

## **Texas Veteran Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Treatment Program**

### **Project Abstract**

Briefly summarize the proposed project.

Collin County is the sixth largest county in Texas by population (of one million plus) and lies just northeast of the Dallas –Fort Worth Metroplex.

Decades of research have shown that veterans can have difficulty readjusting to civilian life. Studies have shown that Veterans have a higher than average prevalence of mental health and substance abuse issues, frequently resulting in illegal, violent, and risky behavior which leads to increased contact with the criminal justice system and incarceration. Unfortunately, many jails and prisons cannot offer the incarcerated adequate mental health and substance abuse treatment. Veterans need to be provided with educational and therapeutic services while inpatient as alternatives to incarceration in the criminal justice system.

The Texas Veteran Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Treatment Program will be the expansion of the known program VALOR that operate as an intermediate sanctions facility (ISF) for Texas justice-involved veterans who are facing Felony or Misdemeanor probation revocations or incarceration across the state of Texas. The program is a collaborative effort between the Veteran Treatment Court, Collin County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD), and the Sheriff's Office to provide veteran-structured treatment programs with the goal to to successfully reintegrate the veterans into civilian society. Upon meeting minimum criteria, the program is open to all Texas Veterans and does not have to be sanctioned through a Veteran Treatment Court.

In the Texas Veteran Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Treatment Program, veterans will be housed together, mimicking the unit structure familiar to veterans. Veterans will be surrounded by others who are suffering from similar mental illnesses, substance abuse issues, and unhealthy coping mechanisms and who understand the sacrifice of military service. Putting them together allows them to begin to heal through unit bonding, allowing them to be open and vulnerable and to assist one another. Veteran-specific programming will be offered by qualified treatment providers who have experience working with veterans or are veterans themselves, providing an integrative and holistic approach for re-entry based on treatment plans developed to comprehensively address their individual needs.

Utilizing grant funding, Veterans will be provided group and individual sessions, develop new coping skills, learn to establish safety and control in their lives, and create re-entry plans. Daily programming routine will include alcohol/drug treatment, PTSD/trauma counseling, peer mentoring, anger management, emotional regulation, among other treatment modalities, as well life skills training and enrichment activities, such as art/music therapy, mindful meditation, and access to the veterans' book library. The extensive treatment regimen will be supervised by a licensed Clinician.

The program will provide a secure setting, foundation for ongoing treatment and a restoration of honor and dignity following their release from inpatient treatment. The program strives to assist the veterans rediscover purpose, direction and rebuild their lives.

### **Problem Statement**

Describe the nature and scope of the underlying problem the proposed project will address.

In 2018, with seed grant funding provided by the Texas Veterans Commission, VALOR was established. Now that we can assure viability as an intermediate sanction facility, we ready to increase Veteran access, expand our programming and leave no Veteran behind. We strive to be an inclusive Veteran rehabilitation facility and provide treatment to ALL Texas Veterans. We are on the cusp of being named a Center of Innovation by the United States Department of Justice.

Currently, our Intermediate Sanction Facility is denying 66% of Justice-Involved Veterans and 100% of female Veterans. With administrative changes, the current denial rate is anticipated to drop by half, creating a participant

waiting list. With grant funding for additional staff and direct client service; we will not only serve more Texas Veterans, but allow us to develop Texas very first female Veteran Rehabilitation unit. We are paving the way for Texas leadership in working with justice-involved Veterans.

One of the many group of individuals in our jails and prisons are military veterans who have served from Iraq to Vietnam or other military posts around the world.

More than 22 million men and women living in the US have served in the US military and according to the US Census Bureau 2021, 1,426,641 reside in Texas and 176,460 veterans reside in Collin County service area. Those numbers are expected to rise based on anecdotal evidence. Texas is considered the second state next to California that veterans move to and prefer to live in.

Community need in regard to Veteran services: Many of these veterans were deployed to engage in combat operations, spending long periods being hyper-vigilant in high stress situations. Combat zone duty can result in injuries both to the body and psyche including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), orthopedic injury and/or amputations, which are all conditions that can derail emotional control and lead to interpersonal conflicts and/or other erratic behaviors resulting in job loss, divorce, and strained relationships. Unfortunately, decades of research had shown that veterans can have a difficult time of readjusting to civilian life and have been shown to have higher than normal prevalence of mental health and substance abuse issues, which frequently result in illegal, violent, and/or risky behaviors resulting in increased contact with the criminal justice system and incarceration.

A Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics study released showed that a higher percentage of detained veterans (60%) than nonveterans (44%) has been diagnosed with some form of mental disorder. Veterans need to be provided with educational and therapeutic services as alternatives to spiraling deeper into the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, many jails and prisons are unable to offer adequate mental health treatment to the incarcerated.

### **Supporting Data**

Provide supporting data for the Problem Statement. Data should be relevant to the project and its target group.

America's Veterans are in trouble...Each year roughly 200,000 service members transition out of the military, and while most reenter civilian life successfully, others struggle with drugs and alcohol addiction, PTSD, TBI, and homelessness (Time, Nov. 2022). For many, this post-service journey leads to a grim destination: the criminal justice system. One in three of the nation's 19 million veterans report having been arrested and jailed at least once, and more than 181,000 are behind bars. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2022).

Currently, Texas has the second largest population of Veterans, with 10% of the total prison population being veterans, many of whom are repeat offenders. Collin County alone has more than 41,918 veteran residents according to the US Census Bureau 2021 Quick Facts. While the number of veterans has increased in Collin County since 2010, the number of veterans jailed has increased as well by 385% over the same time period. Women veteran are racially and ethnically diverse 43% of the women who used VA health services in FY20 belonged to a racial or ethnic minority group. Statistics from the Department of Veteran Affairs indicates Texas is the leading state in the country with 185,154 woman Veterans.

The number of veterans housed in the Collin County jail show an alarming increase of Veterans jailed from 2018-2022. Unduplicated: FY 2018: 437, FY2019: 442, FY2020: 553, FY2021: 671 and FY2022: 690 Veterans.

Recognizing the increase in veterans facing felony charges in his District Court, Judge John Roach, Jr. implemented a Veterans Treatment Court in 2013, which has since grown to encompass over 7 counties with a waiting list of over 25 Veterans. Through interactions and networking to assist community-based justice-involved veterans, it has become apparent that there is also a need to provide veteran-specific mental health and substance abuse services for detained veterans in an effort to help rehabilitate in order to reintegrate them back into civilian society which led to the development of VALOR and the need of funds to assist the Veterans on the waiting list.

Facts on US veterans:

- 68% alcohol and drug addiction.
- 45% difficulty adjusting to civilian life.
- 66.9% was cited by court that they had history of mental health problems.
- Economic Disadvantages
- 61% reported difficulty paying their bills following discharge.
- 42% have trouble obtaining medical care.
- 98% incarcerated veterans in the US are male.
- 70% of incarcerated veterans are convicted of violent crimes.
- About 2 million times each year, people with serious mental illness are booked into jails (NAMI, 2022).
- The majority of male veterans in state (56%) and federal (53%) prison served in the Army.
- About 1 in 4 male veterans in state (28%) and 1 in 5 in federal (21%) prison were combat veterans.
- An estimated 74% of male veterans in state prison and 77% of those in federal received an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions.
- 15.3% of U.S. Veterans experienced a mental illness in 2019 (31.3 million people) (NAMI, 2020).
- 8.4% of Active Component service members in the U.S. military experienced a mental health or substance use condition in 2019.
- 30% of military personnel deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan have mental health conditions (U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs, 2020).
- Over 20% of veterans return home with Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD (U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs, 2020).

### **Project Approach & Activities**

Describe the methodologies, approaches, and activities to be employed by the project. This should logically tie back to the Problem Statement.

The overall goal of the Texas Veteran Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Treatment Program will be the following but not limited to: 1) To equip veteran offenders with tools and decision-making strategies; 2) To facilitate positive changes through counseling, group activities, and skills-building exercises; 3) To model pro-social behaviors fitting of a US Veteran throughout the program; 4) To motivate the veteran to exhibit positive behaviors by assisting in re-establishing control of their lives; and 5) To create an environment where veterans offenders will be safe to grieve, process, and heal from wounds not visible of their service.

The program will be an in-custody facility that will offer work opportunities and treatment alternatives for felony/misdemeanor Veteran offenders facing probation revocations or incarceration.

The program will utilize the treatment team approach to help the veterans with their needs. The multidisciplinary team will effectively address the many unique and significant needs of these veterans.

The team will consist of the following but not limited to:

- Judge
- Clinician
- Intake Coordinator
- Detention Officer
- Treatment Provider
- Community Partnerships

The program will combine the treatment with frequent visits from Judge, counseling, community based support, based on the track they are assigned. Each member on the team plays a vital role in helping the veteran successfully complete the program as well as providing safety for the community. Community partnerships/resources will be

used to provide supportive services for the veteran to ensure they are and will continue to receive targeted interventions.

The following will be programs for veteran offenders but not limited based on the track they will be assigned to:

- Intensive/Supportive Substance Abuse Treatment (IOP/SOP)
- Specialized Individual/Group Counseling: CPT, CBT, EMDR
- Solution/Trauma Focused therapies that address PTSD, TBI, MST
- AA and/or NA
- Anger Management
- Moral Recognition Therapy (MRT)/Battling Shadows
- Thinking for a Change
- Seeking Safety
- Integrative therapies include: Art, Yoga, Narrative, & mindfulness Practices
- Life Skills/Parenting
- Military Benefits

From the first day of admission into the program, we educate the veteran to be responsible. The program will provide a structured environment and teach work ethic similar to their military experience. Please read below an example of the basic schedule: changes in class type, date of services, and needs that will be reflected for each individual treatment plan:

0400-0530 – Reveille/Hygiene  
0500-0600 – Breakfast  
0615-0700 – Scheduled Medications  
0700-1130 – Work Crew  
1130-1230 – Break/Homework  
1230-1330 – Lunch  
1330-1500 – SOP  
1500-1630 – MRT  
1630-1730 – Seeking Safety  
1715-1800 – Integrative therapy  
1800-1900 – Dinner  
1900-2200 – Free time/Medications/TAPS  
2230 - Lights out

### **Capacity & Capabilities**

Describe the applicant organization's background as well as any organizational and staff capabilities and qualifications necessary to carry out this project using the approaches and activities provided above, including any essential collaborative partnerships.

All of the personnel on the Texas Veteran Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Treatment Program team not only have professional expertise in their field but also have (or will have) significant experience and understanding of veteran services.

Texas Veteran Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Treatment Program Team:

Judge: the Judge will conduct status hearings as ordered. The Judge will encourage the veteran to do well and stay on target. The Judge will hold the veteran accountable if they fail to comply with the program and/or requirements. They will also ask what the team can do for them and their family to keep them on track.

- Honorable John Roach, Jr District Court

**Detention Officer:** The Detention Officer will provide safety and security of the jail facilities within the Veteran Pod. The Detention Officer will provide the following but not limited to: care, custody and control of (Veteran) inmates and administer work furlough and working (Veteran) inmate programs. Ensures the clean, safe environment of the Veteran Pod. Transports inmates to various locations, processes new (Veteran) inmates, and assists the team when needed, supervises (Veteran) inmate visitation, distributes food, conducts security checks, and handles paperwork. The Detention Officer will also review and verifies the (Veteran) inmate trust fund account. The Detention Officer will perform related duties as required.

**Intake Coordinator:** The Intake Coordinator will be responsible for application screenings, file maintenance, coordination between staff members, coordinating meetings, assisting case management with discharges and all other assigned duties.

**Treatment Provider:** The Treatment Provider will establish and comprehensive, community-based treatment plan for the veteran and for the family pursuant to their mental health evaluation(s)/assessment(s). The treatment provider will also have a designee assigned to the team. They will provide group, individual and family counseling sessions, and medication management services (if necessary). Veterans will learn various copings skills on how to manage their emotions as well as ways to become free of drugs. The treatment provider will review the progress towards goals as well as provide weekly reports to the team regarding progress towards treatment goals, attendance and participation, and provide insight to the team on how best to provide support for treatment compliance.

**Collaborative Partnerships:** The program has identified and developed relationships with local resources and organizations that provide ongoing support for the veterans.

The program will partner with the following but not limited to:

- US Department of Veterans Affairs/Dallas VA Medical Center
- Dallas Vet Center
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Military Veteran Peer Network
- Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Metrocare
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Guitars for Vets
- North Texas Art Therapy
- Veterans Center of North Texas
- Collin County Veteran Services
- Texas Legal Services Center

Successful completion of the program results in case dismissal and agreed expunction.

### **Performance Management**

Describe how the applicant organization will measure success for this project. Describe the overall goals, objectives, and strategies for this project and how the organization will collect, track, and maintain the relevant data needed to determine if the project is achieving these standards throughout the grant period.

**Goal:** Deliver services to Veterans.

**Objectives:**

- 1 .Ensure minimum of 80% of veterans seeking assistance will be served.
- 2 .Demonstrate 10% increase yearly in veteran enrollment.
3. Graduate 20 from program.

**Measures:**

1. Provide assistance/services to 25 veterans (over the course of the grant)
2. Provide counseling advocacy for 25 veterans (over the course of the grant)
3. Provide advocacy and assistance for adults with a mental illness.
4. Provide treatment referrals for 30 veterans (whether ultimately accepted into the program or not) (over the course of the grant).
5. Assist 25 veterans with developing plans (over the course of the grant).

Client outcome measurements will be used to establish and evaluate the program's progress in achieving service goals. The coordinator will analyze the outcomes and an action plan will be developed and implemented as needed to ensure that objectives are being met. Performance measurement/data will be collected, reported and submitted in a timely matter.

### **Target Group**

Describe or list the agencies, individuals, or other groups to whom you expect to provide services, including any relevant data.

The program accepts veterans of the Armed Forces, including State and National Guard, who did not receive a dishonorable discharge and who are facing criminal charges (misdemeanor or felony) in Texas. Eligibility for program participation is ultimately determined upon completion of a complete classification evaluation by team.

To be eligible, veterans must not have been dishonorably discharged or convicted of violent or sexual offenses and should have a mental health diagnosis such as (but not limited to) anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), or substance abuse/addiction, determined by assessment to be caused or exacerbated by their military service.

**Evidence-Based Practices-** Describe the research or evidence that led the applicant to select the methods, approach, and activities described above. Where possible, cite specific research, evidence, or published best/promising practices model used as the basis for the project's design. If the project approach and activities described above are not based on existing evidence, the applicant must describe why they believe the method to be promising.

The Texas Veteran Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Treatment Program recognizes the importance in incorporating current theory, best practice, and evidence-based service delivery. As such, the program will maintain an updated knowledge base through research and training, informally reviews the program on a continual basis, and formally reviews the program annually, changes are made as needed.

The following are a few of the therapeutic evidence-based service models which may be used:

- Group therapy
- Substance abuse
- Support System
- Treatment Planning (ongoing treatment)
- Alternative therapies (art therapy, music therapy, community service projects, etc.)
- Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards (NADCP)