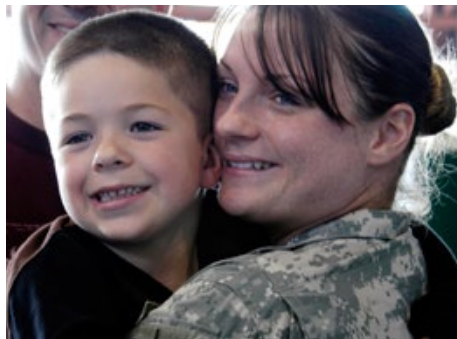


VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

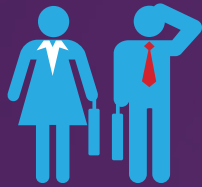


2014 BIENNIAL REPORT TO CONGRESS VETERAN OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

HIGHLIGHTS

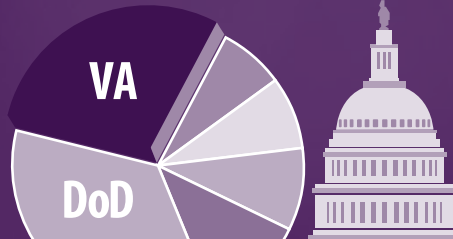
341,325

NUMBER of EMPLOYEES



36%

PERCENTAGE of VA EMPLOYEES who are VETERANS



2ND LARGEST

FEDERAL AGENCY AFTER DoD

\$163.9 BILLION

+\$15 BILLION

= 2015 BUDGET



EACH DAY

1308

NUMBER of COMMUNITY BASED HEALTH CARE FACILITIES



131
VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES

56

NUMBER OF VA BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION REGIONAL OFFICES

VA PROVIDES more than **\$1.3 TRILLION** in LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE to **6.7 MILLION** VETERANS and SERVICEMEMBERS



POST-9/11 G.I. BILL PAID OUT MORE THAN **\$3 BILLION IN TUITION** AND BENEFITS SINCE PROGRAM INCEPTION IN 2009



IN FY13, VA PAID **\$53.6 BILLION** IN DISABILITY COMPENSATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY	2
OVERVIEW	4
STAFF OFFICES	8
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS.....	8
CENTER FOR MINORITY VETERANS	10
CENTER FOR WOMEN VETERANS	11
CENTER FOR FAITH-BASED & NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS	13
NATIONAL VETERANS SPORTS PROGRAMS & SPECIAL EVENTS	13
OFFICE OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS	14
OFFICE OF SMALL AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS UTILIZATION	15
OFFICE OF SURVIVORS ASSISTANCE.....	16
VETERAN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES OFFICE	17
HOMELESS VETERANS OUTREACH AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS.....	17
NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION	19
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION.....	22
BENEFITS ASSISTANCE SERVICE	23
VBA/DOD PROGRAM OFFICE	25
EDUCATION SERVICE	25
INSURANCE SERVICES	27
LOAN GUARANTY SERVICE	28
PENSION AND FIDUCIARY SERVICE	29
VETERANS EMPLOYMENT CENTER	29
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE.....	30
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION	32
CARE MANAGEMENT	32
CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICE	34
HOMELESS PROGRAMS	35
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	37
OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND ANALYTICS CONNECTED HEALTH	44
OFFICE OF INTERAGENCY RELATIONS/HEALTH AFFAIRS/COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION	45
OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH	47
PROCUREMENT AND LOGISTICS	48
READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICES	48
REHABILITATION AND PROSTHETIC SERVICES	50
VETERANS CANTEEN SERVICES	51
WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES.....	52
CONCLUSION	54

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY



Every one of us at VA is immensely fortunate to work in an organization with the noblest and most respected mission in government: Providing care and benefits to the men and women who have “borne the battle.”

There is no more important mission than to serve those who sacrificed so much for our country and for all of us – protecting our freedom and way of life. We must make a positive difference in the lives of our Veterans, whether it is through providing health care of the highest quality, educational benefits to help pave pathways to new careers, the guaranty of a loan to make home ownership a reality, or a final ceremony with dignity and honor on the sacred grounds of a VA cemetery.

Providing these valuable benefits and services to Veterans is not enough. We have to reach out to Veterans throughout the country to ensure they are aware of the benefits they have earned and deserve, understand how to access them, and make it easier for Veterans to interact with VA. Effective outreach is a critical component of our broader engagement effort – both at the strategic and tactical levels. VA’s outreach activities must be proactive; they must reflect our best creative, innovative, and collaborative concepts so that Veterans understand how to access VA health care and benefits.

During the past two years, VA has continued to reduce the benefits claims backlog from a high of 611,000 in March 2013 to 240,000 in November 2014, a reduction of 61 percent in 20 months. We have worked especially hard during the last few months to improve Veterans’ access to health care through improvements to our automated appointment system, telehealth and mobile health initiatives. We are utilizing non-VA providers for care when geography, demand, or a lack of resources dictate that is the best way to provide care. Additionally, VA’s commitment to ending Veteran homelessness has resulted in a greater than 33 percent decrease of Veterans living on the street since 2010.

Despite these positive trends, our reputation has been tarnished and we still have much work to do. I have asked all employees at VA to rededicate themselves to our core mission to serve Veterans and to exemplify

our Core Values of *Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence* – or “I CARE.” Our people understand those are not merely words; they are the foundation of everything we do at VA.

As a customer-focused and customer service organization, VA must constantly strive to see the Department the way Veterans see us. Veterans are the only reason VA exists. VA’s culture must change and everything we do must be transparent to Veterans and the American public. To become a Veteran-centric organization, we must also view ourselves from Veterans’ perspectives.

During the last few months, we have heard from Veterans and families that we still have many areas in need of improvement. We take the feedback seriously, and we are already changing many of our practices, policies, and procedures and we will continue to do so in the coming days, weeks and months. We must subject ourselves to constant introspection, assessment, revalidation and review. Everyone working at VA must be held accountable for their actions and understand how their job contributes to accomplishing our mission. We are also working to provide real-time measurements for Veteran customer satisfaction. We will keep all lines of communications open, so we can receive timely and candid feedback from Veterans and their representatives. Sustaining these practices is essential to our long-term success.

As we proceed with the VA transformation that has already begun, we will continue to conduct a variety of outreach activities throughout the year. These will include routine engagements with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), government and non-government organizations, the state Directors and Commissioners of Veterans Affairs, community groups, and many other individuals, organizations and stakeholders interested in Veterans affairs. We will

help advance the dialog at the national level through public service announcements (PSAs), effective use of public affairs and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and a close and constant dialog with Veterans.

VA faces many challenges. How we respond to those challenges will impact the Department, and more importantly Veterans, for years to come. This is a unique opportunity for us to demonstrate to Veterans by our actions – not words – that we are here to serve them. I am pleased to report that VA’s employees are not only determined to improve our services, but are also enthusiastic about the changes we are making and those that will come in the future. Collectively, we will ensure that VA is the “provider of choice” for care and benefits for every generation of America’s Veterans.

I speak for all VA employees when I say we appreciate the support of Congress for our outreach programs and all of our programs that are designed to improve the lives of Veterans, their families and other beneficiaries. We look forward to continuing to work closely with Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, and all Veterans’ stakeholders to provide effective communications and outreach programs to better inform America’s 22 million Veterans.

Thank you,



Robert A. McDonald

OVERVIEW



38 U.S.C. Chapter 63 defines the outreach mission for VA as to provide information and awareness to every Veteran and beneficiary so they have the proper tools to access VA benefits and services.

The importance of VA outreach cannot be overstated. There are 22 million Veterans in the U.S., and still only about half of them are utilizing one or more of their benefits. Although this reflects an improvement since our last Biennial

Report to Congress for FY 2011 – 2012, there is still much work that needs to be done.

Information, education, engagement and proactivity are some of the components



essential to the success of our outreach efforts. VA must reach out to Veterans, family members and survivors to inform them of the benefits available at VA, how these services can improve lives and, more importantly, how to access them.

Increasing Veterans' awareness of and access to VA benefits and services remains a top priority for VA. We are committed to understanding the many ways that Veterans chose to access information and providing information in their channels.

An important first step is recognizing that not all Veterans access information about VA in the same way. VA offers a suite of services to Veterans, and all of them are potentially life changing. Be it health care, the GI Bill, employment services or a home loan guaranty, all VA benefits are designed to improve the lives of our Veterans.

This report shows the many ways, in the last two years, that VA made sure Veterans were aware of the benefits they have earned:

- VA staff and leadership regularly participated in events in which large

numbers of Veterans attended. These included large national events like Rolling Thunder on Memorial Day, as well as smaller-scale community events, such as “Stand Downs” and “Welcome Home” events. These events allowed VA staff to have face-to-face interaction with Veterans and their families and provided an opportunity for meaningful conversations about VA benefits and eligibility. Events in which VA staffers meet and engage Veterans have proven to be highly effective and are some of the most important venues for Veterans to inquire about their benefits and receive immediate answers to their questions.

- VA’s Web site www.va.gov was significantly redesigned and vastly improved. This process began two years ago and will continue as Administrations and staff offices update content. The navigation on the site is more intuitive and user friendly, with a search function that allows users to find the information they need quickly. The Web site was designed to provide Veterans with easy to understand information on their benefits, services and eligibility and provides contacts with names, phone numbers and email addresses.
- Other VA digital outreach efforts have had a noticeable increase in activity and are now reaching a larger Veteran audience than ever before. At the time of this report, VA’s Facebook pages total 730,000 followers, and its Twitter feeds have 197,000 followers. “VAntage Point,” VA’s blog, averages 110,000 visitors each month. These social media efforts allow VA, the Administrations and program offices to connect directly with Veterans and their families and have a real-time, two-way conversation. These channels provide opportunities for VA staffers to share information about benefits, answer questions posed by Veterans and connect Veterans to support communities.



- VA is augmenting existing digital outreach capabilities by developing mobile applications (apps) to connect with Veterans and families. As every generation increases the use of their mobile devices to acquire information, VA has been at the forefront of creating apps designed to help Veterans and Caregivers not only have access to VA information and support services whenever and wherever they need, but also to become more active participants in their care and feel more closely connected with VA.
- In September of 2013, the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) launched a comprehensive national outreach campaign called Explore VA, designed to inform and educate Veterans about VA benefits and services, and encourage them to apply. As a centerpiece of this campaign, OPIA created the micro-site www.explore.va.gov designed to be Veteran-centric and easy to use. The site satisfies a need for a simpler, more intuitive way for users to navigate VA benefits information, supplying clearly written information on nine main benefits areas, clear instructions on how to apply for each benefit and links to existing Web sites where more detailed information can be found. Social media, email and partnership engagement, as well as advertising, are key components of the campaign. VA developed

We must proactively find Veterans where they are, and present and communicate with them in ways that are both convenient and comprehensible.

and executed a national digital advertising effort and regional TV and radio campaign to direct Veterans to the site.

- VA continued to strengthen its relationship with the Department of Defense (DoD) so VA staff could be active participants in DoD's Transition Assistance Program (TAP), as well as brief Servicemembers transitioning from the military into the private sector in a more timely and thorough way, ensuring they have important information about VA, their benefits and life as a Veteran.

- Finally, VA has learned that developing relationships with other organizations to help deliver information about VA benefits for Veterans is highly effective. Working with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), Military Service Organizations (MSOs), community and regional organizations such as churches, synagogues, temples and other faith-based institutions as well as highly visible companies such as IBM and Goodwill, allows these organizations to convey information about VA benefits to their own stakeholders, helping to further VA's message.

Increasing knowledge is the first step to accessing benefits. During this reporting period of FY 2013 and 2014, VA has made great strides in outreach efforts, with more consistent messaging and better integration among the three Administrations and offices within the Department. We still have work to do, but will continue to reach out to Veterans using every tool available.

STAFF OFFICES

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

AT A GLANCE:

- 2,385,646 visits to new Explore VA Web site 12/30/13 – 6/23/14
 - 8,731 shares from Explore VA Web site 12/30/13 – 6/23/14
 - 75 percent increase in users on VA social media platforms Twitter, YouTube and Facebook in last 18 months
-

The National Veterans Outreach Office (NVO) at the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) was created to lead and coordinate outreach program activities and communications throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs in an effort to increase Veterans' awareness of VA health care and benefits.

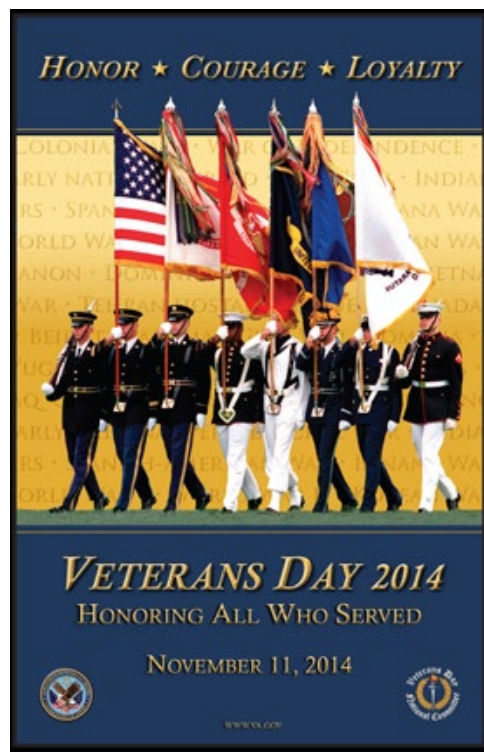
During the reporting period, NVO staff held biweekly meetings with VA Outreach leads across the Administrations and with key staff to synchronize, coordinate and integrate outreach activities throughout VA. Over the past two years, the Department has significantly improved the level of coordination and event participation by outreach offices. Activities, including advertising and Web communications, have been streamlined to find efficiencies and avoid duplication of effort, ensuring the most effective outreach possible.

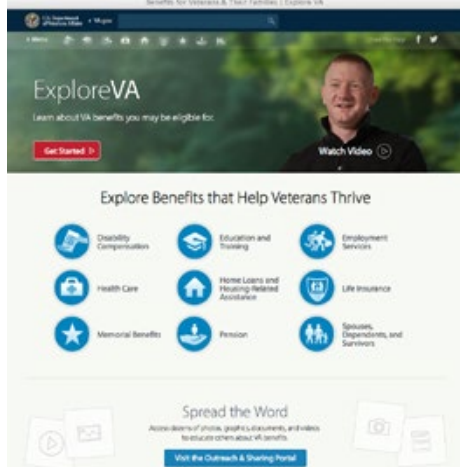
The NVO team participated in the quarterly meetings with communications staff from VSOs and non-government organizations (NGOs) and shared outreach activities, topics of interest and challenges and opportunities with other communications professionals from those organizations.

NVO helped plan and participated in the VA Showcase held in January 2014. More than 350 people attended, including senior level VSO and NGO staff members, to learn more about VA benefits and program offices which they can share with their stakeholders.

In June 2014, NVO spoke to the Association of United States Army (AUSA) New Chapter Presidents, to introduce them to VA benefits and services, how best to direct their members to apply for benefits and other important information.

In 2013, NVO assumed direct responsibility for the National Veterans Day Observance at Arlington National Cemetery. This included planning and oversight of the National Veterans Day Committee, which comprised more than 20 representatives from VSOs and MSOs.





Part of the Veterans Day Observance was the development and dissemination of artwork that celebrates Veterans of all generations and all services. NVO staff ran competitions for Veterans and others to create and submit appropriate art for posters, digital media and other platforms that can be used to celebrate Veterans Day.

In 2013, NVO launched a comprehensive digital national outreach campaign called Explore VA, designed to inform and educate Veterans about VA benefits and services, and encourage them to apply. As a centerpiece of this campaign, NVO partnered with VA's Digital Media Engagement team (DME) to create the microsite www.Explore.VA.gov. The site satisfies a data-driven need for a simpler, more intuitive way for Veterans and others to navigate VA benefits information, supplies clearly written information on nine main benefits categories, clear instructions on how to apply for each benefit, and guides Veterans to more detailed information using links to existing www.VA.gov pages.



SPOTLIGHT ON: EXPLORE VA CAMPAIGN

In the spring of 2013, NVO developed and executed a national digital and targeted regional TV and radio advertising campaign to direct Veterans to seek information on the Explore microsite and VA.gov. The campaign had two objectives, the first was to increase awareness about VA benefits and how to apply. The second objective was to gain a better understanding of how Veterans respond to advertising in order to improve communications and outreach methods.

The TV ad campaign, called Generations because of its multi-generational take on VA and Veterans, featured real Veterans in a scripted scenario. Harry Corre, a Veteran of World War II, portrayed the grandfather, while Darcy Vernier, who played the father, served in Vietnam. Jennifer Marshall, a Veteran of the United States Navy, portrayed the third generation. The campaign tells the story of her family's service in the military, and how VA has since served them as Veterans.

The campaign went live in the fall of 2013. In selecting the areas to run the TV and radio ads, OPIA focused on counties having both large populations of Veterans underutilizing VA benefits and available Medical Center capacity to ensure maximum impact.

According to data analysis, since its launch, the Explore campaign has resulted in more than 2.9 million visits to the Explore website. Of those, more than 700,000 moved on to the eBenefits portal to start the process of applying for benefits.

Explore.va.gov was launched in September of 2013 and is continually upgraded to ensure content is fresh and relevant to Veterans, families, Servicemembers and other stakeholders. Since initial launch, functionality has increased significantly, with new content added, including testimonial videos featuring real Veterans speaking about specific VA benefits they receive and how those benefits impact their lives. A benefits navigator was also added, which steers Veterans towards benefits that they are likely to qualify for, based on their answers to a short questionnaire. Social media content and tools for sharing content with others are available on the site as well.

Additionally, a subscriber-based email program was developed to communicate directly with those users who have signed up to receive information. Emails were deployed to the subscriber base, sharing information about outreach efforts, benefits and services, and more.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) performs outreach to the Veteran offices of states and territories, and includes the Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR).

IGA works closely with state Directors and Commissioners of Veterans Affairs, and collaborates with National Governors Association, local and regional officials to ensure they have a full understanding of VA's services and to strengthen the intersection of Federal benefits with state and local, so Veterans are fully informed.

OTGR reaches tribal leaders throughout the country to ensure leaders have access to important information about VA services for their tribal members who served.

The OTGR team organized and managed approximately 10 Veterans Training Summits in the past 2 years for tribal leaders, VSOs and Veterans to enhance awareness of services and benefits offered by VA, and to build trust between VA and tribal

governments, especially those with a high Veteran population.

OTGR also assisted with communications between Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Chief Business Office and 566 federally recognized tribes regarding the process of establishing Reimbursement Agreements between VA and Tribal Health Programs. This program is important because many tribes are located in rural areas.

Additionally, the team worked with other VA offices to conduct Webcasts, including one on the Native American Direct Loan Program and another titled "VA Working with the Indian Health Service and Tribal Governments to Serve Veterans in Indian Country."



CENTER FOR MINORITY VETERANS

AT A GLANCE:

- 107 targeted outreach events in minority Veterans communities
- 50 collaborative partnerships
- 128 meetings or discussions with VSOs, Federal agencies, NGOs, state/county officials
- 25,792 targeted outreach events conducted by Minority Veterans Program Coordinators

VA's Center for Minority Veterans (CMV) participated in outreach events targeted to reach stakeholders

from minority communities and collaborated with VA program offices to coordinate meetings, workshops and conferences. CMV engaged VA offices to leverage their staff and outreach capabilities in reaching minority Veterans.

CMV staff liaisons conducted targeted outreach to minority Veteran populations to include Pacific Islanders, Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos and Native Americans, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Some key events CMV staff participated in:

- Guam Society Outreach Event, March 2013, Las Vegas, NM
- Blacks in Government (BIG) National Training Conference, August 2013, Dallas, TX
- American GI Forum (AGIF) National Convention, July 2013, Denver, CO
- 2013 League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Convention, June 2013, Las Vegas, NV
- National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators Conference, June 2014, Albuquerque, NM
- Blacks in Government (BIG) National Training Conference, July 2014, Las Vegas, NV
- Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS) - Kapwa: Moving Forward in Unity, July 2014, San Diego, CA
- 2014 League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Convention and Exposition, July 2014, New York, NY
- American GI Forum (AGIF) National Conference, July 2014, San Antonio, TX
- National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS), August 2014, New York, NY
- Southwest Native American Veterans Alliance (SWNAVA) Conference, September 2014 Albuquerque, NM

CMV served as the VA representative for the White House Initiative on Asian American Pacific Islanders (Veteran specific), White House

Initiative for Educational Excellence for Hispanics Workgroup, the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico and the Federal Interagency Health Equity Team. Staff also conducted "lunch and learn" sessions on VA benefits at several Federal agencies to reach employees who are Veterans. The Center worked with members of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, the District of Columbia Department of Veterans Affairs, the Prince George County Veterans Commission (Maryland) and the Prince William County Library System (Virginia).

Finally, CMV staff worked with Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Office of Health Equity to conduct a Webcast on Health Disparities in Minority Veterans.

CENTER FOR WOMEN VETERANS

AT A GLANCE:

- 421 collaborative meetings in reporting period
- 307,510 visits to www.va.gov/womenvet in reporting period

VA's Center for Women Veterans (CWV) was established to monitor and coordinate VA's administration of health care services, benefits services and programs for women Veterans. CWV also serves as an advocate for cultural transformation, both within VA and in the general public, in recognizing the service and contributions of women Veterans and women in the military, and in raising awareness of the responsibility to treat women Veterans with dignity and respect.

CWV conducted collaborative meetings and forums that sought to enhance overall knowledge of VA's services for women Veterans and to promote collaboration among other Federal agencies and stakeholders. Attendees included Veterans, family members, citizens, advocates and Federal, state and

local organizations. Each in-person outreach activity not only offered information on the services and benefits available to eligible Veterans and their family members, it also offered an opportunity to connect Veterans to solid points of contact within VA who could address their specific concerns.



During VA's Women's History Month observance in 2013, Major Khanh Diep, an Army Fellow working in CWV, facilitated a nationwide celebration and outreach campaign, involving representatives from many VSOs sharing their organizations' women Veterans initiatives.

For 2014's Women's History Month, CWV conducted one of its largest outreach campaigns, which included conducting a Twitter Town Hall meeting for women Veterans in collaboration with Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the Women Veterans Program (WVP), to discuss access to VA benefits and services, mental health services and homelessness resources. With the help of WVP, the Center provided a Women's History Month communication package to all VA facilities. During the month, CWV also co-facilitated a White House "Champions of Change" event and hosted VA's Women's History Month Observance program.

In FY 2013, CWV distributed more than 1,000 "Women Veterans 25 Most Frequently Asked Questions" guides, a Quick Series informational guide that is used throughout the country by Federal, state and local governments, as well as community

organizations. The guide provides answers to common questions CWV receives from women Veterans, improving their understanding of and access to VA's benefits and services, and is applicable for women Veterans of all eras of service.

The Center also furthered VA's outreach potential through online presence and correspondence. In July 2014, the CWV piloted an online community on UniteUs (www.uniteus.com) to explore innovative ways to conduct outreach activities that impact women Veterans at different phases in the lifecycle of homelessness and to provide access to Federal, state and local programs and services. Followers received weekly updates on benefits and services focused on women Veterans, event updates by Federal and state partners, and access to all VA resources. To date, approximately 14,000 women Veterans are engaged in the online women Veterans community.

During FY 2013 and FY 2014, CWV executed four meetings of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, arranging for the Committee to engage in constructive dialogue with VA leadership and staff offices on various issues including, but not limited to, new initiatives for Veterans, and the gender-specific concerns of women Veterans; and to provide a clear illustration of how VA's existing policies impact women Veterans. CWV also provided extensive support to the Committee, as the group constructed its Congressionally-mandated biennial report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The report, with VA's responses to the Committee's recommendations, was submitted to Congressional leaders in the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees in September 2014.

CENTER FOR FAITH-BASED & NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS

AT A GLANCE:

- Participated in 25 outreach events
 - 2,288 individuals and organizations reached
-

The Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP) performs outreach in a number of different ways, but in-person outreach is the primary focus of the Center. In-person outreach events staff attended during the reporting period included Clergy Trainings in partnership with the VA National Chaplain Center, churches, Ministerial Associations and the VA Center for Minority Veterans. The primary purpose of this outreach was to educate community clergy on the spiritual and emotional challenges returning Veterans and their families face. The clergy and other attendees received information on the signs of suicide and trauma in Veterans as well as where within VA to refer at-risk Veterans.

With these events, CFBNP reached clergy of various religions and denominations; community-based organizations that provide services to Veterans (e.g., housing, clothing, job training assistance, etc.); other Federal agencies; college and university students who have shown an interest in working with or on behalf of Veterans in their communities; and state and local government staff who work on Veterans issues and want to learn more about how they can help Veterans in their roles and local communities.

To promote CFBNP's events, and to attract a broader audience, the staff worked with VA's OPIA to conduct online outreach for events using the VA Facebook, Twitter and Google+ pages.

In-person outreach efforts have resulted in an increased number of inquiries to host future clergy trainings and for information on how to start a Veteran ministry.

The Center hosted quarterly conference calls inviting speakers to share information that will assist the Center's listserv members in their work for and with Veterans.



NATIONAL VETERANS SPORTS PROGRAMS & SPECIAL EVENTS

AT A GLANCE:

- Provided 22,430 adaptive sports activities for disabled Veterans through grant partners at the national, regional and local levels
 - Provided adaptive sports grant consultation and advice to more than 400 NGOs
 - Partnered with U.S. Olympic Committee and all 31 National Governing Bodies for Paralympic sports in the United States and its Commonwealths and Territories to enable Paralympic allowance for 180 disabled Veterans
-

The mission of the VA National Veterans Sports Programs & Special Events Office (NVSP&SE) is to motivate, encourage and sustain participation and competition in adaptive sports among disabled Veterans and members of the Armed Forces. This is done through relationships with VA clinical personnel and national and community-based adaptive sports programs.

NVSP&SE staff engaged Veterans and various communities by participating at national events, providing information on adaptive sports opportunities within VA and community-based programs across the country. Additionally, staff attended adaptive sports forums and meetings to inform the adaptive sports community about resources available to Veterans. The NVSP&SE office was able to reach a wide variety of individuals, from Veterans to small business owners to VSOs, who achieved greater awareness of VA's adaptive sporting events and community-funded programs.

For these national events NVSP&SE's public affairs team was successful in reaching every media outlet in the local and regional market. Staff produced an onsite newsletter at all the national events for distribution at the event and posting on the NVSP&SE Web site. Staff also contributed blogs to VA's "VAntage Point" to promote events.

The NVSP&SE public affairs team utilized its social media footprint to promote VA's events in real time and during the course of the year by informing Veterans and the public about current events taking place in the adaptive sports community with engaging content and related information.

NVSP&SE was the first VA office to successfully host a Google Hangout held during the U.S. Down Hill National Trials from Aspen, Colorado. With more than 3,400 followers, NSP&SE was able to reach an extensive number of stakeholders at any given time with a single post. As a result, the audience had a better understanding of the programs as well as the various adaptive sports opportunities taking place across the country with our community partners.

NVSP&SE worked with DoD's office of Warrior Care Policy to better impact the lives of transitioning Servicemembers to Veteran status by providing them with adaptive sports information. The staff also continued to foster strong relationships with VSOs to ensure Veterans received the needed information on a continual basis.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

AT A GLANCE:

- Held 246 meetings or discussions with NGO leaders
 - Provided advice and consultation to 87 NGOs
 - Provided 253 referrals to 148 NGOs
 - Participated in 29 NGO community engagement events
 - Hosted 2 events – an NGO Services Showcase and a VA Services Showcase
 - Pushed 59 communiques to 252 member NGO listserv
-

The Office of Public-Private Partnerships (OP3) builds and stewards relationships with NGOs across the country to help them plan, execute and improve their own programs and services so they are in alignment with VA to more effectively serve Veterans, their families, caregivers, survivors, and other beneficiaries. One function of OP3 is to provide strategic engagement that connects NGO and VA leadership to explore and establish collaborative opportunities.

In FY 2013 - FY 2014, OP3 led or participated in 246 collaborative meetings, teleconferences and discussions with NGO leaders and staff members. As follow-up, OP3 provided 148 NGOs with 253 referrals to other internal and/or external offices and stakeholders where collaborative discussions were explored. OP3 provided strategic engagement advice and/or consultation to 87 NGOs in an effort to better align and coordinate services and supports to Veterans. This allowed NGOs to synchronize their programs with VA thereby reducing duplication and maximizing resources.

OP3 hosted two major events. The most recent was an "NGO Services Showcase" on September 10, 2014 that included 37 NGOs who set up informational booths at VA Central Office in Washington, D.C. to

provide information on their Veteran-related services, programs and supports. More than 300 VA Central Office leadership and staff visited the NGO booths during the half-day event.

OFFICE OF SMALL AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS UTILIZATION

AT A GLANCE:

- 63 outreach events attended, 56 of which had Veterans in attendance
- 6,030 Veteran-Owned Small Businesses reached

The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) seeks to enable Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs), Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs), Small Disadvantaged Businesses, HUBZone Businesses and Woman-Owned Small Businesses to add value to the work of VA. OSDBU provides outreach and liaison support to businesses – small and large – and other members of the public and private sectors concerning Small Business Acquisition issues.



SPOTLIGHT ON: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP SHOWCASE

OP3 hosted a Google Hangout titled “Partnerships Showcase Series” on Thursday, June 26, 2014. The 30-minute presentation highlighted a successful non-monetary public-private partnership (P3) between VA and an NGO providing recreational therapy to Veterans through fly-fishing and fly tying.

The event provided NGO representatives with the opportunity to learn more about key elements of some of VA’s successful partnerships and the formula for a model that is both scalable and replicable.

As of November 2014, 2,558 viewers have seen the presentation. Viewers include staff members from both the public and private sector organizations (NGOs, foundations, charities, VSOs, DoD, associations). The presentation provides viewers with a better understanding of how to initiate, explore, problem solve, establish and maintain a public-private partnership with VA.

In FY 2013, OSDBU launched the Veterans Enterprise Web Portal (www.vetbiz.gov), a Web site for VOSBs, SDVOSBs and small business interests. This portal provides information on starting and expanding a business, Small Business Administration (SBA) resources, Vets First Contracting Program, small and Veteran business programs, how to do business with Federal agencies and strategic outreach.

Resources on the site include a vendor information database (www.vip.vetbiz.gov) of Veteran and SDVOSBs, as well as a verification program that gives participating companies official VA verification of their company’s Veteran status, ownership and control.

To generate relationships with small and disadvantaged business, OSDBU worked with numerous organizations, including Women Impacting Public Policy, Women's Business Enterprise National Council, National Veteran-Owned Business Association, NGOs and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

OSDBU held a large in-person outreach event at Syracuse University where staff discussed the Veteran Entrepreneurial Programs for start-up Veteran programs, small business development centers and international franchise associations. These collaborations with academic institutions helped VA reach local, state and national organizations.

Additionally, OSDBU held a conference for small businesses, the National Veterans Small Business Engagement (NVSBE) that had more than 4,000 attendees. This conference, held in St. Louis, MO in May 2013, provided direct connections among Veteran small business owners and government procurement decision makers and business partners.

OSDBU also worked with the states on their Opportunity Showcases to collaborate with VA and provide potential procurement opportunities to VOSBs.

OFFICE OF SURVIVORS ASSISTANCE

AT A GLANCE:

- 45 outreach events attended
 - 9,940 Quick Series Guides distributed
-

The Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA) provides dedicated and comprehensive support to survivors and dependents of deceased Veterans and members of the Armed Services.

In FY 2013 and FY 2014, OSA conducted briefings and presentations; served as panel members; attended and facilitated outreach events; participated in conference calls; and hosted and exhibited booths with organizations such as Federal, state and local

government agencies, VSOs, faith-based, non-profit and community organizations, in addition to survivor stakeholder groups.

During in-person events, OSA staff distributed Quick Series Guides for Survivors and outreach brochures, answered various questions and provided guidance and directed survivors, family members and others to the appropriate service, whether it was VA, DoD or local service agencies. Some of the in-person outreach events included survivor stakeholders, such as Gold Star Wives, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, The Gospel Union Church of Christ Veterans' Outreach Event and Fort Belvoir Retiree Association. OSA also sent the Quick Series out to requestors, including military service branches, community organizations and groups, VA facilities and individuals.

OSA provided information via the Internet for survivors and stakeholders. OSA also has a video on its outreach pages along with downloadable versions of the outreach brochure. This allowed OSA to cast a much larger net for those who seek additional information about benefits and services. Many individuals and groups shared the information in different ways, such as adding links to their Web sites, distributing copies of the Quick Series and outreach brochures and connecting people with VA staff.

Through both in-person and online activities, the staff reached survivors, family members, Servicemembers and other government colleagues – all representing a variety of ages, demographics and all branches of service. OSA's efforts resulted in further education about the benefits and services provided to survivors and dependents who were not previously aware of them, and when applicable, those eligible applied for benefits. This knowledge helped families, loved ones and others be more prepared to assist others before and after death.

Throughout all outreach activities, OSA continued to leverage relationships with survivor stakeholders, the DoD, VSOs, faith-based and community groups, non-profits and other Federal agencies. These outreach efforts served to expand the reach of those who also serve the survivor community, as well as those who applied for survivor benefits through VA.



VETERAN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES OFFICE

AT A GLANCE

- 633 outreach events attended in FY 2013 - 2014
- 285,363 Veterans contacted during the reporting period
- 33,821 Veterans hired at VA in FY 2013 - 2014
- Over 1.3 million visits to VA for Vets Web site

The Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO) conducts outreach to Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers through a number of engagements, job fairs, transition assistance employment seminars and one-on-one sessions. The office also provides resources to Veterans through the VA for Vets Web site at www.vaforvets.va.gov.

Since 2012, the office has partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's National Chamber Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes program to discuss employment opportunities at VA with Veterans.

VESO staff attended numerous other events nationwide, including VSO national conferences, to provide employment services to Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers, including resume

writing for Federal positions, interview skills training and military skills translation.

Staff also participated in several virtual career fairs to provide employment assistance and opportunities for Veterans across the country and around the world including to Servicemembers currently assigned overseas.

HOMELESS VETERANS OUTREACH AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

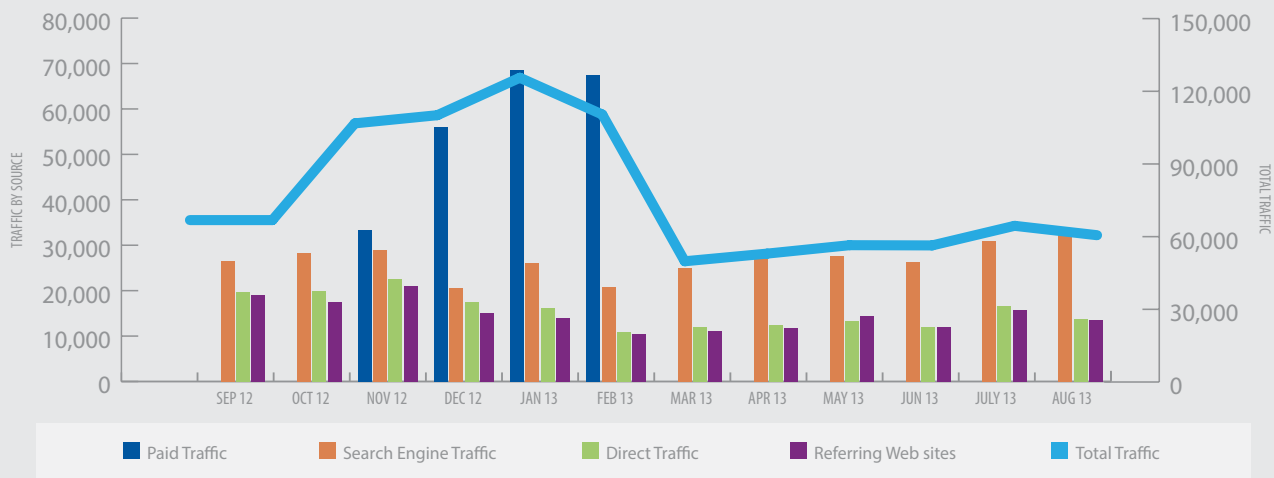
AT A GLANCE

- 52,663 Veterans, spouses and family members reached at Stand Down events in FY 2013
- 208 percent increase in number of calls to National Call Center for Homeless Veterans from FY 2011 - 2013
- 33 percent decrease of homeless Veterans since 2010
- Approximately 6,700 organizations that work with VA to bring awareness and help to end Veteran homelessness

Because of the challenges associated with identifying and reaching homeless and at-risk Veterans using traditional outreach strategies, VA developed relationships with trusted organizations in the community, such as faith-based organizations, first responders, soup kitchens and more to help expand awareness of VA benefits and resources for homeless Veterans.

Material and information was shared with those organizations, as well as at Veteran Stand Down events and other events including: National Alliance to End Homelessness National Conference on Ending Family and Youth Homelessness, February 2013; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans' Annual Conference, May 2013; Rolling Thunder Memorial Day ride, May 2013; and others.

WEB SITE STATISTICS FOR VA.GOV/HOMELESS



As a result of outreach activities, more than 6,700 organizations across the United States agreed to help increase awareness of VA's resources for homeless and at-risk Veterans by distributing outreach materials to homeless Veterans and persons who were likely to interact with them.

The Homeless Outreach and Strategic Communications staff used digital media to provide information about VA homeless resources, including the VA Homeless Program Web site, <http://www.va.gov/homeless>, writing posts for VA's official blog site, "VAntage Point" (<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/>), and adding content to Facebook and Twitter to share information about VA homeless resources with VA's thousands of followers on those social media sites. VA staff also used the agency's Flickr account, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/VeteransAffairs/>, to bring awareness to the issue of homelessness by uploading photos taken as VA staff participated in the annual Point-in-Time count conducted during the last ten days of January each year to enumerate homeless persons across the United States.

VA purchased online advertising to direct homeless and at-risk Veterans to both www.va.gov/homeless and the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) at 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838) for help. VA also distributed public service announcements (PSAs) to television and radio stations and on the Internet with the

same goal. The PSAs targeted both homeless Veterans who were not engaged with VA for homeless services and people who were likely to interact with them, such as first responders, operators of soup kitchens, members of faith based organizations and others.

The online advertising campaign that included keywords, Facebook and YouTube advertising achieved **265,519,794** impressions, **212,975** clicks and **1,013,341** YouTube views.

VA received donated media for outdoor advertising. More than 1,800 billboards were posted in 59 different cities in 30 states.

Additionally, the Homeless Veterans Outreach and Strategic Communications team, together with VHA staff, undertook three successful satellite and radio media tours that resulted in significant earned media coverage and paid media value. The tours focused specifically on reaching TV and radio audiences. Overall, the satellite and radio media tours resulted in combined national, state and local TV and radio audiences of 2.75 million.

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) honors Veterans and their families with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our Nation.

AT A GLANCE:

- Nearly 7,000 outreach events attended by NCA staff during the reporting period
- Over 850,000 people reached at in-person events
- 4 million views of NCA Web pages
- 16,000 Facebook followers
- 4,400 Twitter followers

In FY 2013 and FY 2014, NCA participated in nearly 7,000 outreach events. These events included VSOs, patriotic groups, community organizations, local government agencies, hospice/palliative care and funeral industry events. Some events were large, national or regional conventions/conferences; others were small, local events. NCA reached a wide segment of the Veteran population, their family members and other VA stakeholders.

NCA participated in many events focused on different Veteran groups such as women, Asian Pacific, VSOs and other minority groups. Locations were geographically diverse. Approximately 854,000 people were exposed to NCA benefits information and messaging from NCA's participation in these outreach events.

NCA worked with national and local news media to provide information for stories and access to VA officials for interviews and to capitalize on existing events (Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Wreaths Across America),

highlighting the continued service and sacrifice of Veterans and the available memorial benefits for Veterans, their spouses and dependents at the time of need. NCA had positive articles in several national newspapers and news networks, such as *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Fox News and *The New York Times*. NCA contributed several articles by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs and NCA public affairs officers to VA's "Vantage Point" blog. As a result of these publications and coverage, information about NCA benefits and services in the national and local media reached a broad segment of our nation's Veterans, their family members, other stakeholders and the community through the circulation of these national news stories.

NCA maintains a number of brochures, fact sheets and videos about memorial benefits that are distributed at outreach events and are also available on the NCA Web site.



These informational products about VA memorial benefits and services reached a broad segment of Veterans, family members, other stakeholders and the community. Additionally, NCA brochures and other VA brochures are provided in information packets to the next of kin of all families who bury a loved one in a VA national cemetery. These products are given out to interested parties at outreach events, and printed products and videos obtained at outreach events and from NCA's Web site can be shared with others. These easily accessible materials helped spread information to a broader audience.

Throughout all outreach activities, NCA worked with VSOs, state and tribal governments and local communities to bring VA benefits information to Veterans, their family members, stakeholders and the public. NCA maintained active dialogue with state Directors of Veterans Affairs and awarded 33 grants to states and tribal governments for the expansion of existing Veterans cemeteries and the establishment of new cemeteries during the reporting period. Approximately 64,000 Veterans and eligible family members were interred in these facilities in FY 2013 and 2014.

SPOTLIGHT ON: NCA DIGITAL OUTREACH

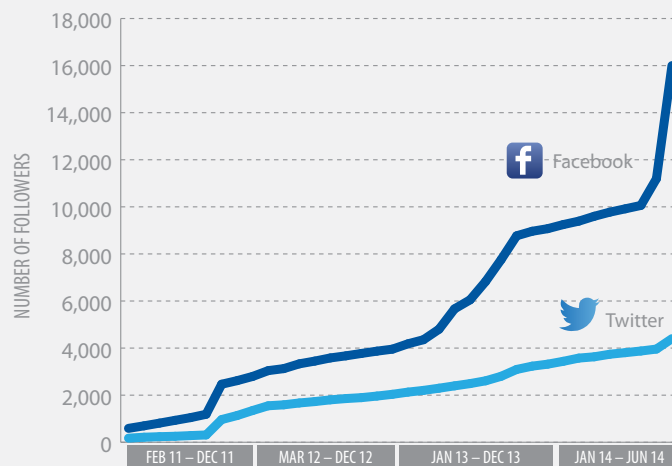
NCA's Web site is the most important and effective outreach tool, providing comprehensive benefits information; access to VA forms; fact sheets and videos for Veterans, family members, stakeholders and the public.

NCA's and VA's social media platforms are increasingly effective distribution methods for benefits information as well. When partnering with sister VA social media entities, the potential to reach Veterans, their families and the public amplifies, with one post capable of exceeding the number of people exposed to benefits information at all outreach events in 2013.

These online tools increase awareness and visibility of NCA memorial benefits and activities to Veterans, active-duty personnel, retirees, spouses, dependents and community influencers. Throughout FY 2013 – 2014, NCA's social media sites continued to show increases in followers.

Facebook followers increased to more than 16,000, and the Twitter handle now has more than 4,000 followers. NCA's top ten Web pages received nearly four million page views from February through June 2014.

NCA SOCIAL MEDIA





NCA also established a public-private partnership with The Patterson Foundation, which donated the new Patriot Plaza to Sarasota National Cemetery to honor Veterans and their families and inspire patriotism.

Additionally, NCA acquired and deployed a new Mobile Command Outreach vehicle to assist in informing Veterans, family members and other stakeholders about VA memorial benefits. The vehicle features a distinctive exterior graphic package that highlights VA burial benefits. The interior graphics package shows a history of the National Cemetery Administration on the passenger side and VA burial benefits on the driver's side. NCA plans to use the vehicle as mobile outreach platform at local events initially in the Florida area and later throughout the country. The vehicle's first major deployment was for the Patriot Plaza dedication ceremony at Sarasota National Cemetery in June 2014.

Through collaborative partnerships with DoD, non-profits, state Departments of Veterans Affairs and other national cemeteries (Arlington National Cemetery and the American Battle Monuments Commission), NCA increased its outreach to active-duty personnel, national cemetery partners, along with Veterans, their family members and the public, resulting in more burials in state and tribal Veterans cemeteries, increased visibility and numbers of visitors to the NCA Web site, increased "Likes" and followers on our social media sites and overall further exposure of various audience segments to NCA memorial benefits.

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION



AT A GLANCE:

- 90,500 hours of outreach completed
- 2.7 million people reached at outreach events
- 1.5 million benefit interviews
- 21 million early communication emails
- Over 73 million unique visits to the eBenefits Web page
- 140 million total visits to VBA Web pages
- 357,000 Facebook followers
- 47,000 Twitter followers

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) provides a variety of benefits and services to Servicemembers, Veterans, their families and survivors. VBA engages in a wide range of outreach activities to increase awareness and access to benefit information and claims assistance via

briefings, informational booths, conferences, speaking engagements and exhibitions.

In an effort to conduct efficient and effective outreach, VBA identified outreach coordinators specific to certain Veteran demographics. Each regional office across the nation has a local coordinator dedicated to targeted outreach at the local level. These coordinators are trained to identify innovative means to connect with Veterans, Servicemembers, their families and survivors and inform them about benefits and services. VBA personnel serve in the following roles: Casualty Assistance Coordinators, Chapter 63 Outreach Coordinators, Elderly Veteran Coordinators, Former Prisoner of War Coordinators, Minority Veteran Coordinators, OEF/OIF Coordinators and Women Veterans Coordinators.

VBA supports VA's goal to end Veteran homelessness by not only providing priority processing to all homeless Veterans' claims but also ensuring dedicated staff conducts outreach to the homeless population. VBA has 20 full-time Homeless Veteran Outreach Coordinators in the locations with the highest homeless populations in the nation. In FY 2013 and FY 2014, VBA made over 7,000 contacts with homeless shelters, completed over 5,300 referrals to Department of Labor, and assisted with over 53,700 contacts seeking regional office assistance.

Other VBA outreach efforts include increasing partnerships with VSOs. In FY 2014, VBA released the Stakeholder Enterprise Portal, which serves as a single secure entry portal for VSOs and other external VA collaborators to access VBA's Web-based systems to assist Veterans and other stakeholders in filing claims electronically. The portal provides capabilities for preparing claims, uploading supporting documents and more.

VBA also continued to partner with DoD during the reporting period for the promotion and use of eBenefits, a joint VA/DoD Web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to research, access and manage VA and military benefits.

VBA continued to update and improve Web and social media presence by adding new pages and information designed to help Web site visitors find information quickly, and to access content on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. VBA participated in nine interactive Twitter Town Hall events from January 2013 through September 2014.

BENEFITS ASSISTANCE SERVICE

AT A GLANCE:

- 98 Veterans Benefits Overview briefings
- 53 eBenefits presentations
- 53 Fully Developed Claims briefings

BAS outreach activities are designed to help ensure benefit information is provided to the right beneficiary at the right time. BAS conducts outreach for a number of programs and offices to ensure Veterans have the information they need to make decisions surrounding their benefits.



Benefits Assistance Service (BAS) was created to establish a consistent VBA message and oversight through all customer communication points for those who visit, call, write or communicate with VBA online. The essential mission of BAS is to educate and create awareness among potentially eligible Veterans about the programs created for their benefit. BAS is the central VBA outreach office and is charged with ensuring a strong VBA presence with a unified message across the nation. BAS is also responsible for collaborating with internal and external stakeholders to advocate for Veterans, Servicemembers, eligible beneficiaries and other stakeholders to ensure they are knowledgeable and informed about accessing and receiving VA benefits and services. Moreover, BAS proactively researches and coordinates VBA outreach activities where they will provide the greatest return on investment and closely align with emerging outreach demographics.

During the reporting period, the BAS Outreach Team coordinated and attended over 300 outreach events and speaking engagements. These events included the annual Rolling Thunder celebration on Memorial Day in Washington D.C., as well as the Women Veterans Rock event. In addition to providing direct assistance to Veterans and their families about the claims process, the BAS staff shared information about the fully developed electronic claims process and enrollment process through eBenefits.

BAS increased collaboration with other outreach offices to improve VBA's presence. Specifically, BAS partnered with the Center for Minority Veterans to participate in several outreach events targeting minority Veterans, including:

- The League of United Latin American Citizens Cinco de Mayo Event
- Support and Encouraging Veterans at Howard University
- Caring for Our Veterans
- Veterans Awareness and Community Outreach
- The Congressional Black Caucus Convention
- The United South & Eastern Tribes Conference



Together with the Center for Minority Veterans and Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) Office of Rural Health, BAS engaged Veterans who reside in rural areas by working with VSOs, faith-based organizations, churches, military outposts, libraries, community leaders and private companies who all have a vested interest in serving Veterans. The team also collaborated with VHA to meet the needs of rural Veterans in underserved areas using the VA2Vets mobile campaign, a campaign that used VHA Mobile Vet Units to reach Veterans across the country during a 52-week blitz campaign. Additionally, BAS has increased collaboration with the Center for Women Veterans, VHA’s Women Veterans Health Program, and the VA Secretary’s Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, to improve services to women Veterans.

BAS is also directly responsible for oversight of VBA personnel coordination, and staffing for the Overseas Military Service Coordinator Program (OMSC). The OMSC Program supports separating Servicemembers

who are stationed in Japan, Germany, Italy and England. OMSC personnel are located on military installations and can process claims, provide specialty briefings and one-on-one interviews. In FY 2013 and FY 2014, OMSCs conducted 5,679 one-on-one interviews and 245 briefings.

BAS continued to develop relationships with other Veteran organizations and stakeholders to increase outreach. BAS worked closely with VSOs to strengthen communication, collaboration and support of VBA initiatives and program changes, meeting twice a month with VSOs.

In FY 2014, BAS partnered with Goodwill to train Goodwill leadership and staff about VA benefits to ensure that they have appropriate information to share with Veterans they come into contact with. Additionally, BAS leveraged Bank of America’s Military Support and Assistance Group to provide Webinars on eBenefits registration and the electronic claims process. These Webinars were provided to Bank of America employees who are Veterans or family members of Veterans.

BAS also participated in planning and presenting at VA’s first Vet Law Forum in Washington, D.C. to introduce VA programs and benefits to legal advocates, discuss law school clinics focused on Veterans, provide information on the legal needs of Veterans and VA support for legal programs, and make recommendations on effective advocacy in Veterans appeals.

In FY 2013 and FY 2014, BAS conducted a series of six live Webinars on a variety of important topics. The audience for Webinars included organizations and stakeholders who work with Veterans in different capacities, including clinical professionals, caregivers, financial planners, attorneys, schools, universities, state and city mental health organizations and others. By educating these professionals, BAS was able to reach more Veterans at the community level where they live, work and study. The average attendance rate for each Webinar was 1,150. The sessions were recorded and made available on YouTube for further viewing.



In FY 2014, BAS continued outreach efforts through a collaboration with NASCAR, with two radio PSAs and two television PSAs. The goal of the ads was to drive Veterans to eBenefits to learn more about filing a claim with VA. The radio PSAs will eventually reach over 4,000 media outlets nationwide and the TV PSAs will reach 1,000 television and cable outlets. All media was donated for the PSAs, and the estimated ad equivalency cost is more than \$3,000,000.

Lastly, in an effort to increase access to benefit information for Servicemembers, BAS implemented an early communication email system. BAS sent over 21 million messages in FY 2013 and FY 2014 to Servicemembers about the VA benefits they may have earned and deserve as they begin their transition to civilian life.

**Radio PSA at 2 months:
27 million total impressions.
TV PSA, first aired in 2013:
260 million total impressions**

VBA/DOD PROGRAM OFFICE

AT A GLANCE:

- 9,500 briefings to 220,000 attendees in FY 2013
- 48,613 briefings and training events to 338,943 attendees in FY 2014

The role of the program office is to provide information on benefits and services to transitioning Servicemembers and their families. The program reaches Servicemembers and their families by providing in-person briefings to assist with a seamless transition to Veteran status. The program office also provided an online version of the VA Benefits Briefing for Transition Goals, Plans, and Success (GPS). The updated versions are now available through eBenefits and DoD's Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) training system.

EDUCATION SERVICE

AT A GLANCE:

- 63 percent increase in users to Facebook page during reporting period
- 811,000 emails distributed for Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP)
- Attended 45 in-person events, reaching more than 225,000 people, including 100,000 Veterans
- Average of 494,000 visits per month to GI Bill homepage

VBA Education Service programs include the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill and many other educational and training programs for Veterans, families and survivors. One of Education Service's programs, the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), offered unemployed Veterans up to 12 months training assistance if they met the eligibility criteria. The VRAP program ended March 31, 2014.

The outreach team educates and informs Veterans about VA education benefits and works to ensure that the higher education and apprenticeship/training communities are aware of updates to the programs and knowledgeable about the best ways to attract and work with Veterans who use the GI Bill.

The GI Bill homepage (www.benefits.va.gov/gibill) continued to be the second most visited page within the VA domain (outside of the VA homepage), averaging more than 494,000 visits per month during the reporting period, and is the first point of information for Veterans, Servicemembers, the news media and the general public about all things GI Bill. Nearly 25 percent of users access the GI Bill Web site from a mobile device.



VBA Education Service conducted a series of seven Webinars (for a combined 12 sessions) with the higher education community including School Certifying Officials, VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) Counselors, Education Liaison Representatives and State Approving Agencies. During the course of the seven Webinars, the number of participants steadily increased, from 250 during the first Webinar to nearly 2,000 in the most recent one. The cumulative total for the FY 2013 and FY 2014 Webinars reached nearly 4,000 stakeholders.

Staff used Facebook to reach GI Bill beneficiaries (<https://www.facebook.com/gibillEducation>) to provide real-time information to Veterans and their dependents. This also provided the opportunity

for beneficiaries and others to connect with each other and to VA, asking questions and providing suggestions and helpful tips. VBA Education Service held “Facebook Office Hours” in order to answer pressing questions from beneficiaries prior to the start of the academic term.

To promote VRAP, online advertising appeared in search results nearly 85 million times. More than 100,000 postcards were distributed in a direct mail campaign, and nearly 811,000 emails were sent out. Print and news outreach included coverage on CNN, *USA Today*, Reuters, *The Wall Street Journal*, The Pentagon Channel and local newspapers through newsfeed distribution.

The VRAP online advertisement resulted in more than 121,000 clicks, and the email campaign had a 24 percent open rate, more than double the industry average.

In addition, VBA Education Service staff conducted its third Google advertising campaign in 2013. Ads were displayed over 75 million times and drove approximately 75,000 people to learn more about VA’s non-college degree and on-the-job training programs under the GI Bill. VBA Education Service also partnered with the Armed Services Network in 2013 to create four PSAs about the Post-9/11 GI Bill televised on the Armed Forces Network across the world.

Importantly, VA trademarked the term “GI Bill” to prevent misleading Web sites and advertising firms from taking advantage of unsuspecting Veterans.

INSURANCE SERVICES

AT A GLANCE:

- Sent Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) Outreach Enrollment information to 152,000 separating Servicemembers in FY 2014
- Contacted over 22,000 disabled Veterans via telephone in FY 2014 regarding VA Insurance benefits, with 39.5 percent enrolling in benefits with over \$3 billion in insurance coverage
- Developed and deployed 2 videos (over 6,000 views) in FY 2014

VBA's Insurance Program provides outreach to separating Servicemembers and Veterans through a variety of means.

To reach Servicemembers about the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) family of programs, the staff worked with all branches of service to distribute messages and material via military and VA social media channels.

For Veterans Group Life Insurance, Prudential Insurance Company of America, VA Insurance's contract partner, sent a series of four mailings, including postcards and letters, to separating Servicemembers who had SGLI coverage, inviting them to enroll in VGLI.

For Service Disabled Veterans' Insurance (S-DVI), VA Insurance included an application for S-DVI in all grant letters for Veterans receiving a rating for a new service-connected condition.

Education and Training

Choosing a School



SPOTLIGHT ON: PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Executive Order 13607 established the Principles of Excellence program to ensure Servicemembers, Veterans and others have the information they need to make informed decisions concerning education benefits.

VA's Education Service team worked with the Departments of Education, Defense and Justice; the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; and state approving agencies to develop a comprehensive reporting program that allows VA's education service beneficiaries to contact the Department directly regarding any concerns or violations of the Principles of Excellence.

In January 2014, the GI Bill Feedback system was launched, providing a mechanism for receiving, processing and referring complaints about educational institutions to VA and other Federal agencies. This fulfilled a key provision of the Principles of Excellence and created consumer protection measures for beneficiaries of education benefits. Since the launch, VA has received and reviewed 2,245 complaints.

Education Service also developed the GI Bill Comparison Tool, an online resource providing key information about college affordability and value so beneficiaries can choose the best education program for their needs. It displays median borrowing amounts, graduation rates and loan-default rates by school; indicates whether the school participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program or has agreed to adhere to the Principles of Excellence; and allows Veterans, Servicemembers, their spouses and dependents to search schools and employers based on state; and estimates and compares benefits of multiple GI Bill programs and schools. Since the launch of the tool, more than 500,000 unique visitors have accessed the GI Bill Comparison Tool.

CareerScope® (a commercial tool) is available for free on the GI Bill Web site and gives prospective students career recommendations based on interests and aptitudes, while providing information on related courses and training programs. Since August 2013, nearly 10,000 individuals have started or completed the free assessment.

Outreach for Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) included working closely with Loan Guaranty's Specially Adapted Housing Program to ensure severely disabled Veterans receiving Specially Adapted Housing Grants are aware of the mortgage insurance provided through VA. Specifically, VA Insurance received a nightly feed of all new Specially Adapted Housing Grantees with information on their desire for the insurance and contacted Veterans who were interested.

VBA's Insurance Program also provided outreach regarding VA Insurance benefits to separating Servicemembers who incurred disabilities that would prevent them from obtaining life insurance in the private insurance market. VBA's Insurance Program contacted these Veterans personally via telephone to inform them of their insurance benefits and assist them in applying for coverage. These benefits include the SGLI Disability Extension, VGLI, Traumatic Injury Protection under SGLI (TSGLI), Family SGLI conversion, S-DVI and VMLI.

VBA's Insurance Program also provided outreach to insurance beneficiaries regarding entitlement to benefits and financial counseling. Additionally, beneficiaries in the SGLI family of programs received a brochure upon claim payment and a series of letters sent at regular intervals after the claim was paid, explaining the financial counseling services available to ensure beneficiaries are able to use the insurance proceeds for future planning.

VBA's Insurance Program provides outreach to separating Servicemembers and Veterans through a variety of means.



LOAN GUARANTY SERVICE

AT A GLANCE:

- 21 million home loans made since the program's inception
- VA guaranteed almost 440,000 loans in FY 2014, equivalent to 1,750 loans per work day, totaling \$400 million
- For 25 straight quarters, VA maintained the lowest foreclosure rate for all loan types in the industry

VA's Loan Guaranty Service (LGY) staff performed outreach to all Veterans and Servicemembers interested in home ownership using the home loan guaranty, to every Veteran with a reportable default on a VA guaranteed loan, as well as those eligible for the Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) and the Native American Direct Loan (NADL) Program provided by VA.

During the reporting period, LGY developed a Webinar on Home Owners and Mortgage Education that had more than 1,400 participants. The Webinar outlined the steps for purchasing a home using a VA guaranteed loan and generated a broader conversation around the home ownership process.

The home loan program staff participated in a host of housing-related seminars with key mortgage industry leaders such as the National Association of Home Builders, the National Association of Realtors

and the Mortgage Bankers Association. The program staff leveraged private sector contacts to advance awareness about the VA home loan program and brainstorm innovative ways of providing Veterans greater access to their housing benefit.

LGY Service SAH program staff participated in several outreach efforts to generate more awareness and use of the program. During the 2014 fiscal year, outreach to blind Veterans, Veterans with difficulty ambulating, as well as several hospital visits resulted in heightened visibility of the SAH program. SAH program staff also hosted a symposium, where numerous national and local nonprofits met for multi-day sessions designed to find innovative ways to deliver SAH benefits more efficiently and effectively to more SAH-eligible Veterans.

LGY broadly expanded outreach efforts to Native American Veterans. LGY promoted the NADL program in over two dozen major regional and national outreach events from the St. Regis tribe in the most northern part of New York to several dozen rural tribes across Alaska. During the reporting period, LGY successfully negotiated memorandums of understanding (MOU) with three tribal governments, enabling Native American Veterans the opportunity to use this direct home loan program. The result has been increased awareness surrounding the program for Native American Veterans.

Additionally, LGY developed new outreach and informational materials about the NADL program to better explain the benefits and eligibility.

LGY staff participated in a Google Hangout to discuss the benefits of the VA Home Loan program. Regional and national mortgage professionals attended the Hangout along with Veterans seeking information about the program. The recorded Hangout is available on YouTube and has received more than 1,800 views.

Several videos were developed for the loan origination process, Specially Adapted Housing and the Native American Direct Loan program and are available on YouTube.

The staff also collaborated with the Appraisal Institute, several major university systems across the country, major employers in the appraisal industry and Veterans to create awareness of employment opportunities for Veterans in the appraisal industry.

PENSION AND FIDUCIARY SERVICE

AT A GLANCE:

- 4 videos created and deployed
- Over 36,400 viewings of videos

Pension and Fiduciary Service created one video and the Office of Corporate Communications created three videos that provide an overview of VA's pension and dependency and indemnity compensation programs, and fiduciary services.



VETERANS EMPLOYMENT CENTER

AT A GLANCE:

- 6,322 Veterans and spouses registered on the VEC Web site
- 4,204 employers registered and committed 392,221 positions to hire
- Over 1.2 million visits to VEC Web site

VA's new Veteran Employment Center (VEC), stood up in spring 2014, provides assistance to transitioning Servicemembers, Veterans and family members seeking competitive employment through innovative strategies to translate military skills, promote diverse educational opportunities and establish relationships with Veteran-committed employers of all sizes in all sectors of the economy across the nation.

In connection with the First Lady and Dr. Biden's Joining Forces, the Departments of VA, Labor, Defense and Education, the Small Business Administration and the Office of Personnel Management collaborated to design and develop the VEC to incorporate the best features of existing online employment tools, including resources for both job seekers and employers. VEC is hosted on www.ebenefits.va.gov/jobs.

Outreach activities included an aggressive rollout of innovative public-private partnerships that are leveraging best practices and tools of premier companies in private industry to provide unique support to transitioning Servicemembers, Veterans and their families.

These unique partnerships assisted businesses looking to establish a reliable pipeline for Veteran talent in high-demand fields and helped VA to better reach Veterans and their families with timely and relevant information on VA benefits and services.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

AT A GLANCE:

- Developed 2 PSAs with 3,745 views to date
 - Developed 2 videos to better explain VR&E benefits and services
 - Supported multiple job fairs and outreach events
-

VR&E worked closely with IBM Corporation to ensure IBM employment opportunities were shared with interested and eligible Veterans. VR&E staff provided IBM with information about the VetSuccess Web site* and worked with IBM to register job postings on the site.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service (VR&E) regional offices provide qualified Veterans and Servicemembers with job training, employment accommodations, resume development, job seeking skills, coaching and more.

To reach Veterans, VR&E and BAS staff participated in the Fort Campbell, Kentucky Veterans Job Summit. The summit was attended by more than 1,200 Servicemembers preparing to separate from the military, and their families. During the event, VR&E staff assisted Servicemembers in creating user profiles and resumes in eBenefits, answered questions and explained the programs available through VR&E. VR&E personnel also participated in a similar event at the Fort Bliss, Texas Veterans Job Summit, which was attended by more than 1,000 transitioning Servicemembers, Veterans and their families.

Staff attended the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hiring our Heroes event in Washington D.C. During this event, they provided information and spoke one-on-one with Servicemembers, Veterans and spouses about services available through VR&E and the application process.

*VetSuccess now called Veterans Employment Center



To help showcase VR&E benefits, staff produced two videos designed to educate Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers, families and others. The videos showcase Veterans discussing their experiences participating in the VR&E programs. The video titled “On Campus,” highlights the services provided to student Veterans participating in Educational and Career Counseling benefits while in college. The “At Home” video highlights the services provided to Veterans participating in a VR&E Independent Living plan of service.

In addition, VR&E created two PSAs, called “Career Day” and “Rolling Up Sleeves.” Again, these PSAs were designed to illustrate to Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers the services available through the program and how Veterans can benefit from the services. The PSAs are available in English and Spanish and have been distributed to TV stations nationwide. They are also available on VBA’s YouTube channel as well as through other social media outlets. The two PSAs have been viewed more than 3,745 times.

VR&E staff developed a set of new materials to help Veterans, Servicemembers, families and other stakeholders better understand the services VR&E provides, including eligibility requirements and how to apply for services. The materials were distributed to service providers, including VSOs and to Department of Labor Career One-Stops that are located in every state across the country, VA Medical Centers and other outreach events and points.

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

CARE MANAGEMENT

VA's Care Management and Social Work Services (CM/SWS) addresses the needs of wounded, injured and ill Servicemembers and Veterans by providing more support services for family members and Caregivers as part of an enhanced program within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

VHA provides a vast array of Caregiver support services nationwide to ensure that Veterans have emotional and physical support, access to health care and the opportunity to remain in their homes when they can no longer care for themselves. Outreach activities focus on the Caregiver Support and the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Support Programs.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM

AT A GLANCE:

- 1,000 visitor average to the program Web site each day
 - 43,000 subscribers to the program listserv
 - Monthly telephone education groups with more than 1,000 Caregivers participating annually
 - Created episode for *The American Veteran* show about Caregivers
-

The Caregiver Support Program Web site, www.caregiver.va.gov, helped inform and educate stakeholders about the program. In FY 2013 - 2014, the Web site averaged 1,000 visitors a day. Collaborating with VHA Web Communications, the Caregiver Support program placed a Web banner on both the VA.gov Web site and VA's internal site

to promote National Family Caregiver Month each November. A picture of a family Caregiver and his Veteran son were also posted on VA's Facebook page in recognition of the month. In addition, staff collaborated with VA's public affairs office to distribute recommended Facebook postings and tweets that could be used locally by VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) across the country during November to recognize Caregivers.



Further engaging the public, the Caregiver Support Program operated a robust Web listserv with more than 43,000 subscribers to reach the broader Caregiver community routinely throughout the year covering important topics such as informing subscribers about Caregiver-related issues, recognizing National Family Caregiver Month and honoring families and Veterans in support of Veterans Day.

In addition, the Caregiver Support Line facilitated monthly telephone education groups dedicated to family Caregivers of Veterans during which a different topic was presented each month. In both FY 2013 and FY 2014, more than 1,000 Caregivers participated in these calls.

The program established a national workgroup to support VAMCs across the country during National Caregiver Month. For 2013's observance, there were more than 350 organized activities held, reaching over 13,000 participants. In addition to face-to-face conversations, program members distributed outreach items with information about the program.

The Caregiver Support Program engages, informs and honors Caregivers and Veterans.

Reaching out beyond the Caregiver audience, the program engaged with VSOs, such as the VFW, DAV and Wounded Warrior Project, as well as NGOs, including Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Hope for the Warriors, Quality of Life Foundation, Elizabeth Dole Foundation, National Caregiver Alliance, Caregiver Action Network and Easter Seals. Participating in more than 50 meetings and events in FY 2013 - 2014, program staff met key stakeholders from these organizations to educate them about VA's Caregiver Support Program, who then could spread the word and increase recognition of the services and support available for family Caregivers of Veterans.

The Caregiver Support Program participated in the VA Services Showcase hosted by VA's Office of Public-Private Partnerships, which was held at the VHA National Conference Center in Arlington, VA, on Wednesday, January 29, 2014. The goal of the conference was to reach out to the community and businesses to share information and resources and network in support of the public-private partnership initiative.



THE OEF/OIF/OND SUPPORT PROGRAM

This program is designed specifically to reach Veterans and family members of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn (OEF, OIF and OND).

Each VA Medical Center hosted an annual Welcome Home event for OEF/OIF/OND Servicemembers, Veterans and their families to educate them on VA benefits, health care services and eligibility. These events reached thousands nationwide, providing information to returning combat Veterans and coordination of care for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans.

The events were held in collaboration with military and community organizations, including local military units, VSOs, colleges, universities, employment agencies and others that provide services to and connect Servicemembers, Veterans and their families with resources both within VA and the local community.

CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICE

PURCHASED CARE

AT A GLANCE:

- 32 briefings across the country, with an average of 100 CHAMPVA beneficiaries per briefing
- Participated in 27 national and state conferences targeting Veterans

CBO Purchased Care team held briefings across the country for beneficiaries of CHAMPVA (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs). The team also held one-on-one discussion sessions with beneficiaries to clarify and answer any questions to ensure full understanding of benefits.

Staff attended VSO national conferences to meet with Veterans and family members about benefits, to discuss Foreign Medical Program, CHAMPVA and the pharmacy program and to distribute information.

To reach stakeholders directly, the Purchased Care team produced and distributed a semi-annual magazine titled *Your Health*, which included stories and tips on living a healthier life, how to process purchased care program claims faster and more.

Finally, the Purchased Care team developed a strategic relationship with the United Veterans of Colorado, which was instrumental in providing Purchased Care information to Veterans across the state of Colorado. This relationship also helped the Purchased Care team reach different segments of the community.

MEMBER SERVICES

CBO Member Services team focused on three important areas of outreach during the reporting period: Affordable Care Act (ACA); VADIP, a pilot program that offers eligible Veterans the opportunity to purchase dental care; and Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC).



The team used a combination of communications activities to reach Veterans and their families.

CBO Member Services staff worked closely with VSOs and others, briefing them and attending conferences, to share information about how ACA impacts Veterans and their families. The staff also briefed these stakeholders on VADIP.

Member Services leadership participated in a Google Hangout targeted at Veterans and other stakeholders to discuss ACA. Information was made available throughout the VA Web site.

Social media platforms were used to communicate information to targeted audiences. Twitter, Facebook and VA blogs were used to push information, with links, to Veterans and families.

The team also created posters, radio scripts and other advertising to inform targeted audiences about how ACA impacts their VA, CHAMPVA and TRICARE benefits. Google AdWords were used to direct Internet users to VA's Web site at VA.gov/health/aca/.

Finally, Member Services staff developed informative materials for distribution at events and online. They also reached out to the media to ensure Veterans and others were reached with the important information about the programs.



HOMELESS PROGRAMS

VA is committed to ending Veteran homelessness. This outreach report highlights two main areas of VHA's homeless programs: Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) and Veterans Justice Programs (VJP).

HEALTH CARE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

AT A GLANCE:

- 304,615 Veterans directly reached in FY 2013 - 2014
- 235 Stand Down events held nationwide in FY 2013
- 6,700 relationships created with collaborating national and local organizations
- Services provided to more than 260,000 homeless or at-risk Veterans in FY 2014
- In FY 2014, more than 72,000 Veterans were either placed in permanent housing or prevented from becoming homeless as a result of VA intervention

The core mission of HCHV is to perform outreach through VA social workers and other mental health clinicians, identify homeless Veterans who are eligible for VA health care and assist these Veterans in accessing the appropriate levels of care. Many of the Veterans who require mental health and substance abuse treatment will not avail themselves of such help without the encouragement of outreach workers going to where the homeless Veterans live on the streets.

HCHV outreach workers regularly canvassed areas frequented by homeless persons in their local catchment areas to attempt to identify homeless Veterans. HCHV outreach workers also collaborated with local soup kitchens, shelters and governmental organizations to identify Veterans who were homeless and in need of assistance from VA. These organizations also participated in Veteran Stand Downs, local community meetings and other outreach and civic engagement events. As a result of outreach, 10,882 Veterans were enrolled in HCHV Case Management services, and 13,528 Veterans were enrolled in HCHV Contract Residential Services in FY 2013.

HCHV also coordinated with staff and contractors within VHA and OPIA to establish relationships with and provide materials to organizations that would help raise awareness about VA resources for homeless and at-risk homeless Veterans. Brochures were created specifically for the general public, Veterans and first responders.

On behalf of HCHV, more than 6,700 local and national organizations conducted outreach and distributed materials, including libraries, food banks, faith-based organizations, homeless shelters, VSOs, government agencies, health care organizations, Veterans courts and first responders.

VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROGRAMS

AT A GLANCE:

- More than 52,000 Justice-involved Veterans served
- 4,800 informational presentations conducted for communities and VA audiences, totaling more than 50,000 participants
- 289 law enforcement training events conducted, reaching more than 6,000 community law enforcement officers
- Video produced encouraging incarcerated Veterans to seek VA services during reentry, which was adopted by 1,231 state and Federal prisons and more than 500 local jails

The VJP reaches out to Veterans in penal institutions to inform them about VA benefits and services. Its purpose is to help avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans by ensuring that eligible justice-involved Veterans have timely access to VHA services as clinically indicated. VJP specialists are responsible for direct outreach, assessment and case management for justice-involved Veterans in local courts and jails and for liaising with local justice system partners.

VJP staff participated in more than 2,500 community outreach and planning meetings, establishing relationships with jail and court staff, community treatment providers, VSO representatives and others. As a result, VJP enhanced the understanding of VA services and processes among community stakeholders and created stronger operational partnerships focused on linking justice-involved Veterans to needed VA and community services.

To help identify Veterans who are interacting with the justice system, the Veterans Reentry Search Service (VRSS) was developed to help prison, jail and court staff identify Veterans among their inmate or defendant populations quickly and accurately. Users were able to identify Veterans at a significantly higher rate than with the previous self-report method.

There are currently 40 active VRSS users, including 23 state prison systems, and the VJP team is actively working to bring others on board.



SPOTLIGHT ON: HEALTHCARE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

Stand Downs are one of HCHV's most successful outreach efforts. These events bring together organizations and programs in local areas to provide supplies and services to homeless Veterans. In FY 2013, HCHV coordinated a total of 235 Stand Down events nationwide. The Operation New Hope warehouse (under the direction of the HCHV office), located in Hillsborough, NJ, maintained an inventory of Department of Defense surplus clothing to give out at Stand Down events.

Items consisted primarily of cold weather clothing, rain gear, sleeping bags, belts, caps, coveralls, boots, footwear, women's clothing, coats, jackets and trousers. HCHV also distributed items such as toothbrushes, waterproof boxes (for important documents), hats and handkerchiefs that contained the phone number to the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV) to Veterans during Stand Downs. The Stand Down events have consistently proven to be an effective way to reach underserved Veterans with VA services.

Use of the new VRSS by more justice systems will enhance VJP's ability to reach Veterans throughout the criminal justice system.

VJP furthered its outreach by producing a brief video intended for Veteran jail and prison inmates. Titled "Suits," the video encourages incarcerated Veterans to use their time wisely by taking an active role in the reentry planning process and informs them how to contact a VA outreach specialist for help. The video was distributed in all state and Federal prisons (1,231 total locations) and at over 500 local jails.

VJP program staff gave interviews to several national and regional media outlets, including *The New York Times*, the *Associated Press*, *USA Today* and *Pacific Standard* magazine. These publications reached wide audiences in various media markets, and with this media coverage, VJP was able to increase awareness of VA's efforts to serve justice-involved Veterans as part of the plan to end homelessness among Veterans.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

VA's mental health services focus on recovery for the Veteran, seeing it as part of primary care and in coordination with care for the whole person. This outreach report considers five main programs: the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (NCPTSD); Suicide Prevention/Veterans Crisis Line (VCL); Make the Connection (MTC); Moving Forward and Parenting online training courses; and Coaching Into Care (CIC).



NATIONAL CENTER FOR POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

AT A GLANCE:

For FY 2013 – 2014:

- 2.2 million page views of the NCPTSD Web site
- 199,655 page views of the AboutFace Web site
- 150,000 downloads of the PTSD Coach mobile app in more than 80 countries
- 106,642 views of VA PTSD videos on YouTube
- 30,000 visitors to the VA PTSD Program online locator

The mission of NCPTSD is to advance the clinical care and social welfare of America's Veterans and others who have experienced trauma or who suffer from PTSD.

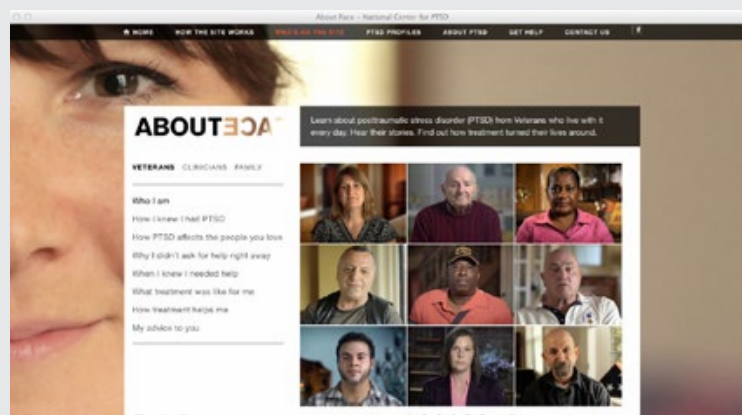
The Center's Web site (www.ptsd.va.gov) is NCPTSD's primary information distribution vehicle, which houses all of the Center's educational information, self-help tools, modules and courses, videos, apps, manuals and more. The Center continually places emphasis on updating new and compelling content for use, as well as driving people to the site. To increase the amount of visitors to the site, NCPTSD incorporated search engine optimization, social media, email bulletins and other outreach tactics.

The Web site offers modules on understanding PTSD, information on effective treatment for PTSD and a VA PTSD program locator to help eligible Veterans find treatment programs at local medical centers. The site also offers 17 self-help tools with video coaches to help those who have been through trauma manage troubling symptoms such as problems with sleep, reminders of the trauma and anger. As of May 2014, there were 2.2 million Web site page views and almost 30,000 visitors to the VA PTSD Program Locator page.

The NCPTSD team created six animated videos, which launched in spring of 2014 and are formatted for and intended to be shared via social media. These videos talk about PTSD, its symptoms and effective treatments.

NCPTSD's AboutFace project continues to be an effective means of reaching Veterans as well. It is an online collection of videos of Veterans talking about living with PTSD and how treatment turned their lives around (www.ptsd.va.gov/AboutFace/). The goal of AboutFace is to help Veterans recognize their PTSD, reduce stigma and encourage Veterans to seek treatment. Some of the videos are also available via YouTube. In FY 2013, clinician videos were added in which therapists talk about treatment.

As of May 2014, the site had 199,655 page views.



SPOTLIGHT ON: PTSD AWARENESS MONTH

Every June, NCPTSD executed a national PTSD Awareness Month campaign. Collaborating with more than 80 organizations and departments throughout the month, NCPTSD implemented a national online campaign (with some international reach to UK and Canada) to raise awareness about PTSD. The campaign centered on a theme of overcoming barriers to care, using the tagline "Take the Step. Raise PTSD Awareness," focusing on various steps anyone can take each week of the month.

The campaign included Web site, flyers, screen savers, social media and email marketing, coupled with ideas on hosting events and posting materials at VA facilities and public locations across the country. Items such as "10 Steps to Raise Awareness" and other online guidance were provided so others could hold their own events or share information. NCPTSD program managers and Public Affairs staff helped reach the goals of increased PTSD Web traffic, social media participation, sign-ups for the PTSD Monthly Update and encouragement of Veterans and others with PTSD to seek care. NCPTSD also provided TV and radio PSAs from AboutFace for distribution and coordinated PSAs to be shown at Major League Baseball games, such as the NY Mets and the Boston Red Sox.

As a result of the campaign, the PTSD Web site visitors increased by 81 percent, Facebook "Likes" increased by 70 percent, the PTSD Monthly Update e-newsletter increased its recipients by 32 percent and PTSD Research Quarterly subscriptions increased by 50 percent for FY 2013.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

AT A GLANCE:

For FY 2013 – 2014:

- 657,000 total visits to www.VeteransCrisisLine.net, an increase of 72 percent compared to previous reporting period
- More than 300 national in-person outreach events
- More than 100 national and local organizations engaged
- September Suicide Prevention Month coordinated activities accounted for more than 111,000 visits to www.VeteransCrisisLine.net, an increase of 50 percent
- 1.8 million people reached at in-person events

The Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) is a free, confidential resource that Veterans and their families and friends can access any day, any time. Trained professionals — some of them Veterans themselves — are ready to listen, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Since launching in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 1.1 million calls and made more than 37,000 lifesaving rescues.

During the reporting period, the VCL team coordinated more than 300 outreach events nationally to provide training, distribute promotional and collateral materials and support a VCL presence at conferences and events. In addition, local Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) organized their own local outreach activities as part of a program mandate to perform at least five outreach events a month. In total, VCL representatives reached more than 1.8 million people at conferences and events for VSOs, educational institutions, media outlets, sports leagues and teams, community and faith-based organizations, NGOs and corporations.



Materials were put in the hands of Veterans, Servicemembers, health care/mental health workers, families and community members at a local and national level.

The VCL outreach team worked with more than 100 supporting organizations nationwide to help carry messages to Veterans' families and friends. The outreach team developed and provided collateral material an online toolkits for these organizations.

The VCL team relied upon online engagement, which contributed to more than 657,000 total visits to www.VeteransCrisisLine.net. Efforts included disseminating PSAs and outreach videos through YouTube and online channels, sending quarterly outreach emails to VSOs and coordinating Webinars for partner organizations to provide information about the VCL. During FY 2014, there were more than 19,000 total social media mentions of the VCL, garnering 42 million impressions alone on Twitter.

The VCL team also executed an online advertising campaign employing keywords, displaying banners and posting Facebook ads. Online advertising targeted seekers of information about suicide or resources online. PSAs reached Veterans, their loved ones and community members nationwide in a wide variety of markets. Out-of-home advertisements

reached audiences in select markets nationally.

During months when paid media was used compared to when it was not, call volume surged by 175 percent and chat volume by 38 percent. PSAs achieved more than \$16.9 million in equivalent earned media value, earning an estimated 1.6 billion in gross media impressions and consistently performing within the top five percent of all PSAs tracked by Nielsen. Out-of-home advertisements generated more than 161 million impressions in just one month.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

AT A GLANCE:

For FY 2013 – 2014:

- More than 400 relationships with national organizations
- 4.2 billion impressions through social media
- 3.2 million visits to the Make the Connection Web site
- 2.3 million “Likes” on Facebook
- 145,000 uses of the VA resource locator

Make the Connection (MTC) is a VA public awareness campaign that provides personal testimonials and resources to help Veterans discover ways to improve their lives. The campaign encourages Veterans and their families to “make the connection”— with information and resources, with the strength



SPOTLIGHT ON: VETERANS CRISIS LINE

The 2013 Suicide Prevention Month (SPM) “It Matters” campaign encompassed an integrated outreach approach across a multitude of platforms, including a photo-sharing campaign on the VCL Web site, distribution of collateral materials and online toolkit items, a social media presence, partner engagement online and through national and local initiatives, earned media in major news outlets, out-of-home advertisements in five markets and airings of a TV and radio PSA across the country.

Audiences engaged with VCL content online, taking the initiative to share social media posts, written content, toolkit materials and collateral items with their networks to help spread the word about the resource. During SPM 2013, there were more than 1,000 toolkit downloads, more than 14 million social media impressions earned through posts about the VCL and more than 130,000 views of the SPM “Talking About It Matters” PSA on YouTube.

The VCL team worked with *The Huffington Post* “Invisible Casualties” blog series to place nine posts about the Veterans Crisis Line. In addition, more than 90 pieces about the Veterans Crisis Line, Military Crisis Line and Suicide Prevention Month were generated during that month alone – including clips in *Forbes*, *Military Times* and on CNN.

During SPM 2013, Twitter mentions for VCL spiked to 15 million people and included content by high profile individuals including Craig Morgan, Gary Sinise and John Mayer.

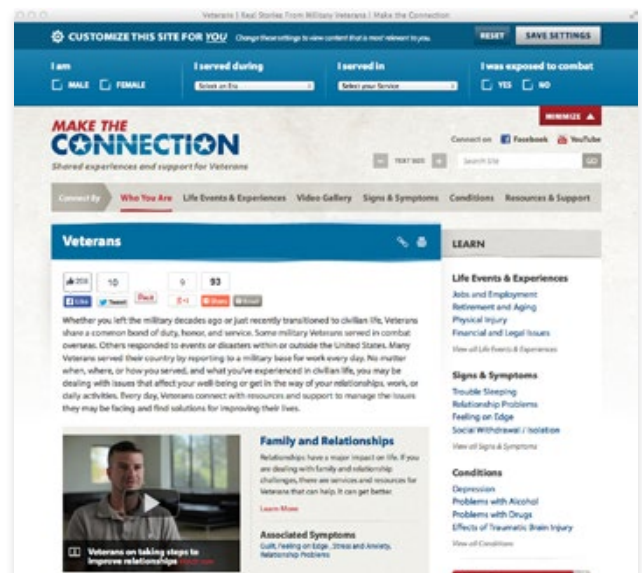
and resilience of Veterans like themselves, with other people and with available sources of support including mental health treatments.

In FY 2013 – 2014, the MTC team engaged more than 400 national organizations and continued to broaden its reach, fostering relationships that broadcast campaign messaging and resources to Veterans' families and friends and other targeted audiences through established communication channels.

The MTC team attended 26 outreach events and speaking engagements nationally to provide information, distribute promotional and collateral materials and support a MTC presence at conferences and events. In addition, MTC has received more than 160 requests from organizations for materials and/or outreach content to share, including magazine and newsletter articles, blog posts, social media content and Web site content.

The team engaged with organizations to share campaign content through their networks and platforms using social media to grow and retain the MTC social media communities, specifically Facebook and YouTube. Efforts included developing a user-generated photo campaign to mobilize Facebook fans around the campaign mission and a photo album specifically for promoting May Mental Health Awareness Month. The team also launched a Google+ page to reach Veterans on new social media platforms and disseminated PSAs and outreach videos through YouTube and online channels. Additionally, the team executed an online advertising campaign employing keyword, display banners and social media and video advertisements, supplemented by print advertisements in military-focused and consumer magazines.

Supplementing all outreach, the MTC team distributed materials at events for mental health professionals and shipped materials to VA Local Recovery Coordinators (LRCs) and partner organizations. In addition, the team developed two PSAs for TV and radio broadcast nationwide. Since FY 2013, more than 1.4 million pieces of collateral



material were distributed, reaching Veterans of all branches and demographics, LRCs, members of VSOs, Veteran groups on college and university campuses, mental health and other health care organizations, law enforcement and emergency services, community-based organizations, corporations and the general public.

ONLINE TRAINING COURSES - MOVING FORWARD AND PARENTING

AT A GLANCE:

For FY 2013 – 2014:

- 5 million Veterans, Caregivers and friends reached through social media
- Webinars conducted to individual VSOs
- Exhibition at the VA Mental Health Showcase

VA created online courses with a series of training modules, providing tools and resources to Veterans and their families for support and to overcome challenges. Moving Forward: Overcoming Life's Challenges (Moving Forward) is an educational and life coaching program that teaches problem-solving skills to help individuals better handle life's challenges. Parenting for Servicemembers and Veterans (Parenting) helps parents learn how to address both everyday parenting challenges as well as family issues unique to military families.

Collaborating with third-party organizations that regularly interact with Veterans was crucial to ensuring the success of the Moving Forward and Parenting programs. The staff focused on developing lasting relationships with key VSOs, mental health organizations and parenting associations to help spread the word about these products.

To do so, Moving Forward and Parenting conducted online and offline research into the mission, reach and activities of a variety of their stakeholders. The program staff engaged them by presenting during the monthly VSO briefing in January of 2014, providing individual Webinars to six main VSOs and exhibiting during the VA Mental Health Showcase in May of 2014, with similar outreach planned for the rest of the year. All presentation and Webinar attendees received a fact sheet, social media content and background information to incorporate into their existing communications



channels to reach as many Veterans and Caregivers as possible. For example, the American Legion tweeted about Parenting to its 30,600 followers, and Paralyzed Veterans of America promoted Moving Forward to its 11,400 followers. The Webinars and a toolkit of outreach materials were also made available online.

Moving Forward and Parenting also worked with VHA's social media channels to promote the programs, developing social media posts for both products for VHA to incorporate into its social media content calendar.

COACHING INTO CARE

AT A GLANCE:

For FY 2013 – 2014:

- 30 percent call volume increase to the Coaching Into Care (CIC) call center
- 8,000-22,000 Web site page views per quarter
- 7,715 subscribers to CIC e-newsletter
- 2,123,169 views of CIC Facebook ads and 12,058 Facebook followers
- 20 trainings to partner call centers, both in and outside of VA
- Memoranda of Agreement created with several VSOs, DoD agencies and agencies outside the Federal government

CIC provides a “coaching” service for family and friends of Veterans who see their Veteran needs help. Coaching involves helping the user learn how to motivate their Veteran to seek services. The service is free and provided by licensed clinical social workers and psychologists. The goal of the service is to help Veterans and family members find the appropriate services in their community.

As a direct resource to Veterans and their loved ones, CIC’s outreach efforts are an integral part of its service. Due to various activities, relationships and strategies, CIC’s Web site (www.va.gov/coachingintocare) page views have ranged from 8,000 to 22,000 page views of the home page alone per quarter during the reporting period. CIC increased inbound calls to the call center (1-888-823-7458) from 15 percent to 29.8 percent, with more than 2,800 first-time callers.

Maintaining a Facebook page and Twitter account, CIC posted approximately two to four times per week about CIC, VA services and mental health self-care.



CIC developed and posted 30-second and 60-second videos on YouTube to increase the visibility of the outreach call center and placed radio ads in targeted markets from July – September of 2013. Other advertisements included Facebook ads during most of the quarters in the past two fiscal years. In addition to social media, CIC created a podcast titled “Voice of Warriors” and presented it on May 7, 2013.

To strengthen outreach, CIC staff members published a national, quarterly e-newsletter, “CIC eNews,” for the Veteran community as a whole and for VA staff and non-VA staff. After five issues, CIC had 7,615 subscribers, with estimations that 80 percent of these are affiliated with state, local or Federal government agencies, and 20 percent are other Veteran stakeholders from non-profits or VSOs.

CIC’s online banners were posted to 100 Web sites outside VA – mostly on sites of VSOs, state Departments of Veterans Affairs and other local-based municipal services – and provided an informational entry to VA resources. Through these outreach efforts, CIC increased its Web site page views and calls to the call center.

In-person outreach and collaborations with organizations nationwide have proven to be successful as well. CIC staff participated in direct

outreach presentations – both via conference call and in-person meetings – to more than 20 other agencies and professional organizations.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND ANALYTICS CONNECTED HEALTH

The Office of Information and Analytics Connected Health leads the effort to improve services to Veterans, their families and Caregivers by increasing access, fostering continuity and promoting patient empowerment through electronic health technologies. The Mobile Health initiative and My HealthVet are the programs that include outreach efforts.

MOBILE HEALTH INITIATIVE

AT A GLANCE:

- More than 20 senior leader speaking engagements at conferences or on panels
 - One-on-one mobile app demonstrations with VSOs
 - Monthly e-newsletter to Veterans and Caregiver participating in Family Caregiver Pilot Program to test apps
-

VA Mobile Health aims to improve the health of Veterans by providing technologies that expand clinical care beyond the traditional office visit. Its mobile applications (apps) are developed for both Veterans and VA care teams, offering safe and secure mobile access to patient data and providing more opportunities for Veterans to be active participants in their health care.

To launch the VA Mobile Health Family Caregiver Pilot Program (the field test of apps developed for Caregivers), the Mobile Health team organized a launch event at the VA Central Office and scheduled several speaking opportunities for Connected Health leaders. The Mobile Health team team exhibited

the Caregiver apps at two VA Connected Health Showcase events and to the American Council for Technology (ACT) Industry Advisory Council (IAC) Igniting Innovation Show.



In addition, the team arranged one-on-one demonstrations of the Family Caregiver suite of apps (nine apps) to four VSOs: American Legion, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association (IAVA) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). These demonstrations led to articles in American Legion, VFW and DAV publications and a video on YouTube posted by IAVA, which reached thousands of Veterans, health care IT leaders, health care providers and members of the general public.

Surrounding the launch of the Mobile Health Family Caregiver Pilot, the Mobile Health team team fielded interviews from more than 40 media outlets including *Stars and Stripes*, *Modern Healthcare*, *FierceMobileHealthcare*, *Federal News Radio*, *mHealth News* and more. The team also developed a monthly electronic newsletter that was distributed to nearly 1,000 Caregivers and Veterans participating in the program.



MY HEALTH e VET

AT A GLANCE:

- Over 23 national outreach events, reaching more than 200,000 influencers and Veterans
- 7 academic journal publications and presentations to reach broader academic, informatics and research, policymakers and health care leadership communities
- Multi-pronged campaign to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of My Health e Vet

My Health e Vet is VA's Personal Health Record (PHR) – designed for Veterans, active duty Servicemembers, their dependents and caregivers – to help manage health care, partner with VA health care teams and provide opportunities and tools to make informed decisions about their health.

My Health e Vet National Program Office participated in more than 23 national outreach events in FY 2013 - 2014 targeting Veterans and their families. Events included speaking engagements, onsite registrations/enrollments to My Health e Vet and general information sessions, most of which occurred at VSO conferences, hiring fairs and VA's National Veterans Sports Programs

and Special Events. As a result, My Health e Vet reached more than 200,000 influencers and Veterans.

OFFICE OF INTERAGENCY RELATIONS/HEALTH AFFAIRS/ COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION

AT A GLANCE:

- Held more than 1,600 outreach events to more than 190,000 OEF/OIF/OND Servicemembers, Veterans and their families nationwide
- Held monthly resource exhibits at the Pentagon
- More than 22,700 Twitter followers

During the reporting period, the staff established a formal, systematic communication mechanism to disseminate information between DoD and VA, with the goal of ensuring that the National Guard and Reserve population received information about VA health care, benefits and services. Consistent dialogue with leadership within the Reserve Service Components, including Army and Air National Guard, as well as the Army, Air Force, Marine, Navy and Coast Guard Reserves, continued to improve and ensured that pertinent information was shared with these communities. The team reached all National Guard and Reserve Service personnel via newsletters, Web sites and other communication portals and achieved more consistent – and thus strengthened – communication throughout the National Guard/Reserves and VHA Program Offices.

Throughout the last 2 years, the team participated in numerous field outreach events for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans and their families, especially in preparation for large events such as DoD Demobilizations, Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Musters and DoD Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA).

One of the largest events was the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP), with its 5 year

anniversary event on January 28, 2013. A VA Liaison Officer assigned to the Pentagon worked with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, YRRP staff and the seven Reserve Components (RCs) Liaison Officers. More than 1,600 of these events were held throughout the United States and territories, providing more than 190,000 OEF/OIF/OND Servicemembers, Veterans and their families with vital information.

In addition, the team hosted monthly Resource Exhibits at the Pentagon, which averaged 100 attendees per event and achieved steady interest throughout each three-hour exhibit. The purpose of the exhibits was to provide literature, awareness and education about VA services to interested Servicemembers, Veterans and family members who work in the Pentagon.

Staff provided information briefings to every National Guard and Reserve Services component.

Online outreach also proved successful for informing eligible Veterans and their dependents of modifications of their VA benefits.

Program staff also reached Veterans through Twitter, with more than 22,700 followers.

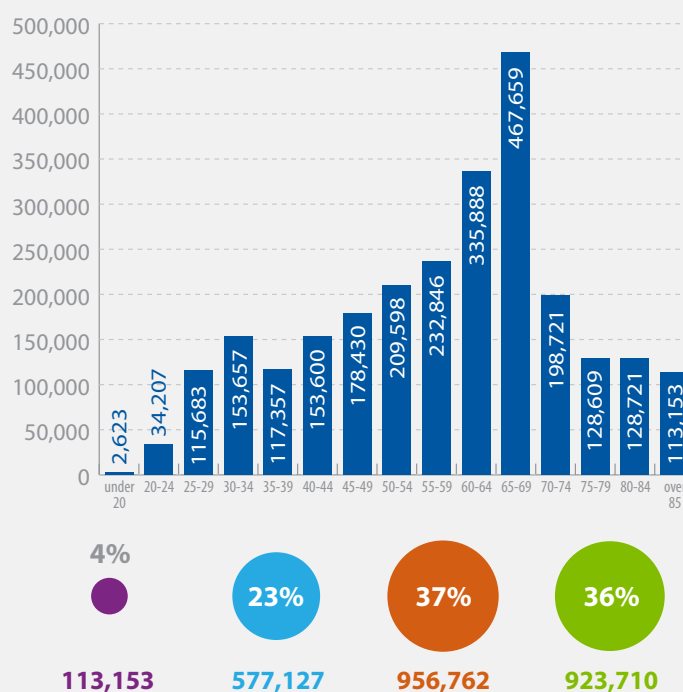
SPOTLIGHT ON: MY HEALTHeVET

The My Health^eVet team developed and implemented a national campaign called *My Health^eVet: Keeping the Promise - Celebrating 10 Years of Online Access* to ensure that My Health^eVet remains the Personal Health Record (PHR) of choice. Using grassroots communications and national press distribution, the program targeted Veterans already enrolled in VHA.

The campaign utilized a variety of outreach tactics, including traditional and new media to promote key messages of the 10-year anniversary. This included internal calls with My Health^eVet Coordinators, a Vantage Point blog post, Facebook and Twitter posts, Web banner posted during November 2013, VANews "Did You Know?" segment, direct mail inserts and traditional radio spots.

By September 2014, My Health^eVet supported more than 2.9 million registered users. More than 1.7 million VA patients have authenticated with a Premium account and have access to all features, including easy access to information from the VA Electronic Health Record. More than 1 million unique VA patients have opted in to use Secure Messaging to communicate with their VA health care teams.

MY HEALTHeVET REGISTRATION BY AGE - NOVEMBER 2013 MEDIAN AGE = 61



OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

AT A GLANCE:

- 3,054 social media click-throughs and 74,992 email recipients for the Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Registry information
- 4,712 social media click-throughs and 16,728 email recipients for Great American Smokeout information
- 1,365 social media click-throughs and 13,191 email recipients for World AIDS Day information
- 2,548 social media click-throughs and 17,675 email recipients for the National Public Health Week information

The mission of VHA's Office of Public Health (OPH) is to serve as the leader and authority in public health, taking the science and practice of promoting health and preventing disease among Veteran and VA staff populations.

OPH began outreach on January 10, 2013, to promote the Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Registry. OPH used social media including Facebook and Twitter, email campaigns and its Web sites to promote the planned registry and public comment period for the registry questionnaire.

OPH also used social media, emails and Web sites to promote various monthly observances to stimulate Veteran participation, including the Great American Smokeout (November 21, 2013), World AIDS Day (December 1, 2013), National Public Health Week (April 7-13, 2014) and National Hepatitis Awareness Month.

In April 2014, OPH printed and mailed a four-page newsletter to 678,000 Veterans on the Gulf War deployment roster, Gulf War registry participants and individuals who had subscribed to Gulf War announcements and information. The newsletter contained information about a longitudinal study



SPOTLIGHT ON: OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Great American Smokeout, held every November, is an event that challenges people to stop smoking for the day and helps them to visualize life without tobacco.

For the 2013 event, OPH staff encouraged Veterans who are smokers to quit for the day by promoting the availability of VA's smoking quitline and SmokefreeVET.

The VA quitline provides support for Veterans and can double their chances for successfully quitting. SmokefreeVET is a text messaging program that helps Veterans who want to end their tobacco addiction by reinforcing the message of tobacco cessation long after a Veteran leaves VA health care appointments.

Since its launch on May 31, 2013, the SmokefreeVET text-messaging program has been used by more than 2,000 Veterans seeking information about ending their tobacco addiction.



about Gulf War Veterans, VA health-related benefits and the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. Social media posts and email announcements were used to extend the information's reach by driving traffic to the online publication.

Due to these outreach efforts, the online newsletter was viewed 4,028 times, and there were 1,108 downloads of the newsletter in PDF form in April. Two Facebook posts and tweets received 2,548 click-throughs, and 17,675 email bulletins averaged 21.4 percent unique opens with an 11.4 percent click-through rate.

PROCUREMENT AND LOGISTICS

AT A GLANCE:

- Participated in more than 155 outreach events during the reporting period

Procurement and Logistics outreach activities surrounded educating Veteran business owners about the benefits and process for working with VA as a service provider.

To accomplish outreach goals, staff participated in events sponsored by local, regional and national organizations, including Small Business Administration, Chambers of Commerce, VSOs and others. At these events, staff

operated booths, hosted workshops, participated in roundtable sessions or panel discussions or presented at organizations' meetings or gatherings. In addition, staff created and conducted monthly vendor training sessions, annual Vendor Fairs and conferences.

Most of these activities were advertised by OSDBU and VetGovPartner, as well as through email, phone and social media invitations and announcements, via local contacts and procurement community networks. At most events, staff handed out a "Doing Business with the Department of Veterans Affairs" tri-fold brochure, OSDBU's Direct Connect Trifold and, when applicable, PowerPoint slides from presentations. Some of these materials were able to be customized by each VISN.

With these outreach activities, VHA was able to increase procurement participation activities by current and future SDVOSBs, VOSBs and Small Disadvantaged Businesses (including 8(a), Woman-Owned Small Businesses and Historically Underutilized Businesses). The outreach activities encouraged greater competition by educating vendors on the processes they need to follow to bring their offerings to market. The businesses engaged provide VHA with a larger market base with the best possible goods and services at fair and reasonable cost.

READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICES

AT A GLANCE:

- In FY 2014, participated in 27,816 outreach events, of which 16 percent had a Mobile Vet Center present
- More than 92,000 face-to-face connections with OIF/OEF/OND Veterans
- 9,500 calls to the Vet Center Combat Call Center
- 4,300 outreach-specific events at 1,300 institutions of higher learning, reaching approximately 71,000 OEF/OIF/OND student Veterans

Readjustment counseling staff welcomes home war Veterans by providing quality readjustment counseling in a caring manner. Staff understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community.

Readjustment Counseling Services (RCS) include Vet Centers and the Mobile Vet Center fleet. All RCS staff members focus on reaching out to eligible Veterans, Servicemembers and their families through face-to-face interaction in order to provide access to Vet Center services. RCS has staff who have the responsibility of proactively seeking out Veterans, specifically those who have not yet accessed services, by participating in a variety of Federal, state and locally organized Veteran-related events. Often focusing on outreach to local Veteran populations, RCS staff frequented demobilization events (post-deployment health reassessments), job fairs, Stand Down events for homeless Veterans and activities on Active Duty bases as well as Reserve and National Guard Armories. In FY 2013, RCS staff participated in more than 21,000 outreach events and made more than 92,000 outreach contacts to OIF/OEF/OND Veterans (face-to-face connections), all of whom were verified to ensure that these individuals served in combat zones.

To supplement this in-person outreach, RCS staff developed print material for distribution at various events, which are designed to meet the needs of the specific audience. All RCS print material was designed



to provide eligible Veterans, Servicemembers and their families with information about VA services as well as how to access those services.

During the reporting period, the RCS team continually looked to develop relationships with stakeholders, internal and external to VA, in order to create referral processes for Veterans, Servicemembers and their families to access RCS and other VA services. Examples of these relationships include VSOs, institutions of higher learning, Federal and state Departments of Labor and programs within VAMCs. Staff worked with more than 1,300 schools across the country, providing information and referrals, student training opportunities and education about Veteran-related topics. Over the past three fiscal years, RCS staff attended more than 4,300 outreach-specific events at these schools, providing information to approximately 71,000 OEF/OIF/OND student Veterans.

RCS also operates the Vet Center Combat Call Center (1-877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)). The confidential, around-the-clock call center is available for Veterans and their families who call to talk about their military experience and transition home, as well as to be directly connected to Vet Center counseling staff. The call center is staffed by combat Veterans of all eras as well as family members of combat Veterans. This call center provides warm handoffs to all Vet Centers, the National Crisis Hotline, Dayton Primary care triage hotline and the National Caregiver Hotline. In FY 2014 the Vet Center Combat Veteran Call Center (available 24/7) processed and made referrals for 40,978

Veteran, Servicemember, family and Veteran stakeholder calls.

In FY 2013 - 2014, RCS outreach included eligible Veterans, Servicemembers and their families, specifically combat Veterans, Veterans who have endured Military Sexual Trauma (MST), those who provided direct emergency medical care to casualties of combat operations or hostilities and members of unmanned aerial vehicle crew in combat zones or areas of hostility. As a part of all the outreach RCS staff performed, staff regularly coordinated with regional and local VA and VHA offices of public affairs. The majority of this collaboration was to inform the local communities when Vet Center staff were traveling to their areas and providing access to services.

REHABILITATION AND PROSTHETIC SERVICES

AT A GLANCE:

- More than 17.2 million prosthetic devices and items provided to over 3 million Veterans in FY 2014
- More than 27 percent of all Veterans seen by rehabilitation care provider
- More than 4,000 downloads to Concussion Coach mobile application in FY 2014

Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services (RPS) is responsible for the national policies and programs for medical rehabilitation, prosthetic and sensory



SPOTLIGHT ON: MOBILE VET CENTERS

VHA's Readjustment Counseling Service operates the Mobile Vet Centers, a fleet of 70 vehicles that are staffed by professionals who are also Veterans of recent conflicts. This allows for the creation of personal relationships among Veterans. Each Mobile Vet Center is equipped with a confidential counseling space and state-of-the-art satellite communications that offer fully encrypted tele-conference equipment, access to VA systems and connectivity to emergency response systems.

These vehicles are deployed for a number of reasons and provide outreach and access to services for Veterans and families who are geographically distant from existing VA services. The Mobile Vet Centers are also used to provide early access to VA services to Veterans newly returning from combat zones via outreach to active military bases, National Guard and Reserve locations across the country.

The Mobile Vet Centers are used in emergency situations as well. In the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, VA deployed five Mobile Vet Centers from across the region to assist Boston-area Veterans and first responders. The RCS staff provided counseling and referrals to almost anyone who visited.

aids services that promote the health, independence and quality of life for Veterans with disabilities. The office comprises national programs for Audiology and Speech Pathology, Blind Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Chiropractic Care, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service and Recreation Therapy. Special programs include Polytrauma/Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) System of Care, Amputation System of Care and Blind Rehabilitation Care Continuum.

RPS utilized various outreach tactics to connect with Veterans and stakeholders. One major event was the VA Showcase at Crystal City on January 29, 2014, in which RPS presented all aspects of service.



RPS also boosted its social media presence by working with OPIA, developing Facebook posts and multiple tweets. Content highlighted the release of the Concussion Coach app; the opening of new Polytrauma Center in Tampa, FL; awards the Polytrauma System of Care received; services offered by Blind Rehabilitation Service; and information highlighted in RPS-related blog posts. By this outreach, RPS increased awareness of its services with special emphasis on the Polytrauma System of Care and Blind Rehabilitation Services and provided relevant and updated information about the Blind Rehabilitation Service Continuum of Care.

RPS also contributed two articles for VA's official blog, "Vantage Point," which reaches Veterans, family members, survivors and other stakeholders.

RPS developed two PSAs regarding military/Veteran hearing health issues, which were made available on the Defense Hearing Center of Excellence Web site (www.hearing.health.mil). These PSAs targeted the general public, Servicemembers, Veterans and their family members, reaching a variety of ages, demographics, conflicts and Service branches.

Finally, RPS undertook a redesign of Polytrauma System of Care display materials to better reach Veterans and other stakeholders, which were used at conferences and distributed throughout all VAMCs, clinics and other facilities.

VETERANS CANTEN SERVICES

AT A GLANCE:

- 6,000 sign-ups for the VCS Father's Day "register to win" promotion
- 98 percent of over 2,000 Veterans signed up for VCS information during the 2013 VA National Rehabilitation Games
- 6 Recruit/Military career fairs held in various regions throughout the country, reaching more than 600 Veterans
- 15,250 followers of VCS' Facebook page

Veterans Canteen Service's (VCS) mission is to provide America's Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system, their families and Caregivers, volunteers, visitors and VA employees with reasonably priced merchandise and services essential to their comfort and well-being. In FY 2013 - 2014, the team conducted three main outreach campaigns and continually engaged audiences via social media.

VCS embarked on an initiative to measure satisfaction levels among Veterans who frequent VCS stores. To secure involvement among Veterans, a special Fathers Day sale event in June 2013 included a "register to win" promotion only for Veterans, with a

section to include email address. This method served as another means for informing Veterans of their VCS benefits. Results of the “register to win” initiative yielded more than 6,000 Veterans who signed up for the program.

VCS co-sponsored all VA National Rehabilitation Games. In 2013, VCS attended six games, participating in the registration process that included an information booth for Veteran competitors. Staff members provided Veterans with information about VCS benefits available at medical centers, community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) and other locations. More than 2,000 Veterans participating at these events had direct contact with VCS representatives. Veterans voluntarily provided email addresses that would allow VCS to communicate directly about upcoming promotions and customers’ service surveys. Approximately 98 percent of Veterans who participated in the Games signed up for VCS communications during the registration process.

In FY 2013 - 2014, VCS also attended four Recruit/Military career fairs in New York, NY; Oklahoma City, OK; O’Fallon, IL; and St. Louis, MO. Through these fairs, VCS reached more than 600 Veterans.

In May 2014, VCS briefed directors of VSOs about VCS operations and benefits available to Veterans and Caregivers, from services VCS provides to Veterans within VAMCs to non-VA programs, such as Special Order and business-to-business programs. In addition, VCS discussed the importance of reaching out to rural Veterans and their start-up initiative of an e-commerce platform. VCS will continue to collaborate with VSOs via its newsletters.

WOMEN’S HEALTH SERVICES

AT A GLANCE:

- Nearly 80,000 outbound calls made, reaching 50,000 women Veterans
- More than 8,500 incoming calls to the Women Veterans Call Center
- 7,500 information packets mailed

At each VAMC nationwide, a Women Veterans Program Manager is designated to advise and advocate for women Veterans and help coordinate all the services a Veteran needs, from primary care to specialized care for chronic conditions or reproductive health.

Women’s Health Services (WHS) collaborated with the American Heart Association (AHA) to raise awareness about heart disease in women through the Go Red For Women® campaign. In preparation for VA Goes Red campaigns across the country, WHS developed an event planning toolkit and held various Webinars with VA staff to walk through the materials. The toolkit provided information on how to plan and implement a successful VA Goes Red event, how to connect with local AHA affiliates, modifiable templates and links to AHA and VA resources that facilities could use to promote their American Heart Month and VA Goes Red events.

Go Red For Women®

VA and the American Heart Association's Go Red For Women® movement are raising awareness of **heart disease as the No. 1 killer of women and women Veterans**. Create a profile, identify yourself as having served in the military and connect with other military women with similar experiences of heart disease in the Go Red Heart Match program.

SIGN UP: www.GoRedForWomen.org

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WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE  **EXCELLENCE**  www.vawomenhealth.va.gov

On February 7, 2014, the VA Central Office held the National VA Goes Red Event that was broadcast live across VA. The event kicked off with a “Heart Parade” around the building and included a slideshow and videos from medical centers across the country showing how they are heart healthy; an exercise demo; and exciting guest speakers from VA, DoD and a female Veteran AHA spokesperson telling her personal story about heart disease. The event reached VA employees and women Veterans at medical centers across the country. While the focus was on women and heart disease, male participants were encouraged to join as well.

Proactively reaching out to pregnant women Veterans about care before pregnancy, WHS developed two outreach videos: “A Healthy Pregnancy Begins with a Healthy You” and “Women and Maternity Care.” Both videos are available at www.womenshealth.va.gov.

Additionally, WHS developed a fact sheet on available reproductive health services and piloted a Maternity Care Coordinator Telephone Care program that has reached out to more than 200 pregnant Veterans.

WHS staff developed monthly outreach resources featuring different themes that Women Veteran Program Managers (WVPMs) used to connect on a local level with women Veterans. Part of the campaign included using a variety of social media platforms to reach women Veterans.

In April 2013, WHS established the Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC). The new hotline (1-855-VA-WOMEN) receives and responds to questions from Veterans, their families and Caregivers about the many VA services and resources available to women Veterans. In the past year, the Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC) made nearly 80,000 outbound calls, successfully reaching 50,000 women Veterans to inform them about benefits and services for which they might be eligible. In addition, the WVCC mailed more than 7,500 packets of information to women Veterans at their request.



SPOTLIGHT ON: WOMEN VETERANS

In March 2014, WHS, in collaboration with VBA, NCA and VA’s Center for Women Veterans celebrated Women Veterans Make History. The 2014 theme focused on women of character, courage and commitment who provide a foundation for future successes in their own post-military endeavors. Throughout the month of March, VA hosted events to celebrate the successes of women Veterans in multiple sectors of society, including, but not limited to, the private sector, nonprofits, government (Federal, state, local) and within their communities to provide information on services available to women Veterans and to elevate awareness of women Veterans’ roles in society.

A Twitter Town Hall kicked off the month’s events. The hashtag **#WomenVets** was used on 698 tweets from March 2 – 7, 2014. The @DeptVetAffairs and @VAVetBenefits handles had more than 500 retweets and more than 600 new followers on the day of the #WomenVets Twitter Town Hall. A SharePoint repository site was also created so that employees in each Administration could use the tools created nationally to encourage and promote local events. Products made available included a toolkit, posters, videos, fact sheets and reports.

CONCLUSION

As we reflect on the many good things that have occurred within the Department during FY 2013 and 2014, including outreach activities, it is also important to recognize our reputation was damaged during this period. This was primarily due to significant problems in health care access that affected hundreds of thousands of Veterans at many of our VA medical centers.

As a result, many Veterans lost faith in VA. Congress recently passed The Veteran Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (“Choice Act”), which provided additional funding to VA to help Veterans get quicker access to medical care. The legislation also included programs designed to help VA hold its senior executives more accountable. VA is also in the process of undertaking the largest reorganization in our history to ensure Veterans and their families have access to VA services and to streamline the process for them.

Veterans have always been VA’s top priority. However, we are recommitting our efforts and sharpening our focus to ensure the Department operates more effectively and efficiently as a Veteran-centric, customer-service organization. Everything we do must have a positive impact on Veterans. But we must do more than just improve our programs and services to make them more accessible, relevant and attractive. We also have an obligation to inform Veterans of our many programs and services.

Despite facing many challenges during the last few years, VA has made huge strides in our outreach programs for Veterans. We have enhanced our public-facing Web site and leveraged different social media platforms to make it easier for Veterans to connect with VA. We have collaborated with other federal agencies and with private organizations to use best practices to improve our outreach programs

and expand our reach. We have done a better job integrating and synchronizing the efforts of our Office of National Veterans Outreach (NVO) with the outreach offices of our three Administrations. And we have executed national campaigns to raise awareness about VA benefits and services.

Even though many of our recent outreach efforts have been successful and received favorably by Veterans, we know there is still room for improvement and much work to do.

Outreach will continue to be an integral component of VA’s communications as we work to reach Veterans, their families and stakeholders to educate them on new and current programs and benefits. We will also continue listening to our Veterans and stakeholders through in-person events, social media and other tools. Together we can continue VA’s important mission of serving our country’s Veterans.

2014 BIENNIAL REPORT TO CONGRESS
VETERAN OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs