance:

- Veterans Affairs' Rural Veteran Health FY 2015 through FY 2019 Strategic Plan Outcomes:
 - Goal 1: Promote health and well-being in the rural Veteran population. Over 1,640,000 rural Veterans served, 758% more than the five-year target.
 - Goal 2: Generate and diffuse knowledge regarding rural Veteran health. Over 108,000 webpage views, 201% more than the five-year target.
 - Goal 3: Strengthen community health care infrastructure where rural Veterans reside. 974 students were trained to serve rural Veterans, 105% more than the five-year target.

The Office of Rural Health provides a variety of outreach methods to inform Veterans and eligible dependents of modifications to the benefits and services administered by VA. The office increased the reach of the Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center Connect Program in 2019 by connecting with Wisconsin Aging and Disabilities Resource Centers (VISN 12). Additionally, relationships were built with Aging and Disabilities Resource Centers in rural Wisconsin counties.

The office also educated Aging and Disabilities Resource Center staff on possible VA benefits and programs specific to older adults and referred Aging and Disabilities Resource Center staff to appropriate local resources for Veterans with questions about eligibility for VA health care.

The staff facilitated network weaving between rural VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics and county Aging and Disabilities Resource Centers. Additionally, they provided VA eligibility information and a Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center Connect brochure.

The Office of Rural Health collaborated with the following nongovernmental organizations to provide outreach to Veterans: The National Rural Health Association, National Association State Directors of Veterans Affairs, National Association of Critical Access Hospitals, National Association for Rural Mental Health, and National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health.

Office of Care Management and Social Work

At A Glance:

- In 2019, over 30,712 families and 43,824 individuals received Fisher House

accommodations and information on VA resource availability.

The Office of Care Management and Social Work employs the Caregiver Support Program (CSP) to provide outreach to eligible Veterans and dependents who are not enrolled for benefits or services administered by VA. They meet with VSO leadership regularly to provide current information about CSP services and educational programs. The program also provides social media messaging to VSO communicators who share new information to the public. They also participate at local outreach events and health fairs and educate transitioning Service members through VA Liaisons for Healthcare.

Through the CSP, Office of Care Management and Social Work staff inform all Veterans and dependents about modifications of benefits administered by VA through partnerships, events and direct communications. Care Management staff are responsible for informing the public about the CSP changes and updates, including provision of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the MISSION Act, Purple Heart Morale, Welfare and Recreation expansion impact on certain program participants, and the proposed regulations. They present at speaking engagements and trainings regarding the CSP, VA services, and updates to the program services. Also, they partner with other VA offices, such as Suicide Prevention, Office of Rural Health, and Voluntary Services for sharing and publicizing projects through their websites. There are frequently asked questions (FAQ) and information sheets about program changes to share widely at the local VISN level and the national level for both internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, the CSP hosts National Family Caregivers Month events and other caregiver events throughout the year to update about services and they send information regularly via email blasts and through Listserv.

The CSP has partnerships with state and local education programs, as well as nongovernmental organizations to provide outreach to Veterans. Care Management staff provides CSP outreach materials and brochures for events held at educational institutions at local levels. They also hold seminars and conferences at universities that focus on specific topics. The CSP provided outreach to Veterans through the Participate for National Family Caregivers Month activities through collaboration with state and local facilities. Additionally, they participated at national and local events such as those with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF).

The CSP has numerous partnerships to provide outreach to Veterans. CSP's partnerships with the EDF and the United Service Automobile Association created the Campaign for Inclusive Care, including educational courses created to shift culture of care at VAMCs for caregivers. The CSP participates in various local or county meetings to educate about CSP services. They have partnered with the PsychArmor Institute to widely spread information about mental health education and courses online for caregivers of Veterans. Also, the CSP has partnered with the Rosalynn Carter Institute to incorporate Operation Family Caregiver coaching in select VAMCs and via telephone, to caregivers of Veterans. Other partners include Sesame Street, CaringBridge, and LinkedIn, providing free services to Veterans.

The Fisher House Program utilizes VA and the Fisher House Foundation social

networks to raise awareness about VA Fisher House resources. The Office of Care Management and Social Work maintains a VA Fisher House program Internet page www.socialwork.va.gov/fisher.asp with information on Fisher House resource availability. VA Facility Fisher House program staff provide education and outreach through VSOs and community partner events; direct contact with Veterans, families and caregivers; military events; community-based health fairs through collaboration with other community non-profit organizations; and presentations at conferences.

VA Fisher House program staff educate Veterans, Service members, family members, caregivers and support persons about VA resource availability during the VA Fisher House stay. They collaborate with DoD and community stakeholders to support VA resource awareness and connection. The Fisher House Program also partners with local educational institutions, community-based hospitals and other hospitality programs such as Ronald McDonald House to provide information about VA Fisher House program resources and VA service availability. Furthermore, staff collaborate with Fisher House Foundation, the Health Care Hospitality Network and the DoD Fisher House program to provide outreach to Veterans.

The Care Management Office's Transition and Care Management Services utilizes VA and VHA presence on social networking sites to promote awareness of transition assistance and care management programs, services and positive stories. Through these services, the office maintains a Transition and Care Management website oefoif.va.gov/caremanagement.asp with information on transition assistance programs, services and resources. Additionally, Transition and Care Management staff members are encouraged to participate or ensure program representation in a wide variety of local events geared toward Veterans, including Welcome Home events, pre- and post-deployment events, and joint events with local colleges and universities. The Transition and Care Management Services networks with and educates current and future VA, DoD, and community partners about VHA transition assistance and Care Management Services.

VA's Transition and Care Management Services also provide outreach regarding modifications to benefits and has partnered with state and local education programs, as well as nongovernmental organizations. Through these services the Office of Care Management and Social Work staff educate Veterans, family members, and caregivers about VA benefits and services while assisting to meet their needs. They have partnered with local colleges and universities to promote VA services and benefits for those eligible. Additionally, they have collaborated with the WWP and four academic medical centers in building the Warrior Care Network, as well as the Marcus Institute for Brain Health in Aurora, Colorado, to offer specialized treatment for Veterans suffering from PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, and co-morbid conditions.

The VA Liaison Program also provides outreach to eligible Veterans and dependents about benefits available through VA. Through the program, Care Management staff networks with and educates DoD partners about VA benefits and services. They encourage VA Liaisons for Healthcare to attend and participate in a wide variety of local events geared toward transitioning Service members, including pre- and post-deployment events. The program also coordinates meetings with VSO leadership to

share and update them regarding CSP services and educational programs available. Through VSOs, the VA Liaison Program communicates updates through social media messaging.

The VA Liaison Program educates Service members, Veterans, and family members about VA benefits and services and modifications to them while assisting their transition to VA. This program has also collaborated with DoD partners to ensure Service members and Veterans are receiving the benefits and services available to them.

The National Social Work Program also uses the same social media, Internet, and interpersonal communication tactics to provide outreach about available benefits. Through the program, social workers are encouraged to attend and participate in a wide variety of local events geared toward Veterans, including Welcome Home and Homeless Stand Downs. Care Management staff network with and educate current and potential community partners about VA services and partner with VSOs to spread the word about VA services and resources.

The National Social Work Program also uses the Internet and collaborations to extend their outreach regarding modifications to benefits. The program promotes the ebenefits.com web site for Veterans and their caregivers and/or family members. They utilize VA and VHA presence on social networking sites to promote awareness of social work programs, services and positive stories. Through the program, Care Management staff educate Veterans, family members and caregivers about local events while meeting their needs daily. The program has also collaborated with community partners such as The Dream Foundation, National Domestic Violence Hotline, community nursing homes and adult day health care facilities to assure Veterans are receiving the highest level of benefits available to them.

Additionally, the National Social Work Program has partnered with state and local education programs as well as nongovernmental organizations to provide outreach to Veterans. The program has partnered with the National Association of Social Workers to assure the area of service provision to Veterans throughout the discipline of social work is meeting high professional standards. They have also partnered with the Council on Social Work Education to assure the education of graduate social work trainees throughout the nation, including information pertinent to service delivery to Veterans. Other collaborations include partnerships with the Dream Foundation to provide Veterans with life-limiting illnesses a final dream and White Ribbon USA to eliminate sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence in VA facilities.

The Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) uses both in-person and online communication to provide outreach to eligible Veterans and dependents regarding benefits and services available to combat partner violence. Through the program, Care Management staff utilize VA and VHA presence on social networking sites to promote awareness of the impact on one's health and safety from an intimate partner's violence. Also, through social media, information is shared about the services available to prevent and intervene upon partner violence. There is also a public facing Internet page socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Index.asp with information on the IPVAP and how

to connect to a local VA IPVAP coordinator. The program encourages staff members to participate in and host local events geared toward Veterans and to involve the partnerships with internal and external stakeholders. They also network with and educate VA, DoD, and community partners about VHA IPVAP services through national conference presentations, virtual trainings, and stakeholder meetings.

National Chaplain Service

At A Glance:

- Collaborated with American Bible Society to provide thousands of free religious materials for Veterans every year. American Bible Society makes these religious materials available so that VA Chaplain Offices can distribute them to Veterans.
- Partnered with the Office of Rural Health (ORH) and the VEO to provide training and outreach to community clergy. During this reporting period, 738 clergy have participated in this training program.

The National Chaplain Service strives to offer services aimed at meeting the diverse spiritual needs of its Veterans. In FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA Chaplains recognized the growing importance of serving Veterans from the offset of their transition into civilian life. Thus, the National Chaplain Service developed “Transitional Care Chaplaincy,” a strategic plan intended to expand their services to provide spiritual direction focused on reaching transitioning Service members.

VA Chaplains partnered with ORH and VEO to coordinate the training of community clergies. These trainings help community clergy better understand and aid in the diverse spiritual and emotional needs of each Veteran. Simultaneously, the partnerships promote awareness of the various services provided by VA. Community clergy leave trainings fully prepared to assist and direct Veterans to relevant resources.

Complementing its outreach training through governmental agencies, VA Chaplaincy maintains robust relationships with nongovernmental organizations. Both American Bible Society and GuidePost provide over thousands of free religious materials for VA Chaplain Offices to distribute among Veterans. Furthermore, many communities of faith reach out to local VA Chaplain Services across the nation to spread awareness of Veteran focused events they intend to host. VA Chaplains share information about these events with local Veterans who may be interested in attending them.

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP)

At A Glance:

- 3 million Veterans accessed the Veterans Health Library between FY 2018 and FY 2019.
- 68,092 individuals downloaded and used the MOVE! Coach app, a VA supported mobile app that is based on the MOVE! weight management program.

- 99% of Healthy Living Teams at 140 VHA facilities participated in local outreach events in their communities, and 82% of facility-based Healthy Living Teams developed relationships with local organizations to offer health education, health promotion and disease prevention programs.

In FY 2018 and FY 2019, the NCP collaborated with various organizations to publicize its services and resources. The NCP worked alongside VHA's Office of Communications to maximize outreach efforts through social media networking sites, VA websites and video platforms. These approaches helped to share information, stories and videos about VHA health education, health promotion and disease prevention services.

Particularly, NCP focused on promoting its existing Veteran health resources. Already accessible to all Veterans through the internet veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov and My Health eVet, NCP prioritized outreach for the Health eLiving Assessment (HLA) and the Veterans Health Library. The HLA, an interactive online health risk assessment tool, recorded the responses of 15,399 individuals during FY 2018 and 12,833 during FY 2019. The Veterans Health Library, an online VHA vetted, comprehensive health education resource, was accessed by over 1.4 million Veterans in 2018 and 1.6 million Veterans in 2019. Together, the two resources brought ample traffic and exposure to VA health websites and services.

NCP promotion efforts also brought increased usage for MOVE!, a VA supported weight management program designed to improve the lives of Veterans. NCP worked to increase awareness of the MOVE!™ website move.va.gov. The website includes a questionnaire, which when completed, produces an individualized report specifying recommended weight management strategies for Veterans to utilize and share with their health care provider. The program also had a mobile app made available to iOS devices starting in 2015, offering MOVE! weight management curriculum through a 19-week guided program. In 2018, the MOVE! Coach mobile app reached Android devices. With the MOVE! app's expanded accessibility and active NCP promotion efforts, the app was downloaded and used by 68,092 people in FY 2018 and FY 2019.

NCP also suggested improvements for VHA facilities to help provide better health services to Veterans. NCP efforts resulted in strengthened relations with local VHA facilities, Agency on Aging offices and state health departments that offered chronic disease self-management programs. These programs assisted Veterans and caregivers in developing the skills and confidence they need to effectively manage chronic medical conditions. Additionally, NCP encouraged VHA facility-based Healthy Living teams to regularly engage in outreach activities with state and local organizations. The support aimed at promoting VHA health education, health promotion and disease prevention services. A November 2017 report indicated that 99% of Healthy Living Teams at 140 VHA facilities participated in local outreach events in their communities, and 82% of facility-based Healthy Living Teams developed relationships with a variety of local organizations to offer local health education, health promotion and disease prevention programs. NCP efforts played a role in the foundation of long-term relationships between VA facilities and local organizations to better serve the health needs of Veterans.

Beyond an advisory role, NCP actively participated in government health-oriented conferences. NCP represented VHA on 11 U.S. Government Interagency prevention and public health initiatives.

NCP also joined large-scale Veteran gatherings to keep health wellness at the forefront of participants' minds. NCP attended the VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee Meeting and Conference in May 2019. The meeting was an opportunity to share information regarding the availability of health education, health promotion and prevention services available to Veterans and caregivers. NCP also had presence at major National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events activities throughout FY 2018 and FY 2019. NCP staff worked with event directors and VHA facility-based Healthy Living Teams to coordinate health education, health promotion and disease programming at each event.

Post Deployment Health Services (PDHS)

At A Glance:

- PDHS aided with DoD's Millennium Cohort Study (MilCo), a study which already produced over 200 findings in peer-reviewed publications and conferences.
- In FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA's PDHS conducted no-cost health registry programs to provide focused health evaluations for Veterans. PDHS completed 5,359 Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry evaluations. The Depleted Uranium Follow-up program completed 36 out of 85 in-person surveillance visits in spring 2019 and processed 362 urine uranium results FY 2018 and 494 results in FY 2019.

The Toxic Embedded Fragment Surveillance Center Program processed metal biomonitoring results for 252 urine samples in FY 2018 and 365 urine samples in FY 2019. The evaluations from these programs helped VA gather information about Veteran health experiences as a consequence of being exposed to certain environmental hazards during military service. The data collected from the registry allows VA to utilize the information to better understand and respond to the health problems faced by Veterans.

The PDHS leveraged its digital media capabilities to publicize its epidemiology research and informational resources. Their most up-to-date information about military exposures, registry programs, epidemiology research studies and publications can be found through VA's public health website publichealth.va.gov. The public health website had 3,819,067 pageviews in FY 2018 and 3,469,790 pageviews in FY 2019. The website further houses videos to promote Veteran registries, like the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. This Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry web page had 214,340 pageviews in FY 2018 and 166,361 pageviews in FY 2019 and was ranked among the top three in public health web page views both years. Updates on Veteran health concerns, such as issues regarding water contamination at Camp Lejeune, can also be found online publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp. The Camp Lejeune web page had 148,477 pageviews in FY 2018 and 118,218 pageviews in FY 2019. PDHS also published the annual Gulf War

Newsletter, Agent Orange Newsletter, Post-9/11 Vet Newsletter and first issue of the biannual Military Exposures & Your Health. These newsletters convey critical updates related to benefits, services, policy and research, and are offered to specific Veteran cohorts. PDHS announced the publication of these newsletters via multiple internal and external channels, including social media.

PDHS oftentimes utilized a Whole of Government approach, crossing boundaries to work alongside other governmental agencies, to discuss and resolve Veterans' issues. One such example was their participation in an active, interagency network, including Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Environmental Protection Agency, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and DoD, to address nationwide health concerns. PDHS further developed the VA portion of VA/DoD Joint Incentive Funded Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record (ILER). ILER is a critical component being developed for Veteran care as related to military environmental and deployment exposures, alongside the six PDHS legacy registries, including the Agent Orange Registry with 811,392 total evaluations, Ionizing Radiation Registry with 28,220 total evaluations, and Gulf War Registry with 197,782 total evaluations. It is anticipated that ILER will be included as a key and essential component of the Electronic Health Record and be able to take the place of the self-reported registries.

PDHS worked closely with DoD to conduct research and gather vital input toward improving Veteran health. PDHS teamed with DoD to host the March 2019 Airborne Hazards Symposium. The event brought together VSOs from across the country to gather insight on the needs of Veterans and collect recommendations on existing VA and DoD efforts. PDHS also worked with VA's Office of Research and Development on a collaboration on the DoD's Military Cohort (MilCo) Study millenniumcohort.org. The study regularly surveyed volunteer Active Duty Service members, Veterans, retirees and family members, some taken as far back as 2001. As of 2019, over 122,000 MilCo Study participants were both Veterans and users of VA services. This ongoing VA-DoD collaboration is an unparalleled opportunity to understand long term effects of military service and provide data driven care to veterans. This collaboration produced 8 peer reviewed scientific papers specifically from VA and PDHS collaborators during calendar years 2018 through 2019. Through collaborative efforts, the MilCo Study produced over 200 findings in peer-reviewed publications and conferences. The study poses promising implications in the form of policy changes, medical care and evidence-based decision making.

In May 2019, Congressional legislation designated the New Jersey War-Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) as an Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Center of Excellence. The Federal recognition for the Center brought increased awareness for its research related to airborne hazards and burn pits. Furthermore, increased attention toward the Center's educational and best practices content for health care providers as well as Veterans to utilize. In addition, the WRIISC in Washington, DC, produced 12 peer-reviewed scientific articles and one book chapter in FY 2018-19; the East Orange, New Jersey, WRIISC produced 38 articles in FY 2018 through FY 2019; and the Palo Alto, California, WRIISC produced 11 articles in calendar years 2018 through 2019.

National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events (NVSP&SE)

At A Glance:

- A partnership between VA and Microsoft resulted in 486 social media posts and 149 traditional news and broadcast stories with an estimated reach of 221 million persons.
- Event advertising reached over 250 million through social media engagement; and over 800 million in traditional news media.

NVSP&SE employed various outreach methods to inform Veterans of its services and events. In FY 2018 and FY 2019, NVSP&SE reached over 250 million people through social media engagement and over 800 million through broadcast and print. Outreach efforts through social media and direct email marketing over the past two years contributed to the added attendance of over 5,300 participants to major events held in cities across the nation.

Oftentimes, NVSP&SE sporting activities presented opportune occasions to register Veterans and eligible dependents for VA services. During the 2019 National Veterans Golden Age Games at Anchorage, Alaska, NVSP&SE collaborated with VBA to provide onsite space for a claims clinic. The program helped to process 44 Veterans' claims.

Outreach efforts contributed to unprecedented increases in turnout to NVSP&SE sporting events. At VA's national sports and rehabilitative events, over 30% of Veterans were new participants; over 20% of Veterans attending were women, and approximately 130 VAMCs send participants annually. VA also observed record enrollment at the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic with registration doubling from the previous five years.

NVSP&SE's partnerships with nongovernmental organizations also promoted Veteran participation in sporting activities. In FY 2018 and FY 2019, NVSP&SE awarded \$23.8 million in signed grant agreements to 229 organizations across the Nation. These award recipients conducted outreach engagement activities with colleges, universities, sports clubs, Paralympic and Olympic sport governing bodies and VSOs. Their combined efforts resulted in outreach to over 20,000 Veterans. Furthermore, VA collaboration with Olympic and Paralympic sport governing bodies promoted awareness of NVSP&SE's monthly training allowance program. In turn, over 200 unique Veteran participants each year were recruited and received funding to participate in elite athletic development programs.

Additional collaborative efforts with VSOs and corporate organizations helped to deliver engaging and successful community rehabilitative events for Veterans to enjoy. NVSP&SE worked alongside Veteran oriented organizations to host the National Disabled Veterans TEE (Training, Exposure, Experience) Tournament, the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Partnerships with organizations like Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and American Legion

Auxiliary played integral roles toward bringing successful events for Veterans and the local communities hosting them.

A NVSP&SE partnership with Microsoft improved Veteran rehabilitative activities while also promoting awareness of VA programs. Established in 2019, the benchmark partnership brought the Xbox Adaptive Controller to 24 clinics across 22 VA facilities. The controller allows Veterans with limited hand function the ability to increase muscle activation, improve hand-eye coordination and greater participation in social and recreational activities. This partnership and new extension of VA clinical care resulted in 486 social media posts and 149 traditional news and broadcast stories, altogether with an estimated reach of 221 million people.

Women's Health Services (WHS)

At A Glance:

- Through the Women's Health Transition Training (WHTT) program, 669 participants received transition training, consisting of 74 in-person training sessions at 21 different locations and 10 virtual sessions.
- A VA partnership with First Quality Enterprises (FQE) to host the first ever Nationwide Baby Shower in May 2018 at 60 VAMCs brought over 2,000 postpartum gift boxes to pregnant women Veterans and their newborns.

WHS actively improved its outreach capabilities to better meet the health care needs of women Veterans. As an integral part of WHS's outreach ability, Women Veteran Call Center (WVCC) representatives made outgoing and responded to incoming calls to provide women Veterans, their families and caregivers information about VA resources and services. In May 2016, the call center implemented a chat feature for women Veterans to communicate with a WVCC representative in real-time. In May 2019, a text feature became an additional option for women Veterans to speak with an agent. Each of these added features allows women Veterans greater access to important support services.

WHS developed a Veteran focused infertility services brochure to educate Veterans on the services VA provides for infertility. The brochure is available [online](#) in both English and Spanish.

WHS has also maintained its annual tradition of highlighting Women's History Month. In 2019, the theme focused on Women Veterans as Trailblazers. WHS collaborated with VA Center for Women Veterans, VBA and NCA to create outreach materials that were shared with internal and external stakeholders through social media outlets, GovDelivery listserv and online. The campaign highlighted women's military services and experiences that led to their continued roles as leaders and advocates in their communities.

In 2018 and 2019, WHS outreach efforts helped combat gender prejudice within the culture of some VA health care facilities. WHS developed monthly outreach materials as a part of the Women Veterans Health Outreach initiative. These resources feature one of two themes, a health theme or a culture change theme, for staff use. In addition, it allowed staff to conduct local outreach to women Veterans and distribute these

resources to external and internal stakeholders. The development of these resources brought a cultural shift in facilities that have historically cared for male Veterans without enough emphasis on women Veterans. In 2018, WHS created “it’s not a compliment, it’s harassment” posters directed to male Veterans to let them know their actions are harmful. In 2019, the Under Secretary for Health office doubled down on WHS efforts by creating a series of respect posters to honor women who have served. The Veterans featured in the posters were an authentic representation of the Veteran population which WHS serves.

WHS recognized the importance of informing Service women transitioning out of the military about women-specific VA health services available to them. In collaboration with DoD and the TAP, VA developed the WHTT program. The 4-hour voluntary course is taught by a woman Veteran who uses VA health care with content designed specifically for Service women transitioning out of the military. Particularly, the WHTT program informs people regarding the diverse range of health care and mental health care services offered by VA. Instructors also guide participants through the process and eligibility requirements for enrollment into VA health care, and to give women Veterans advice on how to stay connected with peers through women-specific networks, resources and programs post-service. Between 2018 and 2019, 669 participants took advantage of this transition training program via 74 in-person training sessions at 21 different locations and 10 virtual sessions.

WHS continued to annually partner with the American Heart Association (AHA) to raise awareness of heart disease in women Veterans through national and local Go Red events in the month of February. AHA named a Dorn VAMC employee and Army Veteran as a 2017-2018 Real Women Spokesperson. “Real Women” serve as national spokespeople and share their personal stories fighting against heart disease. Their stories encourage and inspire women to take a proactive role in their health. Additionally, the Women’s Health program sponsors a grant opportunity for medical centers to develop an initiative which focuses on heart disease prevention.

In FY 2018 and FY 2019, WHS worked alongside nongovernmental organizations to make remarkable strides in postpartum and infant care support programs and resources for women Veterans. VA partnered with the following organizations:

- ZERO TO THREE, providing pregnant women Veterans access to Text4baby™, a mobile information service designed to promote maternal and child health through text messages.
- MomMoodBooster, an online postpartum support program offered to all eligible women Veterans whose maternity care was paid for by VA. This innovation reached women Veterans in rural areas who would otherwise not have adequate access to mental health care tailored to postpartum depression.
- National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome to develop the Period of PURPLE Crying® program. This program supports caregivers in their understanding of early increased infant crying and to reduce the incidence of Shaken Baby Syndrome/Abusive Head Trauma (SBS/AHT). VA maternity care coordinators complete a training that equips them with the knowledge to educate women

Veterans about SBS/AHT and provide resources such as a mobile application that defines SBS/AHT and has strategies for soothing a crying baby. In FY 2018 and FY 2019, maternity care coordinators distributed access codes to 420 Veteran families to access resources.

- First Quality Enterprises (FQE) hosted the first Nationwide Baby Shower in May 2018 at 60 VAMCs across the country to honor and support Veterans welcoming new babies into their families. FQE provided over 2,000 postpartum gift boxes to pregnant women Veterans and their newborns during this event.

VA/DoD Health Affairs

At A Glance:

- Lead monthly Transition Assistant Advisor (TAA) calls to ensure all 54 TAAs learned about the extensive resources available to assist more than 600,000 National Guard/Reserve Service members and their families. These monthly calls helped acquaint TAAs with unique services provided by various VA program offices for Veterans.
- Created and sent out 12 monthly spreadsheets to VA Transition Care Management Teams to support events within their catchment areas. These listed upcoming [Yellow Ribbon events](#) for Reserve Components in EventPLUS.

VA/DoD Health Affairs utilized Veteran outreach events and gatherings to hone existing VA programs. During FY 2018, the office held quarterly resource fairs at Fort Meade, Fort Belvoir, the Pentagon and the VA Central Office Canteen. These events helped determine which VA program offices best represent VA, and the advantages they bring to specific target audiences. Additional FY 2018 outreach included presence at the AUSA Annual Meeting & Exposition. VA/DoD Health Affairs outreach efforts at fairs and gatherings became hubs for empowering, engaging and educating eligible Veterans and dependents about VA resources.

Through FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA/DoD Health Affairs engaged in open dialogue with leadership of the Reserve Service Components. Discussions revolved around the necessity ensuring that Reserve Components continue to receive pertinent and updated information about VA programs and services.

VA/DoD Health Affairs ensured VA received representation at DoD events aimed at supporting Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve Service members and their families. As DoD's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) principal liaison, VA/DoD Health Affairs helped disseminate pertinent messages regarding Demobilizations, Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) musters. VA/DoD Health Affairs also participated in teleconferences to ensure continued VHA presence in the YRRP's wide range of VA health care, benefits services, information, referrals and proactive outreach efforts directed at Service members and their families.

Part of the support included fielding questions, providing updates and identifying military points of contact as needed to better support outreach events.

The office further provided organizational resources to help VISN and VA Transition Care Management Teams better conduct outreach. In the last two fiscal years, VA/DoD Health Affairs created and distributed 12 YRRP/PDHRA/IRR monthly spreadsheets to the teams. These spreadsheets listed upcoming Yellow Ribbon events for Army and Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Army Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve. These resources can be found at <https://www.yellowribbon.mil/>. Distribution of these resources helped the teams gain an awareness of local opportunities to reach Service members.

VA/DoD Health Affairs also led monthly TAA calls coordinated by the TAA Program Manager. VA/DoD Health Affairs helped craft presentations on services the VA offers Veterans to best support the TAA mission. Furthermore, they addressed benefits related questions with appropriate VBA experts for clarification and provided TAAs with an opportunity to ask questions directed to VA subject matter experts. The collaboration helped acquaint the TAAs with unique services provided by VA program offices. All 54 TAAs learned of VA resources available to assist more than 600,000 National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families.

Office of Connected Care (OCC)

At A Glance:

- OCC and OPIA partnered to host Health Care Technologies with VSO Team Red, White and Blue. The event had more than 13,000 views and more than 100 Veteran service and community organizations shared posts and information about the event.
- There were more than 3,750 mentions of Connected Care products on Facebook (nearly 600 posts) and Twitter (more than 3,160 Tweets).
- The OCC held six Facebook Live events which reached more than 75,000 people, and one Twitter chat which had almost 400 engagements and a reach of more than 1 million people.

The OCC aimed to expand Veteran access to care services – such as My HealtheVet, VA Telehealth and VA Mobile – through virtual means. In FY 2018 and FY 2019, OCC focused on collaborating with various VA offices, VSOs and public sector companies to increase awareness of VA virtual tools and technologies.

The OCC worked with OPIA on email campaigns surrounding health care tools, telehealth and apps through the VA OPIA Explore campaign. Explore VA focused on educating and promoting awareness to motivate Veteran adoption of the benefits. In addition to email campaigns, the OCC and OPIA partnered in December 2018 to host an event on Health Care Technologies alongside VSO Team Red, White and Blue. The event garnered over 13,000 views and more than 100 Veteran service and community organizations shared posts and information about the event.

The OCC provided outreach for events sponsored by VA, VSOs and Vet Centers. The office organized six events held in 2019, ranging between the national, regional and local levels. The OCC also featured articles in well-known Veteran publications and online newsletters to promote awareness.

VA Telehealth focused efforts on expanding telehealth services across the VA network to help more Veterans access care and services from home or other non-VA settings. VA Telehealth attended the VFW Annual National Convention and hosted a live interactive booth providing outreach on My HealtheVet and Telehealth Services.

The OCC effort in FY 2018 through FY 2019 worked to utilize its social media presence to spread awareness of currently available digital health tools, programs and initiatives. Social media efforts garnered more than 3,750 mentions of Connected Care products on Facebook (nearly 600 posts) and Twitter (more than 3,160 Tweets). Additionally, social media metrics found posts averaged 10 mentions per day, popularly focusing on My HealtheVet, VA Mobile Apps, the Burn Pit Registry and VA Telehealth.

The OCC also partnered with VSOs for social media events designed to educate Veterans about virtual health tools. In FY 2018 and FY 2019, OCC held six Facebook

Live events and one Twitter chat alongside a partnering VSO. Each event focused on a different theme or technology. These six Facebook Live events reached more than 75,000 people and had more than 1,500 comments and questions that were addressed by the OCC and VHA Communications teams. The Twitter chat had almost 400 engagements and a reach of more than 1 million people.

- The OCC released and promoted VA mobile health apps through VA App Store and commercial apps stores. Notable FY 2018 through FY 2019 apps include the following:
 - CHAMPVA Pay;
 - Mindfulness Coach;
 - NetResponse Mobile;
 - Pain Coach App for Care Teams;
 - Pain Coach App for Veterans;
 - Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System Resources;
 - VA Staff Launchpad; and
 - Virtual Care Manager.

Activities to promote these apps prioritized educating Veterans on how and why apps work on improving health and encouraging Veterans to take advantage of such tools. Efforts also included emphasizing how many of the apps could be used regardless of whether the Veteran is currently using VA health care.

In addition to online and digital related outreach, the OCC supported a seven-event roadshow that engaged more than 1,000 Veterans across the country in FY 2019. Events focused on promoting awareness and adoption of key OCC technologies including My Health^eVet, VA App Store, VA Video Connect, VA Online Scheduling, Annie and Remote Veterans Apnea Management Platform (REVAMP).

My Health^eVet worked directly with VHA VISN and My Health^eVet VAMC's field coordinators to encourage Veterans, caregivers and Service members to register for a My Health^eVet account at myhealth.va.gov. My Health^eVet's extensive outreach to Veterans included a bi-weekly email newsletter delivered to nearly 1 million Veterans and caregivers. The newsletter's subscription rate spiked from an average of 180 new subscribers a week to 257. Furthermore, My Health^eVet oversaw an open and click-through rate at an average of 42% and 13%, respectively, nearly four times the industry standard.

In FY 2019, the OCC worked with VA's Office of Strategic Partnerships to develop robust relationships with organizations to help Veterans take advantage of VA Telehealth Services. The OCC developed videos, commercials, blogs and media articles through VA's partnerships with Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon. Additionally, the OCC conducted outreach relating to the pilot program Accessing Telehealth through Local Access Stations (ATLAS) – part of VA's Anywhere to Anywhere telehealth initiative. Partners involved in ATLAS included Philips, Walmart, American Legion and VFW. Outreach activities included extensive social media engagement, events and ribbon-cutting ceremonies at ATLAS sites, media outreach days and more.

Employee Education System (EES)

EES provides quality workforce education and training to improve outcomes in Veteran clinical care, health care operations, and administration. EES also helps VA personnel to develop their capabilities to better serve Veterans. This was accomplished by encouraging VA employees to take courses on navigating workplace relationships and providing better customer service. The system's main accomplishment includes developing the VA Healthcare Options for Eligible Veterans video, which received over 4,000 views.

MISSION Act

EES supported the development of educational materials for Veterans, related to the MISSION Act. Team members provided editorial support for the development of online brochures and mail out pamphlets. This was done to identify eligible Veterans and eligible dependents who are not enrolled or registered with the Department for benefits or services under the programs administered by VA.

The effort to inform eligible Veterans and eligible dependents of modifications of the benefits and services under the programs administered by VA was also supported by the development of educational material for Veterans, as related to the MISSION Act.

EES Events Division (1)

At A Glance:

- Through the FY 2019 VHA Patient Experience Symposium, VA medical center directors were able to implement the VA Patient Experience program at their facilities. This established a standardized, consistent approach to treating Veterans, their caregivers, and survivors, which in turn helps to improve their experience and trust in VA.
- By the end of FY 2019, all 170 VAMCs had fully developed an actionable plan to improve patient experience.

The VHA Patient Experience Symposium took place on February 5-7, 2019. The symposium helped VA medical center directors implement the VA Patient Experience program at their facilities. It emphasized administering a standardized and consistent experience for Veterans, their caregivers, and survivors, which improves their trust in VA. It also provided VA clinicians and administrative staff uninterrupted time to develop implementation plans to spread the best practices in VA medical facilities. This allowed VA employees access to tools and training to improve the quality of care and service they provide to our Veterans.

Furthermore, all VAMCs had a fully developed and actionable plan to improve patient experience by the end of FY 2019 and are therefore committed to executing patient experience's best practices. Some of the best practices address suicide prevention; this will be a bold part of the agenda.

At the state level, the FY 2019 VHA Patient Experience Symposium in Crystal City, VA provided VA clinicians and administrative staff with uninterrupted time to develop

implementation plans to spread the best practices in VA medical facilities. Doing so allowed VA employees' access to tools and training to improve the quality of care and service they provide to our Veterans. This event also kicked off large-scale best practice implementation to improve patient experience for Veterans across VHA. Participants had the opportunity to develop implementation plans with the guidance of patient experience experts from VA and the private sector.

EES Events Division (2)

At A Glance:

During FY 2018 and FY 2019, hundreds of peer support apprentices have become certified VA Peer Specialists.

The Veteran Peer Specialist Certification Training FY 2019 was carried out to improve VHA's service capability by enhancing skills among staff, as well as reinforcing the value of knowledge application through in-person cooperation among colleagues. The training prepared and encouraged staff to apply their improved knowledge to methods and other conditions affecting intricate operations in VHA. This virtual and face-to-face training helped staff clarify and coordinate future requirements that Mental Health Operations is promoting, with the goal of improving employee engagement across major work functions. The training required extended, uninterrupted episodes of face-to-face engagement to sustain attention on complex operational factors and conditions affecting patients. The content of the training was consistent with the goals of VA and VHA. It included an extensive set of peer-to-peer presentations that concentrated on necessary designs, methods, and professional requirements to improve knowledge application and overall service delivery. The training was required for attendees to fully achieve their professional development, meeting federal standards for full participation in the mission of VA, and its growth of performance capability.

Staff Veteran peer support apprentices were hired throughout medical care facilities. A peer support apprentice must complete a one-year certification training program before they become a VA Peer Specialist. In addition, to be a VA Peer Specialist, one must be a Veteran and have been in recovery for at least 1 year from a mental health or substance use disorder. Veteran Peer Support Specialists are selected for the VA Peer Certification Training class based on their appointment expiration date. This program has been ongoing to comply with the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Pub. L. 111-163) and the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-387) and must continue to be offered. These goals have been achieved through the certification of hundreds of peer support apprentices. Certification of front-line peer support apprentices is mandated by statute. These employees are important because they impact suicide prevention, provide greater choice for Veterans, and support section 506 of the MISSION Act; therefore, the program must be held to comply with the statute.

Furthermore, a person must be certified by a VA approved peer support certification not-for-profit organization or a state approved certification organization. If a peer specialist is certified by a state entity, and the state requires periodic recertification, the peer specialist must comply with that requirement and have documentation that they are up to date with their certification. Not maintaining certification could result in a change of

duty assignment to non-patient care or loss of position. There is no such recertification requirement for staff certified by VA approved vendors, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA), or Recovery International (RI). However, they must acquire 12 continuing education hours annually to stay current with their VA competencies.

The DBSA (Chicago, IL) and RI (Phoenix, AZ) have developed excellent Veteran-specific peer training programs for VA. They provide peer support certification training, including didactic, experiential and multimedia modalities, covering the competencies that VHA has designated as required for peer support staff.

EES Events Division

At A Glance:

46 organizations were in attendance for the Community Partner Fair during the conference to provide outreach to Veterans.

In recent years, VA and DoD have extended their suicide prevention reach by partnering with internal and external stakeholders across the suicide prevention space. The conference provided a forum to share innovative practices and scientific findings critical to VA's mission to prevent suicide among Veterans. The conference also allowed attendees to work together to identify and help those not receiving care from VHA.

The conference model seeks to improve the access, quality and efficiency of mental health services to all active duty Service members, National Guard and Reserve members, Veterans, and their families.

Numerous organizations attended the Community Partner Fair during the conference. Each is partnered with either VA or DoD or both, collaborating on various activities throughout the year. They are listed as follows:

- Psych Hub;
- Objective Zero Foundation;
- K9s for Warriors;
- LivingWorks Education, Inc.;
- IBM;
- Magellan Federal/AFSC;
- SOF Missions;
- EPI/Alpha-Stim;
- America Warrior Partnership;
- Rocky Mountain MIRECC;
- VA/DoD Evidence Based Clinical Practice (shared booth);
- Education Development Center (EDC Zero Suicide Institute);
- The Independence Fund;
- Real Warriors Campaign;
- Give an Hour;
- Make the Connection;
- AMVETS;
- Cohen Veterans Network;
- National Shooting Sports Foundation;
- Columbia Lighthouse Project;

- American Red Cross;
- Semper Fi Fund;
- inTransition Program within the Psychological Health Center of Excellence (PHCoE);
- Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS);
- Combat Wounded of Pennsylvania and New Jersey & Thank-A-Vet (shared booth);
- Travis Manion Foundation;
- Veteran and First Responder Healthcare, LLC;
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention;
- Military OneSource;
- CaringBridge;
- K9 Partners for Patriots;
- American Bible Society;
- RallyPoint;
- Defense Health Agency, Recovery Coordination Program;
- metaXis;
- Wounded Warrior Project;
- Voi, Inc.;
- #LiveOn (Center for Disability Rights, Inc);
- Navy Bureau of Medicine (BUMED);
- The Military Reunion Network;
- Warrior 180 Foundation;
- Psychological Health Outreach Program;
- PTSD Foundation of America;
- Code of Support Foundation; and
- Exhibitor Services (check-in and help).

Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS)

At A Glance:

- During FY 2019, the RCS staff hosted or participated in over 35,896 distinct outreach events focused on providing access to readjustment counseling services that contributed to over 224,000 outreach contacts. This was a 9.5% increase from FY 2018.
- During FY 2019, the VA formalized a partnership between RCS' Vet Centers and the National Guard Bureau, resulting in a 38% increase in National Guard Service members seeking Vet Center services.
- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, RCS assets supplied assistance in the face of natural disasters and emergency response situations, providing services to 9,255 Veterans, 225 Service members, 1,646 families and 6,060 citizens.

RCS employs outreach staff at every Vet Center and encourages clinicians, office managers and Vet Center directors to participate in outreach efforts when possible. They proactively seek out those who may be eligible, specifically those who have not yet accessed services. They participate in a myriad of Federal, state, and locally

organized Veteran-related events, including demobilization events (Post Deployment Health Reassessment), Homeless Stand Downs, job fairs and activities on active duty bases such as Transition Assistance Program briefings. In addition, RCS staff focused efforts on outreach to internal and external stakeholders who could help increase referrals into the system. RCS staff hosted or participated in over 35,896 distinct outreach events in FY 2019 that focused on providing access to readjustment counseling services. These efforts contributed to over 224,000 outreach contacts, a 9.5% increase from FY 2018. Outreach efforts aimed at general and wide public dissemination of Vet Center and other VA outreach information are not included in this count.

RCS provides updated information regarding services through various media formats, including print, web and digital, social media and public service announcements. In the fourth quarter of FY 2019, VA formalized a partnership between RCS' Vet Centers and the National Guard Bureau, providing counseling and outreach staff on training weekends as part of its efforts to decrease Service member and Veteran suicide. As a result of initial outreach efforts, VA saw a 38% increase in National Guard Service members seeking Vet Center services. In FY 2019, RCS leveraged its 40th anniversary as a national outreach initiative to engage with communities at a national and local level. Both national and local press releases were issued, resulting in roughly 65 positive media stories that built awareness of services offered at Vet Centers and led to an increase in utilization. More notably, over 300 open houses or outreach events were conducted for this effort, building on face to face connections and outreach. By inviting people to Vet Centers, RCS they decreased any anxiety to seeking readjustment counseling services.

RCS has also fostered relationships with colleges, universities and other programs that provide training to Veterans. In some universities, Vet Center counselors provide direct counseling services to student Veterans and connect them to other VA services. Outreach specialists also engage with Student Veterans Centers and provide necessary print materials on VA benefits and services. Outside formal higher education partnerships, many Vet Centers across the nation partner with their respective state's Suicide Prevention Coordinator. In FY 2019, Vet Centers collaborated with these state leaders to co-host suicide prevention trainings to local community members. It was a strategic outreach opportunity to both educate the community and inform them of Vet Center services available to them locally. In addition to partnering with the National Association for State Directors of Veterans Affairs on a national level, local Vet Centers maintained close partnerships with State Directors of Veterans Affairs and participated on each other's advisory boards. State Directors such as those in Massachusetts, California, Hawaii, Texas and others often called on Vet Center staff to help support VA's Fourth Mission during natural disasters or emergency response situations. In FY 2018, RCS assets supplied assistance in the face of three major hurricanes, mass shootings and wildfires, providing services to 7,322 Veterans, 180 Service members, 1,359 families and 4,165 citizens. In FY 2019, RCS assets provided services to 1,933 Veterans, 45 Service members, 287 families and 1,895 citizens.

Further, RCS offices developed collaborative relationships with non-governmental organizations (NGO) at the local level. These relationships allow a referral process into RCS services while also providing local Vet Center leadership with insight into the

needs of the local Veteran population they serve. At the local level, many Vet Centers partner with their local law enforcement to provide education and training on working with Veterans with PTSD and to also provide suicide prevention training. RCS sites develop national and local relationships with stakeholders internal and external to VA to create referral processes for Veterans, Service members and their families to access Vet Centers and other VA services. RCS has utilized partnerships with NGOs like Semper Fi Odyssey and Homebase, which have a shared mission, to allow Vet Center staff to connect with their participants before leaving to get them an appointment with a Vet Center counselor.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-141) granted funding to RCS to partner with organizations that provide outdoor experiences for Veterans as part of a continuum of care to treat combat-related injuries. The goal of the initiative was to provide Veterans with an outdoor experience that would not only build interpersonal confidence and self-esteem as a part of their readjustment counseling goals, but also be conducive to building trusting relationships. Some of the activities included horseback riding, hiking, fly fishing and wildlife viewing. Funding was provided to RCS on April 10, 2018. All RCS districts awards contracts with NGOs, such as Sheepdog Impact and Outward Bound partnered to serve and provide outreach to approximately 620 Veterans across 37 separate sessions throughout FY 2019. Vet Centers also partnered with local food banks to help bring the necessary resources to Veterans in need. For example, the Syracuse Vet Center partnered with its local food bank to host a quarterly food drive to help support those Veterans' needs and get them connected to other resources. Vet Centers also used partnerships with local NGOs that promote physical fitness and wellness to build community. Vet Centers will also partner with organizations such as Team RWB, Team Rubicon, CrossFit and others to enhance outreach, create community, and build trust to eventually get Veterans connected for services.

RCS has relationships with all state and various local Veteran employment organizations. Vet Centers participate in numerous job fairs, recruit Veteran initiatives and partner with local organizations, like Goodwill Job Connection Centers, to assist where possible. Many Vet Centers also provide office space for state Department of Labor (DOL) staff to have office hours available for Veterans utilizing Vet Center services. Examples of state DOL collaboration include relationships with Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veteran Employment Representatives.

Office of Research and Development, Million Veteran Program (MVP)

At A Glance:

- MVP outreach during FY 2018 and FY 2019 resulted in the enrollment of over 180,000 new participants.
- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, MVP representatives continued to expand their national outreach by attending 19 events, resulting in 990 Veterans enrolling, and reaching over 16,000 Veterans, family members and other attendees.
- During FY 2019, MVP staff at local medical centers conducted a total of 90 outreach events where enrollment was offered at approximately 50 events,

resulting in over 375 new Veteran participants in the program.

The VA Office of Research and Development's MVP is a national voluntary research program with the goal of improving healthcare for Veterans by better understanding the role of genetics (genes), lifestyle and military exposure in health and disease through high impact research. MVP aims to rapidly translate research findings into real-world impact in the clinic to improve the diagnosis and treatment of diseases in Veterans and all people. MVP outreach resulted in the enrollment of over 180,000 new participants in FY 2018 through FY 2019, bringing the total since 2011 to over 750,000 and getting MVP closer to the goal of 1 million enrollees.

Since 2011, enrollment in MVP has been available to users of VHA and will be expanding to non-VHA users in 2020. To best connect with eligible Veterans, MVP conducts outreach in collaboration with other VA services (VHA, VBA, NCA) on both the national and local levels. It participates in activities such as VSO meetings, conferences and events and other Veteran-focused activities including Stand Downs, military and Veteran appreciation events, and state and local fairs.

Having begun in June 2016, MVP's outreach program is relatively new and continues to grow annually. In 2018, MVP representatives attended six national VSO conventions and offered the ability to enroll in the program at four of the events. Over 550 Veterans were collectively enrolled and an estimated 500-600 existing MVP enrollees were updated on program progress. More than 6,000 Veterans, family members and other attendees received information about the program. Additionally, MVP staff at local medical centers attended over 25 events including Stand Downs, VSO post meetings, state fairs and other events at the facilities reaching a diverse group of Veterans.

In 2019, MVP expanded its national outreach to 13 events, reaching over 10,000 Veterans and family and friends, and resulting in over 440 enrollments. Additionally, MVP informational packages were sent to over 50 VSO posts across the country to share with their members. MVP staff at local medical centers conducted over 90 outreach events and offered enrollment at approximately 50 events, resulting in over 375 new Veteran participants in the program. Information on the program progress, including updates on current research activities, was provided to over 5,000 individuals.

Veterans Benefits Administration

Office of Field Operations, Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement (O&E)

At A Glance:

- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, O&E planned, organized and completed more than 18,500 events for more than 400,000 Veterans, Service members, survivors and family members.
- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, a total of 37,340 Veterans, transitioning Service members, family members, dependents and survivors were served by Overseas Military Services Coordinators (OMSC).
- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, VBA, in coordination with the Office of Tribal Government Relations and support from the regional offices, conducted over 6,330 claims clinics, assisting over 2,000 Veterans in Indian Nations with over 1,000 claims.

O&E planned, organized and completed various events across the nation, where VBA provided outreach to Veterans, Service members, survivors and family members. During FY 2018 and FY 2019, the team organized more than 18,500 events for more than 400,000 Veterans, Service members, survivors and family members. O&E took an integrated and proactive outreach approach by leveraging strategic communications and technology.

O&E provided direct outreach to Veterans at various outreach events, such as job hiring fairs and transition summits, VSO conferences, town halls and symposiums for faith-based, non-profit, community organizations and through PSAs. In the last two years, outreach workers distributed printed marketing materials, such as brochures, facts sheets, pamphlets, flyers and nearly 1.5 million Veteran Assistance Discharge System Letters. The team also used technology to interact with Veterans through various platforms, including the eBenefits Web Portal, where the team sent and delivered millions of emails to Veterans and transitioning Service members; GovDelivery, where the team sent emails that reached the millions of Veterans, Service members, survivors and family members; and VA digital platforms such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and public webinars) and the Regional Offices (RO) websites.

Through VA RO outreach program coordinators, O&E provided outreach to targeted populations, including the elderly, Former Prisoners of War (FPOW), homeless, minority, faith-based communities and resources, the National Guard and Reserve, and populations located in rural areas. The team also distributed information to Veterans, Service members, and dependents via a variety of formats including the following:

- Special emphasis outreach campaigns;
- VSO meetings, forums, and conferences;
- Survivors' forums;
- Town hall meetings;
- Direct mailings;

- Electronic newsletters;
- National conferences;
- Transition summits;
- VA websites;
- Webinars;
- Briefings to various external stakeholders; and
- Community Claims Clinics.

VBA conducted benefit briefings and provided informational materials for Veterans, Service members and dependents through local churches and non-profit organizations, as well as partnered with various external agencies such as DoD, Department of Agriculture, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Federal Communications Commission, Bureau of Prisons, Social Security Administration, U.S. Postal Service, Department of Housing and Urban Development and Department of the Treasury to inform Veterans about VA benefits and services.

In efforts to inform eligible Veterans and dependents of modifications to the benefits and services under programs administered by VA, VBA distributed information to Veterans, Service members and dependents via a variety of formats, including the OMSCs, which provide one-on-one services to Veterans and Service members abroad who are seeking support on their claims or need assistance filling a claim and registering with VA in the following countries: Italy, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom. In FY 2018 and FY 2019, a total of 37,340 Veterans, transitioning Service members, family members, dependents and survivors were served by OMSCs.

In 2019, VBA collaborated with the Anchorage VARO employees from multiple regional offices, County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO), VSOs, VHA and other local government entities to complete an outreach campaign in Alaska. This campaign was composed of several days of claims clinics in rural or remote areas, where Veterans do not have easy access to VA locations. A total of 250 Veterans, Service members, survivors and family members were assisted in four towns visited throughout a total of seven days. In coordination with the Office of Tribal Government Relations and support from the ROs, VBA also conducted over 6,330 claims clinics, assisting over 2,000 Veterans in Indian Nations with over 1,000 claims in the last two years.

VBA collaborated with multiple state and local education and training programs to provide outreach to Veterans, Service members, survivors and family members. VBA provided benefits training and informational materials to assist State Departments of Veterans Affairs employees in the performance of their duties with Veteran populations. The team conducted benefit briefings and provided informational materials for CVSOs at their annual national training conferences that focused on benefits and services available to their Veteran population. Additionally, VBA partnered with the North Carolina CVSOs to travel throughout the state, specifically targeting Veterans living in remote areas. O&E also supported VSOs and State Women Veterans Coordinators during their annual conferences and meetings, providing briefings and resource tables

on benefits and services. At state job fairs, VBA personnel staffed benefits tables to answer questions, assist with filing claims and promote benefits registration.

VBA also collaborated with various NGOs to reach Veterans across the country. The team partnered with the Women Veterans Interactive during the last two years to provide support during their annual conference on women Veterans by staffing resource tables with subject matter experts providing information on VA benefits and services. Additionally, VBA has completed two three-day claims clinics, participated in several forums and conducted presentations during this annual conference. VBA also partnered with non-traditional Veteran organizations, such as Student Veterans of America (SVA), to reach Veterans in new ways as they integrate back to civilian life. VBA provided support to the National Council on Aging via teleconferences, electronic materials and references on VA benefits. Through these means, O&E provided advice on benefits that are available for the elderly as well as information and assistance with benefits eligibility, application for benefits and services processes and shared the best practices to reach older Veterans.

VBA collaborated with state and local Veteran employment organizations by providing benefits training and informational materials to assist SDVA employees in the performance of their duties with Veteran populations. The team also supported the SVA organization by providing one-on-one benefits briefings and conducting a two-day claims clinic to provide claims-related services to all student Veterans attending the organizations' national conferences.

Office of Transition and Economic Development (OTED)

At A Glance:

- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA had more than 475,000 touchpoints with Service members, Veterans and family members through more than 17,000 VA Benefits and Services courses, Military Life Cycle (MLC) modules, and installation engagement events.
- In FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA, along with the TAP interagency partners, developed and launched nine MLC modules at Veterans military installations worldwide, and online through the DoD Joint Knowledge Online.
- At the Economic Investment Initiatives (EII) in Puerto Rico, OTED successfully served more than 900 Veterans at a VA Benefits and Claims Clinic, awarded \$262,000 in retroactive benefits, connected attendees with 200 jobs and repaired five Veterans' homes damaged by Hurricane Maria. More than 40 employers provided employment opportunities to Veterans during the Puget Sound EII job fair.
- In response to Executive Order (EO) 13822, VA, DoD and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued the FY 2019 Joint Action Plan which outlined the VA Solid Start (VASS) program. The VASS goal is to make early and consistent contact with all newly transitioned Veterans to establish their

relationship with VA, increase awareness of available services, lower barriers to entry into VA mental health care, and support successful transitions into civilian life.

OTED conducted various direct contact programs to educate and connect with Service members throughout their military life cycle, as well as eligible Veterans and dependents. The office collaborated with interagency partners such as DoD.

OTED engaged DoD TAP Managers to provide Service members, family members and dependents with information on important and available VA benefits and services before transitioning from the military to civilian life. Through the VA Benefits and Services course and other TAP events, VA serves approximately 250,000 transitioning Service members each year at more than 300 installations around the world. Between FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA had more than 475,000 touch points with Service members through more than 17,000 VA Benefits and Services courses, MLC modules, and installation engagement events. VA Benefits Advisors are also available worldwide to conduct one-on-one assistance to Service members, family members and dependents to provide information on VA benefits and services. During this period, VA Benefits Advisors conducted more than 118,000 one-on-one assistance sessions to explain VA benefits, answer questions and connect Service members with resources to meet their individual needs.

In FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA, along with the TAP interagency partners, developed and launched nine MLC modules at military installations worldwide, and online through DoD's Joint Knowledge Online. MLC modules are approximately 45 to 60-minute information sessions that provide Service members and their loved ones with information on benefits and services early and consistently to help them plan for the future.

MLC modules can be taken at any time in a Service member's career and are especially valuable after major career events like permanent changes of station or post-deployment—or after major life events like getting married or having a child. MLC module topics include the following:

- **VA Education Benefits:** Provides information about DoD and VA education benefits to include Post-9/11 benefits that may help Service members pay for or offset the cost of tuition, housing, books and supplies.
- **VA Benefits 101:** Highlights VA benefits and services to include education, home loan guaranty, health care and insurance and memorial benefits.
- **Social and Emotional Health Resources:** Describes services and provides information on resources for coping with life experiences and stressors that may impact social and emotional health.
- **Community Integration Resources:** Explains how to identify local services and community organizations that can provide assistance and aid to Service members and their families.

- **VA Home Loan Guaranty Program:** Offers a general overview of the VA Home Loan Guaranty Program including eligibility, processes, costs, and other available resources.
- **Vet Centers:** Describes how to connect with local Vet Centers and how Service members, Veterans and their families can use Vet Centers as a free resource.
- **VA Life Insurance Benefits:** Communicates the different types of VA Life Insurance benefits to help determine the best choice for Service members and their families based upon interests and needs.
- **Reserve Component Dual Payments:** Provides an overview on drill pay, compensation eligibility, and dual payment.
- **Survivor and Casualty Assistance Resources:** Provides an overview on VA and DoD Survivor Benefits and eligibility and what to do in the event of a loss.

Working with VBA's Office of Strategic Engagement, DoD and the Interagency TAP Strategic Communications work group to use social media and other direct engagement channels to promote information about VA benefits, services and resources, including the new MLC modules, through partners.

In an effort to inform eligible Veterans and eligible dependents of modifications to the benefits and services in Qualified Opportunity Zones, OTED developed EII in various economic distressed areas with the goal of creating tangible, coordinated and targeted support from federal and local governments, VSOs and other entities for Service members, Veterans, and their families and caregivers.

For example, after Hurricane Maria, OTED held an EII in Puerto Rico, serving more than 900 Veterans at a Benefits and Claims Clinic, where the team awarded \$262,000 in retroactive benefits, connected attendees with 200 jobs and repaired five Veterans' homes damaged by Hurricane Maria. In Puget Sound, OTED collaborated with multiple state and local education and training programs to provide outreach to Veterans. Through the Washington State Veterans Affairs Offices, the team worked to inform and educate transitioning Service members about VA benefits and other state and federal benefits that they may be entitled to receive and the application process for those benefits. Additionally, OTED developed geographically specific action plans to address challenges faced by Veterans in the Puget Sound community and worked with 40 employers to provide employment opportunities to Veterans during the Puget Sound EII job fair.

On December 2, 2019, VBA launched VASS, an implementation action resulting from Joint Action Plan Task 1.1, a directive of Executive Order 13822, Supporting Our Veterans During Their Transition from Uniformed Service to Civilian Life. Led by VBA, this initiative represents a collaborative effort among VA, DoD and the Department of Homeland Security to proactively contact the over 200,000 newly separated Service members during their first year of transition from the military.

To support this critical initiative, we contact former Service members at three intervals around the 90, 180, and 365-day mark during their first year of transition to civilian life to discuss their transition and any challenges the new Veteran may be facing. These contacts provide critical touchpoints to ensure transitioning Service members are aware of available benefits and services, including the free VA mental health resources offered to Veterans for up to a year after separation, regardless of discharge status. Additionally, VASS representatives are trained to recognize signs of crisis and immediately connect Veterans with the VCL should the situation dictate.

By providing early and consistent, caring contact to transitioning Service members VASS also serves to improve mental health care and access to suicide prevention.

Education Service

At A Glance:

- Education Service participated in over 60 local and national outreach events to promote the GI Bill to stakeholders.
- Promoted modifications and significant changes to GI Bill programs through other marketing channels, including the GI Bill website benefits.va.gov, over 300 Facebook posts and 79 GovDelivery emails to stakeholders.
- Collaborated with VSOs on six conference calls as well as on an ad-hoc basis to provide updates to GI Bill programs and social messaging.

Education Service participated in over 60 local and national outreach events to promote the GI Bill to stakeholders. During the events, Education Service participated in staffing information booths, made presentations about education benefits and took part in virtual town hall meetings. The team also continues to maintain and operate an Education Call Center (1-888-GIBILL-1), where individuals interested in learning more about the GI Bill may call to discuss their potential eligibility and learn the steps to apply for education benefits. Education Service promoted modifications and significant changes to GI Bill programs through other marketing channels including the GI Bill website, made over 300 Facebook posts and sent 79 GovDelivery emails to stakeholders.

In efforts to inform eligible Veterans and eligible dependents of modifications of the benefits and services under the programs administered by VA, the team held quarterly school certifying officials' webinars. Education Service recently expanded the audience to include State Approving Agency personnel and Vet Success on Campus counselors. The team also promoted the GI Bill website to include the GI Bill Comparison Tool, benefits.va.gov/gibill/comparison_tool/about_this_tool.asp, as well as developed social media presence through blog posts and linking to VBA's social media accounts. Additionally, Education Service continued the longstanding relationship with the Office of Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement and initiated a new process with the Office of Transition and Economic Development and external organizations, such as RallyPoint, to host social media events, including two Facebook Live events, to answer questions

from beneficiaries prior to the start of the academic term and about changes to the GI Bill program.

Education Service also collaborated with various education and training programs to provide outreach to Veterans by participating in local events to promote the GI Bill program to stakeholders. The team attended military service and federal agency education fairs in partnership with DoD and its services, Department of Education (DOE), DOL, National Geospatial Agency and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Education Service also collaborated with NGOs for Veteran outreach by continuing to build on relationships developed after successfully institutionalizing the President's Principles of Excellence through partnerships with the DOE, DoD and DOJ the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and the Federal Trade Commission. The team also worked alongside these national and local organizations to reach Veterans and beneficiaries both digitally and face-to-face in FY 2018 through FY 2019.

Additionally, Education Service collaborated with multiple VSOs. The team partnered with VSOs on six conference calls as well as on an ad-hoc basis to provide updates to GI Bill programs and social messaging. Additionally, the team participated in the several VSO annual conventions and the Council of Colleges Military Educators.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service (now Veterans Readiness and Employment Service) (VR&E)

At A Glance:

- In collaboration with VHA and PVA, VR&E Service's Orlando-based Training Team provided volunteer support at different events during the 38th National Veterans Wheelchair Games with over 600 athletes and 4,000 volunteers.
- VR&E participated in a Small Business Administration (SBA) Twitter chat which reached 810, 948 accounts and had 2,129,533 impressions.

VR&E conducted various direct contact programs and used multiple platforms to connect with eligible Veterans and dependents during FY 2018 through FY 2019. VR&E participated in Operation IMPACT (Injured Military Pursuing Assisted Career Transition) Network of Champions Symposium focused on the hiring and retention of Veterans. During this event, private sector companies and federal agencies provided information on programs being implemented to support hiring and retention of Veterans. Additionally, multiple companies also presented resources that assist organizations with Veteran hiring and present opportunities to meet disabled Veterans and transitioning Service members who are ready for employment.

These events directly supported the VA Under Secretary for Benefits' top three priorities: providing Veterans with benefits they have earned in a manner that honors their service, being good fiscal stewards and fostering a culture of collaboration. Veterans were able to express their feedback on the areas of success and points for improvement in the Chapter 31 program.

Additionally, VR&E conducted the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) Symposium in San Antonio, Texas, which focused on executing automatic entitlement to enrollment into the VR&E program to include rehabilitation plan development, delivery of services and outreach that is required for an IDDES vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC). The 99 IDDES VRCs who attended the symposium were able to gain a better understanding of the special mission of seriously ill and injured transitioning Service members. The team was also able to gain a better understanding of the issues that IDDES VRCs experience with their own management and with the military installations, which has allowed them to adjust policies and procedures to enhance their work environment.

On November 8, 2018, a member of VR&E Outreach Team attended the Veterans Day Celebration at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) in Bethesda, MD. A resource table was set up in the exhibit area where ODNI employees could stop by and pick up information about VR&E and speak with an Outreach Team member. Additionally, the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs spoke to approximately 100 ODNI employees and 20 vendors to thank Veteran employees for their service. Veteran employees of ODNI were recognized and thanked for their service. They were provided with a cake-cutting ceremony and the opportunity to record their stories prior to the event for a video compilation during the event.

VR&E staff members also attended the annual SVA National Conference, the largest gathering with over 2,000 student Veterans attended this event, as well as over 200 advocates, stakeholders and Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), in Orlando, Florida, in early 2019. The staff members manned a resource table in the main exhibitor hall and facilitated outreach to attendees. Additionally, the VR&E Executive Director gave a presentation on VR&E during one of the breakout sessions. This event provided a great opportunity to communicate with student Veterans and network with speakers and exhibitors (employers and IHLs).

During the Women Veterans Hiring, Education, and Health Event at Northern Virginia Community College, VR&E attended as an exhibitor and guest to provide women Veterans with additional information and hiring opportunities. In celebration of Women's History Month and in honor of women who served in the Armed Forces, the Department of Virginia Disabled American Veterans Chapter 48, the Virginia Employment Commission Jobs for Veteran State Grant, and Health Information Technology Solutions, LLC, hosted a women Veterans' hiring, health and education event. Over 50 women Veterans attended the event and were able to obtain VR&E information and connect with additional employer.

Representatives from VR&E also attended events that celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the GI Bill. The celebration on May 30th took place at George Washington University's Marvin Center Grand Ballroom where Secretary Robert Wilkie and Under Secretary for Benefits Dr. Paul Lawrence, as well as other high-profile speakers, addressed the GI Bill education components and current VR&E programs. Additionally, a VR&E Employment Coordinator (EC) attended a Hire GI Job Fair. At this event, there

were many active duty military, spouses and Veterans interested in obtaining employment opportunities and learning more about services offered by VBA. Over 100 active duty military, spouses and Veterans were provided with information on VR&E, which resulted in the increased awareness for available services for Veterans with disabilities.

From June 2 – 7, 2019, representatives from VR&E attended the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers Annual Training Conference in Cleveland, OH. VR&E hosted an outreach table throughout the event to provide more information to the attendees about the available resources for Veterans with disabilities. Approximately 200 County Veterans Service Officers from Ohio and surrounding states attended the event, as well as other stakeholders, including VHA, IHLs, nonprofit organizations and VSOs.

In collaboration with VHA and PVA, VR&E's Orlando-based Training Team provided volunteer support for handcycling, motor rally, triathlon and field events during the 38th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Orlando, FL. The National Veterans Wheelchair Games is the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. The event consisted of over 600 athletes and 4,000 volunteers and served as a rehabilitation and wheelchair sports program empowering Veterans with spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, amputations and other neurological injuries to live a healthier lifestyle through sports and recreation. The observance theme was "Thank You for Your Service" and included speakers and a panel discussion from HHS leadership, Veterans and employees. At this event, the national EC had the opportunity to meet 20 hiring managers at HHS and inform them about Veterans being trained in their agency for cybersecurity.

In efforts to inform eligible Veterans and eligible dependents of modifications of the benefits and services under the programs administered by VA, VR&E made use of various platforms and participated in different programs across the country. The VR&E Outreach Supervisor presented at the 2018 Army Transition Coordinator (TC) Training. The presentation was an overview of the VR&E program, with specific emphasis on early intervention for disabled transitioning Service members. There were over 25 TCs at the annual training who were provided with up-to-date information related to early intervention and the overall VR&E program. Additionally, a representative from VR&E's Outreach Team conducted a VR&E 101 Presentation to OMSC in Washington, DC, on August 2, 2018; December 6, 2018; and August 15, 2019. Approximately 10-13 OMSCs attended each of the trainings and assisted transitioning Service members, Veterans living or working overseas, and their families with access to VA benefits.

On August 8, 2018, a VR&E Outreach VRC conducted a presentation on VR&E benefits and services to a United States Army War College Fellowship program participant. The fellow was provided a tour of the VR&E Office and introduced to the different teams within VR&E. Each year, an Army War College fellow will learn about all the VA, VHA and VBA programs. Additionally, on October 25, 2018, a VR&E Service Outreach VRC

conducted a presentation on VR&E benefits and services to the VA TAP Master Training Session for 25 master trainers.

A VR&E Service's Outreach Team member gave a presentation on VR&E Service, Chapter 36 and VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) at the VA-DoD Survivors Forum in Arlington, VA on April 9, 2019. The forum included VA and DoD representatives, Service members, VSOs, survivor assistance groups and people of the survivor community. Approximately 20 people attended in person, while 100 other participants attended via teleconference. Later that month, a member of the VR&E Outreach Team also gave a presentation at the Florida Advisory Council on Military Education (ACME) Workshop in Fort Walton Beach, FL. Approximately 50 representatives from IHLs in Alabama, Mississippi, the Florida Panhandle and other surrounding southern states who are members of Florida ACME, attended this event. At this workshop, the IHL representatives received information on what VSOC VRCs do, the services offered, and how to qualify and apply for becoming a VSOC site during future expansions.

On August 14-15, 2019, the VR&E outreach supervisor conducted a specific VR&E IDES training at the annual IDES Summit for VBA Compensation Service Pre-Discharge which includes all five branches of the military service. This presentation was to market the automatic entitlement into the VR&E program when a Service member is in the IDES process. There were approximately 30 attendees from all branches of the military at the Summit. The audience was educated on the automatic entitlement process for the VR&E program. Additionally, attendees were eager to learn more and have agreed to follow-up presentations they can provide to the IDES VRCs that are located on the military installation. They were provided with a list of all the IDES VRCs and their locations to begin the referral process and to meet those IDES VRCs.

A VR&E EC provided two presentations to registered small businesses with the Department of Veterans Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) to explain the VR&E program and hiring of Veterans with disabilities on September and October 2019. Participants included small businesses interested in partnership with the VR&E program to hire Veterans with service-connected disabilities. The small businesses were informed about recruitment of Veterans with disabilities in the Chapter 31 program. Additionally, a member of the VR&E Outreach Team provided a presentation on VR&E during Education Service's quarterly webinar for School Certifying Officials (SCO), where an overview of VR&E, Chapter 36, VSOC, and IDES was provided during the presentation. Approximately 1,500 SCOs attended the quarterly webinar, as well as some State Approving Agencies. The information provided assists the SCOs with having correct knowledge of the VR&E program and helps them to distinguish between services offered by VR&E and the GI Bill programs.

VR&E, along with the Office of Strategic Engagement and Publications Division, designed, developed and distributed various posters in order to spread awareness about various events going on throughout the year. The teams hosted a meet and greet and created VRC photo collage posters for National Rehabilitation Counselor

Appreciation Day. They also created two posters for the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR) in order to inform others of session progress.

VR&E also held various town halls conducted in conjunction with the Field Advisory Committee (FAC), which consisted of 10 members representing each of the four Districts with two members serving as co-chairs. The FAC members generated 10-12 questions to ask the panel of Veterans at the various regional offices. The questions were related to the services they received through VR&E and they provided feedback on how VR&E services could be improved. The town hall meetings with the FAC members were held at the Oakland Regional VR&E Office (January 2019), Waco VR&E Regional Office (March 2019), Little Rock VR&E Regional Office (April 2019) and Chicago Regional VR&E Office (July 2019). During each meeting, the VR&E offices selected Chapter 31 VR&E participants to volunteer on the Veteran panel. The VR&E Executive Director briefed the Veteran panel about VR&E transformation and modernization initiatives, service delivery and the Under Secretary for Benefits' three priorities.

In order to further provide outreach to Veterans, VR&E collaborated with some state and local education and training programs. VACOR, which operates through VR&E, visited the Bay Pines Healthcare System and St. Petersburg Regional Office. VACOR assesses VA services and submits rehabilitation recommendations to the VA Secretary. Seven Veterans in total participated in the panel representing the demographics indicated above with a varying age range. Through this event, the team received comments and recommendations from VA staff and Veterans to improve VA services. VACOR members who are state and local organization employees also provided rehabilitation recommendations to VR&E to enhance outreach services (i.e. suicide training, people first language, name rebranding). The members are employees from special government, nongovernmental organizations as well as federal agencies. These include the following:

- VHA, Blind Rehabilitation Services;
- DOL;
- HHS, National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research;
- Department of Education, Rehab. Service Administration;
- Texas Tech University;
- EOD Warrior Foundation;
- Disabled American Veterans;
- Council of State Administrators;
- Pacific Asian Alcohol and Drug Program - Program Director; and
- California State University.

VR&E also collaborated with state and local Veteran employment organizations to provide outreach to Veterans regarding employment opportunities within their communities. On November 14, 2018, the Academy for Advanced Manufacturing, a private sector employer, was invited to introduce manufacturing opportunities for

Veterans to EC's nationwide on their monthly conference call. Over 80 EC's became aware of opportunities for Veterans in the manufacturing field. A private sector employee from Eversource (previously called NSTAR) also introduced employment opportunities to ECs on IT and contracting opportunities. As a result of this contact, the company presented on the Employment Coordinators' conference call and reached Veterans nationally for employment opportunities; EC's in 50 states have access to job opportunities in this company for Chapter 31 Veterans.

In June 2019, VR&E EC attended the Atlanta Federal Executive Board meeting to provide a presentation. This presentation reached federal executive board members including Federal agency leadership staff interested in learning about the VR&E program and hiring Veterans with service-connected disabilities. With over 20 Federal agencies in attendance at this event, the EC provided a comprehensive overview of services for employers including the benefits of hiring Veterans with disabilities. Additionally, two VR&E ECs attended the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hiring Our Heroes Career Summit at Joint Base Lewis McCord, Seattle, Washington. Participants included active duty military, spouses and Veterans interested in learning more about services for military and Veterans as well as employment opportunities. VR&E Employment Team members attended this career summit to conduct outreach to potential Veterans and employers to obtain access to employment opportunities and engage potential Veterans in Chapter 31 Services. As a result of this event, meetings were conducted with both Microsoft and Amazon.

VR&E and Army Career Education and Readiness (CER) Division, along with the VBA Social Media Team, also hosted a Facebook live that garnered more than 18,000 views. This event was geared towards Service members, Veterans and their families, who were encouraged to participate by submitting questions and comments. Marketing for this event included email blasts to the field and partners and promotions on Twitter and Facebook. This event provided the opportunity to highlight National Disability Employment Awareness Month and discuss both the VR&E and CER programs. On November 29, 2017, VR&E also participated in a DoD Warrior Care Facebook Town Hall that was promoted through email blasts to the field and partners, Twitter and Facebook. The Facebook Town Hall provided the opportunity to highlight Warrior Care Month and discuss VR&E services. This event reached over 6,400 people, yielding 299 post clicks and 216 engagements (137 comments, 57 likes and 21 shares). Successes were fueled by support from 16 partner organizations, who shared more than 30 Twitter and Facebook posts leading up to and throughout the event.

VR&E participated in a SBA Twitter chat which reached 810,948 accounts and had 2,129,533 impressions. This event provided the opportunity to highlight National Veterans Small Business Week and discuss holiday marketing tips for business owners. Additionally, VR&E, along with the VBA Social Media Team, hosted a Facebook Live featuring Executive Director William Streitberger, providing the opportunity to highlight National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Week. The event was geared towards VR&E counselors and staff, Service members, Veterans, and their families, employers, and partners and accumulated more than 11,000 views. The VR&E team, along with

TAP Team members, also hosted a Facebook Live that was geared towards Service members, Veterans, and their families, and provided the opportunity to discuss both the Education and Career Counseling and TAP programs. The results from the Facebook Live are the following:

- The post reached the Facebook timelines of 32,774 people, which is slightly better than our average reach.
- The video received 152 comments, 2,254 reactions, an exceptional number compared to our average.
- The video had a peak of 121 viewers watching in real time.
- 14,634 people have viewed the video.

Through VAntage Point Blogs, VR&E, along with other offices within VA, wrote multiple articles to spread more information on how their services benefit Veterans. The following are some of the articles written by the VR&E team and were posted through VAntage Point:

- **“VA and Small Business Administration team up to help Veteran entrepreneurs”** - VR&E Service and the Office of Strategic Engagement wrote this article which provided the opportunity to share information on an agreement between VR&E Service and the SBA to provide self-employment guidance, assistance and on-the-job training to Veterans with disabilities.
- **“VA, Ohio State Veteran community host 5K to raise mental health and suicide prevention awareness”** - This article had more than 200 views and highlighted one of VR&E Service’s VetSuccess on Campus Counselors, and her support of the student Veterans and programs at Ohio State.
- **“VA expands VR&E Program to improve service to Veterans”** - This blog article provided the opportunity to announce VR&E hiring of 172 vocational rehabilitation counselors in order to reduce the average counselor-to-caseload ratio, to one to 125 or below.
- **“Veterans, your dreams of entrepreneurship can become your reality”** - This blog article provided the opportunity to highlight VR&E’s self-employment track and other SBA and DoD programs.

The VR&E team also submitted multiple blogs to HeyVBA and VA Insider to highlight employees and their accomplishments with other employees within VBA. On multiple dates in 2019, VR&E submitted specific VR&E blog articles related to employee’s accomplishments, employee good news stories and employees’ retirement. Additionally, the following are some of the articles written by the VR&E team and were posted on HeyVBA and VA Insider:

- **“Boise RO Welcomes Principal Deputy Under Secretary”** - This blog summarized the Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits’ trip to the

Boise RO, which also included a tour of the Boise State University VetSuccess on Campus site and a roundtable discussion with student Veterans, spouses and peers.

- **“Veterans, Your Dreams of Entrepreneurship Can Become your Reality”** - This blog highlighted VR&E Service’s self-employment track and other SBA and DoD entrepreneurial resources.
- **“VA Announces Fully-capable Tele-Counseling Service Within Its Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program”** - This blog article highlighted the announcement of and discuss VR&E’s tele-counseling initiative.
- **“Scooby’s success story”** - This blog article provided the opportunity to share a good news story on a Veteran, who worked as a work study at the San Diego VR&E office; applied, found entitled, and went through the VR&E program; had a non-paid work experience opportunity; and hired as a claims assistant at VA.
- **“VBA and VR&E celebrations National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day 2019!”** - This blog, written by VR&E and Office of Strategic Engagement, provided the opportunity to share VR&E’s VRC collage and summarize the observance’s activities within VBA.

Loan Guaranty Service (LGY)

At A Glance:

- Between FY 2017 and FY 2019, there was an increase of 15% in active home loans, from 2.9 million to 3.34 million.
- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA helped a total of 206,732 borrowers who were behind on loan payments avoid foreclosure. VA’s home retention efforts saved the government an estimated \$5.29 billion.
- During FY 2018 and FY 2019, VA closed a total of 43 loans under the Native American Direct Loan (NADL) program, corresponding to over \$10.3 million in loan funds. The NADL program allows Native American Veterans and Service members to obtain VA financing on trust lands.

VA’s LGY administers the VA-guaranteed loan, Specially Adapted Housing (SAH), and NADL benefit programs. These benefits assist eligible Veterans, Service members and surviving spouses (collectively, “Veterans”) in obtaining, retaining and adapting their homes. VA-guaranteed loans are made by private lenders, such as banks, credit unions and non-depository mortgage companies. VA’s guaranty of a portion of the loan often allows Veterans to obtain financing on favorable terms, without a down payment. The SAH program provides grants to Veterans with certain service-connected disabilities. SAH grants help these Veterans in acquiring home adaptations made necessary by the nature of their disabilities. The adaptations can help promote a degree of independent living these Veterans might not otherwise enjoy. LGY also can award SAH Assistive Technology Grants to persons or entities for use in developing new assistive

technologies for SAH. As mentioned above, the NADL program provides direct loans to Native American Veterans who seek to purchase homes on trust lands.

In FY 2018, VA guaranteed 610,513 loans (valued at over \$161 billion). Also in that year, VA guaranteed 383,115 purchase loans (a record at the time). As part of VA's effort to help borrowers avoid foreclosure, VA made a total of 560,466 contact attempts to borrowers in default and their loan servicers. Through these efforts, VA helped nearly 105,000 borrowers avoid foreclosure, with approximately 95% retaining their homes, saving the government \$2.66 billion in costs. In July 2018, LGY conducted a satellite media tour, during which various TV and radio outlets interviewed LGY's Executive Director. The interviews covered topics such as VA-guaranteed loan volume in top metropolitan areas, home-buying season, program eligibility and key program facts.

In FY 2018, the SAH program provided 2,085 grants (valued at over \$104 million) to help eligible Veterans obtain crucial housing adaptations. LGY also awarded three SAH Assistive Technology grants (totaling nearly \$600,000).

Also in FY 2018, VA closed 23 loans under the NADL program (valued at over \$4.8 million). LGY promoted the NADL program in 39 major regional and national outreach events across the United States. Additionally, LGY entered into three MOUs with tribal organizations, thereby allowing eligible Veterans who are under the jurisdiction of such organizations to participate in the NADL program.

In FY 2019, VA guaranteed 624,546 loans (valued at over \$175.6 billion). For the second straight year, VA guaranteed a record number of purchase loans (384,496). Throughout the year, VA made approximately 491,798 contact attempts to reduce the likelihood that borrowers who were in default on their loans would suffer a foreclosure. This allowed VA to help 101,980 borrowers avoid foreclosure, saving the government \$2.63 billion.

In FY 2019, the SAH program provided 2,270 grants (valued at nearly \$121 million). LGY also awarded four SAH Assistive Technology grants (totaling nearly \$800,000).

Also, in FY 2019, VA closed 20 loans (valued in aggregate at over \$5.5 million) under the NADL program. LGY promoted the NADL program in 47 major regional and national outreach events across the United States. Additionally, LGY entered into three memorandums of understanding with tribal organizations, thereby allowing eligible Veterans who are under the jurisdiction of such organizations to participate in the NADL program.

As described below, LGY attended various conferences, summits, and events to inform eligible Veterans about the benefits and services provided by LGY. LGY also updated many of the publicly facing materials listed below.

- Federal Benefits Book – 2019;
- Modernization of the VA home loans website, including updating of the content 2018- 2019;

- Outreach with Vietnam Veterans of America – January 13, 2019;
- VA Resource Fair, Pentagon- January 17, 2019;
- Outreach with the Living in Place Institute – February 2, 2017 and 2019;
- National Association of Home Builders – Presence in conference publications and material distribution at the International Builder Show and National Kitchen and Bath Show – February 17, 2019;
- Veteran Sports Program Wheelchair Games- July 10, 2019;
- Home Loan Breakdown, "Borne the Battle" Podcast- June 2019;
- The American Legion National Conference – August 24, 2019;
- The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) Remodeler's Summit – September 24, 2019; and
- Hanley Wood Publishing – Coordinated throughout 2019 with one of the largest building industry publication companies in the US regarding series of articles highlighting the SAH program.

LGY also collaborated with multiple NGOs to provide outreach to Veterans. LGY regularly coordinated and engaged with VSOs representing SAH-eligible Veterans. These VSOs included the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled Veterans of America, Wounded Warrior Project, and Blinded Veterans of America. LGY also collaborated with non-profit organizations, such as Living in Place Institute, Habitat for Humanity, Homes for Our Troops, Age Safe America, and Purple Heart Homes. Additionally, LGY worked with entities in the accessible design and adaptation industry, such as the National Association of Home Builders, National Kitchen and Bath Association, National Association of the Remodeling Industry, and the American Society of Home Inspectors.

Insurance Service

At A Glance:

- In FY 2018 through 2019 Insurance staff contacted 866,176 Veterans via email. Each Veteran got between 41 and 27 separate emails depending on eligibility criteria. This outreach resulted in an engagement rate of 36%, far outperforming 2018's average industry-wide open rate of 20.94%.
- In FY 2018 through 2019 a total of 1,167 Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI) payments were authorized, totaling \$58,558,000.
- The Insurance Service staff during FY 2018 through 2019 attended a total of 36 events that reached over 5,530 stakeholders.

Insurance Service conducted various direct contact programs and used multiple different platforms to connect with eligible Veterans and dependents. The Insurance Service staff attended Wounded Warrior-sponsored events, job fairs and VSOs sponsored events to identify eligible Veterans and eligible dependents who are not yet enrolled or registered with the Department for benefits. During FY 2018 through 2019, we attended a total of 36 events that reached over 5,530 stakeholders. Our largest events in this reporting period were Philadelphia's Third Annual Veterans Day Parade and Festival with over 3,000 attendees, Federal Correctional Institution Fort Dix Veteran's Retreat with over 290 attendees, and NJ County Service Officer Annual Training Conference with 200 attendees. The Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (OSGLI) Customer Service Call Center answered almost 360,000 phone calls and the Insurance Center answered 930,693 phone calls from Veterans and potential Service members.

Through Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI), Insurance Service contact Veterans by sending a series of mailings to separating active duty and reserve/guard members who have Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI). The team reached approximately 168,109 separating Service members in 2018 and another 119,917 in 2019. The outreach unit has personalized telephone contact with separating Service members who have a medical condition that makes them uninsurable or insurable at higher premium rates. Through this, the team speaks to Veterans about the SGLI Disability Extension, VGLI, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI) and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI). In the last couple of years, our efforts reached 65,308 disabled Veterans across the country. The team sent notification of eligibility for S-DVI with rating decisions for new service-connected conditions along with an application to many Veterans. Additionally, Insurance Service sends notification emails via GovDelivery to those Veterans who are within six months of the end of eligibility to apply for S-DVI. A separate group of emails are sent out to recently separated severely disabled Veterans who had SGLI at separation. And a third group are sent out to recently separated Veterans who had SGLI at separation. Through GovDelivery efforts, the team contacted a total of 656,591 Veterans with an engagement rate of 27%.

Insurance Service collaborated with the LGY SAH Program in effort to connect with more Veterans and Service members. In this collaboration, SAH sends a nightly data feed of all Veterans with new SAH grants to Insurance Service. The team then reaches out to the individual Veterans based on their interest in VMLI as indicated by the SAH officer on the data feed. In 2019 alone, we contacted 1,206 Veterans with new SAH grants about VMLI. Through TSGLI, the Insurance Service staff and the branches of service conduct briefings and attend events designed to identify disabled or previously injured Service members and Veterans who may be eligible for TSGLI benefits. Through the team's efforts, a total of 1,167 TSGLI payments were authorized in the last couple of years totaling \$58,558,000.

In effort to inform eligible Veterans and eligible dependents of modifications of the benefits and services under the programs administered by VA, the team used multiple

online platforms. Insurance Service notifies eligible Veterans and dependents of program modifications through the following:

- Press releases (through VA Office of Strategic Engagement);
- Social media (VA Vantage Point blog, VA and VBA Facebook and Twitter sites and branch of service social media sites);
- VA Insurance website benefits.va.gov/benefits/ including photo carousel;
- eBenefits including message center, videos and carousel;
- Public service announcements (short video pieces surrounding a specific topic);
- VSO outreach (briefings of local and national VSOs, email updates to CO VSO contact list);
- Mailings about benefit updates;
- Conferences and events dedicated to outreach regarding Veterans' benefits;
- Online training modules available on Insurance website;
- Branch of service personnel and policy directives, emails and publications;
- Prudential and VA employees attend and speak at outreach events and conferences hosted by military organizations; and
- Online manuals and procedure guides.

Insurance Service also collaborated with multiple state and local education and training programs to provide outreach to Veterans. VA Insurance staff attended Stand Down, an annual program held every September in Philadelphia that provides a range of services to homeless Veterans and educates them about VA benefits where multiple agencies such as the City of Philadelphia, local non-profits such as Salvation Army, local attorneys and VSOs also attend. Additionally, at the Philadelphia Veterans' Multi-Service Center, VA Regional Office staff members, trained on Insurance benefits, provided educational services and assistance filing claims one day per week. The team also provided training and briefings to VSOs, military organizations and other Veterans organizations to educate them about VA Life Insurance programs and inform them of any upcoming changes. To stay up to date, the local VSOs met with VA Insurance leadership on a quarterly basis regarding VA Insurance benefits.

Since most NGO collaborate on an ad-hoc basis and consist almost entirely of VSOs, Insurance Service collaborates with education and training programs at a state and local level.

Appeals Management Office (AMO)

At A Glance:

- AMO participated in 18 different outreach events during FY 2018 through FY 2019.

- The “Appeals Modernization” public service announcement (PSA) campaign aired across 157 radio and television stations with a total of 1,406 airings, 4,600,918 impressions and \$416,289 in donated media value.

In August 2019, AMO launched an “Appeals Modernization” PSA campaign designed to increase awareness to Veterans about new decision-review process through the Veterans Appeals Modernization and Improvement Act (Appeals Modernization Act). The PSA aired across 157 radio and television stations with a total of 12,439 airings. It also has 44,251,932 impressions and \$3,083,137 in donated media value. Additionally, the team also participated in 17 different outreach events during FY 2018 through FY 2019. These events include the following:

- October 2017 - County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO) Association Training Conference;
- October 2017 - Appeals Modernization Training Session-Annual Training Conference for North Carolina Division of VA;
- March 2018 - Winter CVSO Conference;
- March 2018 – Disabled American Veterans Conference;
- March 2018 - Waco-Austin Texas Veterans Commission (TVC);
- April 2018 - St. Paul CVSO Association Conference;
- April 2018 - Waco-Austin TVC;
- May 2018 - San Juan, Puerto Rico Department of Veterans Affairs Conference;
- May 2018 – Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs Conference;
- June 2018 - National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) Conference;
- July 2018 - CVSO Convention;
- August 2018 – Congresswoman Dina Titus;
- August 2018 – American Legion National Conference;
- October 2018 - Panel Discussion-National Association of Veteran Advocates (NOVA);
- October 2018 - New Jersey Association of Veterans Service Officers Conference;
- March 2019 – Officer of Inspector General Briefing & NOVA Conference;
- June 2019 - NACVSO Annual Conference; and
- September 2019 - Portland NOVA Conference.

In an effort to inform eligible Veterans and eligible dependents of modifications of benefits and services, AMO maintained its presence on social media platforms and blog sites such as Rapid Appeals Management Program and “Appeals Modernization” Facebook live events to deliver messaging related to the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (Pub. L. 115-55). Additionally, the VA.gov team created a new hub for decision reviews to increase visibility of the content across applicable business lines, which was completed in July 2020. AMO has completed most of the required updates to the VA.gov website regarding the new decision review process and continually reviews for improvements to the language as we gain more insight from feedback from Veterans, www.VA.gov/decision-reviews.

AMO has also collaborated with NGOs to provide outreach to Veterans. In November 2019, AMO partnered with the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Collaboration and supported the Washington DC-based Access Housing Veterans Homeless Shelter food drive. The drive collected canned and other non-perishable food items for the shelter. Additionally, the AMO is now known as VBA's Office of Administrative Review and continues to conduct outreach and provide support to Veterans.

National Cemetery Administration

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

At A Glance:

- In FY 2019, Veteran Legacy Program (VLP) awarded contracts to 5 universities with their K-12 school partners, engaging 45 professors, 550 undergraduates, who produced 698 research-based biographies of Veterans and Service members interred in VA national cemeteries. The program further involved collaboration with 260 teachers and more than 3,000 students participating to contribute to remembering our Nation's Veterans interred in their local national cemeteries.
- Outreach comprising direct engagement with Veterans and families along with digital outreach programs resulted in 138,030 Pre-Need applications for Memorial benefits during FY 2017, FY 2018 and FY 2019.
- In 2019, NCA not only achieved the top satisfaction index from American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), but also achieved the highest EVER score from that survey. This was also the seventh consecutive time that NCA has achieved the top rating. The survey is done every three years.

NCA conducted direct contact programs with Veterans and eligible dependents a several nationwide forums and events. Attendance included outreach conducted at various Veterans conventions such as American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, Air, Sea and Space Symposium and the Association of the United States Army annual meeting, as examples. In 2019, NCA attended at least 125 different public functions focused on engagement with specific sectors of NCA's stakeholder communities, such as VSO conventions, funeral industry professional conferences, the hospice and palliative care industry, civic groups at national and state levels, and other related engagement functions.

Efforts were taken during this reporting period to inform eligible Veterans and eligible dependents of modifications of the benefits and services under the NCA for memorial benefits through direct engagement activities and social media. For example, NCA hosted informational sessions at functions listed above; conducted town hall events in communities; hosted webinars for industry stakeholders; spoke at national VSO conventions; and updated digital and in-print content for coordinated distribution with district-level leadership. These outreach activities are conducted on a regular, periodic method to ensure currency and relevance on memorial benefits and services.

NCA conducted education and training at the state and local levels to sustain information and Veterans access to memorial benefits. Foremost is NCA's full participation in the annual conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), where we deliver formal presentations on effective outreach best practices related to VA memorial benefits in addition to exhibiting and holding informational sessions. The goal is to engage the influential and critical

NASDVA community in multiple modes for the most effective delivery of benefits education.

To reinforce the benefits-related messaging delivered at NASDVA, NCA also attends national- and state-level conventions of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, with the parallel goals of engaging with multiple levels of VSO leadership and their benefits specialists. NCA's VLP has expanded to connect with students of all levels to educate young Americans about the American Veteran tradition and the place of the national cemetery in their community. VLP functions are designed to include the local community, and Veterans in particular, with the goal of elevating the profile of the national cemetery in the community and raising awareness of NCA and the memorial benefits VA offers to eligible Veterans, their spouses and dependents. VLP programs have reached over 9,000 students in communities across all five NCA districts.

In the summer of 2019, NCA released the Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM), an online memorial space managed by NCA, vlm.cem.va.gov. VLM was created to extend the memorialization of the 3.7 million Veterans interred in NCA cemeteries to a digitally accessible environment. VLM provides a unique opportunity to extend outreach to an exclusively digital sphere, changing the nature of memorialization and extending NCA's reach into the Veteran and Veteran-adjacent public, with considerable outreach potential. VLM is a work in progress, and its role in NCA's outreach initiatives is under constant review by senior leadership who seek to maximize the potential of this new effort.

In 2019, NCA forges an internal partnership with the Veterans News Network (VNN), a VA-produced network with production offices in St. Louis. VNN will reach all VA facilities, and there are plans under consideration to implement wider distribution through commercial streaming services. VNN will air short videos produced by NCA's VLP program as part of its programming, educating and underscoring how VA memorial benefits are a gateway to the broader tradition of Veteran heritage that NCA is a proud custodian of.

NCA outreach also includes collaboration, engagement and participation with NGOs. In addition to the state-level presence described above, NCA continues its relationship with Carry the Load (CTL), an NGO dedicated to preserving the memory of our Nation's fallen Veterans. Initially interested in reinforcing the intention of Memorial Day, CTL has expanded their mission through their partnership with NCA to honor all fallen Veterans, all the time. Starting in late April 2019, CTL embarked on three national relays across the United States with stops at several VA's National Cemeteries. At each cemetery, CTL and NCA volunteers paid tribute to the men and women memorialized in those cemeteries, while recognizing all of America's Veterans, of all periods of service. In September of the same year, NCA partnered again with CTL on 9/11 for a National Day of Service, during which hundreds of volunteers visited national cemeteries cleaning headstones and performing beautification projects. At each visit to an NCA cemetery, outreach materials relating to VA memorial benefits were presented to participants and attendees.