

## Grant Outcome Report

### Serving Servicemembers: Replicating and Spreading Best Practices for Community-based Services for Vets and Their Families

#### The Problem

Veterans' health and wellbeing are the responsibility of both their communities and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Clinical and social service delivery systems are critically important for addressing veterans' needs. A majority of veterans receive care either through civilian or other public sector providers. A New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth)-supported study conducted by the RAND Corporation, "A Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans," found that if New York State wants to encourage its veterans to seek and sustain treatment for their clinical and social service needs, service providers must offer care and services that meet client preferences.<sup>1</sup> The report also indicated that additional efforts are needed to help veterans understand what services are available and learn how to navigate these systems of care.

In 2011, NYSHealth awarded a grant to the Veterans Outreach Center (VOC), an organization with more than 40 years of experience serving veterans and their families in the Rochester region, to develop a blueprint to spread and replicate its model for helping meet the needs of veterans and their families across New York and the country.

#### Grant Activities and Outcomes

VOC collaborated with the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) to document and create a replicable and scalable community-based blueprint of best practice supportive services to serve veterans and their families. The two organizations formed a taskforce of community-based mental health, physical health, and human services specialists to provide input to the blueprint. Members of the taskforce were expected to describe how to provide outreach services; ensure access to behavioral health services; assist with navigating complex health care and benefits systems; address

#### KEY INFORMATION:

##### GRANTEE

Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.

##### GRANT TITLE

Serving Servicemembers: Replicating and Spreading Best Practices for Community-based Services for Vets and Their Families

##### DATES

May 1, 2011–December 22, 2011

##### FUNDING

Solicited

##### GRANT AMOUNT

\$96,586

<sup>1</sup>New York State Health Foundation, "A Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans," accessed December 2013

behavioral and social service delivery systems beyond the VA; and provide services for job placement, education, and vocational training. The blueprint also included a business case for implementing these core elements and financial models on how to sustain these programs. By documenting the financial models, the blueprint could help organizations identify potential funding sources to implement and sustain the core elements of the model. The full report was produced in May 2012.<sup>2</sup>

Documenting the VOC model also motivated Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) to ask CGR to serve as a peer organization for other community providers of veterans' supportive services.

Using the blueprint as a platform to help other communities, VOC presented its community-based model to the annual meeting of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's annual Policy Academy, and to White House staff members. Recognizing their responsibility and capacity to lead additional communities into greater service for their returning veterans, VOC staff members continue to offer their expertise in this area.

In addition to sharing best practices, documentation of the VOC model helped eligible organizations take advantage of federal funding that was available through 2012. The VA announced its Supportive Services for Veterans Families Program, a grant program for nonprofit organizations that provide services to low-income veterans and their families, such as outreach and case management services, and assistance with obtaining VA and other public benefits. The VA committed \$50 million in 2011 and \$100 million in 2012 to community-based supportive services for veterans. As one of the first 85 recipients of federal funding, VOC has helped organizations that have implemented its model also apply for federal funding to support these best practices.

## Future

Early efforts are underway in Utica and Buffalo, New York; Broward County, Florida; Boulder, Colorado; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and in Rhode Island to replicate the service delivery model captured within the blueprint. After observing a significant increase in demand for the blueprint, VOC is exploring opportunities to sell the blueprint both as an electronic and print version, and to provide technical assistance to interested communities.



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<sup>2</sup>New York State Health Foundation, "Coming Home to Caring Communities: A Blueprint for Serving Veterans & Families," accessed December 2013.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### ABOUT THE GRANTEE

The Veterans Outreach Center, Inc., (VOC) is a community-based nonprofit organization, which maintains a twofold mission:

- Ensure the community at large is informed, educated, and supportive of issues affecting veterans and their families; and
- Provide cost-free, community-based and individually tailored supportive employment, education, and readjustment counseling services for all veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and their immediate families to ensure timely access to earned benefits and successful reintegration from service.

VOC, the first veterans outreach center in the country, has assisted more than 40,000 veterans and their families in the Rochester region with comprehensive assistance, resources, and services dedicated to successfully transitioning veterans from service into their communities. VOC's primary activities involve conducting outreach to veterans and improving access to medical, behavioral, and social resources; providing wellness, counseling, and supportive services; and providing housing and job-placement services.

### CONTACT

Judge Patricia Marks  
Acting CEO  
Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.  
459 South Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14620-1020  
Phone: 585-546-1081  
E-mail: [Patricia.Marks@veteransoutreachcenter.org](mailto:Patricia.Marks@veteransoutreachcenter.org)  
Website: [www.veteransoutreachcenter.org](http://www.veteransoutreachcenter.org)

### FOUNDATION CONTACT

Jacqueline Martinez Garcel

### GRANT ID #

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