

COMING HOME TO CARING COMMUNITIES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

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COMING HOME TO CARING COMMUNITIES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES



February 23, 2012

Dear Friend:

With more than a decade of war in Afghanistan and nearly that many years of combat in Iraq, the nation finds itself worn and tired of the wars' physical and economic toll and projected aftermath. More than 46,500 returning service members have suffered physical wounds and injuries, and thousands more await diagnosis of wounds of a more invisible nature, namely post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. The lives of more than 6,250 families have been forever altered through the loss of their loved ones. Their ranks – and the ranks of surviving veterans – continue to grow as these wars roll forward and another generation joins the thousands of veteran families before them who, more often than not, look to their community for help in sorting out their futures. Not only do we owe it to them, but when veterans are not successfully re-engaged in civilian life in our local communities, we all lose out on the opportunity to redeploy their tremendous assets of talent, dedication, and service.

Are we, as a nation of communities, comfortable with what awaits our veterans and their families? As the leader of the nation's oldest, and one of the most respected, community-based providers of supportive services for veterans and their families, I am not.

We can and must do better

To help other communities ready their response, Veterans Outreach Center presents *Coming Home to Caring Communities: A Blueprint for Serving Veterans & Families*. Our goal in presenting this blueprint is simple: to provide communities with a replicable and scalable best-practice model for serving veterans and their families. With nearly 40 years of service under its belt, Veterans Outreach Center has grown to become a national leader of community-based supportive services. We're often called upon to help other communities identify needs and organize their resources. By providing this blueprint, we hope other communities will take the charge and learn from our experience to do even more.

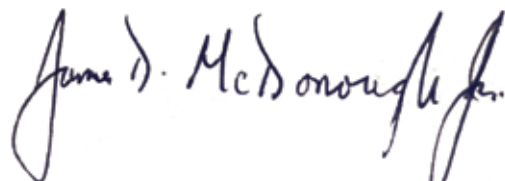
Share the responsibility

You can help do your part right where you live. This blueprint is a guide to help your community get started right and to support you over time as you grow. If you're interested in learning more about this blueprint, or if you want to begin organizing your community to serve its veterans and their families better than they're being served today, contact Veterans Outreach Center at www.veteransoutreachcenter.org or by calling us at (585) 546-1081.

We stand ready and committed to ensure that sustainable and high-quality supportive services are accessible for veterans and their families – *right in their own communities*.

Let's get to work "Serving Those Who Serve U.S."

In partnership,



Colonel James D. McDonough, Jr., U.S. Army (Retired)
President & CEO of Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.
Rochester, New York

COMMUNITY-BASED CENTER MODEL

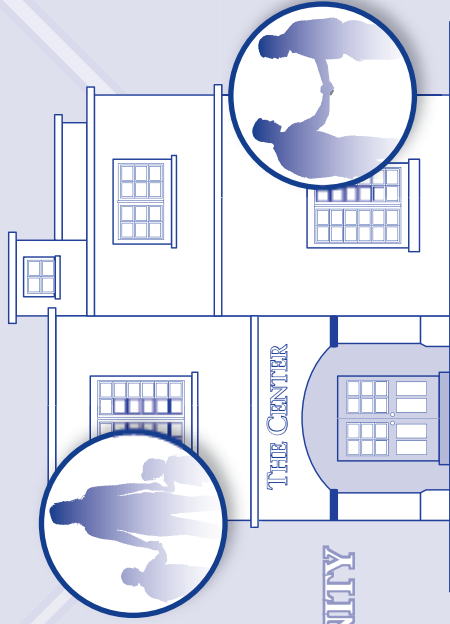
VETERANS & FAMILIES

PROGRAM ELEMENTS (the WHAT)

1. CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES
2. ACCREDITED BENEFITS COUNSELING
3. EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES & SERVICES
4. PEER MENTORING SERVICES
5. READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICES
6. LEGAL SERVICES & VETERANS TREATMENT COURT
7. FINANCIAL COUNSELING & COACHING SERVICES
8. EDUCATION RESOURCES & SERVICES
9. HOUSING & EMERGENCY SERVICES

ESSENTIAL

DESIRED



COMMUNITY

FUNDERS

OPERATING PROCEDURES (the HOW)

- CLIENT SERVICES
- LEADERSHIP
- GOVERNANCE & OVERSIGHT
- FUNDING
- STAFFING STRUCTURE & PHILOSOPHY
- CULTURAL COMPETENCY
- OUTREACH TO VETERANS & FAMILIES
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- MARKETING & BRANDING
- SPECIAL EVENTS
- COMPLEMENTING THE VA & OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS
- VOLUNTEERS
- TECHNOLOGY
- MEASURING IMPACT

CORE OPERATING VALUES (the FOUNDATION)

VETERAN & FAMILY FOCUSED	CULTURALLY COMPETENT, MISSION-DRIVEN STAFF
BARRIER FREE	COORDINATED & CLEAR
COMPLEMENT, DON'T DUPLICATE	ACTIVE OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT
PERFORMANCE ORIENTED	LEARNING ORGANIZATION

GOVERNMENT

Acknowledgements

We would like to first thank and commend Dr. James Knickman and Ms. Jacqueline Martinez of the New York State Health Foundation for their leadership, funding and assistance in recognizing the value of documenting a community-based service delivery model for veterans and their families. Their belief in this project was instrumental in developing the blueprint to support greater community-based capacity across our state and nation.

This document is a product of a full team effort. Our volunteer Blueprint Task Force provided time, insight, and guidance throughout the development of this document. We thank each of them for their continued dedication to the men and women, including their families, who serve our country. The Blueprint Task Force members are:

- Bob Connors**, U.S. Army's Medical Research & Materiel Command
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- Dick Wannamacher**, Disabled American Veterans

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Thank you to the creative team from **Bob Wright Creative**, Michael Gastin, Phil Daggar and Joanna Tuzzeo, for their assistance in creating and articulating the blueprint message.

Last but not least, VOC's very own **Jocene Henderson** and **Laura Stradley**, whose writing and editing help proved invaluable.

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Sergeant Major Jocene Henderson, U.S. Army Reserves (Retired), Director of Community Services and Volunteerism, Veterans Outreach Center, served as co-author of the blueprint, together with Senior Associates **Kirstin Pryor** and **Jaime Saunders** from Rochester, New York's Center for Governmental Research.

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CHAPTER 1:

A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO SUPPORTING VETERANS AND FAMILIES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES

A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO SUPPORTING VETERANS AND FAMILIES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

When thinking about how to improve the access to high-quality services for veterans, we need to think beyond making changes in the VA.

A Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans,
RAND Corp. (2011)

Local communities are the new “home base” for veterans and their families.

Communities across the U.S. are grappling with veterans’ reintegration issues, but the answers about how best to serve veterans and their families may be elusive, because every region has different resources, service gaps, and needs. Despite these variations, a common core of key community-based supportive services and practices has been identified in order to help communities serve their veterans and families in a more consistent and professional manner.

So what can a community do to help? How would service providers, local leaders, and citizens begin to organize their community’s resources to support veterans and families effectively? What would that look like? How would it be paid for? Has it been done well in other communities?

This blueprint answers these questions as a combination “how-to manual” and toolkit with an inside look at how an existing Center operates.

This document provides a blueprint of “what works” to help communities identify and implement the programs their local communities need. The details in this blueprint leverage the knowledge of Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) in Rochester, NY, the oldest community-based nonprofit organization in the nation devoted exclusively to serving veterans and their families. The information in this blueprint will help communities get a jump-start on developing local programs and initiatives of their own. *Ultimately, these tools will help increase access to consistently high-quality community-based supportive services for veterans and their families.*

Our Veterans Today

Veterans and the ways they serve have changed significantly over the last decade of war, resulting in the need for changes in the structures to support those who served. More than 2.5 million U.S. troops have been deployed as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND) since October 2001. The returning veterans from OEF/OIF/OND tend to be older and more geographically dispersed than generations of veterans preceding them. The ranks of returning veterans also include more women

than ever before. Families and communities are uniquely impacted as our Active Component, National Guard, and Reserve units are called away from families and civilian jobs in record numbers, often for multiple deployments. Many of these veterans and their families do not have the “ready-made” support system of a military base, making the local community ever more critical.

Despite the public’s awareness of the wars, the challenges facing veterans and their family members are often invisible to local communities, employers, and service providers, thereby making a bad situation worse. Emotional barriers, stigma, and a military culture of self-sufficiency and toughness often inhibit the willingness to ask for help. A service system that is stressed and seen as overwhelming confronts those who do admit their need.

The veterans returning from our current wars have garnered national attention and resources. Of course, it must be understood that the term “veterans” includes men and women who have served throughout our nation’s history. Servicemembers from our World Wars, Korean War, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf War, among others, are still with us and are equally considered when identifying need and access to services. Developing effective supportive systems and services must recognize both the differences and commonalities among all veterans who have served.

The Role of VA and DoD

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD) are critical to the support and care of our veterans and their families. However, they cannot do it alone.

In reality, much of the care delivered to veterans in New York State is through either the civilian health care system or other nonprofit and public sector providers.

The VA and DoD are essential partners in the work of the community-based approach. The model described in this blueprint recognizes their role and works diligently to incorporate and maximize these resources as key ingredients to success.

Why Now?

Communities across New York State and the nation see the need and have the desire to support veterans and their families. The Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense also recognize this shift toward community-based care, investing greater attention and resources in community approaches. Most importantly, the funding is there now to develop community-based solutions.

Who Should Read This Blueprint?

The ideas and examples outlined in this blueprint apply to many fields and individuals. If you have a personal or philanthropic interest in serving veterans, or an organizational focus on veterans, these tools will be relevant. If you are responsible for a broader swath of public health and human service needs, or are an existing service provider, learning more about veteran perspectives and service needs will benefit the veterans you may already serve. The materials in this blueprint will help:

- Public health and human service providers
- Health care and mental health professionals
- Behavioral health providers
- Government staff and leadership
- Community funders
- Volunteers
- Veterans and families
- Employers
- Faith-based communities

Existing organizations may not realize they are already serving veterans. Understanding veteran perspectives and service needs could help improve the overall service delivery of an organization.

What Is Included in This Blueprint?

This blueprint identifies the building blocks necessary for a community-based Center to provide effective supportive services for veterans and their families. The blueprint is modeled on the successful programs of Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) in Rochester, New York, as illustrated by the following building blocks:

- 1 Resource Domains:** The resources which exist in communities that the Center can draw on for support. This section details the five domains and how the effective Center acts as a hub linking and leveraging a range of existing resources.
- 2 Operating Values:** The values or principles that inform all the work of the Center and determine the overall type of experience a client has. These values make up the organizational culture and overall “feel” of the organization. This section details the eight hallmarks of an effective Center.
- 3 Program Elements:** The services clients will see, experience, and choose from. This section details what services can and should be provided from a range of supportive service offerings.
- 4 The Story of Veterans Outreach Center:** This section details how services are provided by looking into the operating procedures of the oldest Center in the nation. The case study details how VOC delivers services by examining the strategies and “back office” mechanics that tie the above three building blocks together.

In addition, the blueprint includes the following sections:

- Local Implementation Considerations
- Resources, Templates, and Glossary

How To Use This Blueprint

This blueprint provides a wealth of information from concept to implementation. It is meant to be used in different ways, at different paces to suit a community’s unique needs. The blueprint may be read sequentially or readers may focus on the particular topic area that meets their immediate need, depending on whether they are starting from scratch and looking for guidance on where to begin, or enhancing services at an existing Center. The material provided in this blueprint is designed to be scaled (or grow) with an organization.

The key message here is to use these tools to plan carefully and execute well, to grow over time at a pace that allows for sustainability and quality service.

Process for Developing the Blueprint

In 2011, the New York State Health Foundation released *A Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans*, the first statewide review of veteran needs which was conducted by the RAND Corporation. The study highlighted the urgent need for greater community-based access to services for veterans and families.

The Foundation engaged Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) to document its community-based service delivery model for veteran families.* During the course of 2011, VOC and a statewide Blueprint Task Force reviewed and documented the VOC approach into a replicable Center model presented in this blueprint to share with other communities.

A listing of Blueprint Task Force members can be found in the front section of this document.

The goal of this blueprint is to help communities across New York State and beyond build the high-quality support systems necessary to help veterans and their families thrive.

* Throughout the blueprint we use the phrases “veteran families” and “veterans and their families” interchangeably in recognition that more than the individual veteran is affected.

CHAPTER 2:

THE CENTER MODEL

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES

THE CENTER MODEL

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

A Center Model Harmonizes Community-Based Care

What Is a Center Model?

A Center model provides a physical place (The Center) for serving veterans and families. It allows them to easily access an array of appropriate and comprehensive supportive services with a holistic goal of wellness. The Center is not part of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), but links community, VA, and military resources together to provide more effective services through a supportive caring, coordinated, and integrated approach.

This blueprint offers a guiding framework and shares the lessons learned from the field so that each community can avoid starting from scratch. Essentially it should enable communities to move more quickly in developing effective supportive services for our veteran families.

This blueprint incorporates the practical learning of Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) in Rochester, NY.

What Is Community-Based Care?

Community-based care is a collection of services provided by local community organizations which complement the resources provided by government. The strength of community-based care for veterans (and for any population) is that it is holistic. When done well, it can reduce both barriers to access and stigma for those who need and use services. It also recognizes the unique character of each community, allowing a tailored system that meets the needs in that particular place and time. It is fiscally sound because it uses existing community resources. Lastly, it can serve the dual purposes of providing easily accessible care while educating and engaging the larger community. A community-based care approach makes even more sense for veterans and

their families now that most do not live on or near traditional military installations.

There can be challenges associated with community-based care that is not coordinated or implemented well. It may be confusing to people who need services because there is not one central place (like the VA) for them to go. Services provided might not be fully responsive to their needs because the providers are not specializing in serving one population. These challenges are particularly important to counter when supporting veterans, who are used to clear organization and protocols and for whom establishing credibility through peer-to-peer relationships is crucial.

Why Use a Center Model?

A Center model capitalizes on the benefits of a community-based care approach and guards against the risks. It does so by establishing a convenient physical location that is focused on comprehensively supporting veteran families by harnessing the resources that already exist. It offers clients a supportive pathway to wellness through integrated service offerings and a coordinated personalized approach.

In recent years, many communities in New York State have responded to this need. There has been an emergence of local coalitions, taskforces, partnerships, study and planning groups, and even fledgling Center-based models.

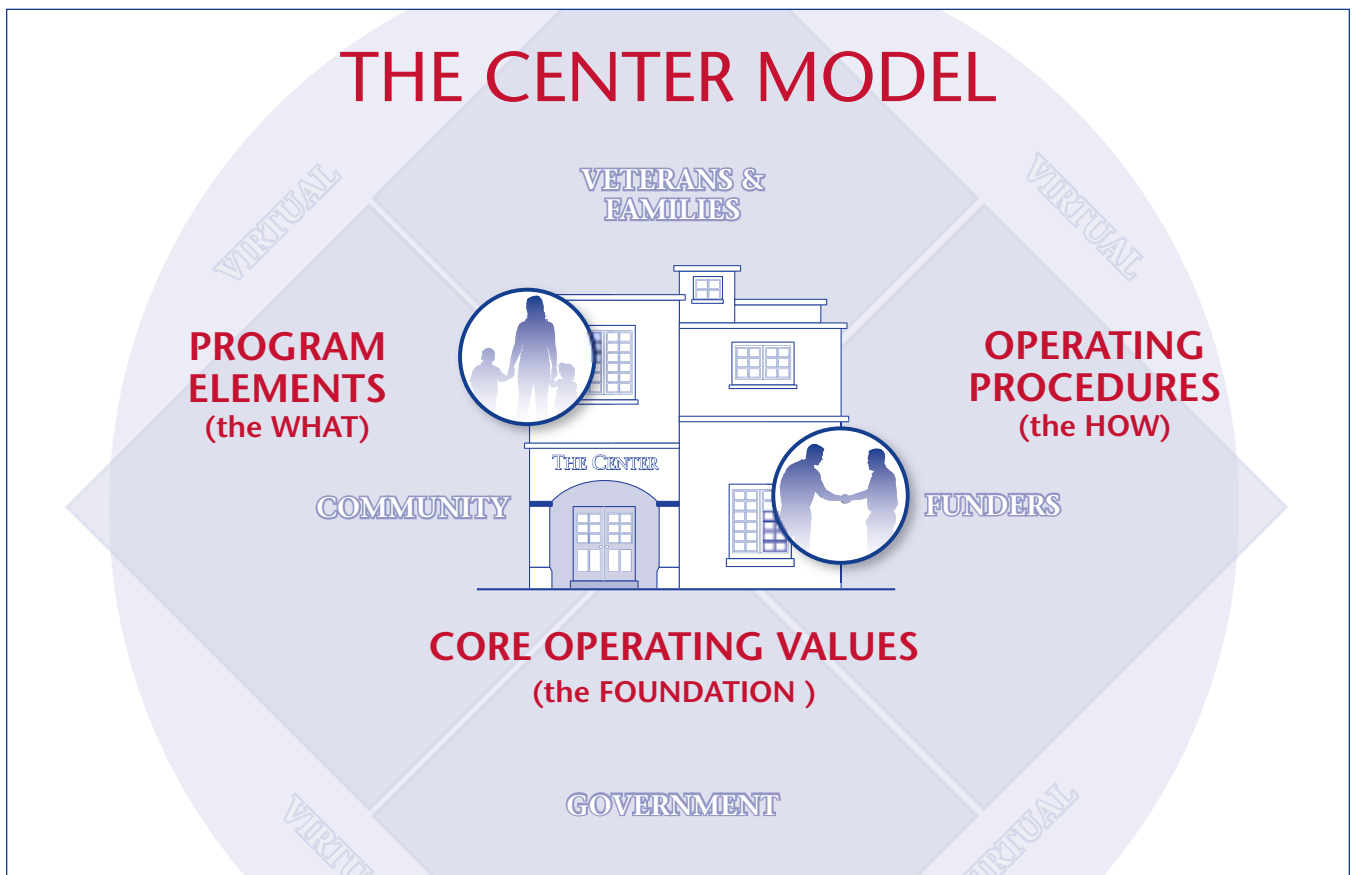
Is There a Current Example of a Center Model for Veterans?

Center models are commonly found in the public health or human services fields. Despite the documented need for this approach, there are few Center-based models focusing on veteran families, as described in this blueprint, in operation today.

This blueprint incorporates the practical learning of Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) in Rochester, NY. Founded in 1973, VOC is the oldest community-based Center serving veterans and their families in the nation. Over the years, Veterans Outreach Center has continued to develop and expand its service offerings and community-centered approach. VOC is one of the most extensive community Center-based models for veterans and provides the starting point for this blueprinting process.

To provide useful insights of how this model works in practice, VOC has opened its doors to share concrete details of how it operates in an effort to help spark and support similar service providers in communities across the country. Each program element description in Chapter 5 includes real world examples in practice at VOC – both in describing the service and in outlining the resources required to support it. In Chapter 6, VOC tells its story of how it brings all of the components together to create a sustainable and high-quality organization.

Additional information about Veterans Outreach Center can be found at www.veteransoutreachcenter.org.



CHAPTER 3:

THE CENTER'S CONTEXT

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES

THE CENTER'S CONTEXT

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

Leveraging the Five Domains for a Center

The community-based model of supporting veterans and families draws upon resources available from several “domains,” which, if optimally leveraged, contribute to a community’s ability to serve veterans and families with meaningful and effective supportive services.

There are five domains that form the context for the Center-based model. The successful community Center-based model of care will incorporate resources from these five domains into its design. These domains, and the role they each play for the Center, are summarized in the following table.

Resource Domain	Description and Relationship with the Center
<p>Government Domain</p> <p>How does the Center work with the VA and government services for veterans?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources to serve veterans and their families are available through all levels of government—federal, state, and local. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a wealth of services to veterans including health care and benefits. Access to veterans’ names and addresses for outreach also comes from the VA through a “Release of Names and Addresses”(RONA) protocol for government and nonprofit organizations. State and county government and, in particular, accredited veterans’ benefits counseling services, can be leveraged and coordinated into the Center. Partnering with local government will vary from community to community. Examples include veteran-specific court diversion programs, co-location of veteran benefits counseling services, and training initiatives with service providers. <p>Keep in Mind: The government is the largest provider of veterans’ services. The Center should recognize this and be very clear that it is not competing with or duplicating government services. Instead, the VA and its massive infrastructure are assets that can be tailored to serve in a community setting. To be successful, the Center must reach out to, collaborate with, and complement this system.</p> <p>Don’t limit the search for government partners to veteran-specific agencies. Keep informed of changing national policies within other governmental agencies as they relate to chronic health issues, substance abuse, mental health, and clinical care. Veterans may be a subpopulation being served.</p>



Resource Domain	Description and Relationship with the Center
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<p>Funders Domain</p> <p>What kinds of financial resources can be used to support the Center?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One form of available public funding is competitive grant-based funding available from the (Federal) Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education to support specific veterans’ initiatives. • Additional public funding can also help support the Center. For those Centers that choose to include housing and emergency services, the VA’s Grant and Per Diem Program can serve as a public funding source. • Private funding is necessary to augment public funding sources to ensure high-quality and inclusive services offerings. Foundations, aligned corporate interests, and individual giving are key resources to engage. <p>Keep in Mind: The cost of implementing and sustaining veterans’ services should not be underestimated. It takes creativity and planning, but several funding sources can be blended to deliver integrated and comprehensive services for veterans and families.</p>
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<p>Community Domain</p> <p>How can the Center incorporate existing community resources into serving veterans and their families?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities have a range of non-veteran-specific human service providers and faith-based organizations specializing in areas such as housing, financial counseling, employment, mentoring, substance abuse, and legal services. All of these present possible partnership opportunities. • Inclusion of the behavioral, physical, and mental health provider network is also an essential part of the Center’s community resources. • Volunteers are a huge resource for a Center. They offer no-cost labor and help raise the Center’s visibility in the community. From serving as “greeters” at airports for returning service members to staffing the front end of the Center, volunteers are crucial to sustaining the organization. A plan for recruiting, training, and managing them is a must. • Local businesses are also a resource. They can provide employment opportunities, job training, and donations of money or in-kind services. Many businesses are also willing to offer discounted rates to veterans and their families.
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Resource Domain	Description and Relationship with the Center
<p>Community Domain (contd.)</p> <p>How can the Center incorporate existing community resources into serving veterans and their families?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleges and universities are potential partners. They can offer scholarships, support structures, and research capacity. They can also host events that help educate and raise awareness. <p>Keep in Mind: The community at large is often able and willing to serve veterans and families, but they don't always know how. Part of the Center's work is to map out a plan for where, when, and how these community assets come together. Engaging the general public to include nurses and school teachers is also wise.</p>
<p>Veterans & Families Domain</p> <p>How can veterans and families be a resource for the Center?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans and their families supply both the purpose for the Center and a wealth of knowledge about how the Center can meet their needs. An effective Center makes opportunities to seek their diverse perspectives and ideas of what services should look like. • Family members and veterans themselves are often the most effective volunteers. They can participate in peer-to-peer mentoring and/or support groups. These volunteers can also support activities for children and conduct outreach for the Center. <p>Keep in Mind: Meeting and exceeding the needs of veterans and their families should be the central goal of the Center. Projects, programs, or services which fail to address identified and documented needs may sound good on paper, but in reality they waste valuable time, funding, and energy. Monitor efforts and build processes to check in with clients on a regular basis.</p>
<p>Virtual Domain</p> <p>How can the Center make the best use of technology and the virtual world?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology has expanded the definition of "local" and increased access to information and resources. Online support groups, veteran-specific websites, and social networking comprise another layer of resources to integrate into the Center. • Technology has changed the preferred mode of communication. To establish two-way communication with veterans and families, the Center must be able to use text messaging, email, Skype, Twitter, Facebook, and the like. • Virtual resources must be effectively used in outreach and fundraising. • Centers must be on the front end of learning how to capitalize on emerging developments such as electronic medical records, online referrals, and web-based intake processes. In addition, tools like Google Analytics can help the Center expand its reach by optimizing website content. <p>Keep in Mind: Making good use of the virtual domain can be challenging. Managing current and useful content for a website, Facebook, and Twitter is time consuming. It may take trial and error to learn what is most effective for reaching target audiences. Trying new approaches and being open to new developments are key.</p>

CHAPTER 4:
**OPERATING
VALUES**

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES

OPERATING VALUES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

Operating Values of the Center

A list of ingredients is not the same as a recipe; similarly, a list of program elements and operating procedures are not all the Center needs to successfully support veterans in the community. There are hallmarks of service, or core operating values, which govern how these come together for the veterans and families being served. They can be thought of as the culture of the organization, defining the “feel” or experience of the Center.

The Operating Values hold the program elements and operating procedures in place. These values must guide everything from the organization of the Center, to the people hired, to the community partners being engaged, to the role the Center plays in the community.

From community-based Centers with demonstrated success in supporting veterans, to documented research gleaned directly from veterans, eight operating values have been identified.

EIGHT CORE OPERATING VALUES

- 1 Veteran & Family Focused
- 2 Culturally Competent, Mission-Driven Staff
- 3 Barrier Free
- 4 Coordinated & Clear
- 5 Complement, Don't Duplicate
- 6 Active Outreach & Engagement
- 7 Performance Oriented
- 8 Learning Organization

These values should be clearly evident to all clients.

Check in with clients frequently to gauge the Center's alignment with its operating values.

These values should run through all of the decision-making processes and program implementation.

1: Veteran & Family Focused

The Center exists to serve veterans and their families, period. There is a pervasive and palpable commitment to this mission. As a result, no one is turned away—the broadest possible definition of veteran, and of family member, is used. It does not matter if the family member

seeking services is the girlfriend, parent, or grandparent. Likewise, it is irrelevant whether the service member was deployed in combat or not. Characterization of service (honorable or otherwise) is immaterial. There is an ongoing commitment to listening and learning from clients and developing new services and practices in

response to the needs and ideas expressed. All services are provided with respect for the people being served and with a commitment to privacy.

2: Culturally Competent, Mission-Driven Staff

The Center only employs staff who “get it.” This will likely mean a high proportion of staff who themselves are veterans or military family members. It means that all staff are knowledgeable about military culture—e.g., values, mindsets, language, procedures, and resources. It also means staff members are equipped to establish rapport and serve veterans and families from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class in ways that respect and empower. Center employees are completely dedicated to serving those who served.

3: Barrier Free

The Center takes pains to identify and remove as many barriers to access as possible. This involves designing entry procedures carefully and thoughtfully, in trauma-informed ways. It may involve providing childcare or expanding hours of operation to meet family needs. It means not mandating honorable discharge papers in exchange for services. Barrier free also necessitates a simple, universal “no charge” approach. It means training staff to have a can-do, follow-through attitude.

4: Coordinated & Clear

The Center offers clients a clear path to wellness, a roadmap through the web of available resources and supports. Center staff are aware of all these resources and can help coordinate them. There is a case manager approach that involves more than making referrals to various community resources from a list. From the veteran’s perspective, there should be a seamless and warm handoff from the Center to various other service providers, rather than just a referral. This coordination is

particularly important in serving veterans who are used to following military directives and procedures, and who then face a fragmented civilian system.

5: Complement, Don’t Duplicate

The Center should not build in-house capacity to meet every need. It is not financially sound, nor realistic, for the Center to design and offer the full array of benefits counseling, behavioral health services, marital supports, child and family support services, housing and legal expertise, and employment training and placement—and do it as well as the existing domains already do. There is no need to re-create all of these resources. Instead, the goal should be to complement what exists, perhaps partnering to bring services into the Center’s physical space, or to apply proven methods to its programming needs. This approach demonstrates good stewardship of resources in a global sense and helps to lessen the divide between the VA and the community. This is, after all, the larger goal of a community-based approach, and ultimately it is this design which benefits veteran families.

6: Active Outreach & Engagement

The Center is committed to and invests in outreach efforts to connect with veterans, their families, and their community. Reaching those who need direct services is always a priority, but engaging and educating the public at large often gets overlooked. This is critical to the work of the Center to build a community that values veterans, simultaneously developing awareness of their needs and strengths. This is also how to recruit volunteers. Effective outreach strategies employ a variety of methods and techniques, drawing on creativity and the ability to adapt to changing times. Keeping client outreach front and center with general public engagement and education is time consuming but central to the mission.

Through continuous monitoring, reviews and reflection, the Center will be responsive to the particular needs of its community and better serve veterans and their families.

7: Performance Oriented

Performance-oriented organizations spend the time necessary to develop and maintain a careful plan of action to achieve articulated goals. The Center outlines a clear path to show how it will invest its time and funds to achieve a particular outcome. Once the plan is created, the Center measures its activities to determine if it is making progress toward its goals. If not, the Center re-evaluates and dedicates the time necessary to refine its approach to improve overall performance. This means that the Center has to carefully track client outcomes and regularly survey clients to assess their experience. Building structures and investing time in managing staff in a performance-oriented way is also critical.

8: Learning Organization

The Center addresses complex needs and serves within a dynamic context. As a result, the Center must learn to adapt to its changing environment and to be flexible in its approach. Through continuous monitoring, review and reflection, the Center will be responsive to the particular needs of its community and better serve veterans and their families. When the Center stops seeking continuous improvements, it does a disservice to those it was created to serve and quickly can become obsolete. Being willing to improve is half the battle, but it takes discipline and humility too. The Center must be committed to providing ongoing professional development and trainings, and to incorporating recent research in the field. Staff must be engaged in learning and making judgments. A quality control piece must also be developed, so there are guidelines about which practices are worthy of being implemented.

CHAPTER 5:

**PROGRAM
ELEMENTS OF
SUPPORTIVE
SERVICES**

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES

NINE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

Program Elements of Supportive Services

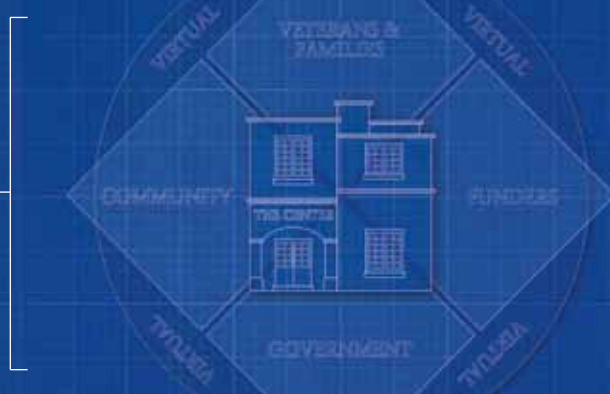
This section provides an overview of the types of programs and services a Center can offer to support veterans and their families. Each program element is profiled and includes a service description, implementation steps, and other key considerations when engaging the service at the Center. For each, a separate “VOC In Action” section is included to provide an inside look of how an existing Center provides the particular supportive service in practice.

Each program element is profiled and includes a service description, implementation steps, and other key considerations when engaging the service at the Center.

NINE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

- 1 Case Management Services
- 2 Accredited Benefits Counseling Services
- 3 Employment Resources & Services
- 4 Peer Mentoring Services
- 5 Readjustment Counseling Services
- 6 Legal Services & Veterans Treatment Court
- 7 Financial Counseling & Coaching Services
- 8 Education Resources & Services
- 9 Housing & Emergency Services

The Center and Its Resource Domains



A Note About Reading Program Elements

Resource Domains

Each program element includes a reference to the resource domain(s) it draws upon. The graphic in the upper right-hand corner of the title will indicate which domain the program element leverages. More information about the five resource domains can be found in Chapter 3.

Prioritizing Services

Each program element is categorized as either “essential” or “desired.” Based on the experience of Veterans Outreach Center, the first five program elements are considered essential services and should be the primary focus of a new Center. Once these supportive services are established, the Center may decide to offer additional services as outlined in the four program elements designated as desired.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

Case Management as the Center's Core

Well-trained and dedicated case managers are the glue of the Center. Case managers bridge the spectrum of resources and services available and then tailor them to the needs of the veterans and families being served. They provide the human touch, ensuring that each veteran or family member feels served, not simply dealt with.

Case Management Services are the hub within the Center where the program elements are implemented and provided to veterans and families.

Much of the service field is moving toward the use of the term “Care Coordinator” instead of Case Manager. We acknowledge this trend, yet refer to Case Management throughout the Blueprint, as it remains the most commonly understood term. Whatever a Center calls it, this function within the Center Model is the most critical. Case managers, just as with all of the Center's staff and volunteers, put the operational values outlined in Chapter 4 into action.

CASE MANAGERS ARE THE CORNERSTONE FOR SUCCESS

They:

- Build trust and respect
- Are knowledgeable about community resources
- Provide a warm hand-off, not a list of resources
- Have veteran or military background and are military culturally competent
- Are trained in trauma-informed care
- Are well informed and connected to the network of behavioral, physical, and mental health providers

Without case management, a Center serving veterans will not be effective.

The Center should ensure case management services are a top priority to fund, support, and grow.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

Case management services are the heart of the Center's ability to offer each and every client an individualized and holistic path to wellness. Regardless of a client's needs or entry point, the veteran and/or family receives a case manager trained in the field of social work. Case managers make holistic assessments, work with clients to design Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and then follow through to assist in meeting goals. IDPs are used to monitor levels of accomplishment and can be adjusted along the way as circumstances change. Case managers are key in coordinating any other program elements or services offered; it is not uncommon for them to call meetings with other staff or service providers to assess or improve progress for their clients.

Case management is the singular defining characteristic of delivering effective supportive services. Case managers provide the point of contact, the glue which holds all other elements of the Center together and helps them "stick" with the client. They are responsible for providing each client with a tailored, personal, and effective experience. Without case management staff, there can be no Center.

Why should we offer this service?

Research at federal, state and local levels finds that veterans see the system of available supports as challenging to navigate. They also express the need for a trusted source of coordinated information. Long a staple in the field of social work, case management services address both of these needs. They are highly regarded for their effectiveness in building solutions to complex problems presented by veterans and their family members.

How should we start?

- **Get informed about existing case management services** and resources available to veterans and their families. Next determine how to best complement and leverage what already exists. Is there a group already serving veterans and families? Maybe it's the VA, maybe it's a local human services agency. Search the community's affiliations with the National Association of Social Workers (www.naswdc.org) and Case Management Society of America (www.cmsa.org). There

In ACTION

VOC CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

DETAILS: 100% of clients receive varying degrees (low, medium, high) of case management services. Each client meets with an assigned Case Manager early on in his or her VOC experience; together they develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to guide the delivery of services and resources contributing to well-being. Two-thirds of each Case Manager's weekly time is spent in direct client contact hours. Each contact is scheduled for 60 minutes, 10 minutes of which is allotted for documenting session case summary notes.

RESOURCES: Private meeting/office space; telephone and Internet connection; case file templates and intake forms; Integrated Client Referral System

STAFF: 4 full-time on-site Case Managers; 1 part-time on-site Case Manager; 1 full-time on-site Case Manager assigned to rural operations hub; 2 Nazareth College Graduate School of Social Work student interns (8 hours/week supervised direct client contact allotted); volunteer administrative support; and 1 Nazareth College undergraduate student intern Intake Coordinator

FUNDING SUPPORT: VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) funding; foundational giving; individual contributions. 2012 Operating Budget: \$285,420 is devoted exclusively for case management services.

REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE: "The VOC helped me immensely with shelter. I was literally homeless. Counseling got me through rough times. Having someone to talk to was helpful – getting things off my chest that bug the hell out of me at times, especially with my family. I don't get a chance to talk to a lot of people."

– A thirty-year-old combat veteran who served in Afghanistan

may already be a private practice that is serving veteran families, meaning that all the Center would need is to ask them to deliver some of their services from within the Center.

- **Start with licensed mental health professionals** (LCSW, LMHC, LCAT, and BSW) to ensure high-quality case management services are available. Our Center's experience indicates that a blending of these credentials best meets the needs of our veterans and their families. Adding some degree of specialization, such as a Licensed Creative Arts Therapist (LCAT), can provide added therapeutic value to those served.
- **Design the Center's model with case management services at its heart.** When building staff and services, everyone must understand the essential role of the case managers. Case managers must be able to collaborate effectively with clients and with all other service providers in the Center and community. The structure (e.g., meetings, communications, technology) must build in ways to ensure this collaboration. The hiring process for this role is critical as well.

How should we monitor progress?

When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Possible indicators to measure and record include:

- Number of veterans and families served through case management services.
- Client progress toward goals. (This is measured in different ways, based on the client—e.g., completion of rehab, job placement, resolution of a family situation, permanent housing, better mental health.)
- Measures from the Unified Court System database, if Veterans Treatment Court is involved.
- Documentation of case management interactions.
- Measures of cost effectiveness including case load, completion of goals, etc.

- Client satisfaction with timely and helpful services.
- The Case Management Society of America's *Standards of Practice for Case Management* and Chapter 4 in the federal Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's *Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) 27* provide guidance on effective case management.

What else should we know?

- The Center's overall function is basically to act as an effective case manager. If the Center is unable to staff this most essential service, it likely should not be in operation.
- Case managers need good tracking and monitoring systems to help coordinate care for their clients. Microsoft's Excel and Access both work, but because case management applications almost always need to be carefully designed to meet the organization's needs, it's critical to consider initial setup and long-term maintenance as part of the costs. The Center will need the help of someone technically savvy and experienced with case management databases to get started with these tools. A good resource is the article *A Few Good Case Management Tools* by Laura S. Quinn and Jay Leslie, April 2011, in Idealware.

References/Resources:

- "The Integrated Case Management Manual" from the CMSA; (www.springerpub.com/samples/9780826106339_chapter.pdf)
- NYC Department of Youth and Community Development; Case Management Standards Toolkit (www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/downloads/pdf/NYC_DYCD_Case_Management_Toolkit-2011.pdf)
- Evaluation and Quality Assurance of Case Management Services; Chapter 4 of the SAMHSA/CSAT Treatment Improvement Protocols (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK25748/#A50144)
- "A Few Good Case Management Tools" from Idealware (www.idealware.org/articles/few-good-case-management-tools-0)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

ACCREDITED BENEFITS COUNSELING SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

No-cost accredited veterans benefits counseling services ensure that veterans and their families take full advantage of all government-provided benefits available. Counseling services range from filing applications for federal disability compensation, pensions, education benefits, and insurance, to enrollment in VA health care. This type of counseling also includes accessing state-level benefits like education and targeted annuity programs, as well as making referrals to state agencies that provide veteran-targeted programs in areas such as employment, homeownership, property tax exemption, motor vehicle registration, substance abuse services, and mental health resources. Counselors must be accredited by the VA as veterans benefit counselors to do this work properly. Services should be provided through partnership agreements between the Center and state or local governments, or with accredited representatives of

Veteran Service Organizations (VSO). Co-location or on-site hours are an option to consider.

Why should we offer this service?

A key finding from the NYSHealth-funded *Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans* was that the health care systems serving veterans are so complicated that personalized assistance is often required to ensure access. This is borne out by other research that labels the system fragmented, time consuming, and frustrating to navigate. Accredited individuals are trained specialists familiar with navigating the complex VA benefits delivery system. Such assistance has been proven to reduce filing errors, expedite delivery of actual benefits, and reduce levels of anxiety associated with navigating the benefits delivery system supporting veterans and their families.

How should we start?

- **Scan the community** for available accredited veterans benefits counseling services and resources. Use the map search function at www.veterans.ny.gov to enter any one of New York's 62 counties to find and locate accredited New York State and County Veterans' Service Agency Benefits Advisors. Once located, develop a plan for incorporating these services as part of the Center.
- **Work with elected officials and their staffs** to explore partnership opportunities with New York State or the counties in the Center's service area to enhance the delivery of veterans services. Make the case for providing wrap-around services in a community setting vs. exclusively in state and county office buildings. Ask for a representative's assistance in obtaining support for the Center's community-based approach.
- **Explore an on-site arrangement** where state, county, or VSO veteran benefits counselors could be located on site to serve clients in the Center for a set number of hours each week. Is there space to accommodate private sessions? Is staff available to do the scheduling?
- **If on-site service is not possible, strive for a specific point of contact** with the state or county Veteran Service Agency to foster a seamless experience for the veteran family. Check to make sure he or she is accredited by the VA before signing on to any support.

In ACTION

VOC-ACCREDITED BENEFITS COUNSELING SERVICES

DETAILS: VOC partners with the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs for on-site accredited veterans benefits counseling services. Services include three staff at the Center five days per week. In 2010, \$3.66 million worth of new and generally recurring veterans benefits were secured by these assigned New York State counselors.

RESOURCES: Private meeting/office space; Internet connection

STAFF: 1 Intake Specialist who refers and schedules clients with benefits counselors

FUNDING SUPPORT: In-kind: 3 FTE accredited veteran benefits counselors valued at \$165,000 annually

REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE: "I didn't know putting together an application for veteran benefits I earned through my service could be so difficult. I gave up on trying to do it myself and then came to see VOC's accredited benefits guys and they took care of me completely." – OEF Veteran

How should we monitor progress?

When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Possible indicators to measure and record include:

- Number of clients served
- Dollar amount of new and generally recurring veterans' benefits secured
- Average processing time for filing disability claims
- Number of veteran clients newly enrolled in VA health care
- Client survey of value and impact of services received

What else should we know?

- Utilizing accredited Veteran Service Officers from Veterans Service Organizations, such as Vietnam Veterans of America, the American Legion, and Disabled American Veterans may be acceptable for the Center's community; the Center will need to decide what level of expertise and accreditation is sufficient. Of note, a majority of formerly salaried Veteran Service Officers are now volunteers, and while once locally plentiful, their ranks are dwindling as membership in VSOs declines.
- Accredited Veterans Benefits Counseling Services should be provided in a comfortable and private space that is away from open air cubicles or offices to ensure the privacy of clients.
- Keep in mind that family members are part of the target audience for veterans benefits counseling as well. This may impact hours of operation, locations from which the Center provides service, the child-friendliness of the site, and what type of outreach the Center conducts.

References/Resources:

- New York State Division of Veterans Affairs (<http://www.veterans.ny.gov>)
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefit fact sheets (<http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/factsheets/index.asp>)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES & SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

Employment services support veterans and families in moving along the path toward economic well-being and self-sufficiency. These are core services the Center should provide on site, with full-time staff. A comprehensive menu of employment services combined with to education services provides this full range of options:

- Vocational counseling and skills assessments
- Résumé preparation and job readiness training
- Occupational skills training / courses offered in Veterans Community Technology Center
- Employment networking activities and focus groups
- Job search, advocacy, and placement assistance
- Promotion of military-acquired skills for civilian career advancement

Why should we offer this service?

Unemployment rates for post-9/11 veterans are nearly 5% higher than for the general veteran population; the current economy exacerbates this need. Furthermore, according to the 2010 *Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans*, substantial numbers of those who do report employment, also report being underemployed in terms of job satisfaction or hours worked. Translating military training and acquired skills to the needs of civilian companies is essential to preparing veterans' résumés and increasing the rate of placements.

How should we start?

- **Contact and partner with a Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist.** Visit the nearest State Employment Service (also known as Job Service) agency listed in the State Government section of the Center's local phone listings. DVOP specialists provide direct services to disabled and other veterans, enabling them to be competitive in the labor market. They promote community and employer support for employment and training opportunities, including apprenticeships and on-the-job training.
- **Find, join or start a relationship with local supportive business affiliations and organizations.** Several communities already support business alliances. Within them, one will likely find veteran-owned and/or -operated businesses that are capable of supporting

In ACTION

VOC EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES & SERVICES

DETAILS: The Center delivers its Employment Resources & Services through an in-house paid staff of 11. On average, 70-75% of enrolled clients are placed in meaningful employment. Average hourly wage secured ranges from \$12 - \$15+, depending upon program. A full one-third of all placements occurred in the green energy sector in 2011. On average, 86% of all placements remained employed at the 270-day post placement date.

RESOURCES: 3,233 square feet; reception/intake space; private office space; Internet; and multiple computers for Technology Center

STAFF: 1 Vice President of Programs & Services; 1 Administrative Manager; 1 Administrative Assistant (Intake Specialist); 2 Program Managers; 1 Employment Specialist; 1 Program Specialist (Housing); .20 FTE DVOP; 2 Outreach Specialists; 1 Training Director; 1 Training Specialist; and 10 Instructors

FUNDING SUPPORT: Grants from Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) of the U.S. Department of Labor; Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP); and Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP).

2012 OPERATING BUDGET: \$721,000

REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE: VOC annually holds one of the largest "veteran-friendly" job fairs in the country. This year's event will host over 1,000 veteran job seekers and 100+ employers, college admission officers, and business owners.

Many business owners came from within Rochester Business Alliance (RBA) and formed the "Rochester Regional Veterans Business Council" (RRVBC). Now 92 members strong, the RRVBC's administrative "home" is inside the Center, and the partnership is underpinned by a supporting Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). For IRS and legal purposes, RRVBC is listed as a "supported and related" entity on the Center's annual Form 990 to ensure compliance measures are met. The Center maintains an ex-officio seat on RRVBC's board and enjoys a healthy and vibrant relationship in the partnership.

the Center's efforts to place veterans (and their family members) into meaningful employment.

- **Explicitly encourage businesses to hire veterans.** Articulate the value of a veteran employee: strong work ethic, exceptional training, proven leadership skills, and, often, security clearances. Educate employers about the financial benefits and tax credit incentives.
- **Partner with business leaders** to provide interview coaching, resume assistance, and job openings to veterans and family members.
- **Maintain a supply of business attire** to support job interviews/placements.

How should we monitor progress?

Funders of employment services will often require specific data. When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Some common measures include:

- Unduplicated count of all participants receiving job search assistance, counseling/vocational guidance, and job readiness training
- Number of veterans/family members placed in employment
- Wage of client placed in employment
- Retention rate (requires case management)

Additional consumer feedback is essential to improving services:

- Courtesy of staff
- Timeliness of service
- Knowledge of staff
- Overall satisfaction

What else should we know?

By law, veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during specified periods or in military campaigns are generally entitled to preference

over non-veterans. This is the case in both federal hiring practices and in retention during reductions in force.

Be creative in involving employers. Utilize CEOs with military background as spokespersons or create a system to promote companies that are "veteran friendly."

References/Resources:

- United States Department of Veterans' Affairs; VetSuccess program website (<http://www.vetsuccess.gov/>)
- United States Department of Labor: Veterans' Employment and Training Service, Grant and Contract Awards Information (<http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/main.htm>)
- United States Department of Labor; Veterans' Employment and Training Service, VETS Fact Sheet 1 (http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/fact/employment_services_fs01.htm)
- Hire Veterans: A job-search website for veterans and veteran-employers (<http://www.hireveterans.com/>)
- The Society for Human Resource Management, Genesee Valley Chapter (<http://www.gvcsrhm.org/>)
- Department of Defense's TurboTap.org website: Transition resources to connect veterans with money, benefits, and jobs (<http://www.turbotap.org/register.tpp>)
- CareerOneStop website: use the "Military Transition" tab to access the "Key to Career Success Campaign" for Veterans (<http://www.careeronestop.org>)
- The Federal Government's Official Jobs Site (<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>)
- JobCentral, VetCentral Division: A job-search website for veterans (<http://www.jobcentral.com/vetcentral/>)
- America's Job Exchange: A job-search website. Use the "Diversity" tab to access "Veteran's Jobs" (<http://www.americasjobexchange.com>)
- Rochester Regional Veterans Business Council (www.veteransbusinesscouncil.org)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES PEER MENTORING SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

Peer Mentoring Services recognize the importance of having peer support from someone who has been through similar situations and “gets it.” Peer mentoring refers to an intentionally established, consistently supportive relationship between a client and selected volunteer mentor who shares a key characteristic with the client. It builds on and formalizes the notion of support groups with peers. It is also related to – but more formal than – simply having veteran staff members or volunteers. Ideally, these services consist of an on-site expert in peer mentoring to help with matching, training and guidance. Preferably, this would be a veteran drawn from existing mentor organizations such as Compeer, Inc., an established national “best practice” partner. Within the Center, a CompeerCORPS program can create a supportive network of veterans and nurturing veteran peer mentors. Volunteer veteran mentors are matched with a veteran based on interests, age range, military service, and gender. Peer mentoring also includes military family support groups, and can extend to social media. Peer mentoring

should be embedded within the core program areas and ultimately permeate all components of the Center’s service delivery system.

Why should we offer this service?

Qualitative research with veterans across New York State has shown that veterans implicitly trust and respond well to other veterans. For them, it is an immediate bond that allows them to open up in ways they might not to a civilian. The “vet-to-vet” dynamic also builds on the military values of loyalty and teamwork. Informal support groups have always recognized this, and veteran treatment courts are also using peer mentoring successfully.

Spouses and children express a desire for peer support too, which may be even more important since they are in civilian neighborhoods and schools rather than military bases. The Compeer model formalizes peer mentorship and addresses the need to employ a more evidence-based approach to relationship-building. It also embeds quality control directly into the model.

In ACTION

VOC PEER MENTORING SERVICES

DETAILS: VOC partners with Compeer Rochester to deliver effective peer mentoring services to veterans and their families. Our joint CompeerCORPS program is designed to create a supportive network for veterans who could benefit from a nurturing veteran peer mentor and other community relationships.

RESOURCES: On-site office for resident Compeer staff (3 days per week); laptop; telephone and internet connection

STAFF: 1 CompeerCORPS Program Manager

FUNDING SUPPORT: VA’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) funding.

2012 OPERATING BUDGET: \$66,000

REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE: “This experience has been therapeutic for me as well, because I am able to learn from the generation that came before me.”
– Active-duty combat soldier of his Vietnam veteran compeer.

How should we start?

- **Leverage community partners** for available peer mentoring resources that can be tailored to serve veterans and their families. Invite providers to the Center; discuss the needs of veterans and their families and how each provider can help serve their needs.
- **Start small and work big.** If the Center already operates a residential program for veterans, add value to it by introducing a peer mentoring component. Every facet of the Center’s service delivery system serving veterans should be considered for adding peer mentoring.
- **Get volunteers involved and trained** in the details of peer mentoring services for veterans and their families. CompeerCORPS can become the Center’s affiliate as the Compeer model is not only nationwide, but international as well.
- **Consider the role of Veteran Service Organizations and national branches of family support groups as an available “bench” of volunteer mentors.** For example, leverage relationships with Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapters, which could provide peer mentoring in a community’s Veteran Treatment Court, as well as general peer mentoring across every component of the Center.

How should we monitor progress?

When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Possible indicators to measure and record include:

- Number of veterans and families served through peer mentoring services
- Duration of established peer mentoring relationships
- Number of veterans or family members participating as trained volunteer peer mentors
- Client survey of value and impact of services received

What else should we know?

It is not necessary to invent a peer mentoring program to serve veteran families – leverage resources already available in the community through organizations such as Compeer, Inc.

References/Resources:

- Compeer, Inc. (<http://compeer.org>)
- *Increasing Social Support for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness: Evaluating the Compeer Model of Intentional Friendship*; To access this study, click on the “Read the Boston University study” link in the purple box on the left of the page (<http://www.rochester.compeer.org/>)
- Peer Mentoring Resources Booklet (<http://www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/peermentoring.pdf>)
- National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Justice for Vets Program: The national clearinghouse for veterans’ treatment courts (<http://www.justiceforvets.org/>)
- Vets 4 Vets: Free peer support for Iraq/Afghanistan-era veterans (<http://www.vets4vets.us/>)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

No-cost Readjustment Counseling Services refers to therapy and counseling services provided to address mental health and chemical dependency needs. While the Center’s overall goal of client wellness encompasses all services from employment to housing to peer mentoring, here we focus on a variety of behavioral and mental health resources. On-site licensed staff provide clinical services including creative arts therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy and general readjustment counseling. These services evolve based on client needs and strengths. They are designed to complement, not duplicate, other quality community-based resources available to veterans and their families throughout the broader continuum of care. This means that while some therapies are provided in house, other needs are met through referrals to outside agencies or VA services. It is crucial to note that the Center provides these services at no cost to those who need them. There is no need for a formal medical diagnosis or insurance.

Why should we offer this service?

The 2010 *Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans* reported elevated levels of depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and a complicated system of care, which means that many veterans do not receive quality treatment and/or support. It recommends a twin focus on strengthening both the VA and non-VA offerings in terms of quality and access. This call for a non-VA focus is important for communities, as most veterans have other sources of non-VA health insurance, and many veterans receive health care through civilian providers. In particular, reducing the stigma around seeking mental health services is an issue that integrated community-based care can help combat.

How should we start?

- **Get informed about existing health care resources** available to veterans and their families and determine how to best complement and leverage what currently exists. The Center’s staff will need to build a working knowledge of the health care systems within the Veterans Administration. Does the Center’s community have a VA Medical Center (VAMC), Community-Based

Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), or Vet Center? If so, reach out. In addition, staff must become familiar with local civilian health care providers who are “vet-friendly” and respected.

In ACTION

VOC READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICES

DETAILS: VOC retains five licensed Case Managers / Social Work Professionals (1 LCSW, 2 full-time, 1 part-time LCATs, 1 BSW), who are educated and trained in select specialties such as Creative Arts & Cognitive Behavioral Therapies. Therapists perform 25 hours of direct client contact/week. VOC partners with Nazareth College’s School of Social Work for continuous placement of two graduate students to augment staff.

RESOURCES: 1,792 square feet; staff salaries; private office space; laptop, telephone and Internet connection; in-house integrated client referral system; and oversight provided by Nazareth College Dean and faculty.

STAFF: 5 professional-status staff members and 2 full-time graduate student interns

FUNDING SUPPORT: Limited and fractional above and beyond case management resources available within VA’s SSVF funding. Primary sources of funding stem from internal revenue generated through VOC’s retail store, foundational giving, and income derived from art therapy gallery space. Approximate annual value: \$140,000.

REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE: “The Wellness Program is a great addition to the services offered here at the VOC. The program has been a tremendous help to overcoming my addictions, preparing to go back to school, and transitioning back into the workforce. My therapist and the whole wellness team have been very effective in treating my combat-related PTSD.”
– Combat Veteran, after 9 months of services through VOC

- **Start with licensed, credentialed Social Workers (LCSW, LMSW, LCAT, BSW)** to ensure high-quality, non-diagnosis-based services and therapies are available. Because most veterans exhibiting need for behavioral and mental health services can be effectively treated through non-diagnosis-based resources, only build the capacity in the Center that it needs; plan to provide diagnosis-based resources through the Center's local continuum of care to ensure the full spectrum of services.
- **Plan to connect clients to both diagnosis-based resources and non-diagnosis-based services**, but not all on site. Which services should the Center offer on site and which should be made available through referrals? A thorough wellness screen for all clients will determine which resources are more appropriate for individual client needs.

How should we monitor progress?

When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Possible indicators to measure and record include:

- Number of veterans and families served through on-site wellness services
- Number of veterans and families served through referrals to off-site wellness services
- Established measures of treatment effectiveness (e.g., trauma-informed care)
- Informal client satisfaction indexes
- Staff survey as to whether wellness services help with delivery of all other services

What else should we know?

- Veteran Readjustment Counseling Services can take many forms, but must be delivered through licensed and credentialed individuals to ensure the program's success.
- Design services to fill wellness needs. It may seem obvious, but a successful Center should only build and sustain those services that meet the needs of its clients. Focusing on behavioral and mental health efforts is probably a safe bet, given the needs of veterans and their families. However, it may be wise to leverage those services that contribute to physical well-being off site. Know the Center's strengths as well as its limitations.

References/Resources:

- United States Department of Veterans' Affairs, Vet Center; Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling for transitioning veterans and their families (<http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>)
- Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury; Services to ensure that the Department of Defense meets the needs of the nation's military communities, warriors and families (<http://www.dcoe.health.mil/>)
- American Art Therapy Association (<http://www.arttherapy.org/>)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; Services for Military Families (<http://www.samhsa.gov/MilitaryFamilies/>)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

LEGAL SERVICES & VETERANS
TREATMENT COURT

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

Low- or no-cost legal services help veteran families address a range of legal issues including employment, child support, guardianship, and eviction. Legal services can be provided through partnerships with community legal aid organizations, volunteer hours from attorney associations, or from in-house qualified staff. The idea is to enable veterans, especially those recently returning, to stabilize problematic situations in order to fully transition to civilian life. This model allows veterans to receive legal services that are integrated with the full spectrum of other supportive services. Providing legal services on site fosters the trusted environment that is critical in addressing what are often emotional issues.

Veterans Treatment Court is a pre-trial diversion structure, a hybrid of formal drug court and mental health court models. These courts allow veteran defendants to enter into an agreement whereby prosecution of a crime is deferred subject to compliance with a set of coordinated and holistic conditions aimed at treatment and prevention. A municipal court must run the program, but the Center can advise or provide part of the treatment plan through case management services.

Why should we offer this service?

Legal Services: Increasing reliance on members of the National Guard and Reserve has resulted in an expanded need for legal services. Multiple and prolonged deployments for members who leave civilian jobs and families behind without a military base structure drive these needs. Preventing eviction and working with creditors while a spouse is deployed or reclaiming employment upon return all require accessible and affordable legal expertise. The toll on families is high, making divorce, custody, and estate planning all needed services as well. Obtaining VA benefits may also require an appeal process and legal guidance.

Expanded need across a more geographically dispersed veteran population heightens the demand for community-based (non-military) legal services. Including these services in a Center's supportive offerings is imperative, because veterans often name family and financial worries as top stressors of their mental health.

Veterans Treatment Court: Studies show that veterans who do become involved with the legal system often have co-occurring challenges with substance abuse, mental illness, or homelessness. Drug and mental health courts have demonstrated the benefits of treatment over incarceration, and creating court structures specific to veterans' needs is proving effective as well.

In ACTIONVOC LEGAL SERVICES & VETERANS
TREATMENT COURT

DETAILS: In December 2010, VOC and Monroe County Legal Assistance Center (MCLAC) launched a first-of-its-kind partnership. The arrangement places 1 staff attorney inside VOC 2-3 days per week. In addition, a second fractional attorney is assigned to the VOC's rural hub of operations. MCLAC sees clients at VOC through clinics and an on-site appointment system, which means that veterans can access services in a place they already know and trust.

NOTE: MCLAC is an affiliate of Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc.

RESOURCES: Private meeting/office space; internet and telephone connection

STAFF: 1 "donated" partner attorney 2-3 days/week; 1 "fractional" attorney in rural hub; and staff time for booking appointments

FUNDING SUPPORT: VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

2012 OPERATING BUDGET: \$103,000

REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE: To date in 2011, we calculate 105 hours of on-site attorney time devoted to supporting our veterans and families. The total attorney time expended on individual veterans' cases totals 388 hours.

How should we start?

- **Scan the community** for legal assistance already targeted at veterans. Law Help (www.lawhelp.org/NY) is a starting point, and many regions have vet courts and other resources already in place. Ask around. Talk to those providers to see what's needed and available for partnership.
- **Identify the generic legal assistance providers already in the community** to explore partnership opportunities. These include legal aid organizations and the Bar associations, as well as law firms. Many attorneys contribute pro bono (free) hours; these are the volunteers to seek.
- **Explore an on-site arrangement** where another organization provides legal staff to serve clients in the Center for a set number of hours each week. Does the Center have space to accommodate private sessions? Does it have staff to do the scheduling?
- **If on-site service is not possible, strive for a specific point of contact** with the legal service provider to foster a seamless experience for the veteran family. Do some checking to make sure the person is reputable and a fit with the Center's mission.

How should we monitor progress?

When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Possible indicators to measure and record include:

- Number of clients served
- Number of client requests/referrals that the Center can't accept (waiting list)
- Number and kinds of legal needs
- Number of legal counsel hours provided
- Fiscal value of legal services provided
- Client survey of value and impact of services received

What else should we know?

Legal needs are deeply personal and confidential. Legal services should be provided in a comfortable and private space that is away from open air cubicles or offices. It is also important to arrange a consistent legal service provider to minimize disruption of assistance which may span a few months or longer. Volunteers may be a reasonable starting point to provide the service, but longer-term agreements with a service provider are more beneficial for clients.

Veterans and their families often experience unique and traumatic situations. Volunteers or partners providing legal expertise must be able to communicate with clients in a way that recognizes this. Ideally, the Center would provide some early training to legal volunteers in the areas of military and cultural competency.

References/Resources:

- Legal Information for New Yorkers; Follow the "Veterans and Military" link to find legal information for Veterans (www.lawhelp.org/NY)
- Legal Information for New Yorkers, State Directory; Browse service agencies by name or service area (www.lawhelp.org/NY/StateDirectory.cfm)
- The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York: a nonprofit law office serving the legal needs of low-income New Yorkers (www.lasmny.org/)
- Pro Bono Legal Clinic for Veterans and Active Military Service Members Brochure: providing legal aid to Veterans of Military Service Members who cannot afford a lawyer (http://cnyvets.org/files/vets_project_brochure.pdf)
- The Legal Aid Society of Rochester (www.lasroc.org)
- The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program: providing representation to veterans at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (<http://www.vetsprobono.net/about-us/>)
- National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Justice for Vets Program: the national clearinghouse for veteran's treatment courts (<http://www.justiceforvets.org/>)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

FINANCIAL COUNSELING & COACHING SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

Financial Counseling and Coaching Services refer to the Center's partnership with community members who are trained to help families manage their finances and access community resources related to financial stability. The best example of this is the C.A.S.H. (Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope) Coach Program. The local C.A.S.H. Coalition (CASH or C\$H in some communities) helps low-income clients achieve self-sufficiency by offering free income tax preparation assistance, financial literacy education and assistance in asset building.

Acting as a host site for this program enables a Center to match veterans and families with trained financial coaches who provide confidential, one-on-one money management education and guidance designed to help them gain and maintain self-sufficiency.

In ACTION

VOC FINANCIAL COUNSELING & COACHING SERVICES

DETAILS: VOC partners with a local community group (Empire Justice Center) and its C.A.S.H. (Creating Assets Savings & Hope) program to provide one-on-one financial coaching to interested clients. The C.A.S.H. program also provides seasonal income tax preparation assistance, and VOC serves as one host community site.

RESOURCES: C.A.S.H. volunteer coordinator; volunteers serving as financial coaches; reception/intake space; private office space; and computer and Internet access

STAFF: Fractional oversight by SSVF Program Manager; Volunteer C.A.S.H. Coordinator and C.A.S.H.-certified volunteer financial coaches

FUNDING SUPPORT: VA's Supportive Service for Veteran Families (SSVF) funding provides resources for training materials and session

2012 OPERATING BUDGET: \$15,000

Why should we offer this service?

According to the 2010 *Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans*, support for families in financial distress was perceived as inadequate. In addition, almost 40% of respondents to a 2010 National Military Family Association survey reported a recent financial setback due to significant life events. Half believe Congress and/or Department of Defense should provide more financial education to service members and families.

How should we start?

- **Identify possible financial coaches within the Center's current volunteer database.** Many communities have a C.A.S.H. coalition and volunteers donate time to several organizations. It is possible the Center already has a certified C.A.S.H. coach on the team. If not, perhaps its volunteer team contains individuals with strong financial skills.
- **Develop a network of referrals for financial assistance.** Both active duty and community-based military can count on the American Red Cross to link them to financial assistance in partnership with the military aid societies.
- **Partner with local veteran service organizations.** Nationally since 2006, Veterans of Foreign Wars provided over \$4.2 million in emergency financial aid to over 3,000 military families. Likewise, local American Legion Posts provide emergency aid, cash grants to veteran and military families who have suffered hardship due to a natural disaster, college scholarships, and Family Support Network programs to help military families during the deployment of a parent.

How should we monitor progress?

When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Possible indicators to measure and record include:

- Coaches assist participants in reaching the financial goals outlined in their personal service plan. They meet monthly for up to one year providing financial education, direction, and encouragement.
- Common goals are: saving money, participating in mainstream banking and credit union services, discontinued use of predatory banking services (e.g., pay-day loans and rent-to-own centers), maintaining a budget and balancing a checkbook. The service plan and personalized attention allows the program to meet the unique needs of each client.

What else should we know?

Recently reported unemployment rates for New York State veterans are higher than nonveterans. This poses an additional financial strain on veteran families. It is recommended that the Center provide employment services in conjunction with financial counseling and coaching.

Whether the Center has a local C.A.S.H. coalition or not, it's worth familiarizing the Center with the model, which is often run in conjunction with a United Way.

References/Resources:

- C.A.S.H. Community Coalition: C.A.S.H. program (Creating Assets, Savings & Hope) led by Empire Justice Center and United Way of Greater Rochester (<http://www.empirejustice.org/cash/>)
- The American Red Cross: select the "Getting Assistance" tab to access *Serving Military Families* (<http://www.redcross.org/>)
- National Military Family Association: resources for military families (<http://www.militaryfamily.org/>)
- Army Emergency Relief: a private, nonprofit organization to help soldiers and their families (<http://www.aerhq.org/>)
- Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Rochester: programs on financial education, debt management, and bankruptcy counseling (<http://www.cccsofrochester.org/>)
- Veterans of Foreign Wars: serving veterans, the military and communities (<http://www.vfw.org/Common/About-Us/>)
- The American Legion: the nation's largest veterans' organization offers a variety of services and information (<http://www.legion.org/membership/158705/american-legion-numbers>)
- The RAND Corporation: *A Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans* (http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR920.html)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

EDUCATION RESOURCES & SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

Education services support veterans and family members in taking full advantage of educational resources. This means acting as an “education mentor,” assisting clients on their individual paths to furthering their education. Tasks include filing education benefit applications, exploring career goals, selecting appropriate colleges and majors, financial aid planning, and supporting the transition to college. Ideally, education services will be integrated with employment counseling services, building an educational component into the client’s individual development plan (VOC template provided in the Resource Section). Education services can be provided in a variety of ways, as long as the necessary expertise and awareness of resources can be ensured. Effective options include: an on-site Education Resource Specialist, a campus-based model with Center staff providing services on campus, formalized relationships with higher education partners, or a volunteer veteran who has used veteran education benefits.

Why should we offer this service?

The statistics are clear about the benefits of education for all citizens; these needs are heightened for veterans. The 2010 *Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans* indicates that job placement, education, and vocational programs would be a welcome and effective means to improve veterans’ well-being. Veterans also express the need to have more coordinated information and support in navigating higher education, for themselves and for their children. This has grown in importance since the advent of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, or Chapter 33, as it is referred to by the VA. Furthermore, college campuses are recognizing that they must be more proactive in supporting returning service members who enroll as students. A 2010 report on veteran students from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) found veterans in their senior year are less engaged in, and less satisfied with, college life than are non-veteran students. The Center can help local community and four-year colleges become more effective in supporting veteran students.

How should we start?

- **Scan the Center’s college community** for available veteran education services and resources. Begin with Veteran Certifying Officials (VCOs), who are usually part-time, on-campus personnel devoted to processing federal and state veterans’ education benefits. Build an inventory of connections at each institution.
- **Learn more about the VA Work Study Program** and consider placing veteran students in VA Work Study positions in the Center and on campus.
- **Equip the Center’s Employment Services Specialists** to address education needs of clients either by working closely with the Center’s Education Resource Specialist or by becoming informed themselves. Add screening for education services to the Center’s intake assessments and link clients with available State or County Veteran Benefits Counselors to support education benefits counseling and applications. If the Center can’t afford a full-time Education Resource Specialist, consider devoting a percentage of a staff member’s time to this function.

How should we monitor progress?

When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Possible indicators to measure and record include:

- Number of veteran and family member students served
- Percentage of veteran students receiving accurate education benefits payments
- Rate of retention of veteran students
- Number of veterans participating in VA Work Study Program
- Client survey of value of services received

In ACTION

VOC EDUCATION RESOURCES & SERVICES

DETAILS: VOC partners with two area colleges, Nazareth College and Monroe Community College (MCC), to deliver comprehensive veterans' education services both on and off campus. Nazareth College places two graduate-level Social Work interns in VOC's wellness programs annually, as well as serves as host of VOC's Coming Home from War Discussion Series, a community outreach and education program. At MCC, VOC maintains a three-day-per-week on-site presence helping to connect hundreds of veteran students to earned resources and services.

RESOURCES: On- and off-campus offices; laptop; and telephone and Internet connection

STAFF: 1 Education Resource Specialist

FUNDING SUPPORT: U.S. Department of Education College Access Challenge Grant (CACG); Program administered by NYS Higher Education Services Corp. (HESC)

2012 OPERATING BUDGET: \$50,000

REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE: "My experience as both a veteran and a former student offers veteran students the ability to navigate the maze of veteran services with greater ease."
– VOC's Education Services representative serving at MCC campuses three days/week.

What else should we know?

The best place to begin serving returning veterans is where they are: college campuses, especially community colleges. Recommend partnering with area colleges to establish an on-campus presence for the Center. This demands an organized and independent staff member who can navigate a role both on campus and in the Center.

Partnering with higher education also provides opportunities to educate schools' faculty and staff about how to better understand and serve veterans.

References/Resources:

- National Survey of Student Engagement (2010): *Engagement of Student Veterans* section beginning on page 18 (http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE_2010_Results/pdf/NSSE_2010_AnnualResults.pdf)
- United States Department of Veterans' Affairs: Post 9/11 GI Bill (<http://www.gibill.va.gov>)
- American Council on Education: Transcripts for Military Personnel (http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Military_Programs&CONTENTID=9175)
- Department of Veterans' Affairs: Application for Work-Study Allowance (<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-22-8691-are.pdf>)
- Student Veterans of America: The *Work-Study Guide* is a How-To for applying for Veterans' Work-Study Benefits (http://www.studentveterans.org/resource/library/documents/SVA_-_VA_Work_Study_Guide.pdf)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

HOUSING & EMERGENCY SERVICES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

What is it?

Housing and Emergency Services refer to the Center's ability to house and serve homeless veterans. Housing services run the gamut from emergency shelter through transitional, supportive, and independent living housing options. If at all possible, it is best to operate a continuum of housing programs that serve to move veterans from emergency shelter to independent, permanent living arrangements. The continuum may be housed under one roof, with different numbers of "types" of beds, and should not distinguish between VA-eligible and non-VA-eligible veterans. Partnering with community providers, particularly on permanent supportive housing placements (HUD-VASH vouchers) is also an option. Supportive Living Units designated as serving veterans with addiction should be fully certified by the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services or similar certifying bodies. Housing assistance for both female veterans and families are a growing portion of this support. Emergency services such as personal hygiene kits, financial crisis assistance, food, clothing, and health care referrals can also help to meet acute needs.

Why should we offer this service?

America has faced veteran homelessness for decades; meeting the basic need of shelter is critical for any human being to reach their full potential. In recent years, the VA has undertaken a bold initiative to end chronic homelessness among veterans. The VA reports reducing the number of chronically homeless veterans from a high of 135,000 in 2008 to 75,500 as of June 2011. While obtaining firm counts of homeless people is a challenge, communities across New York State and the country see waiting lists for available housing resources and placements for veterans. For VISN2 (all of New York State, outside of New York City), the VA's Project CHALENG 2009 survey found need for roughly 90 more emergency and 60 more transitional beds, as well as over 300 more permanent placements. The 2010 *Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans* reports that the majority of veterans said they would personally benefit from housing assistance. Including certified alcohol and substance abuse counseling in supportive housing placements is also critical, given the documented incidence of addiction.

How should we start?

- **Assess the need to house homeless veterans in the Center's community.** The VA's Project CHALENG publishes annual survey results of both local VA staff and community participants (local government, service providers, former, and current homeless veterans). The surveys assess perceptions of homeless veterans' needs, the degree of VA/community collaboration in serving them, and progress on local homeless veteran initiatives. Find the Center's area: www.va.gov/HOMELESS/challeng.asp.

In ACTION

VOC HOUSING
& EMERGENCY SERVICES

DETAILS: VOC operates 28 units of housing to serve chronically homeless male veterans. Housing options include 6 emergency, 8 transitional, and 14 supportive living units. Veterans may reside in program for up to 2 years. Average length of stay remains 4–5 months as residents move onward into independent living arrangements.

RESOURCES: 10,651 square feet; 28 apartment units; and 1 assigned van to transport residents to appointments

STAFF: 6 on-site staff ranging from a Director and Administrative Support to credentialed Case Managers and Alcohol & Substance Abuse Counselors; 1 part-time Maintenance Tech; and volunteers

FUNDING SUPPORT: Multiple sources: VA's Grant & Per Diem Program; Residential Contract Funding; Monroe County DSS; HUD-VASH; NYS OASAS; foundational giving; individual restricted gifts; and Foodlink Feeding America Food Bank

2012 OPERATING BUDGET: \$481,000

REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE: The community rallies around VOC's Residential Programs. Several groups routinely gather at the house to help prepare meals or donate furniture for those moving out. VOC's housing program also serves as a recurring "Day of Giving" location for local businesses as their employees give back to their community.

- **Identify and reach out to local housing providers and resources. Learn from them.** Start with the HUD Continuum of Care in the Center's area. Gather local providers of homeless services and gauge their willingness to begin (or continue) serving veterans and their families. Develop a plan to support targeted efforts to serve chronically homeless veterans. Help providers improve their outreach and care to the veterans they already likely serve.
- **Plan to integrate services within the Center's residential programs.** Wrap-around case management services; certified alcohol and substance abuse counseling; wellness, legal, and peer mentoring services; benefits counseling; and job training and placement assistance all improve a residential program.

How should we monitor progress?

When establishing a new program or service offering, it is helpful to track it from the beginning. This way, the Center can continually evaluate and improve the program by identifying where problems exist. This will enable the Center to accurately report to funders on the value of the program. Possible indicators to measure and record include:

- Number of veterans served through residential programs
- Average length of stay of residents
- Number of HUD-VASH vouchers available in the community to support permanent supportive housing
- Number of volunteers supporting residential program and service activities
- Average caseload of on-site case managers
- Client survey of value/impact of services

What else should we know?

- Many chronically homeless veterans struggle with alcoholism and substance abuse, so it makes sense to address this in the Center's residential programming. A Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) on staff enables diagnostic assessment, evaluation, intervention, referral, and alcoholism and/or substance abuse counseling in both individual and group settings.
- There is a growing population of female homeless veterans – include them in the Center's model or become familiar with local resources to serve them.
- Veterans who live in rural areas report difficulty traveling to medical appointments. Keep in mind the need for transportation: rural transit providers, lift-equipped vans, and paratransit services.

References/Resources:

- New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services; Specialized Addiction Services Available for Veterans (<http://www.oasas.ny.gov/pio/press/pr-11-10-09vetsvc.cfm>)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Use the 'Military Families' tab to access information on services for military members and their families (<http://www.samhsa.gov/>)
- United States Department of Veterans' Affairs: Homeless Veterans Services (<http://www.va.gov/Homeless/>)
- Disabled American Veterans: VA hospital transportation network for sick and disabled veterans (<http://www.dav.org/volunteers/Ride.aspx>)
- Feeding America: National network of local foodbanks. Use the "Find my Foodbank" tool to connect with the local foodbank. (www.feedingamerica.org)

CHAPTER 6:

**THE STORY
OF VETERANS
OUTREACH
CENTER**

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES

THE STORY OF VETERANS OUTREACH CENTER

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES



The Center Model in Action

Here we provide a detailed look “under the tent” of Veterans Outreach Center (VOC), in Rochester, NY. VOC is the oldest community-based nonprofit organization in the nation serving veterans and their families and is the center modeled in this blueprint. Here we provide a window into the inner workings of VOC to answer the question, “How does VOC operate and provide the various supportive services?”

Within 14 key topic areas, VOC has outlined its experience of operating a Center-based model serving veterans and their families. Within each section, VOC shares “What We’ve Learned: Key Ingredients” in an effort to help inform other communities about what it takes to create and maintain a center model. Additional considerations of how to bring the Center Model to a community can be found in Chapter 7: Implementation Steps and Chapter 8: Resources.

This section presents a clear picture of how VOC works to provide comprehensive supportive services to veterans and their families.

Written from VOC's perspective, this section presents on-the-ground insights on the following topics:

- Client Services
- Leadership Philosophy
- Governance and Oversight
- Funding
- Staffing Structure and Philosophy
- Cultural Competency
- Outreach to Veterans & Families
- Community Engagement
- Marketing & Branding
- Special Events
- Complementing the VA and Other Community Partners
- Volunteers
- Technology
- Measuring Impact

This chapter is meant to be an explanation of how VOC operates rather than a template for creating a new center. Each community has different variables to consider and will find different aspects of the VOC story more useful than others. *The goal is to build on this ready book of knowledge – giving a jump start to other organizations to increase their capacity for providing sustainable and quality supportive services for veterans and their families.*

VOC BACKGROUND

How VOC Got Started

Veterans Outreach Center began in the waning days of the Vietnam War when America was struggling with how to help the thousands of returning young men and women sent to fight for their country in Southeast Asia. In 1973, nearly every returning veteran found an unsympathetic, poorly funded, and unorganized response by the federal government and the Veterans Administration (VA). To make matters worse, returning service members were unwelcome citizens in the very communities that sent them to war. Vietnam veterans were alienated and unsupported.

Fortunately, in Rochester, New York, and communities across America, efforts began (largely by veterans themselves) to organize community-based services and resources to meet the needs of this newest generation of veterans. Veterans Outreach Center began from this swell of community momentum when a group of Vietnam veterans worked together to address their own difficulties readjusting to civilian life by bringing together resources to meet basic emergency needs – counseling, housing,

food, and even clothing. Several years later, a donated and dilapidated house became VOC's first "home" for area veterans.

VOC has grown from its humble beginnings to the fully comprehensive model that it is today. Thirty-eight years later, our agency is now housed in six buildings totaling 31,000 square feet with over 36 staff members. We started small with a group of dedicated volunteers, adding and reducing programs and paid staff over the years.

We have endured many bumps along the way to become the organization modeled in this blueprint.

VOC Chronology

Below we provide a detailed chronology of several key points in VOC's history. It is our intention that by showing the fits and starts of creating a community-

based model, other communities will recognize that it takes time, often on a winding path, to scale up to a full model.

YEAR	EVENT DESCRIPTION
June 1973	The National League of Cities and U.S. Conference of Mayors sends a letter of proposal to Rochester Mayor Stephen May to open a local Veterans Outreach Project (VOP), to be funded through the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. Similar VOPs are proposed to 19 other cities nationwide.
October 18, 1973	Rochester's Veterans Outreach Project (VOP) is founded, providing job development, outreach, and referral to other services, with two full-time and four part-time staff members.
1976	Two full-time staff members are added to the staff: an Education & Training Specialist and a Discharge Review Specialist.
1977	A full-time Outreach Coordinator and three full-time outreach staff are hired to undertake a concentrated outreach effort to apprise veterans of benefits programs and services at VOP.
October 19, 1979	The Certificate of Incorporation of Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. (VOC), is filed by the U.S. Department of State under the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law.
October 1979	U.S. Congress discontinues federal funding. Because of VOC's good track record, Monroe County and the City of Rochester grant \$53,000 to VOC to enable it to continue some of its programs.
December 1980	VOC's first Board of Directors of 12 members is established—all are veterans from varying backgrounds.
March 20, 1981	VOC's 501(c)(3) status is determined. VOC is now a tax-exempt organization.
June 1981	VOC obtains permanent headquarters with the donation of a house at 459 South Avenue from Harry A. and Rosemarie Caulfield. The agency receives donations from construction industries to completely rehabilitate the deteriorated residence.
November 1981	Loss of funding results in complete elimination of paid staff; volunteers maintain some services.
June 1982	VOC reorganizes through funding from the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs, the United States Veterans Administration and private foundations. Case management and post-traumatic stress disorder counseling are added to VOC's long-standing core service of outreach.
1985	State funding is increased from \$50,000 to \$75,000.

1986	New York State funding is increased to \$100,000.
1993	VOC resurrects Flag Day in the community, involving 200 veterans and raising both public awareness about the national holiday and \$10,000 in flag sales in its first year.
1993	STARS & STRIPES <i>The Flag Store</i> business venture is established.
1996	New York State Legislature cuts funding from \$100,000 to \$40,000, causing a reduction in counseling staff and services.
1996	The U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development grant \$1.7 million for a VOC transitional housing proposal.
1998	State funding is increased to \$150,000.
1998	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes VOC for 25 years of community service.
2000	VOC opens an emergency, transitional, and supportive living center at 791 South Avenue.
2003	VOC opens the Veterans Community Technology Center to provide remedial and occupational training activities for veterans.
2004	The first capital campaign, with a goal of \$2.3 million, is launched to expand and renovate VOC's North Campus.
2004	State funding is increased to \$250,000.
2007	The Charles P. Golisano Campus of Veterans Outreach Center is officially opened with a dedication ceremony.
2008	The New York State Health Foundation awards VOC a \$374,000 grant to establish Operation Welcome Home & Recovery, a new initiative spanning from Buffalo to Albany to study the barriers and gaps in services veterans encounter in their efforts to reintegrate into civilian life.
2008	VOC celebrates its 35th Anniversary.
2011	The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs selects VOC as one of 85 recipients nationwide to receive funding for its Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) initiative. The grant award of nearly \$1 million allows VOC to stabilize veterans' housing needs by making third-party payment to landlords and utility companies. VOC also places one staff member full-time at Monroe Community College's downtown and Brighton campuses.

The VA of Today

To its credit, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has emerged from its troubled past to become the acknowledged leader in veterans' health care and services, and readily partners with organizations like VOC. The VA has made a massive commitment and

investment to right the mistakes made with veterans of our nation's past. Make no mistake, however, today it is the local community response that is languishing far behind the accomplishments of our VA, and the time is now to address these shortcomings.

VOC TODAY

As we embark on 2012, today's Veterans Outreach Center has grown to serving more than 3,500 unique veterans and families annually through a full array of supportive services. Our team consists of 36 full-time and 3 part-time staff, nearly 900 volunteers, and numerous partnerships with in-kind staff located within VOC. Today's VOC provides the following no-cost comprehensive supportive services:

- Accredited veterans benefits counseling
- Dedicated case management services
- Licensed staff offering readjustment counseling and creative arts therapy
- Comprehensive one-stop employment services
- Vocational counseling, job search, advocacy, and placement assistance
- Resumé preparation and job readiness training
- Veterans Community Technology Center (occupational skills training)
- Employment networking activities and focus groups
- Help with career advancement
- Limited and time-durational temporary financial assistance
- Legal services and resources
- CompeerCorps peer mentoring services: "Vets helping Vets"
- Educational counseling services
- One-on-one financial literacy counseling and coaching
- Seasonal income tax preparation assistance by certified representatives
- 28-unit residential program supporting emergency, transitional, supportive, and independent housing needs of homeless veterans
- Alcohol and substance abuse counseling services and referrals

More information on Veterans Outreach Center can be found at our website: www.veteransoutreachcenter.org

VOC 2012 SNAPSHOT

Year Founded: 1973

Location: Rochester, New York

Service Area: Five counties of the Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) including Monroe, Livingston, Wayne, Ontario, and Orleans as designated by the VA Healthcare Upstate NY Veterans Integrated Services Network 2 (VISN 2).

Annual Budget: \$3.4 million

Number of Board Members: 24

Total Staff: 36 full time, 3 part time

Number of Facilities: 6 buildings totaling 31,139 square feet across a "north" and "south" campus.

VOC CLIENT SERVICES

Client Services refers to the VOC experience as seen through the eyes of our veteran and family member clients. This section details how new and recurring clients access VOC and our supportive services.

VOC Philosophy of Client Services

Inclusive

The basic operating framework of VOC is that the organization exists to serve all veterans, regardless of the characterization of their service. This structure translates into a service delivery model that recognizes that each veteran is unique and falls within a range of needs and interests, but the organization must serve them all.

VOC is designed to serve the full spectrum of client capabilities and needs. Limiting services to meet the needs of less fortunate veterans and their families would exclude those veterans who are high performing individuals – and the reverse is true. Throughout the nation there are focused efforts to attract veterans to professional business executive positions, and there are countless programs to shelter homeless veterans.

At VOC, we act as a central place with the capacity and inclusive practices to serve veterans and families all along the service spectrum. We believe in this core value of inclusiveness where one veteran population can be called upon to help another veteran population (i.e., Vietnam veterans mentoring OEF/OIF/OND veterans). This makes our service delivery model quite unique.

Respectful

Serving veterans and their families begins with an initial impression – both physical and virtual – that communicates respect (not pity) for individuals and

The VOC model values individual choice by ensuring the voices of the veteran and/or family member are considered.

family members who served their country.

A favorite story of ours to tell about VOC is one involving a mistake. In this

VOC CLIENT SERVICES SNAPSHOT

In 2010, Veterans Outreach Center:

- Served more than 3,400 “unique” veteran and/or family members
- Hosted more than 7,400 participants in its Veterans Community Technology Center (VCTC)
- With 650+ volunteers logged more than 2,250 volunteer service hours (saving the Center over \$46,900 in operating expenses)
- Delivered \$3.66 million worth of generally new and recurring veterans’ benefits payments directly to veterans and family members
- Housed and/or served 118 homeless veterans (30% of whom served in Afghanistan, Iraq or both) in its Residential Programs & Services
- Placed nearly 3 of every 4 (72%) participating veterans into meaningful employment, beating the national average of cost per job placement by 12%

case, the story begins with a sign in the entrance to VOC that read “No Loitering.” Until Veterans Day 2010, that’s the sign that welcomed veterans and their families to VOC. That sign has since been replaced by one that reads “Thank You for Your Service.” It now sits in VOC’s Welcome Center alongside an oversized letter signed by the President & CEO that outlines the responsibilities of VOC and what those who seek services can expect from the organization. The point of this anecdote is that our mistake was really a big one. Culturally, we were an organization that served only those veterans who were less fortunate. We had lost sight of the fact that not all veterans are the same, and that to be of true service, the organization had to do more to begin serving veterans all along the spectrum.

VOC Client Services Process

Yet, respectful practices at VOC are more than a sign in a window. It is critical for us to back up these statements and exemplify this value in everything we do. We work to ensure respectful practices are clearly evident and firmly embedded in the minds of each of our staff members. VOC's volunteer greeters guide all first-time visitors to a central point where they are asked to complete a "Getting to Know You" handout (see sample in the Resource Section). This simple, two-page document is designed to convey VOC's commitment to serve non-intrusively and with as few barriers as possible. "Getting to Know You" implies learning from the clients themselves of why they're visiting VOC. Questions include, "Why are you visiting us today?" and "Do any of these additional supportive services interest you?" These core questions are important to understand as the first step in the process, because it affirms we value individual choice and ensures the voices of the veteran and family members are considered.

VOC Case Management

Upon completion of their "Getting to Know You" handout, first-time visitors are then guided to VOC's Wellness Services staff where case management assignments are made. All first-time visitors to VOC are assigned a case manager, regardless of the perceived level of need. By design, VOC's case management function is what ensures clients get the services they came for, while simultaneously ensuring clients get what they earned by virtue of their military service. This distinction is important, as many veterans and their families have no idea what they've earned through their service.

Our case managers are trained and licensed social workers who next begin a private triage phase with each first-time visitor assessing two things: need and urgency of need. VOC's triage function is designed to last as long as it takes to adequately determine both. For high-performing veterans it can be accomplished in as little as 15 minutes. Two "tracks" emerge from the triage session: urgent and non-urgent. When urgent needs are identified, case managers personally escort clients to the (in-house) Supportive Services staff provider whose resources are best designed to efficiently meet the veteran and/or family member's requirements. This usually translates into housing services and/or temporary financial assistance to stabilize their housing situation.

Case managers address non-urgent needs by scheduling appointments via VOC's Integrated Client Referral System (ICRS). This is a secure and confidential portal on VOC's website. Timely delivery of non-urgent supportive services is essential, so appointments are always scheduled within two working weeks of the client's initial visit. Returning visitors are greeted through the Welcome Center and quietly guided to their scheduled appointment destination without sign-in or fanfare to respect their privacy.

VOC's six case managers work collectively as the Center's Wellness Team, meeting regularly to discuss client progress and share crucial feedback. These six staff members are the most precious and in-demand commodity within VOC. A daily balancing effort is required to ensure adequate time is allocated for case management and underpinning therapy to reduce barriers to employability, economic well-being, and physical and emotional health. Great attention is paid to preserving resources for those most in need because they are typically the same individual veterans and family members presenting the highest need(s) with the least amount of associated available resources, including access to VA services.

VOC Documentation and Planning

VOC case managers collect three documents from every client: proof of veteran status (i.e., Discharge Certificate DD Form 214 or equivalent), photo ID, and proof of income. Proof of income is required to properly "categorize" and enroll clients in certain programs and to satisfy program funding requirements. When considering the amount of paperwork veterans and their families are often required to complete by the VA and other government-funded programs, these administrative requirements are exceptionally simple. Clients remain appreciative and understanding of the fact that for these supportive services to remain free of charge in their community, some paperwork is required.

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is prepared by the assigned Case Manager. It constitutes an agreement of sorts: in exchange for supportive services provided by VOC, the client will uphold his or her responsibilities to see the IDP through to completion.

Once the client IDP is completed, case management functions shift into gear. VOC resources, services, and programs become available to the client, and case

managers begin monitoring the client's progress with the selected offerings. The client file is subsequently closed when all required services run their course and designed goals have been met.

VOC Client Feedback

VOC seeks and receives regular client feedback through surveys developed by our staff and administered at multiple intervals during a client's time with us (see sample included in the Resource Section). Feedback then guides our efforts to improve performance by focusing resources on areas most in need of attention.

Feedback also allows VOC's Leadership Team the means to recognize excellent performance among paid staff and volunteers.

VOC also partners with Nazareth College's School of Health & Human Services, specifically the Department of Social Work, to provide clinical oversight of our wellness functions (case management and therapy). Within this relationship, Nazareth College clinical staff consults with VOC's Wellness Team as much as required to ensure effective case management and therapeutic protocols are followed.

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **One-to-one case management services.** It is critical to have licensed mental health professionals who can double as licensed therapists at the core of client services.
- **Immediate needs assessment and referrals** (either in house and/or by community partners). This should include benefits, readjustment counseling, employment and training, financial, legal, mentoring, education, and housing.
- **Client spectrum focus.** The center model must maintain the spectrum of clients as the focal point for everything the Center does. It is not difficult to fall victim to serving select clients (i.e., one generation of veterans at the expense of others, or veterans of one socioeconomic class vs. another). Attention must be paid to maintaining a model that attracts and retains veterans from across multiple spectrums within the Center.
- **Confidentiality.** From closed office spaces for client meetings, to secure electronic and physical file storage, we take every step to ensure confidentiality for our clients.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

- Provide client satisfaction surveys to assess staff awareness and familiarity with military culture (a VOC sample is included in the Resource Section).
- Take time to look at the Center from the perspective of its clients. Walk into the building, look around, and make adjustments as necessary.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

It sounds simple, but when setting up how the Center will support clients, think about them from the moment they enter the Center's doors:

- Who greets them? Volunteers or staff?
- What's the first discussion between staff and clients? Focus on "how can we help you" and "thank you for serving."
- How much administrative information is needed to get started? Strive for minimal.
- How are non-urgent and urgent needs handled? Address these needs separately.

VOC Client Services Resources

- Nazareth College Social Work Department ([www.naz.edu/health-and-human-services/social-work/social-work-department/?searchterm=social work](http://www.naz.edu/health-and-human-services/social-work/social-work-department/?searchterm=social%20work))
- Department of Veterans Affairs Strategic Plan 2010-2014 (www.va.gov/op3/Docs/StrategicPlanning/VA_2010_2014_Strategic_Plan.pdf)

Expand the Center's resources even more by establishing a "second tier" of community-based case managers and therapists. At VOC, we have an on-site, no-cost presence by a community-based major health care provider to augment existing case management and therapy resources. This is in addition to VOC supervising two graduate-level social work interns per academic semester.

VOC LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

Leadership of VOC includes the Chief Executive and the core Leadership Team, which oversees the management of the agency, delivery of services, and general operations. We also strive to instill leadership qualities in all of our staff members through ongoing professional development.

The Critical Role of VOC's Chief Executive

VOC's Chief Executive sets the overall tone and direction of the organization. As the leader, it is the Chief Executive's job to ensure the needs of those served – veterans and their families – and the organization are aligned at all times. He/she drives the organization's collective performance by building a high-functioning team. In order to be effective, VOC's Chief Executive must be comfortable operating in all five domains outlined in this blueprint: community, veterans and families, government, funders, and virtual. VOC's Chief Executive executes his/her responsibilities with harnessed independence, communicating both with the Board and internally to continuously engage the people who guide VOC's performance.

VOC's Staff Leadership Team

Recruiting and retaining staff (both paid employees and unpaid volunteers) is a primary function of the Chief Executive, beginning with the selection of VOC's Leadership Team. We take great care in placing and developing our leaders, for they possess the ability to directly influence outcomes and performance throughout the organization. VOC's Chief Executive cultivates and nurtures the

Leadership Team who arrive with the DNA to place the interests of themselves secondary to those served by VOC.

Creating and retaining this type of organization is hard work. Good leadership doesn't

occur naturally; it's developed over time and requires an investment by the organization in the professional development of all staff, from the very bottom of the organiza-

tional chart to the very top (for more information see the Staffing section later in this chapter).

At VOC, our staff leadership team consists of the following five positions: Chief Executive, Chief Financial/Operations Officer, Vice President of Programs & Services, Director of Administrative Services, and Chief of Community Services and Relations. We meet every Wednesday to ensure we are aligned and not operating in separate silos. As a team, we develop our plan to address the immediate and upcoming needs of the organization.

VOC's Approach to Leadership

When VOC's leadership is working best, it remains nearly invisible to both clients and staff. Outstanding leadership provides clear vision and creates trust, resulting in a cohesive team with a shared mission. Leadership at VOC:

- Sets the organization's direction and means for maintaining the course at all times
- Acknowledges mistakes while correcting through coaching
- Prioritizes daily and for the long haul around mission, vision, and values
- Is visible and involved while respecting lines of authority
- Is focused on being a resource provider – people, money, policies, and procedures
- Carves out time each day to think strategically about the big picture
- Never compromises on quality
- Praises people publicly and holds people accountable privately
- Embraces continuous performance improvement – and never settles for the status quo

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Small, lean management team.** Develop a leadership team that covers key areas of the Center and allows for easy cross-department coordination. Think of combining functions into one position to keep the top management team small. For example, at VOC we combined operations with finance through a Chief Operating & Financial Officer position.
- **Professional development experiences throughout the year.** Make sure leaders are developed professionally throughout the year to increase performance and demonstrate that the Center values and invests in its staff. At VOC, we set aside funding for staff development and encourage staff to identify online and in-person learning opportunities.
- **Organized and routine discussion.** Ensure regular scheduled meetings, but not too many. Keep them small and demand the information be shared further inside the Center's separate units. Look for indications that information is being shared routinely throughout the organization. At VOC, we hold quarterly all-hands meetings of all staff, and the management team meets weekly.
- **Recognition programs.** Develop recognition for the Center's staff, volunteers, and the Center itself. It is important to hit all three components of the Center. Leaders often forget that one of their responsibilities is to ensure the overall organization is recognized for its performance and to not overlook the many people it takes to make it happen. At VOC, we hold quarterly and annual volunteer recognition events. We also make a concerted effort to celebrate our accomplishments in visible ways such as having staff appear in front of the media when the Center receives recognition.
- **A strategic plan looking out three to five years.** A strategic plan is the road map for the organization. Develop the plan with a range of stakeholders to increase ownership of the goals and tasks. Monitor progress and make course corrections as necessary. At VOC, we operate under a three-year strategic plan timeframe, which includes regular reporting to our board of directors.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

- Ensure performance appraisals are linked to the Center's strategic plan – use contributions made to organizational values and mission as one basis for assessment (see VOC example in the Resource Section).
- Think long and hard about how the Center measures the organization's performance. The tendency is to measure progress by individual program(s). Leaders must think broader, across program elements, of how they each contribute to the whole. Communicating that expectation is equally important. At VOC we designed separate center-wide metrics to measure and track the organization's progress (see VOC example in Resource Section).
- Convene quarterly all-hands meetings to bring together all staff to share performance and check the organization's pulse and direction.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Some elements of leadership can be taught, and therefore learned, while others are characteristics a person brings to the organization. When designing the Center, be selective when looking for leaders. The key management team should comprise leaders with significant experience in key areas: organizational design, decision-making, financial systems, planning, and program integration. Look to the uniformed services to recruit former Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, and Marines into the Center to serve veterans and their families.

VOC Leadership Resources

- *Managing a Nonprofit in the Twenty-First Century*, by Thomas Wolf (Simon & Schuster, 1999)
- *Thoughts on Leadership in the Nonprofit World*, by Mary Ann Siegel (Nonprofit World, Vol. 21, No.5, October 2003) (<http://www.seagullwriting.com/freearticles/thoughtsonleadership.pdf>)
- Leader to Leader Institute (<http://www.pfdf.org>)
- *Nonprofit Kit for Dummies*, 3rd Edition, by Stan Hutton, Frances Phillips (December, 2009)

VOC GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

Governance and oversight refers primarily to the function of the Center’s Board of Directors (Board). The Board is legally and financially responsible for the conduct of the organization. To be effective in its responsibilities, the Board must play an active role for the good of the organization and for reducing liability of the individual directors.

One of the most important roles of the Board is to hire an executive director for the organization and to give that person room to lead. The Board should provide oversight and not become involved in day-to-day operations.

VOC’s Board Structure

At VOC, our Board consists of 24 members. Our Board has established operating by-laws which govern how the Board operates and makes decisions. (See examples of both in Resource Section.)

A good Board member for VOC is one who brings unique skills and perspective and takes an active interest in the organization. We have learned that having a well-known Board member for the sake of their name can be more damaging than beneficial. Board members who are connected in the community, are representative of our constituency, and truly want to help our organization succeed are a better fit. In terms of VOC, we’re talking first and foremost about veterans and family members – both constituencies have a place on our Board.

Our Board is organized under officers and through committees. This is a practical and effective way to provide governance for most organizations and helps to involve all Board members. Our officers include a Chair, who presides over meetings and provides management of the Board, a Vice-Chair, who presides in the absence of the Chair, a Treasurer, and a Secretary. At the VOC, the Treasurer and Secretary positions are assigned to staff of the organization.

VOC Board committees include a finance committee, program committee, development (fundraising) committee, human resources committee, nominating committee (future Board members), and other areas, depending on the needs of our organization.

Minutes are recorded for all of our Board meetings as a legal record of activity. The minutes do not need to be extensive, but they adequately address matters of importance and show that discussions took place including any resulting decisions. Attendance at meetings is also recorded. In legal terms, absence from a meeting or pleading ignorance does not relieve a Board member of responsibility for actions of the Board. The minutes provide enough information that an absent member would be able to recognize important discussions that may require their additional review.

VOC’s Board Chair serves as the conduit for communicating goals and objectives of the Board to the executive director of the organization. All members of the Board also interact with staff, volunteers, and those served by our organization in order to gain insight into operations. This active interest also builds loyalty and enthusiasm and develops mutual respect between our Board and those who fulfill the mission of VOC every day.

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Board membership for veterans and family members.** Including constituents in governance and oversight is a smart move. At VOC, 75% of our Board seats are currently filled by veterans.
- **A spot on the board for tenant veteran service organizations associated with the Center.** Consider hosting a chapter of the Blue Star Mothers. At VOC, a chapter member has served on our Board to contribute to our mission.
- **Schedule, process, and discipline.** Hold regularly scheduled meetings, but not too many. An acceptable meeting cycle should recognize the role of committees, executive, and full membership. At VOC, our full Board meets 10 months per year, while our committees meet monthly.
- **Membership requirements and responsibilities.** Don't make the mistake of failing to levy responsibilities and requirements for membership – it's not just a seat these members are warming, they should be expected to contribute, financially and otherwise. At VOC, our Board members are expected to set an example by contributing both financially and in-kind to our organization.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

- Ensure the Executive Committee of the Board appraises the performance of the Chief Executive annually.
- Annually measure each Board member's contribution – financially, time spent serving on a committee, introductions to funders, etc.
- Spend time to cultivate and engage the Board – meet with them individually and ensure they are invested within the organization.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

State laws may establish a minimum size of a Board, and in some states new corporations can have a Board of directors consisting of as little as only one member

who fulfills all roles. As the corporation grows, others will need to be added. As a general guide, nonprofit corporations should have at least five or more members who are related only in their commitment to the organization.

Avoid allowing the Chief Executive to fill Board positions with friends and friends of friends. While everybody likes to be liked, governance and oversight should operate independently of the Chief Executive.

It is also important to reconfigure the Board regularly to bring in new ideas, energy, and connections with the community. One way to avoid complacency is to implement term limits for the directors. Two- to three-year terms, with a maximum of two consecutive terms, is probably a good starting point. Staggering term limits also provides continuity while allowing for planned member turnover. At VOC, our Board members serve terms of three years.

VOC Governance Resources

- Board Source (<http://www.boardsource.org>)
- New York Council of Nonprofits (<http://www.nycon.org>)
- Right from the Start: Responsibilities of Directors of Not-for-Profit Corporations. Click on the "Right from the Start" document link (http://www.ag.ny.gov/bureaus/charities2/guides_advice_new.html)
- Procedures for Forming and Changing Not-for-Profits in New York State. Click on "Forming and Changing Not-for-Profits" document link (http://www.ag.ny.gov/bureaus/charities2/guides_advice_new.html)
- New York State Office of the Attorney General. Click on the "Helpful Websites" link (http://www.ag.ny.gov/bureaus/charities2/guides_advice_new.html)
- New York State Department of State Guide for Forming Not-for-Profit Entities: Information on Not-For-Profit corporation filing (<http://www.dos.ny.gov/corps/nfpcorp.html#certinc>)

VOC FUNDING OVERVIEW

Funding drives the availability of all programs and services for veterans and family members within the Center. At VOC we strive to secure sustainable funding while maximizing resourcing opportunities. Sustainable funding is money we can count on that drives quality within each program and service. Generally, lower levels of funding restrict our program capacity and access, while greater levels expand it. Resourcing, on the other hand, refers to the actions undertaken by VOC to leverage the services of others to serve veterans and their families.

The three most operative words for funding and resourcing at VOC are:

Sustainable – *funding and resources that are recurring in nature*

Predictable – *to allow for accurate budgeting and cash flow projections*

Adaptive – *to allow for new funding and resourcing options that cause no harm to existing streams of revenue*

VOC's philosophy is to be 100% barrier free – all of our services are provided free of charge for veterans and their families.

No Charge for Services

Unique to VOC's funding model is the absolute rule that *we charge nothing for our services*. Our service delivery model is built around "barrier-free access" for all veterans and family members and it means exactly that – no third-party billing systems, no insurance forms, no complex paperwork (we maintain to this day a two-page intake form – see a sample in the Resource Section).

From a veteran or family member's perspective, this service aspect is most appreciated, and unlike anything they've become accustomed to in their dealings with the VA, DOD, and other forms of government services.

It is important to understand and appreciate that this commitment to free services places a burden on VOC's leadership and staff to control expenses, seek recurring revenue streams, and operate efficiently at all times. There is very little room to maneuver outside of that framework.

VOC's chief rule about funding and resourcing is to avoid "chasing shiny objects," or seeking money wherever it can be found to satisfy gaps between revenue and

expenses. Such pursuits, we have found, usually result in the organization veering drastically off course and away from core functions and services.

Funding VOC in the Beginning

VOC began by attracting prominent veterans who possessed the means to provide seed money to cover early operating costs. From there, working with leading politicians became the second step in the quest to secure early funding. At VOC, a portion of our operating funds is through state grants and county per diem services for housing. Our relationships with government partners are essential for programming and services, but most critical for our funding.

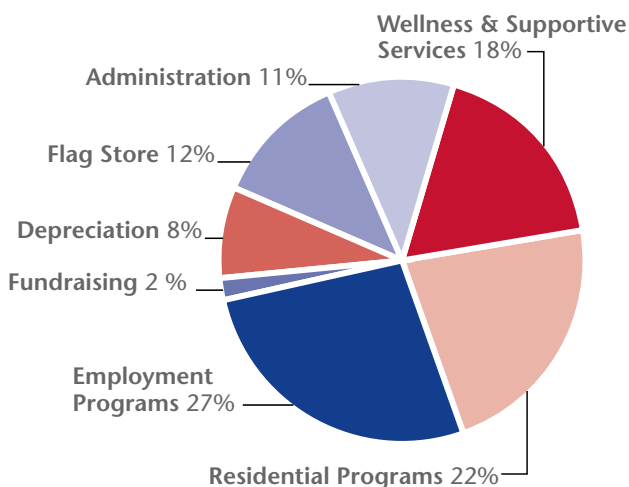
VOC Funding Model Overview

For 2012, VOC has a projected \$3.4 million operating budget. As a service organization, the bulk of our expenditures are the direct expenses of program administration (67%). Other indirect costs include administration (11%), fundraising (2%), depreciation (8%), and operation of our Flag Store (12%).

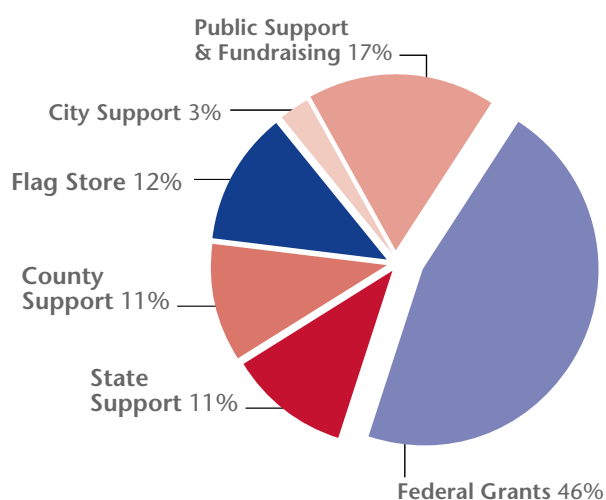
Government funding in 2012 makes up the largest share of our operating revenue, representing 71% of our total budget. The balance of our support comes from sales from our Flag Store (12%) and fundraising through events and financial donations (17%). Last quarter, we

conducted the first of a biannual appeal to contributors (December and May). We project this new initiative to provide an additional 30% of additional fundraising revenue.

VOC EXPENDITURES



VOC REVENUE



What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Funding case management services is the starting point.** Case management is the vehicle for overlaying solutions to the needs of veterans and family members.
- **Leveraging community-based resources to serve veterans and families simultaneously is a requirement.** At VOC, our partnership with Legal Assistance began as a leveraged resource, and, over time, we have applied for specific grant funding to cover additional expenses with the service.
- **Sustainability is key.** When serving veterans and families, it is important to remember that the need for veteran services does not peak until 40 years following any war or conflict (think Vietnam).
- **Diverse revenue and income streams.** Think about adding the Center's own internal revenue source. Our Flag Store adds between \$275,000 and \$300,000 worth of income annually. After expenses, the Store's profits are returned to program costs.
- **A disciplined funding strategy.** Not every funding opportunity needs chasing. Look hard at core services – employment, counseling, legal services, housing – and identify potential sources of funding that align with the service delivery model.
- **A Chief Financial Officer and Controller.** Both are needed for proper controls over spending and bookkeeping.
- **A means to regularly communicate with contributors.** VOC utilizes DonorPerfect software for tracking contributions (both cash and in-kind) and for generating acknowledgement letters. In the beginning, keeping track of contributions with a spreadsheets or database program may suffice. The goal is to keep track of supporters and set up systems to easily engage them throughout the year.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

- Formalize a cyclical budgetary and execution rhythm. The Center should have a general budget planning and tracking system in place to ensure the Center remains on its financial glide path.
- Conduct routine reviews of all financials with the Finance Committee within the Board of Directors.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Funding and resourcing the Center's activities is everyone's business – the Chief Executive, paid staff, volunteers, and members of the Board. Getting all parties to both recognize that and contribute is one of the more important tasks of the Chief Executive. One additional important consideration is to never underestimate the degree of difficulty in implementing a funding model that is tied to a strategic plan and actual performance. The trilogy of a very successful funding model for the Center must connect the following three things: (1) the strategic plan, (2) funding and resources, and (3) overall performance (both organizational and individual).

*The trilogy of a successful funding model must connect the following three things:
(1) the strategic plan,
(2) funding and resources, and
(3) overall performance.*

VOC Funding Resources

- “Ten Non-Profit Funding Models”: An article from the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2009. (<http://www.opportunitycollaboration.net/userimages/file/Fellowship%20Ten%20Nonprofit%20Funding%20Models.pdf>)
- U.S. Government site for nonprofits: Government information and services for owners of nonprofit and charitable organizations (<http://www.usa.gov/Business/Nonprofit.shtml>)
- Enoch Pratt Free Library: A guide for finding grants for your nonprofit organization. Contains links to books, websites, and databases about nonprofit funding (<http://www.prattlibrary.org/locations/ssh/index.aspx?id=3130>)

VOC STAFFING STRUCTURE AND PHILOSOPHY

Staffing refers to the ability to place the most qualified person in the best position to serve the needs of veterans and their families. Maintaining a hiring philosophy of hiring up at all times, VOC places a premium on recruiting talented individuals who not only possess the required experience, education, licensing, and credentials, but most importantly, the desire and heart to serve our veterans and families.

VOC's staffing model is built around five key components:

- *Paid staff*
- *In-kind resourced staff from partner organizations*
- *Volunteers*
- *AmeriCorps VISTA members*
- *Internships*

By design, paid staff and volunteers often work side by side in the execution of their responsibilities, and we take great pride in speaking about our teammates as equal partners in service to veterans and their families. Volunteers are critically important to VOC's mission, and without them we would fail to function. In addition, both volunteers and paid staff serve as an extension of the Leadership Team by communicating the value of VOC throughout their individual circles of influence. In-kind staff members from our partner organizations, such as VA and Legal Assistance, are also housed at VOC providing a comprehensive staffing picture.

How VOC Staff is Organized

VOC is run by 36 full-time and three part-time staff members who are grouped across four units. A copy of our organizational chart is provided in the Resource Section.

VOC Leadership Team

As noted earlier, VOC prides itself on our lean administration, which comprises a five-member Leadership Team: Chief Executive, Chief Financial/Operations Officer, Vice President of Programs & Services, Director of Administrative Services, and Director of Community Services and Volunteerism. Presenting a lean administrative side is a requirement for funders and is dependent on recruiting the best possible staff available. VOC Leadership Team has "Weekly Leader Huddles" every Wednesday to synchronize the organizational tempo and ensure visibility into all lines of operation supported by VOC.

VOC Organizational Units

Directly beneath the Leadership Team are a series of direct reports for Residential Programs & Services, Facilities Maintenance, Wellness Services, Communications, Marketing and Event Planning, Retail Flag Store, and New Media Operations. Direct Reports have their associated subordinate operational staff (Program Managers, Administrative Support, Technology Center Support, Outreach, Donor Services, Case Managers, Therapists, and Credentialed Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselors).

VOC's Volunteer Workforce

VOC integrates volunteers throughout the organization. Our volunteers act as Peer Mentors, Financial Coaches, Outreach Ambassadors, Welcome Center Greeters, retail sales staff, drivers, trainers, educators, and marketing support staff. Volunteers are the backbone of our events such as Annual Flag Day, the Pound the Ground for Vets Race, our Golf Outing, and our Annual Dinner. Our volunteer Operation Welcome Home Team is responsible for greeting all returning service members at the Rochester International Airport and Rochester Bus Station, which they have been doing since the First Gulf War. More than 600 volunteers share this responsibility and are present for welcome home greetings at all hours of the day and night at the request of the family. Learn more about how VOC leverages volunteers as a resource in a later section on VOC's volunteer program.

VOC also incorporates internship opportunities through a partnership with Nazareth College in Rochester, New York. Through a formal agreement, Nazareth College not only provides required clinical supervision and oversight of assigned wellness staff, the College also assigns two graduate-level School of Social Work Interns per semester to VOC. Interns work under the careful eye of VOC wellness staff who supervise their professional conduct throughout their internship experience, thus allowing VOC to take an active role in training future Social Workers in the practice of caring for veterans and their families.

VOC currently has one Serve NY VISTA Volunteer who works 35-40 hours per week as an assistant to our Director of Community Services and Volunteerism. Serve NY members are available through Americorps VISTA. These volunteers work with organizations and agencies throughout New York State that serve the unmet needs of veterans, active duty military personnel, and military families. Through activities such as fund development, program development, community education, volunteer recruitment, and training, members build the capacity and sustainability of organizations and agencies.

VOC In-Kind Resourced Staff

VOC has established partnerships with other agencies to host their staff at our Center. This allows us to deepen the expertise and services available onsite to meet the needs of our clients while simultaneously helping our partner organizations to reach a target population. Through the recently awarded VA funding of Supportive Services to Veterans and their Families (SSVF), VOC receives onsite assistance from three full-time employees from collaborative partners: CompeerCORPS, The Housing Council, and Monroe County Legal Assistance Center.

VOC Staffing Philosophy

VOC staff members act as agents who ensure that services and programs are delivered with the highest degree of quality at all times. Good teammates ensure good things happen for good people who access VOC's services and resources. At VOC, we believe the staffing function should:

- Ensure adequate capacity levels are maintained to keep ahead of the demand for services
- Incorporate continued professional development and learning
- Reward performance and recognize contributions made to the organization
- Continuously be thinking of the next candidate for the next position
- Address measures to retain quality people – superior benefits and competitive salary being key
- Allow for off-hour service delivery (evenings, being primary) to account for clients who work and attend school
- Be flexible enough to assign staff to off-site locations such as community colleges
- Incorporate all components in support of the Center's mission

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Across-the-board recognition program.** Volunteers, paid staff, interns, AmeriCorps members – even Board Members – should be recognized for their contribution. Think of “Service Pins” for volunteers who achieve volunteer service hour milestones in support of the Center.
- **The best benefits possible.** Within means, providing for the best possible benefits serves as a linchpin in attracting and retaining top staff to the Center.
- **Continuous appraisal of performance for all staff.** From Chief Executive to Facilities Specialist, all members of the Center’s team deserve critical feedback annually and when necessary to improve upon skills and performance. (A copy of VOC’s Employee Self-Evaluation Form is provided in the Resource Section).
- **Internships.** Work with the Center’s local college to provide for a supervised internship experience, particularly in the area of social work.
- **Partner with community organizations.** Reach out to other organizations to work in the Center to provide identified service needs. Many service organizations seek new ways to reach the target populations served. As noted above, VOC provides space for staff from VA, Legal Aid, and Compeer.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

Establish a continuous information-sharing and recognition cycle. VOC uses a quarterly all-hands approach, where all paid staff and available volunteers gather to receive updates on VOC’s performance associated with our strategic plan. At the same time, high-performing staff members during that quarter are recognized along with their volunteer counterparts for contributing to VOC’s mission.

Giving regular feedback through a structured performance appraisal process is critical to improving individual performance and, in turn, overall organizational performance. Make time to do this on a regular basis, be clear of what is expected, and provide feedback when staff members are doing things well and when there is need for improvement.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

It is important to pursue recurring funding to ensure services are delivered without interruption to veterans and families. Staffing comes with funding and resourcing; it is important not to overlook the obvious linkage between the two.

VOC Staffing Resources

- **Staffing Model for Small Non-Profit Service Organization: From Suite 101, Non Profit Organizations** (<http://constancewolochuk.suite101.com/staffing-model-for-small-non-profit-service-organization-a353395>)
- **Nonprofit Organizations and Human Resources Management: Providing basic information and definitions, this page also has a valuable list of resources at the bottom** (<http://www.answers.com/topic/nonprofit-organizations-and-human-resources-management>)
- **Serve New York VISTA** (<http://www.tscwny.org>)

VOC'S APPROACH TO CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural competency refers to the direct and ancillary knowledge staff members possess of military life. Such knowledge includes branch-specific acronyms and terminology, military values, chain of command structure, family sacrifices related to frequent relocations, and combat and garrison stressors. The focus in this section is on military culture; it is just as important for staff to be culturally competent around race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

In addition to the technical knowledge associated with cultural competency, VOC strives to emanate warmth and appreciation for veteran families. Our staff can identify with the power of camaraderie. They understand the “mission-first” mentality that may have become embedded in an individual and the challenges associated with the same attitude in the civilian sector.

Our culturally competent staff resists the inclination to lump all veterans together into a homogenous group.

We recognize and value each veteran as a unique individual bound to his/her fellow service members with common experiences. In order to achieve this level of understanding, we must hire the right people. One of our most effective means of creating an atmosphere rich with cultural competency is hiring veteran personnel. However, non-veterans who have worked extensively with service members are also a wonderful asset at VOC.

Being culturally competent is to recognize and value each veteran as a unique individual.

Cultural Competency at VOC

We believe having a culturally competent staff is critically important to the success of our organization. Being culturally competent:

- Establishes a measure of *credibility* with veteran clients and creates a level of trust between the client and the staff member. Increased trust allows VOC staff to more quickly understand and meet identified needs.
- Helps *reduce barriers* in communication. Speaking the same language facilitates understanding from a technical angle and a psychosomatic perspective.
- Enables VOC staff members to provide the *best possible service* to the veteran. If a veteran needs resumé assistance from an employment specialist, the quality of the resumé will directly reflect the level of cultural competence our staff member has. A greater understanding will permit the employment specialist to accurately capture, interpret, and document the veteran's military experiences in such a way that is comprehensive and impressive to a civilian employer.

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Whenever possible, veterans should be considered during the hiring process of new personnel.** Veterans often admit that they relate best to other veterans. At VOC, 16 of 39 staff members (41%) are veterans.
- **Training should be provided for non-veteran personnel to help them become familiar with military life.** A trip to the nearest active duty installation and visits to reserve units would afford real-life educational encounters with greater value than the passive experience of textbook learning.
- **Participation** in local patriotic observances, focus groups, discussion series, veteran community groups, and the like would also facilitate cultural competency. At VOC, our staff is engaged in a variety of community groups, coalitions, and events. VOC senior leaders are members of numerous local organizations whose missions include mobilizing and educating the community about the issues facing our military families. They are often called on to co-facilitate workshops for military families and service providers. Some examples are Help Base Greater Rochester, Rochester Regional Veterans Business Council, and Project Healing Waters.
- **Online courses and webinars** are available to offer military cultural competence training. Many of these courses are designed specifically for individuals working with veteran families. At VOC, we encourage staff to attend at least one workshop or seminar annually related to developing and expanding their level of cultural competency.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

- Provide client satisfaction surveys to assess staff awareness and familiarity with military culture (a VOC sample is included in the Resource Section).
- Encourage staff to attend professional development seminars to enhance understanding of military-related issues. Include participation in professional development activities as part of performance appraisal process.
- Support staff involvement in local military organizations, such as community veteran advisory boards, veteran business councils, veteran consortiums for area colleges, etc.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

It is difficult to teach military cultural competency overnight. It requires a deep-seated understanding that can only be cultivated through time, exposure, and experience. The more adept staff members become at communicating accurately and comfortably with veterans, the better chance the Center has of receiving client referrals. In other words, the military community is tight-knit. *Positive (and negative) experiences are shared quickly with other service members, often causing fellow veterans to support or avoid an organization accordingly.*

VOC Cultural Competency Resources

- Department of Defense Live (Social Media Site): How Providers Can Improve Care for Reserve Component Members (http://www.dodlive.mil/index_php/2011/08/how-providers-can-improve-care-for-reserve-component-members/)
- Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP): Military Cultural Competence Online Course. The CDP prepares professionals to support warriors and families (<http://deploymentpsych.org/training/training-catalog/military-cultural-competence>)
- Coming Home Project: "Treating the Invisible Wounds of War" presentation by LTC David Rabb, LICSW (<http://www.cominghomeproject.net/node/152>)
- Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: DOD's Challenge in Today's Educational Environment. U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations, November 2008. (http://prhome.defense.gov/READINESS/DLO/files/LanguageCultureReportNov08_HASC.pdf)
- Rank Structure Resource: A chart providing descriptions of all military ranks (http://www.military.com/Recruiting/Content/0,13898,rec_step08_ranks,,00.html)
- Help Base Greater Rochester (<http://www.hbrochester.org/default.asp>)
- Rochester Regional Veterans Business Council (www.veteransbusinesscouncil.org)
- Project Healing Waters (<http://www.canandaigualaketu.org/2011SiteUpgrade/11HealingWaters.php>)

VOC OUTREACH TO VETERANS & FAMILIES

Veterans and family members are not instantly aware of the supportive services available to them upon their return from active duty. VOC serves 3,500 unique individuals annually out of the nearly 70,000 veterans in our service area. It is our responsibility to go out and educate them about the services available inside VOC and elsewhere in the community.

The word “Outreach” falls between “Veterans” and “Center” in our name for a very specific reason: in order to bring veterans (and by extension, their families) across the great divide between them and their community-based center, *there is an absolute requirement* to conduct effective outreach.

VOC’s Outreach Approach Is Multi-Dimensional

Utilizing a philosophy of “going to them (veterans) if they’re not coming to us,” VOC’s outreach efforts are viewed as a means to inform veterans and their family members of services available at VOC. During outreach activities, VOC takes on an educational role where it shares information and ideas regarding the needs of veterans and their families and the available resources to meet those needs. Outreach strategies are linked to VOC’s mission and strategic plan with defined targets, goals, and milestones.

By investing in reaching prospective clients where they are, we meet them on their turf. Using a multi-dimensional approach to attract veterans of all social strata, VOC has placed staff on local college campuses to interact with veteran students attending college. At another end of the social strata, VOC employs a homeless outreach team consisting of two full-time staff members and an agency vehicle. The team is out on the street, under bridges, and at area shelters reaching out for prospective clients who would benefit from our services.

For targeted direct-mail efforts, VOC utilizes a VA-sanctioned process called “Release of Names & Addresses,” or “RONA” for short, to directly communicate via U.S. Mail to veterans and their families. RONA protocols allow nonprofit organizations and

governmental entities to request mailing labels and affiliated databases containing the names and addresses of veterans. Applicants have the option of specifying targeted zip codes and periods of associated service of veterans when requesting names and addresses. VOC utilizes the RONA process twice annually to conduct targeted, direct-mail campaigns with veteran households to inform them of their earned benefits and supportive services available through VOC. Applicants are required to follow VA guidelines for use of this information.

Veteran families present a challenging opportunity for inclusion within outreach efforts. Our experience informs us that more often than not, stubborn veterans can be brought to VOC through their family members when they don’t see their own way in. Because of this, our communications always go to great lengths to convey that veteran family members are as welcome in VOC as the veteran themselves. That philosophy includes portraying family members alongside their veteran in outreach products (as provided in the Resource portion of this blueprint).

Similarly, VOC uses social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) platforms to communicate with additional veterans and family members about the value of services available.

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Don't forget about the folks still serving in the armed forces.** Get inside local military units and help educate service members who one day will become veterans (if not already). VOC's staff and volunteers are able to participate in the Guard and Reserve's local Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) events, a Department of Defense effort to help National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments, especially during the reintegration phase that occurs months after service members return home. Commanders and leaders play a critical role in assuring that Reserve Service members and their families attend Yellow Ribbon events where they can access information on health care, education/training opportunities, financial, and legal benefits.

- **Go to where the target audience is located.** This means if the Center wants to serve homeless veterans, it goes to where homeless people sleep and receive services. Visit Veteran Service Organization Posts and Chapters. Speak to veteran students in colleges and universities. Provide case management services inside the community's Veterans Treatment Court (if there is one).

- **Refine messaging before speaking.** Like left foot in front of the right, it's important to refine messaging before communicating the message itself. Equally important, be frank and simplify that which is complex. Remember that becoming a veteran didn't include an instruction manual. The K.I.S.S. (Keep it Simple Sailor) principle applies – always strive to be clear and concise.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

Measure the Center's message and gather feedback from outreach participants. Find out whether the presentation was informative. Did it address their needs and questions? Determine any additional information that will benefit veterans and family members and include it in subsequent outreach activities.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Involve all members of the organization in outreach. Every team member has valuable information to contribute. Keep in mind community outreach opportunities will multiply as the Center earns its place as a subject matter expert for veterans and their families.

VOC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement refers to the function of building and maintaining a caring community that supports VOC's mission to serve veterans and their families. It is our responsibility to ensure a caring community remains mindful and supportive of everything VOC stands for. Engaging the community, often and in different formats, is essential to generating and maintaining support for our center and, most importantly, for the veterans and families we serve.

VOC Approach & Engagement Strategy

In many ways VOC's engagement strategy is guided by the unique niche it occupies – caring for veterans and their families in the community. And while being unique doesn't translate directly into automatic support by the community, it does afford VOC the basis to build a compelling dialogue with our community to seek its support.

Painting the picture of local need

VOC begins every discussion within the community at large by framing the need. A "needs statement" serves the root purpose of rallying support to address the needs presented by veterans and their families. We begin by framing the needs from a national veteran perspective and then articulating how these needs are seen locally. This approach provides greater context for understanding and gives the community a feel for its fit when developing local solutions.

Our community commonly lacks insight into just how many veterans and their families call the greater Rochester area "home." Using data provided by the VA, we ensure our community knows annual population figures for veterans in our area. For VOC, this is 68,658 veterans as of September 2011. We then provide additional context by comparing to other regions. For example, "Western New York is second only to New York City and Long Island when it comes to its veteran population." This helps to demonstrate the magnitude and scale not only of need, but of the resources available within VOC to meet the needs.

Providing insight into the population then becomes the launching point for a more dynamic dialogue about rates of suicide among veterans, divorce, financial illiteracy, substance abuse, homelessness, local VA health care penetration rates, and benefits usage, to name just a few. Engaging the community means making them

understand not only the need for community-based supportive services for veterans and family members, but the requirement to support these services as well.

We also work to promote the general understanding that being a veteran doesn't necessarily mean he or she is broken. We work to educate the general community and employers about the great value and marketable skillsets of our veteran men and women.

VOC's engagement strategy carefully draws a distinguishing line between what government efforts to serve veterans and their families can and cannot do while bringing particular attention to the complementary value of community-based supportive services for veterans and family members. We strive to both convey the strengths of government-provided resources while at the same time explaining their limits. When done correctly, this provides the community with a value statement regarding VOC and its functions.

For example, when we praise the VA for its top-notch health care practices, we also draw attention to the fact that the same system does not provide health care to veterans' family members. This helps to highlight the role and value inherent in VOC by reiterating our mission to serve veterans *and* their families in the greater Rochester area.

Getting the message out

Community engagement comes in many forms and must occur on an ongoing and timely basis. To put it all together requires a coherent strategy, a playbook of sorts, to give staff, board members, and volunteers the tools they need to provide context and meaning to their community. VOC routinely updates its following through ListServ e-mail blasts, website, and new media (Facebook, Twitter) updates ensuring relevant and meaningful content is exchanged between VOC and its community. We leverage these communication mediums to their fullest extent.

Advertising is yet another component within VOC's engagement strategy. Our approach allows us to retain the professional services of a local creative shop to work alongside our staff members for brand development, positioning and execution. We refer to this as "VOC's

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Attend regular meetings of community-based organizations.** Tell the Center's story at meetings of Rotary International, Chambers of Commerce, Continuum of Care, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), community clubs and circles, colleges, and retirement communities. Members of such organizations need to identify regular guest speakers and will become educated on the Center's supportive services, and, in turn, will be able to then inform others.
- **Host a community discussion series with a local college or university.** Create engagement opportunities on campus to contribute to fostering a more intellectually aware community. Area colleges and universities often seek military experts to advise staff and faculty on the issues facing student veterans. Consider hosting a lecture series as a means to create understanding of a more informed and educated audience. In partnership with Nazareth College, VOC hosts a quarterly lecture program, *Coming Home from War: The Veteran and Family Discussion Series*. It is our hope that these events will serve to broaden the community's understanding that the true cost of war is calculated in human factors—families, children, spouses, veterans—and that their care must be accounted for to receive our nation's true consent to wage war.
- **Represent the Center's constituency – serve as a member of community advisory boards.** The VA has two such opportunities: Women Veterans Program (WVP) and Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Program. Several governmental entities (Members of Congress, County Veteran Services, and New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs Boards and Councils) present similar opportunities for the Center. Seek them out. VOC serves on a number of such boards and councils.

Branding & Marketing Efforts," and a separate chapter is devoted to this aspect of VOC's operations. The point to be made in this chapter is that branding comes before community engagement to ensure the community receives a coherent, well-designed message.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

Always stay focused on community engagement. Without a supportive community of contributors, volunteers, and knowledgeable backers, the Center will find it difficult to flourish. Look for ways to solicit feedback after engaging members of the community. "Did we make you smarter?" "Do you know more about veterans and families as a result of this discussion?" We also find that community members want to help but often are not sure how. Keep them informed of opportunities for assistance. Explore using social media to keep supporters engaged and up to date with minimal cost. See the VOC Branding & Marketing section for more ideas and information.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Once the Center's engagement strategies are developed, prioritize activities. Identify community partners who can share resources and help promote the Center's supportive services. There is a wealth of goodness found in coalitions – increased military cultural competency, leadership, trust, and heightened awareness of the needs of our veterans and families.

VOC Outreach & Engagement Resources

- **Yellow Ribbon Program:** For those who serve and those who support (<http://www.yellowribbon.mil/>)
- **Army Family Readiness Group:** U.S. Army Support Site (<http://www.armyfrg.org/skins/frg/home.aspx>)
- **Marine Corps Coordinating Council of Rochester.** The "Family Readiness" and "Links" pages provide resources and information (<http://mccrochester.org/>)
- **Sea of Goodwill: Matching the Donor to the Need** (http://www.fifnc.org/Sea_of_Goodwill.pdf)
- **Survey Monkey:** A user-friendly site that allows you to create and distribute surveys and analyze results (<http://surveymonkey.com>)

VOC'S MARKETING & BRANDING STRATEGY

VOC's marketing and branding efforts are the structured way we tell our story. Our strategy defines VOC's profile and its position in the community. Our tactical messages communicate the value of VOC and its resources to the general public, internal staff, and our supporters alike. Within these efforts we are responsible for creating and maintaining the public profile of VOC and developing contacts to use for the purpose of creating greater support – financial and otherwise – for VOC's activities. Marketing and branding also includes the development of all print advertising, new media presence, and promotional materials in support of VOC's services, programs, special events, and outreach and engagement.

Marketing & Branding at VOC

Effective branding attracts resources, including donors and volunteers, and, most critically, helps to get the word out about the services the Center provides. VOC has a marketing and branding plan that coordinates and defines our unique strategy and goals.

At VOC, all events and major fund- and friend-raising opportunities fall under the control of the Center's Communication & Special Events staff member. VOC employs one full-time equivalent (FTE) Manager of Public Relations and Special Events and one FTE Network IT Specialist/Website Developer who enlist the assistance of volunteers with all events and fundraising. While the main responsibilities for execution fall to these assigned staff members, promoting VOC's activities requires an all-hands effort. Communication staff members (paid and volunteer) work with all departments to provide common branded materials and messaging to help communicate their part of the VOC story within the context of the whole VOC story. VOC members at all levels are trained to recognize media-worthy opportunities to help promote positive messaging through "veteran interest stories" that occur naturally within our daily routine. Ensuring all staff members actively look for newsworthy events will increase opportunities to create a positive association with the organization's name and mission.

VOC Key Ingredients & Marketing Advice for Getting Started

Professionally develop the Center's brand early.

Define the logo, colors, and fonts to use for the Center. Consistency will help build the brand and, ultimately, the overall recognition of the organization. At VOC, we use red, white, and blue on most of our materials and have copyrighted the tagline: "Serving Those Who Serve U.S." A sample of a recent advertisement reinforcing our brand and logo can be seen in the Resource Section.

Create collateral branding products. Develop a full suite of collateral tools with a unifying theme representing the various programs and supportive services within the Center. This may include one-sheet informational guides, brochures, direct mail, and donor appeals. Be mindful of the target audience and the need for different messages to reach different groups (families, female veterans, businesses, stakeholders, etc.). Invest in business cards for all staff members and encourage them to be distributed liberally. Business cards are a small investment that both acknowledge staff's value and provide an easy branding tool to get the word out about the organization.

Getting & Staying on Track

- **Seek free media coverage.** Inviting local media outlets to the Center's events will result in great, free advertising for the Center. Working with media contacts to cover the Center's events is a high-priority undertaking. Maintaining up-to-date

media contact lists and listservs helps to effectively and efficiently draw the right attention to the Center's events. Once hooked, control the message to the best of the Center's ability. Ensure that the appropriate people are on-camera and in the background for the best possible coverage.

- **Cultivate the Center's media supporters.** Make the Center – and every staff member – available to speak with reporters. Maintain a current list of “go to” veteran and family members who, at a moment's notice, are willing to speak with the media. Keep that list current.

Other Considerations

- **Invest in building a professional website.** The Center's website and associated social media channels remain the single greatest direct resource to control the organizational image, message, and interaction with a distant and anonymous public. It should be updated regularly with accurate and interesting information that serves the Center's audience. To be relevant and timely, a dedicated staff member should be assigned these responsibilities.
- **Develop supporting social media tactics.** The Center's branding strategy should include multiple communications channels. Facebook and Twitter are examples of web-based technologies proven to be successful as a medium to share information with younger veterans and their families about the Center. Likewise, encourage the management team to establish accounts on LinkedIn and create opportunities to develop business relationships – not simply contacts. Exercise caution when selecting contacts; don't just connect with anyone who sends an invitation. Ask, “Is there an opportunity to build a working relationship with this person that will in turn benefit the Center?”
- **Ask for help.** Professional branding firms can accomplish much more than one person alone. Whether it's web development or branding campaigns, it is money well spent and time saved to outsource responsibility in the areas where the Center lacks

VOC Marketing & Branding Resources

- Ad Council: A nonprofit working to deliver information to the public (www.adcouncil.org)
- National Council of Nonprofits: Advancing the vital role, capacity, and voice of charitable nonprofit organizations (www.councilofnonprofits.org)
- Idealist.Org: Connecting people, organizations, and resources (www.idealist.org/)
- National Resource Directory: Connecting wounded warriors, service members, veterans, their families, and caregivers with those who support them (www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov)
- Branding Basics for Nonprofits: Nonprofit Brand Institute (<http://npbrandit.com/articles/nonprofit-best-practices/branding-basics-for-nonprofits/>)
- Branding 101 for Nonprofits: The Nonprofit Toolbox. The site also has useful resources beyond this article (<http://thenon-profittoolbox.com/2010/01/branding-101-for-non-profits-part-1-a-definition-of-brand/>)
- Facebook (www.facebook.com)
- Twitter (<http://twitter.com>)
- LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)

expertise. If resources are too limited at the start, develop a volunteer branding committee, but be selective in identifying the skill sets needed. Make sure well-intentioned volunteers adhere to an overall branding strategy and strive for volunteers who will take on and implement key tasks of the plan.

VOC SPECIAL EVENTS

At VOC, our special events act as both “friendraising” and fundraising opportunities. We host a range of special events throughout the year to engage the greater community, raise awareness of our services, thank our supporters, and raise funds.

Overview of VOC Special Events

VOC’s special events function primarily as a means to generate revenue for the Center. Annually, VOC hosts a range of special events to engage the greater community, raise awareness of our services, thank our supporters, and raise funds.

In 2012, VOC’s portfolio of special events will raise \$100,000, representing 3% of our general operating budget. Equally important, our events are opportunities to educate the community about VOC and veteran families in our community. Our special events are a full team effort, with the primary responsibilities assigned to our Director of Community Services and Volunteerism.

VOC Special Events Include:

Golf Outing (17th year)

Pound the Ground for Vets 5K & 10K Road Race (3rd year)

National Veterans Job Expo (11th year) –

More than 100 employers and nearly 1,000 veteran job seekers participated and attended in 2011.

Coming Home from War: The Veteran and Family Lecture Series at Nazareth College

(2nd year) – A quarterly lecture and discussion to educate the general public about issues important to veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Stars and Stripes Celebration (6th year) –

A cornerstone event on VOC’s calendar, this is our annual event in celebration of the men and women who’ve come through our doors and used our services. We also pay special tribute to the service members who have dedicated their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice.

Flag Day Campaign (18th year) – On an annual basis, our staff and volunteers hit the streets and meet and greet our community. While doing so, they offer flags to community members in exchange for donations to raise funds to support programs and services for veteran families, and to make new friends for Veterans Outreach Center.

Semi-Annual Appeal Campaign (1st year) –

A direct-mail fundraising program that solicits donors twice during the year. The program relies heavily on past donors to repeat their gifts.

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Document and organize the Center's events program.** A structured catalog of events and resources must be maintained for continuity of execution. Develop tools that will help future volunteers and staff implement the effort, such as spreadsheets, binders, meeting notes, and after-action reviews.
- **Incorporate volunteers in all events.** All staff are tasked with identifying volunteer personnel requirements for each activity. The Volunteer Coordinator will then assign support staff – paid and unpaid – to the events themselves. Volunteers are necessary to execute events at the level required to retain the support of sponsors and participants year to year.
- **Be selective.** Each event is an extension of the Center and its brand – so choose them carefully.
- **Keep the Center's website current.** Regular, even daily, website updates are critical to keeping the community aware of special events and opportunities to get involved.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

- Pick events that can engage the greatest number of people for minimal cost.
- Stay the course and select events that align and support the Center's mission.
- Fundraising efforts should show long-term growth in profitability, or be routinely re-evaluated for effectiveness and areas in need of improvement.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Special events are time consuming and require a great deal of work. Be selective in the events and partnerships the Center pursues.

COMPLEMENTING THE VA AND OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Caring for veterans and their families is not just the Government's job. It is every community's business to embrace veterans for their example, their commitment to serving others, and their passion for service. At VOC, we know no one can do it alone. We invest resources to reach out and actively build relationships with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and to develop a network of community partners to best serve veterans and their families.

The center model embraces true and equal collaboration as being the best possible course of action to serve veterans and their families. We have found that many community-based organizations are already serving veterans and families, but don't know it because they never took the time to identify them as a population in their service delivery model.

Once identified, the basis is formed for consolidating services to present as much of a barrier-free experience as possible. When designed to complement the strengths of the VA, a center model can add incredible value to any community in terms of how it organizes, resources, and delivers supportive services for those who defend our country and those family members who support them.

Communities can and must play a greater role in complementing services offered through government.

VOC's Partner Network

Numerous existing studies indicate the gaps in services and barriers to reintegration. Locally, the VA reports a mere 26 percent "health care penetration rate" for veterans served in the greater Rochester area (which does not include families). For those 26 percent of veterans served, the VA gets high praise for its quality, and while the VA remains the primary source of assistance to America's veterans, it still serves a minority of area veterans. Geographical barriers (time, distance, weather conditions), appointment wait times, an understanding that the VA serves veterans but not families, strict eligibility criteria, perceived stigma, and a reported feeling that the VA exists for those veterans less fortunate are all reasons cited by veterans for not using their earned VA benefits and health care. At the same time, these are the very conditions that allow for a greater community response in caring for veterans and their families. Communities can and must play a greater role in complementing those services offered through government.

In addition to the VA, VOC's community partners include service providers from health care to education to child care that can provide services to our clients and benefit from learning how to better serve the veterans they may already be working with. At VOC, our goal is to leverage the services and resources that already exist and to avoid unnecessarily duplicating efforts, which wastes critical resources. By working through a network of community partners, both government and private, we build up a base of supporters with increased awareness and skills to serve veterans and their families.

VOC is a community resource that must operate efficiently and quickly to eliminate the barriers and gaps in services. Through collaboration with the Veterans Administration (including Community-Based Outpatient Clinics) and other local service providers, VOC continues to build the bridges necessary to complement all available services in our community.

At VOC, we actively engage our VA partners by inviting key leaders to sit on VOC advisory boards, collaborating on individual client case management to ensure continuity of care, and supporting each other's outreach events. Collaboration with the VA also extends to an initiative called the Grant & Per Diem program. This nationwide project helps fund community agencies that provide supportive living services to homeless veterans. The local Grant & Per Diem Liaison spends one morning per week at the VOC's homeless shelter (Richard's House) to facilitate case management of residents in the program. His on-site presence exemplifies the value of a solid relationship between VOC and the VA.

Likewise, our Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) Manager makes weekly visits to the VA Domiciliary to meet with homeless veterans who are soon to be discharged and seeking employment. Our licensed creative arts therapists are on-site at the VA Medical Center and Outpatient Clinic to provide in-service training to VA staff. Many veterans arrive at VOC without ever having enrolled in VA Health Care or Benefits. Our case managers and on-site NYSDVA Benefits Counselors assist veterans with their VA enrollments. We expedite this process by providing a computer and Internet access, which enables veterans to immediately apply for health benefits.

If the community center is not located in close proximity to VA health care facilities, then partnering with non-VA health care resources to support veteran (and family) well-being should be foremost in the Center's thinking.

While New York State enjoys a very sizeable VA presence, whether in the form of medical centers, community-based outpatient clinics, or vet centers, many veterans nonetheless choose to receive their health care through private, employer-based health care plans, self-pay or other forms of comprehensive health care coverage (Medicare being primary). To ensure the physical health and well-being of the community's veterans and family members, build or leverage private health care resources inside (or reachable through referrals) the Center's model. Such design should be an early and ongoing consideration. Remember, only the VA's Vet Centers serve veterans' family members.

Develop strategic partnerships with the community's private health care portfolio, and, forming a strategic service partnership, the Center will be able to leverage additional resources to serve veteran families. Our Center sought out specialized social work professionals (to serve those with co-occurring disorders) to supplement available, in-house personnel. Through an initiative with Rochester General Hospital (RGH), we were able to support the placement of one of their staff members on site one day per week to serve veterans and families suffering with co-occurring disorders. VOC could not provide this service through our own resources. RGH was motivated to provide these services because they, first, genuinely wanted to help serve our community's veterans and their family members, and, second, because they had the capacity. Partnering with private health care providers stimulates professional development exchanges leading to increased overall levels of cultural competency among private providers and Center staff.

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Develop a network of supporters.** As more organizations get on board with the Center, we are creating a network of educated organizations in our community that are more veteran friendly and ultimately help fulfill VOC's mission. We find partners by identifying opportunities for assistance and contacting service providers who can offer them. At VOC, through our community partnerships we are able to increase appropriate referrals and develop more effective supportive services for our veterans and their families.

By working through a network of community partners, both government and private, we build up a base of supporters with increased awareness and skills to serve veterans and their families.

Our key partners include:

- Local Veterans Administration Medical Center
 - Veteran Service Organizations
 - Health care providers, including educating civilian health care providers on the needs of veteran families and encouraging them to become TRICARE providers
 - Other service providers such as education, financial, child care, legal, and housing
- **Engage Employers.** Invite them into the Center as guest presenters for Job Readiness Workshops. At VOC, we maintain a pipeline of veterans' resumes and a listing of HR Directors of veteran-friendly employers. We also recruit employers for our Annual Veterans Job Expo.
- **Reach Out.** VOC recently completed a targeted mailing to local veterans discharged between 9/11/2001 and 8/1/2010 and veterans currently receiving VA benefits. Names and addresses were obtained through the VA's Release of Name and Addresses (RONA) process.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

- Consider joining or developing a community coalition to learn what services are truly available. By working together, it becomes easier to identify how different services and programs in the community respond to the needs of veterans and their families.
- Develop a partnership self-assessment tool to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the coalition. The coalition members will then be equipped to improve interagency communication and coordination of services.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Keep community partners on the Center's email list and encourage reciprocity to share agency updates as they happen.

Geography seems to matter. Where the Center chooses to live can ultimately have a direct bearing on the level of resources available to support veteran families. Furthermore, rural veterans might not even seek out needed services due to the lack of public transportation.

VOC Community Partnering Resources

- Apply for or Renew VA Health Benefits (<https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/>)
- eBenefits (<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>)
- Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (<http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/>)
- Army Strong Community Center (ASCC): Connects dispersed families to support resources in their community (http://www.arfp.org/skins/ARFP/display.aspx?Action=display_page&ModuleID=8cde2e88-3052-448c-893d-d0b4b14b31c4&ObjectID=3747cb51-15bc-49c4-91f1-92e9d298f6ba)
- Help Base Greater Rochester (<http://www.hbrochester.org/default.asp>)
- American Red Cross Service for Veterans. Select the "Getting Assistance" link, then choose "Serving Military Families" to access resources and information (<http://www.redcross.org/>)
- Release of Names and Addresses – RONA Process (http://www.rms.oit.va.gov/RONA_Process.asp)

EFFECTIVELY USING VOLUNTEERS

A volunteer program is a structured way to attract and assign unpaid (or minimally compensated) groups or individuals to help achieve an agency's mission. Volunteers may include helpers for one-time events, regular commitments to staff a particular function or program, or longer-term engagements such as college internship placements or AmeriCorps service volunteers.



Volunteers at VOC

VOC's volunteer program is a critical component in achieving our mission. Our volunteers bring additional diversity, skill sets, and expanded community support. Our volunteer opportunities provide another way for us to engage veterans and their families who already have a proven call to serve. When our volunteers have a good experience, they become our best advocates and champions in the community for additional outreach and support.

At VOC, we work with 900 volunteers each year that collectively provide approximately 6,000 hours of service to our Center. We also engage several high school and college interns each year and have one regularly assigned Americorps Vista volunteer.

All who enter VOC are greeted by volunteers at our reception desk and are offered a cup of coffee and directions to their appointment. This position is staffed by volunteers five days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

We are currently integrating volunteers as retail assistants in our Flag Store. Many have critical skills to share with our store manager: financial accounting, development experience, retail sales and support, and customer service.

Additional regular volunteer opportunities include: drivers for our homeless veterans, financial counselors, and vet-to-vet mentors. Many volunteers also staff our special events throughout the year both in planning and on event days.

Outside the VOC daily activities, we have a force of over 600 Operation Welcome Home (OWH) volunteers who are the first faces in the community to greet our returning service members. These volunteers are led by an OWH Coordinator who announces incoming flights via email blasts to our volunteer database.

Volunteer Application and Welcome Packet samples are included in the Resource Section.

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Assign a Volunteer Coordinator from the very start.**

It is critical to have an established go-to person to coordinate the volunteer program and to be ready to respond to the community members' desires to support the organization. The Volunteer Coordinator identifies volunteer opportunities and ensures quality volunteer experiences for both the volunteer and the organization. This function may be initially assigned to a lead volunteer who is able to make a regular and sizable time commitment to the Center. As the Center grows, this function would become a paid staff position. At VOC, our Director of Community Services and Volunteerism manages our program with the assistance of one Serve NY Americorps VISTA volunteer.

- **Organizational acceptance of volunteers is critical.**

Successful volunteer programs take work but provide invaluable returns. The important role of volunteers for the Center should be clearly communicated to staff and engrained in the organizational culture of the Center. Volunteers symbolize the community's ownership in the organization, serve as bridges to certain populations who might prefer to interact with volunteers over staff, can engage in activities that staff cannot (i.e., advocating for the organization or commenting on particular political positions), help to reach new audiences, and can become financial donors and even future staff members.

- **Identify volunteer jobs.** The Volunteer Coordinator will need to work with staff to continuously identify useful and appropriate volunteer opportunities with the organization. At VOC, our staff members are tasked with identifying volunteer opportunities within their respective departments. The Chief of Community Services and Volunteerism identifies volunteer interests and skills during the volunteer sign-up and orientation process to best match the volunteer with the organization.

- **Outreach and recruitment.** It is essential to develop and implement a plan to continuously promote volunteer opportunities throughout the community.

- **Review insurance policy.** Before launching a volunteer program, know the legal and financial liability if a volunteer is hurt on the property or offsite while acting on the Center's behalf. Review current policies and seek professional counsel on any modifications that should be made.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

Successful volunteer programs keep track of the work performed and incorporate ongoing feedback. At VOC we track output measures as listed below and monitor volunteer and staff satisfaction with the program:

- Number of volunteers each month/year
- Number of volunteer hours per month/year
- Volunteer satisfaction survey
- Staff feedback on volunteer performance

At VOC, we survey our volunteers during their service with us. We also actively engage our staff to provide feedback on volunteer performance and opportunities for volunteers. Our Volunteer Coordinator keeps track of volunteer information using an Excel spreadsheet to document and quantify the overall contribution to the Center.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Volunteers need training and guidance. Many well-meaning community members have the best of intentions when volunteering, but without proper training can sometimes cost the organization more than the return. Because the Center is in the people business, it is extremely important to provide proper training and oversight of the volunteer program. It is our job to work with the volunteers to understand their interests and to align these with the needs of the organization.

Leverage volunteer skill sets and interests. A volunteer program provides the Center with a strong foundation of support for financial contributions and access to expertise generally difficult to obtain. At VOC, we strive to engage our volunteers in a range of opportunities that may not be initially apparent – from masonry projects to event planning to website development. Also, don't overlook opportunities to engage veterans and their family members who wish to volunteer.

It's OK to say no. Not every job or program at the Center should use volunteers. For example, case management services should be provided by a licensed professional who can provide expert knowledge and continuity of service for the veteran and/or family member. Also, know that volunteers may work for free, but they can also be expensive! Work hard to find the right opportunity for the right volunteer, and if it doesn't work out, be prepared to say so.

Establish procedures that outline safeguards for staff and clients with regard to dual role relationships that may lead to professional loss of objectivity. At VOC, our clients cannot act in certain volunteer functions while they are receiving services. Confusion, feelings of rejection or abandonment, and misinterpretation of personal communications can result from dual role relationships. Staff, family members, or volunteers seeking assistance should be referred to other supportive services as appropriate. See the Resource Section for a sample of the VOC policy.

VOC Volunteer Management Resources

Energize Inc.: Especially for leaders of volunteers (<http://www.energizeinc.com/>)

Idealist.Org: Volunteer Management Resource Center (<http://www.idealist.org/info/VolunteerMgmt>)

Service Leader: Where the study and practice of volunteerism meet (<http://www.serviceleader.org/>)

Center for Nonprofit Management: FAQs on Volunteer Management (<http://www.cnmsocial.org/resources/management-and-supervision/faq-about-volunteer-management.html>)

Recognize the Center's volunteers! With ongoing recognition of volunteer contributions, the number of active volunteers and supporters will increase. Without proper gratitude, volunteers will reduce or discontinue their involvement. See the Resource Section for a sample of our Annual Volunteer of the Year Award nomination packet.

USING TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a tool to help our staff perform their assigned responsibilities better and quicker. New technologies and social media have allowed for two-way communications with a range of stakeholders not possible before. Often overlooked, technology infrastructure is a vital component to serving veterans and their families.

VOC's Technology Infrastructure

VOC's technology infrastructure includes personal computers, firewalls, smart phones, point-of-sale (POS) systems, safeguards of donors' contributions, security and internet protocols, user agreements, laptops, servers, network administration, and technical support. These elements represent recurring expenses that are incorporated into our annual operating budget.

VOC's internal operations rely on technology for the following:

- Ensuring client case management files are archived, protected, and safeguarded
- Internal, electronic referrals between Case Managers and Service Providers
- Client tracking and reporting
- Ensuring gifts are recorded and contributors thanked in a timely manner
- Managing volunteerism (schedules, recording hours logged, etc.)
- Time and attendance, payroll, Human Resources services
- Ensuring training opportunities are available for staff and volunteers
- Managing money and providing access to financial revenue streams
- Database management and mining to analyze donor giving patterns
- Ensuring grant reporting and applications are saved and organized to serve the Center
- Providing timely and effective communication with clients and contributors

How VOC Uses Technology to Engage the Community

VOC's use of technology has expanded in the digital age. We now use a variety of platforms to communicate with a range of stakeholders in the community.

VOC Website

Our website (www.veteransoutreachcenter.org) is a key communication tool for our Center. We post all of our services, events, and resource links from this site. Our Marketing Department works hard to provide fresh content on a regular basis to encourage visitors to return to the site. Our Chief Executive hosts a monthly "Colonel's Corner" blog to present updates and perspectives, adding a personal touch to our operation.

VOC Social Media

In recent years, VOC has expanded our social media capabilities. These tools allow information to be accessed anytime and anywhere, while allowing for two-way communication with a range of stakeholders. At VOC, our social media operations are managed internally and on-site to ensure timeliness and relevancy for various audiences. Samples of our social media include:

Facebook: Our staff post updates here and are able to "friend" other partner organizations and supporters. (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Veterans-Outreach-Center-Inc/142905395544>)

Twitter Feed: Our staff posts regular updates of activities, events, and service announcements. (<http://twitter.com/#!/VetsOutreachCtr>)

YouTube: We post videos of interest, client testimonials, interviews with our staff, our lecture series, and clips from special events. (<http://www.youtube.com/user/veteransoutreachctr>).

Regular Electronic Communication

Today's technology makes it very easy and cost effective to engage our supporters. VOC has developed and continues to grow an e-mail ListServ – a group of email subscribers who want to receive regular electronic updates from us. Our ListServ is our go-to place for volunteers, announcements, events, and more.

At VOC, we use MailChimp to publish information with followers of social media, integrate services, and track

What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **In-house content management is a must.** In order to be relevant, the Center advocates for managing web content and social media using in-house resources.
- **Start small.** When investing scarce resources, consider getting technology infrastructure started around managing clients and contributors – folks in need and folks who can help the Center financially.
- **Get some technology help.** Recruit a board member with a technology background to help get started.
- **Find the right skill sets.** Hiring a website manager who can also act as a network administrator is a smart move.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

- Develop a technology plan – anticipate needs, costs, and replacement cycles.
- Learn early how to share information across the spectrum of social media and with participating community partners.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Funding technology can be difficult, so start in the areas that make the most sense. Look at free technologies and platforms as a matter of practice and build operations around them as much as possible. Use open source materials to reduce costs as much as possible; for example, at VOC we subscribe to the nonprofit organization, TechSoup.org, to receive free and discounted technology. In addition, we are currently migrating to the database management system of MySQL (<http://www.mysql.com/>).

results. MailChimp's free reports summarize who opened the email and clicked on the links, how many times the email was forwarded, overall return on investment, and more. MailChimp is the backbone for our event planning associated with VOC's "friend-raising" efforts.

We also post our newsletters on our social networks and add "tweet" and "like" buttons to get people talking.

Make sure the Center's technology has proper safeguards in place, especially with case management services and client information. The Center's technology should be well managed and should ensure secure access to client information throughout the IDP.

Make sure the website matches what the Center offers veterans and families. There is nothing worse than a glitzy website that does a poor job of promoting an organization's services.

VOC Technology Resources

- **Stages of Maturity in Nonprofit Organizations' Use of Online Technologies: From Coyote Communications** (<http://www.coyotecommunications.com/outreach/online3.html>)
- **Nonprofit Technology News: Articles and resources on nonprofit technology** (<http://www.nptechnews.com/>)
- **Nonprofit Technology: Wikipedia article** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-profit_technology)
- **Nonprofits & Technology: "Emerging Research and Usable Knowledge,"** by Michael Cortés and Kevin M. Rafter. Portions of the book are available electronically (<http://lyceumbooks.com/NonprofitsAndTech.htm>)
- **MailChimp** (<http://mailchimp.com>)
- **Tech Soup** (<http://home.techsoup.org>)
- **Google Analytics** (www.google.com/analytics)

MEASURING IMPACT

The armed forces have long held the belief of “That which gets checked, gets done.” The same can be true of our organization – “That which gets measured, gets done.” The question remains however, “What should be measured?”

Designing and implementing a feedback loop to measure the impact of VOC’s efforts begins and ends with clients – our veterans and their families – and the support needed to serve them. Possessing the means to gauge the effectiveness of our services is both good stewardship and responsive to those we serve.

Role of Measurement at VOC

Possessing the means to measure VOC’s impact is essential to understanding where we are and where we’re going. When working properly, effective measurements of VOC activities allow us to:

- Account for the number of veteran families receiving specific services
- Measure how well we serve our clients
- Gauge how well the community supports the Center
- Provide for insight into how sustainable are our resources
- Benchmark how recognized VOC is in terms of its performance

Measuring Impact with Our Strategic Plan

Measuring impact at VOC starts with our three-year Strategic Plan. Throughout the strategic planning process we focus on basic questions to help us stay on track, such as:

- How well do we serve customers?
- How well does the community support us?
- How sustainable are our resources?

Through this process of reflection and planning, VOC establishes Performance Commitment Measures as depicted in the graphics on the following pages. Across the organization, we track specific measures to help inform and answer these questions.

The goals of the Strategic Plan are then further linked to each staff member’s performance appraisal where – individually and then collectively – we are responsible for achieving the goals of the plan. Ultimately, the Chief Executive is held accountable by the Board for VOC’s progress on each of the measures in the Strategic Plan.

Performance Commitment Measures



Number of Unique Veteran Families Receiving Specific Services
KRA 3

How Well Do We Serve (customer satisfaction)
KRA 3 & 5

- Employment Placement Rate
- Technology Center
- Counseling / CM
- Residential Program
- Supportive Services
 - Temporary Financial Assistance
 - Legal Services
 - Financial Counseling
 - Peer-to-Peer Mentoring
- Benefits (new & reoccurring)
- Overall Satisfaction
 - Knowledge of Staff
 - Courtesy of Staff
 - Timeliness of Services

2012 TARGET

- >75%
- >7,500
- >100
- 120
- 500
- >\$3.6m
- >90%
- >85%
- >90%
- >90%

439 South Avenue ★ Rochester, NY 14620 ★ www.veteransoutreachcenter.org ★ 585.546.1091 ★ 999.906.VETS

Performance Commitment Measures



How Well Does the Community Support Us
KRA 5 & 2

- Number of Volunteer Hours
- Number of Donors
 - Active Donors
 - New Donors
 - Average Donation Amount
- Number of Unique Visits Website

2012 TARGET

- >2,200
- >6,500
- >150
- >50
- >\$1,170
- >35,000

How Sustainable Are Our Resources
KRA & 4

- Ratio of Recurring vs. non-recurring funding
- Ratio of FTS covered by recurring funding
- Ration of Program vs Admin Expenses
- Employee & Volunteer Turnover Rate
- Number of Grants applied vs Secured

- >80%
- >65%
- <15%
- <5%
- 2 : 1

489 South Avenue * Rochester, NY 14620 * www.veteransoutreachcenter.org * 888-548-1081 * 999-906-VETS

Performance Commitment Measures



What We've Learned: VOC Key Ingredients

- **Keep it simple.** Leave the complex measurements to specific programs. Begin designing the Center's measurement instruments by asking the basic questions.
- **Set annual goals and objectives.** Not just out there on their own, but tied to the Center's strategic planning process, and then make sure to periodically measure progress.
- **A means to communicate progress.** Care must be taken to ensure transparency when it comes to measuring and articulating progress. Involve staff at all levels during regularly scheduled gatherings and communicate how well (or poorly) the Center is doing.
- **Not everything.** An adjunct to "keeping it simple," organizations often make the mistake of thinking they need to track everything under the sun. Be selective in what gets measured and focus the effort on the actual impact of services provided and the support necessary to deliver services.

VOC Recommendations for Staying on Track

Measuring performance is a continuous process. Strive for a performance rhythm in order to gauge progress over time. Ultimately, the Center will be able to make time-based comparisons to get a better picture of performance over time (i.e., comparing first quarter in Calendar Year 2011 against first quarter in Calendar Year 2012, etc.). Document annual performance and communicate results to staff, volunteers, funders, stakeholders, etc. A great time to do so is during an annual strategic planning review.

Other Considerations When Getting Started

Don't be afraid to move away from measurements that serve no purpose. Keep the process flexible and don't design measurement instruments that are not rooted in the overall Strategic Plan.

VOC Feedback System Resources

- **Measuring What Matters: Performance Measurement for Not-for-Profit Organizations** (<http://www.the3bottomlines.com/?p=174>)
- **"The Profit in Not-for-Profits."** Article from **Fast Company** (<http://www.fastcompany.com/social/2005/monitor-essay.html>)
- **"Inside Philanthropy: Tracking Non-Profit Impact Critical."** Article from **Philanthropy Journal's** blog (<http://philanthropyjournal.blogspot.com/2007/06/tracking-nonprofit-impact-critical.html>)

CHAPTER 7:

GETTING TO WORK: IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES

GETTING TO WORK: IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

Starting a Center is not a small undertaking. Proper planning and realistic goals are essential. Take the time up front to get organized and develop a plan of action. In this section we outline several key questions to consider when creating a Center or when expanding community-based supportive services in the area.

Where do we start?

The drive to create a Center should come from the community it intends to serve. Is there growing momentum to support a Center? Is there an identified need? Who else is working in this area? Once an increased interest is identified to formally provide (or expand) services to veterans and their families, consider moving ahead with the following steps:

Identify needs. It is important to take the temperature of the community to determine whether the desire to create a Center is genuine. Get educated about what is currently offered and what is missing from the clients' perspective. Talk with veterans and families about their experiences. Make sure to capture a broad range of viewpoints.

Conduct an initial scan of community services. Avoid duplicating what already exists. Understand what is already available in the community. Who is currently serving veterans and families? What organizations are providing services that could act as key partners with the Center? Is there a need for a separately incorporated Center or does it make sense to start as a program of another nonprofit? Include services from emergency services, education, employment and job training, health providers, and more.

Develop a plan. Take the time to write out the vision and goals for creating a Center. What is needed? What is already in place? Who should be contacted? What goals should be accomplished and over what time period?

Good plans act as a guide and help focus energy and resources. The Center's plan is also a key communication tool to attract supporters by clearly stating its vision and where it wants to go. From an outline, to logic models, to business plans – whatever tool is best – the goal is to crystallize thinking into actionable steps.

Develop a budget. What will it cost to operate the Center or expand its offerings? Even with volunteer staff, running a Center costs money. Costs may include building expenses, equipment needs, Internet access, transportation, supplies, and insurance. Include cost assumptions in the plan to have a realistic understanding of the kind of support needed now and for the years ahead.

Think long term. Often the focus is on the immediate needs of the day and the goal of launching a new Center. However, it is important to have plans in place that ensure the Center is sustainable well into the future. We owe it to our veterans and their families to ensure services are not interrupted as a result of a lack of planning. Well before engaging clients, the focus must be on how the Center will provide ongoing quality service for future generations of veterans and their families.

Harness supporters. Most likely this blueprint is being read because a need has been identified and there is growing interest in providing better services to veterans and their families. This increasing community momentum is key to sustain a Center over the long

haul. Provide opportunities for dedicated volunteers to get involved and stay engaged. Help identify and direct this goodwill to support the creation and expansion of the Center. Identify a handful of supporters with local

credibility to be on the Center's startup board or advisory committees. Make sure to include veterans and local providers.

Getting Started: Scaling the Community's Response

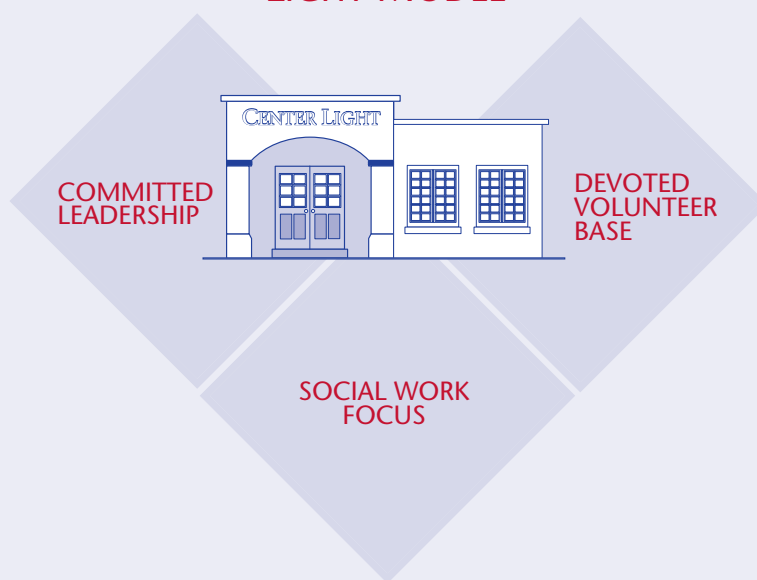
While great care has been taken to illustrate what nearly 40 years of providing supportive services looks like inside Veterans Outreach Center, we know and understand that not every community has the resources to undertake a \$3.4 million investment in veterans' services. In fairness, neither did we when we began in 1973. We firmly believe that any meaningful Center supporting veterans and their families can and must begin as we did – with case management services. As mentioned earlier, this is essential to creating positive solutions among veteran families experiencing distress in their lives.

For illustration purposes, a "VOC LIGHT" startup model of comprehensive supportive services should incorporate the following characteristics:

- Committed leadership to organize a Center model.
- A volunteer base willing to devote time, energy, resources (financial and otherwise), and expertise to organize the community's actual response to serving veterans and family members.
- A program base of social work to deliver effective case management services above all else and a means to measure and communicate the Center's effectiveness.

These basic "building blocks" have the potential to coordinate externally available resources to begin serving veterans and their families while developing the essential in-house case management resources

VETERANS OUTREACH CENTER LIGHT MODEL



needed to expand and add additional services as they become available and sustainable.

While comfortable labeling this as "VOC LIGHT," it must be understood that a secondary role of case management professionals is to continuously develop a tier of community-based resources. Veterans and families are often unaware of what they need, where to get help, and how to access services. The Center is well positioned to act as a network hub for community service providers that can accept and make referrals throughout the spectrum of developed supportive services to best meet the needs of veteran and family members. Such an approach offers the greatest likelihood of keeping costs down while offering meaningful supportive services through the leveraged capacity of others.

How do we learn what is already in our community?

Don't duplicate and waste precious energy and resources where it is not truly needed. It is important to understand the full range of services and partners that already exist in the community. Build relationships and leverage the full complement of available resources to benefit those served.

Be open to what is found. Perhaps the original goal to develop a Center is not needed, but rather a more cohesive approach to outreach and marketing of existing services to the veteran population is the missing link.

Talk to people. Attend meetings and events around related topics and services. Make sure any other veteran-related planning groups and veteran-specific programs are identified in the region. Reach out to the local U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care coalition, if the Center's community has one, and any other planning groups that include multiple nonprofit and local government providers that meet on a regular basis. Take care to avoid inadvertently offending providers by making assumptions of unmet needs without doing homework.

Include a scan of the funding organizations in the area.

Who are the main funders and what do they fund? Are there prominent business leaders who are veterans and may lend financial support? Talk to the Community Foundation and United Way agencies about what they fund and what resources are in the community – both financial and other complementary services. Immediately develop a database to organize contact information for community partners, volunteers, and funders.

Solicit input from college-going veterans. Veterans in school often represent the younger generation of clients that the Center will see. As such, they can help identify local gaps in service delivery to ensure the Center provides relevant, necessary, and non-duplicative offerings. In terms of their future career status, college students also embody the next generation of potential funders. They are a likely source of energetic volunteers, and perhaps most importantly, they generally possess first-hand knowledge of the arduous veteran benefits application processes. They can help the Center learn how to serve the needs of its unique community.

What programs or services should we start with?

Case management is the cornerstone of the Center model. Without fully supported and accredited case management services in place, a Center should not open its doors. The case management function works with clients to coordinate the array of services and resources available throughout the community to support individual needs. See Chapter 5 of this blueprint for more information on case management and a listing of services that are designated as either “essential” or “desired” to help determine what additional service offerings to provide as the Center grows.

Another critical function at the start of the Center is volunteer and resource coordination. The outpouring of support from well-meaning individuals who want to help can be overwhelming. It is important to be prepared to meet, handle, and absorb this goodwill. Turning away support or being unprepared to accommodate the volunteerism and donations can quickly turn away a core base of ongoing support for the Center. Designate a lead person to act as the go-to person for all volunteers and donations. At the beginning, this person may be a lead volunteer, but quickly this should become a paid position to standardize the role and integrate the contributions into the operation.

What should we think about when deciding where to locate the Center?

The Center model outlined in this blueprint affirms the need for a physical space for the Center. The location should be easy for veterans, families, and supporters to find. Moving to various locations in the community can lead to confusion and result in unintended breaks in service. Beware of well-intentioned donors of land and unused buildings. Do homework to ensure the location meets the Center's needs and is accessible to veterans who do not have personal transportation before committing to using it. The goal is consistency and ease when making decisions about the Center's location. Additional considerations when deciding on a location are:

Define the service area. Make sure to carve out a catchment area for the Center. Work with the VA and other local providers to align the Center's coverage area with pre-existing service areas to leverage existing networks and meet identified gaps. For example, VOC serves the defined VISN 2 service area of the Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Weigh the costs and benefits of owning vs. leasing. Facility costs can be a large portion of the Center's operating expenses. Give great care when reviewing the options of owning a building or leasing space. Think about the long-term impact of both options. Consider the Center's organizational capacity, i.e., building a new facility or buying a used building, and/or doing major

building modifications that will stretch the capacity of the executive director and other key agency staff. And don't forget – even donated buildings can be expensive to maintain. Know what the Center is getting into and plan ahead.

Be accessible. This is a balance – locations must be evaluated through the client's perspective but also open to what is available and affordable. Some general guidelines: explore opportunities to share space with other service organizations in the community. Pay attention to the public transportation options available to the Center, such as bus routes with hours that complement services and meeting times. The facility should also be able to comfortably accommodate all physical ability levels – including wide hallways and accessible entrances for wheelchairs. Be aware of what else is in proximity to the Center's location, and weigh whether those are assets or barriers. For example, if the Center is located in close proximity to substance abuse counseling services or a shelter, these can be of obvious benefit to one segment of the Center's demographic. Alternatively, they could also present a perceived barrier to those who do not relate to these needs. In the end, defining who the Center serves will help establish its proper location. For a Center to be of true value to its community it should serve needs from across the spectrum of veterans and their families.

Where should we look for funding support?

Look for support from local community members, especially veterans who have the means to invest in the Center with initial seed funding. Reach out to local government partners to identify opportunities for funding through program initiatives, including County housing placements and emergency services. Contact state representatives and educate them about the identified needs in the area and opportunities for state funding. Explore options under the new federal funding made available by the VA to support community-based supportive services. Join the local HUD Continuum of

Care in the community. They have substantial funding for homeless services and programs and make HUD-identified veteran homelessness a priority. Don't overlook various business and foundational support. The task is to present program elements that align naturally to charitable opportunities. One of our earliest mistakes was to craft non-core "projects" to attract funding at the expense of core service program elements. Make no mistake, pursuing unrelated projects only inhibits the effort to attract sustainable funding tied to core program elements.

How do we know if we are on track?

From the start, keep track of what the Center is doing. At a minimum, keep track of its inputs and outputs – for example, the number of clients served, number of volunteer hours committed, and the number of housing placements made. Institute client surveys to provide a

regular feedback loop of how the Center's services are working and areas in need of improvement. Taking the time to set up these systems at the beginning will strengthen the overall program and will demonstrate to funders that their resources are invested wisely.

Implementation Resources:

- *Business Planning for Nonprofits: What it is and Why it Matters*, Bridgespan (<http://www.bridgespan.org/sample-nonprofit-business-plans.aspx>)
- *W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide* (<http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2006/02/WK-Kellogg-Foundation-Logic-Model-Development-Guide.aspx>)
- *A Community Needs Assessment Guide*, Center for Urban Research and Learning, Department of Psychology, Loyola University (http://www.luc.edu/curl/pdfs/A_Community_Needs_Assessment_Guide_.pdf)
- *Community Needs Assessment Toolkit*, Dianne Moore, Missouri Association for Community Action (http://communityaction.org/files/HigherGround/Community_Needs_Assessment_Tool_Kit.pdf)
- *Process for Federal Tax Exempt Status* (<http://www.irs.gov/charities/>)
- *The Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health* (<http://www.cacsh.org/>)

Veterans Outreach Center is ready to help.

For more information about VOC or how to use this Blueprint, please call us directly at

585-295-7854,

e-mail: jocene.henderson@veteransoutreachcenter.org,

or

212-584-7672,

e-mail: mcdonough@nyshealth.org.

We look forward to hearing from you and your community.

CHAPTER 8:
RESOURCES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING
VETERANS & FAMILIES

RESOURCES

A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVING VETERANS & FAMILIES

Throughout the Blueprint, we include online resources for reference. The Internet is a vast library of information about veterans and their families, health care, nonprofits, and many more topics that will be researched while designing the Center.

This section provides a sampling of documents designed by Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. We provide these as a public service to be incorporated and modified as templates within other Centers.

Administrative Services

- Organizational Chart
- By-Laws
- VOC Customer Comment Card
- Sample Partnership MOU
- Employee Self-Evaluation Form
- VOC Standard Mission Briefing

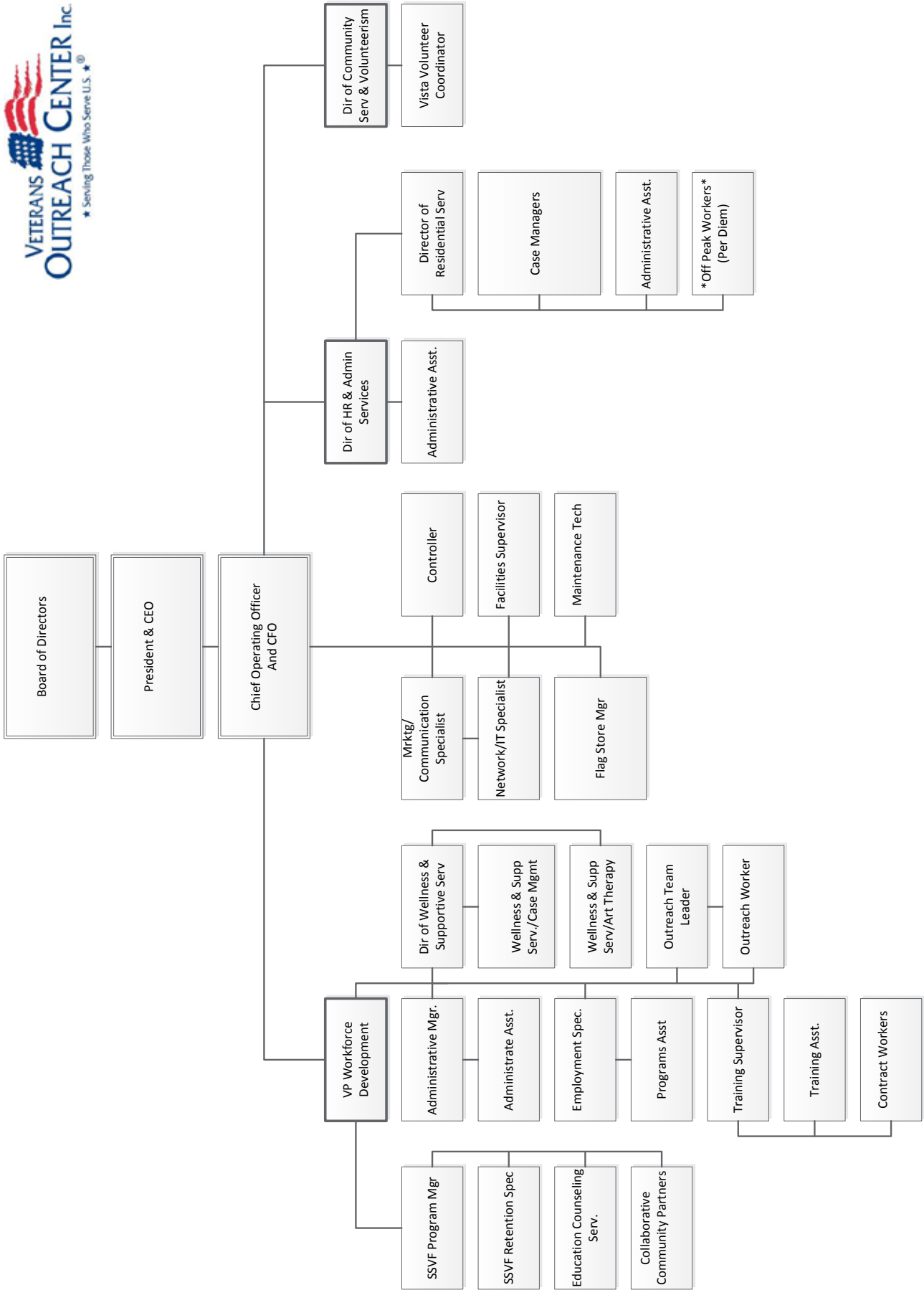
Employment & Wellness Services

- Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Intake Form
- Getting to Know You

Outreach & Engagement

- Key Card – Overview of VOC
- Volunteer Application

Glossary



**BY-LAWS
OF
VETERANS OUTREACH CENTER, INC.**

ARTICLE I NAME

The Name of the corporation shall be the Veterans Outreach Center, Inc., a charitable corporation organized as a Type B Not-for-profit Corporation under the New York Not-for-Profit Corporation Law.

ARTICLE II PURPOSE

The purpose of the corporation shall be as set forth in its Certificate of Incorporation (Article Third (i) – (vi)) which shall be complied with to the fullest extent.

ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP

The corporation members shall be its Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. Membership

a. The Board of Directors shall consist of no more than twenty-four (24) members and shall at no time be composed of less than twelve (12) members, and may be changed from time to time by majority vote of all Directors constituting the entire Board. No decrease in the number of Directors shall shorten the term of any Director in office.

b. The President of Chapter #20 of Vietnam Veterans of America during his or her term in office, or a member of the Executive Committee of Vietnam Veterans of America that he or she may designate, shall be a member of the Board of Directors.

Section 2. Composition

A majority of the members of the Board of Directors shall be Veterans of the United States Armed Forces in the Rochester metropolitan and surrounding areas.

Section 3. Election

Members of the Board, except the member from Chapter #20 of Vietnam Veterans of America chosen in accordance with Section 1.b. above, may be elected at any regular meeting by a majority vote of the incumbent Board members present. Nominations for election will be submitted, in writing, by the Governance Committee to the Board of Directors.

Section 4. Term of Office

Members of the Board of Directors chosen in accordance with Section 3 of this Article shall be elected for terms not to exceed three (3) years. A director may succeed himself/herself any number of times. The President of the corporation shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors coterminous with his/her tenure as President.

Section 5. Removal or Resignation

A member of the Board shall be removed from the Board for unexcused failure to attend three (3) consecutive meetings unless the Board, at its discretion, chooses to continue the tenure of such member. Directors may also be removed for any acts of malfeasance and/or neglect of office by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire Board.

Section 6. Vacancies

The Board shall promptly initiate the procedures necessary to fill any seat which may be vacated by reason of resignation, removal, expiration of term or otherwise, except in the case of removal, Board members shall serve in each case until their successors are elected.

Section 7. Conflict of Interest

Except as specifically provided in Article V, Section 4, no member of the Board of Directors during his/her term of office shall have any interest, direct or indirect, in any contract with the corporation. No member shall serve as a member of the Board if a member of his/her immediate family is employed in a staff capacity by the Corporation.

Section 8. Powers of the Board

In addition to and subject to the powers conferred by Section 202 (General and Special Powers of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Laws of the State of New York), the Board of Directors shall have the following powers:

the corporation;

- a. To approve major personnel, fiscal and program policies of
- b. To approve overall plans and priorities;
- c. To determine its own rules of procedure;
- d. To authorize, except as otherwise provided in these by-

laws, any office, agent or agents to enter into any contract or execute or deliver any instrument on behalf of the Corporation. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized, no officer, agent, or employee shall have any power or authority to bind the Corporation by any contract or engagement or to pledge its credit or to render it financially liable for any purpose or any amount.

e. To hire the President, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board. The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Corporation, with general charge of the property, affairs and activities of the Corporation. The President shall have the powers and duties of management usually vested in the President of a corporation, and may also appoint agents and hire employees to carry out the business of the Corporation.

In exercising the foregoing powers, the Board shall encourage maximum feasible participation of Veterans of the United States Armed Forces in the Rochester metropolitan and surrounding areas in the development and implementation of programs and projects which affect their interest, to ensure that such programs are meaningful to and widely used by them.

Section 9. Meetings of the Board

a. Annual, Regular and Special Meetings - The annual meeting shall be held on a date and time deemed appropriate by the Board for purposes of reviewing the annual report, election of Board members and Board officers, Amendment of By-Laws and/or for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting. Regular meetings of the Board, one of which shall be designated as the annual meeting, shall be held as often as required, but at least four (4) times a year, at such times and places as may be determined by the Board. Special meetings of the Board may be called at any time by the Chairman of the Board or by petition of at least three (3) members of the Board.

b. Notice of Meetings - Written notice of all meetings shall be given to the members of the Board at least (10) days before regular meetings and at least three (3) business days before each special meeting, and in the case of a special meeting, shall state the purpose thereof. Any such notice shall specify the date, time and place of the meeting. Such notice shall be effective upon personal delivery or mailing of same to Director's usual business or residence address. This notice requirement shall be deemed waived by any Director by his or her attendance at the meeting without attesting, prior thereto or at its Commencement, the lack of notice to him/her. Any such Director

may also waive this notice requirement by signing a written waiver of notice, either before or after the meeting.

Section 10. Procedures of the Board

a. Quorum For purposes of any regular, annual or special meeting a quorum of the board shall consist of a majority of the entire Board of Directors. A vote of the majority of the Directors present and voting at the time of the vote, a quorum being present, shall constitute the act of the Board. If at any meeting, there is less than a quorum present, a majority of those present may adjourn the meeting until further notice is given to any absent directors and until a quorum is present. The Chairman or in his or her absence the Vice Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the Board. In the absence at any meeting of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, the Chairman shall select a Chairman pro tem to preside at the meeting.

b. Voting Members are each entitled to one (1) vote, provided, however, that the Chairman may cast a vote only in the event of a tie. Each member must cast his/her vote in person. Proxy voting is prohibited unless designated for a specific purpose.

c. Minutes Written minutes of a meeting, which include a record of votes on all motions, shall be distributed to all Board members along with the notice of the next meeting.

d. Order of Business The order of business at meetings shall include roll call, approval of the minutes, Officers' Reports, Committee Reports, President's Report, old business and new business. The procedural authority for all meetings shall be Robert's Rules of Order, newly revised.

e. Participation in Meetings by Telephone Any one or more members of the Board or any committee member may participate in a meeting of the Board or such committee by means of a conference telephone or similar communication equipment allowing all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other at the same time. Participation by such means shall constitute presence at the meeting.

f. Action Without Meeting Any action required, or permitted to be taken, by the Board may be taken without a meeting if all members of the Board consent in writing or by email to the adoption of a resolution authorizing the action. The resolution and written consent thereto by the members of the Board shall be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Board.

g. Records The Board and each committee shall maintain a complete record of all business transactions, minutes and acts. The Board shall also maintain a complete record of its proceeding.

ARTICLE V OFFICERSSection 1. General

The officers of the corporation shall be the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Corporation Counsel. All officers shall be members of the Board of Directors.

a. Chairman

The Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors and its Executive Committee and shall appoint all standing and special committees and the chairman thereof, subject to approval by a majority of the members of the Board. The Chairman shall also execute all formal documents authorized by the Board of Directors, except where other persons have been expressly designated to do so.

b. Vice-Chairman

The Vice-Chairman shall assist the Chairman, shall perform the duties of the Chairman in the event of his/her disability or resignation and shall perform such other duties as the Board of Directors may from time to time determine. He/she shall facilitate all committee activity through periodic meetings with committee chairmen.

c. Secretary

The secretary shall attend and keep minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors and shall prepare and serve all corporate notices and shall perform such other duties incident to the office of Secretary as determined by the Board.

d. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be the Chairman of the Finance Committee and shall render periodic financial statements and other reports and accounts as may be requested from time to time by the Board and shall preside over all meetings of the Finance Committee.

e. Corporation Counsel

The corporation Counsel shall be the legal advisor to the Board. He/she shall be a member of the Executive Committee and shall be in charge of interpreting, performing and/or coordinating all legal matters in which the Corporation is involved or which affect it.

Section 2. Nomination and Election Procedures

- a. The officers shall be elected at the annual meeting. Names shall be considered in nomination, upon their submission by a Board member to the Governance Committee, at the regular Board meeting immediately prior to the annual meeting.
- b. Voting on the nominee for each such office shall be secret, written ballot and the person receiving the highest number of votes shall be deemed elected to the office. No person may hold more than one office at the same time.

Section 3. Terms of Office, Removal, and Resignation

a. Term

Each officer, except the President and Treasurer of the Corporation, shall hold office until the next annual meeting of the Board, and until his/her successor is elected and qualified.

b. Removal

Any officer shall be subject to removal for cause at any time by a majority vote of the Board of Directors provided that at least two-thirds (2/3) of the membership of the Board shall be present at any meeting at which a removal vote is taken. In the case of absence or the inability of any officer to act, the Board of Directors may, without removal, delegate the powers and duties of such officer to another officer or agent of the Corporation for a period of time the Board may deem necessary.

c. Resignation

In the event that an officer resigns his/her position with the Board of Directors, the Governance Committee will receive and accept nominations from the Board of Directors to complete the term of the vacant officer position. The Governance Committee at the next regularly schedule meeting of the Board of Directors, will announce the candidate(s) nominated for the officer position and, furthermore, will call for the election of the officer(s) by secret ballot.

Section 4. Compensation

No officer shall receive a salary or other compensation for his/her services as an officer; nor shall any officer receive compensation from the Corporation in any capacity, except for the President of the Corporation who shall be paid salaries for their services rendered. Directors may be reimbursed for approved expenditures in accordance with procedures fixed by the Board.

ARTICLE VI COMMITTEES

Section 1. Committees

There shall be the following committees: Executive, Finance, Audit, Human Resources, Development, Planning, and Governance and any other committees as the Board of Directors deem necessary from time to time.

Section 2. Composition

All committees shall be composed of at least three (3) members of the Board of Directors. The President shall be an ex-officio member of all committees coterminous with his/her tenure as President.

Section 3. Duties and Responsibilities

a. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be composed of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Corporation Counsel, and Treasurer and shall be responsible for coordinating the functions of the Board between meetings and shall set the agenda for all meetings of the Board of Directors. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the annual review of the Corporation By-Laws, the annual performance review of the President and shall fulfill such other duties, as the Board shall designate.

b. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee, in conjunction with the President shall advise the Board as to all fiscal policies of the corporation, review and make recommendations with respect to the budget, audit process, future fiscal goals and objectives, and investment procedures of the Corporation.

c. Audit Committee

The Audit Committee shall review the organizations financial Statements and any certification, report, opinion or review rendered by the independent auditor.

The committee shall recommend to the Board of Directors the particular persons or firm to be appointed as an independent auditor to include the proposed discharge of such person or firm. The committee shall review the terms of engagement of the independent auditor, scope and plan of the external audit, compensation arrangement and independence of the independent auditor.

The committee shall review the performance of the independent auditor and review the results of each audit, the report of the independent auditor

including suggestions to management concerning improvement regarding the systems of internal controls related to safeguarding corporation assets and the integrity of the Corporation's internal and external financial reporting processor.

The committee shall, as the Board of Directors determines necessary, make reports, to include recommendations, to the board through minutes or reports of committee meetings.

d. Human Resources Committee

The Human Resources Committee shall review and recommend to the Board of Directors policies affecting employees of the VOC. These policies should enhance the quality of human resources available to the VOC in a fiscally responsible manner.

e. Development Committee

The Development Committee, in conjunction with the President, shall be responsible for researching, planning and developing such initiatives as shall meet the annual financial needs of the Corporation.

f. Planning Committee

The Planning Committee shall assist the President with reviewing the Corporation's plans and programs and shall advise and assist the President and Board of Directors with planning and developing current and future goals and objectives of the Corporation, and shall report to the Board of Directors at least once each year on the Corporation's goals and objectives.

g. Governance Committee

The Governance Committee, in conjunction with the Board of Directors and the President shall actively identify and seek prospective board members. The Committee shall maintain a list of interested and qualified persons willing to serve as a Director. The Governance Committee shall prepare and present to the Board a slate of candidates nominated for Chairman, Vice- Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Corporation Counsel, for the purpose of selecting these officers at each annual meeting. The Governance Committee shall collect the secret ballots at the annual meeting and appoint two (2) of its members, who are not then candidates for any such office, to collect and count the ballots. Providing no member of the Governance Committee is available, the Chairman of the Board shall appoint two (2) members of the Board of Directors to collect and count the ballots.

Section 4. Committee Procedures

a. General Powers Each committee of the Board shall have the powers granted to it by the board, except that no committee, including the Executive Committee, shall have authority as to the following matters:

- (1) The election of officers;
- (2) The filling of vacancies of the Board or on any committee;
- (3) The amendment or repeal of these By-Laws, the Certificate of Incorporation or the adoption of new By-Laws;
- (4) The amendment or repeal of any resolution of the Board.

Each committee shall serve at the pleasure of the Board and the Board, subject to the applicable provisions of these By-Laws, shall have the authority at any time to change the membership of any committee, to fill vacancies in it, or to dissolve it. All committees shall report to the Board whenever requested by the Board to do so and shall keep regular minutes of their meetings. At any meeting of a committee, a majority of all members of the committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business and a vote of the majority of the members present at the time of the vote shall be the act of the committee. The President shall be a member ex officio of all committees.

ARTICLE VII INDEMNIFICATION

Section 1. Officers and Directors

The Corporation shall indemnify any person made a party to any action or proceeding by reason of the fact that he or she is or was a Director or officer of the Corporation including operating officers, and any Director or officer of the Corporation including operating officers, who served any other organization, corporation, partnership, joint venture or trust in any capacity at the request of the Corporation in the manner and to the maximum extent permitted in Article 7 of the New York Not-for Profit Corporation Law as amended from time to time.

Section 2. Corporate Personnel

The Corporation may, at the discretion of the Board, indemnify all corporate personnel of the Corporation, other than Directors and officers, in the same manner and to the same extent as any Director or officer shall be indemnified as aforesaid by reason of his or her being, or having been, an employee of the Corporation, or having served any other organization, corporation, partnership, joint venture or trust as aforesaid.

ARTICLE VIII FINANCES**Section 1. Bank Accounts**

The President and/or the Treasurer shall have the authority to establish bank accounts on behalf of the Corporation upon such terms and conditions, as may be authorized by the Board

Section 2. Bills, Notes, etc.

All checks, demands for money and notes or other instruments evidencing an indebtedness or other obligation of the Corporation shall be made in the name of the Corporation and shall be signed on behalf of the Corporation by the President and/or the Treasurer or any other officers or persons as the Board may from time to time designate.

Section 3. Investments

The Corporation shall have the right to retain all or any part of any securities or property acquired by it in whatever manner, and to invest and reinvest any funds held by it, according to the judgment of the Board of Directors, without being restricted to the class of investments which a trustee is or may hereafter be permitted by law to make or any similar restriction; provided, however, that no action shall be taken by or on behalf of the Corporation if such action is a prohibited transaction or would result in the denial of any exemption from taxation under Internal Revenue Code and its Regulations as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended.

ARTICLE IX EXEMPT ACTIVITIES

Notwithstanding any other provision of these By-Laws no Director, officer, employee or representative of the Corporation shall take any action or carry on activity by or on behalf of the Corporation not permitted to be taken or carried on by an organization exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code and its Regulations as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended, or by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (c) (2) of such Code and Regulations as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended.

ARTICLE X AMENDMENTS

These By-Laws may be altered, amended, or repealed by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the entire Board at any regular or special meeting called for such purpose. If any by-law regulating an impending election of Directors is adopted, amended or repealed by the board, there shall be set forth in the notice of the next

meeting of the members the by-law so adopted, amended, or repealed, together with a concise statement of the changes made.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Veterans Outreach Center values your comments and looks forward to continued improvement of our services to Veterans and your families. Please give us a minute of your time to help us better serve your needs.

Are you a Veteran Family Member

How did you hear about VOC?

- Website Veteran Relative VA
 VOC Staff Radio/TV Other: _____

Reason for visit: *(check all that apply)*

- employment VA benefits counseling VCTC
 housing peer-to-peer education legal
 Other: _____

How would you rate your experience?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not at All	N/A
1. Courtesy of staff.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Timeliness of service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Knowledge of staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Overall satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Name *(optional)* _____

Date of Visit _____

Additional Comments _____

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.
and
Monroe Community College

WHEREAS, Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. (VOC) is a nationally recognized leader and provider of supportive services for all veterans of the US Armed Forces and their immediate families, and provides cost-free, community-based and individually tailored supportive employment, education and rehabilitation services, *and*

WHEREAS, Monroe Community College (MCC) is nationally ranked and recognized as one of the most innovative community colleges in North America and a frequent starting point for returning veterans to begin their academic career;

ACCORDINGLY, the following Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") has been entered into by Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. and Monroe Community College.

The purpose of this MOU is to develop effective coordination of resources, and set forth the conditions, stipulations, and responsibilities between the two parties in order to best serve the needs of veteran students and their families from their MCC experience and beyond.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

In order to demonstrate a commitment to the terms of the MOU, the parties agree as follows:

- Monroe Community College will provide professional space for VOC staff assigned to MCC at 1000 East Henrietta Road and 228 East Main Street, Rochester, NY. VOC staff will provide services at both the Brighton Campus and the Damon City Campus a minimum of three days per week while school is in session.
- MCC will provide telephone service, a fax line, internet service, access to a printer, and parking on the Brighton Campus.
- MCC and VOC will develop a model built around a comprehensive program to provide veteran students with assistance in transferring to a 4 year college/university, as well as career transition assistance if the end goal is an Associate's Degree.
- MCC will refer veteran students who visit the Counseling and Advising Center to the VOC staffer on site for one on one information sessions.
- MCC will include Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. in veteran-related, administrative and academic information material and marketing collateral to ensure understanding of VOC's on-campus services.
- Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. will provide appropriate veteran student referrals to the correct offices at MCC as well as our community partners; peer to peer veteran student mentoring; access to and assistance with veteran benefits; staff training to all interested parties of MCC; outreach assistance; Veterans Administration ("VA") service navigation; and access to all VOC services including, but not limited to, transitional and emergency housing, employment and training services, residential housing, and case management services.

- MCC will network with appropriate VOC staff providing information needed for intake, assessment and follow-up services.

PERIOD OF AGREEMENT

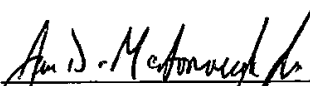
This Memorandum of Understanding will automatically be renewed on the anniversary date unless a thirty (30) day notice of termination is given by either party.

Nothing in the agreement is intended to diminish or otherwise affect the authority of any agency/ organization to implement its statutory functions or procedures.

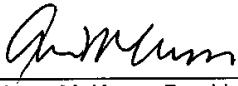
The Memorandum of Understanding will become effective on the day of the last signature.

Dated:

Dated:



James D. McDonough, Jr., President & CEO
Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.



Dr. Anne M. Kress, President
Monroe Community College



Employee Self-Evaluation

Name:	
Title:	
Supervisor:	
Department:	
Appraisal Period:	
Date:	

Your input is an important element in a comprehensive performance review and you are asked to complete this self-evaluation and return to your supervisor as part of the overall process. Consider your personal performance as well as the progress of tasks/project(s) you have worked on during this appraisal period.

Please complete and return this self evaluation to your supervisor by 10/21/11.

Evaluate yourself on the following factors that apply to you since your last performance appraisal (or date of hire).

- Rating Scale:
- 5 = Outstanding
 - 4 = Above Expectations
 - 3 = Meets Expectations
 - 2 = Below Expectations/Inexperienced
 - 1 = Immediate improvement needed

	Category	Self Rating
A)	Technical skills (capable of performing the job independently and with minimum assistance from others)	
B)	Knowledge of the requirements needed to perform the job effectively	
C)	Quality of work product (comprehensive, accurate, consistent)	
D)	Uses sound judgment in identifying issues, makes sensible recommendations	
E)	Initiative: work is planned, organized, and suggests process improvements	
F)	Integrity: honest, ethical, an example to others of professional conduct	
G)	Computer skills (i.e. MS Word, Excel, etc.)	
H)	Interpersonal skills (ability to get along with co workers, positive attitude, active team participant)	
I)	Clear communicator: expresses ideas concisely both orally and in writing, encourages two-way communication, demonstrates effective listening skills)	
J)	Accepts constructive criticism with open-mindedness	
K)	Attendance: reliable, on time and present when expected; gives sufficient notice of absences	
L)	Timely response to staff/clients and follows through on commitments	
M)	Employee policies: knowledgeable of/compliant with VOC policies and procedures	

Self-Evaluation (page 2 of 2)

- N) What do you consider your major accomplishments during the past year? Have you successfully performed any new tasks or additional duties outside the scope of your regular responsibilities? If so, please specify.

- O) What areas do you feel require improvement in terms of your professional capabilities (development opportunities)?

- P) What activities have you initiated, or actively participated in, in effort to encourage camaraderie and teamwork within your group and/or office? What was the result?

- Q) What training you have participated in during the past 12 months? (include all internal and external training)

- R) Do you have any questions about what is expected of you on the job?

Employee Comment Section (optional)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this Self-Evaluation.





Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.

A Community Resource
Serving all Veterans and their Families

Special Topic Presentation:

Background Brief – VOC Services & Resources

Standard Mission Briefing

November 11, 2011

459 South Avenue * Rochester, NY 14620 * www.veteransoutreachcenter.org * 585.546.1081 * 866.906.VETS

Agenda – Two Parts



Part One – The Center

- Organizational Background
- Center's Mission, Vision & Values
- Key Performance Commitment Measurements
- Funding Enterprise Model – Realignment of Budget to Strategy
- Governance Model
- Current Initiatives
- Annual Performance Snapshot (Handout)

Part Two – Open Discussion

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Background – The Center



- 1 million veterans (and families) across New York
 - Western New York second only to Metropolitan NYC and Long Island (Data as of 9/30/11)
 - Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area – 68,658
 - Erie County – 66,482

- Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. has been serving since 1973
 - All veterans, regardless of characterization of service
 - Families
 - No-fee assistance for all
 - Proven track record across all core competencies
 - Community-based w/ strong public & private partnerships
 - Unique and distinguishable public & private design

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Organizational Mission



Veterans Outreach Center is an independent community-centered non-profit providing premier one-stop supportive services to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families in the greater Rochester area

We serve by helping them to achieve their goals and realize their full potential

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Organizational Vision



Strive to become the nation's best provider of community-centered supportive services for veteran families

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Organizational Values



Veterans & Families First – Serve selflessly, with gratitude and respect

Integrity – Demonstrate truthfulness in all we do

Trust – Honor our commitments

Excellence – Perform at the highest levels

Compassion – Care, be compassionate with those we serve

Collaboration – Work as a team in all we do with each other and those we serve

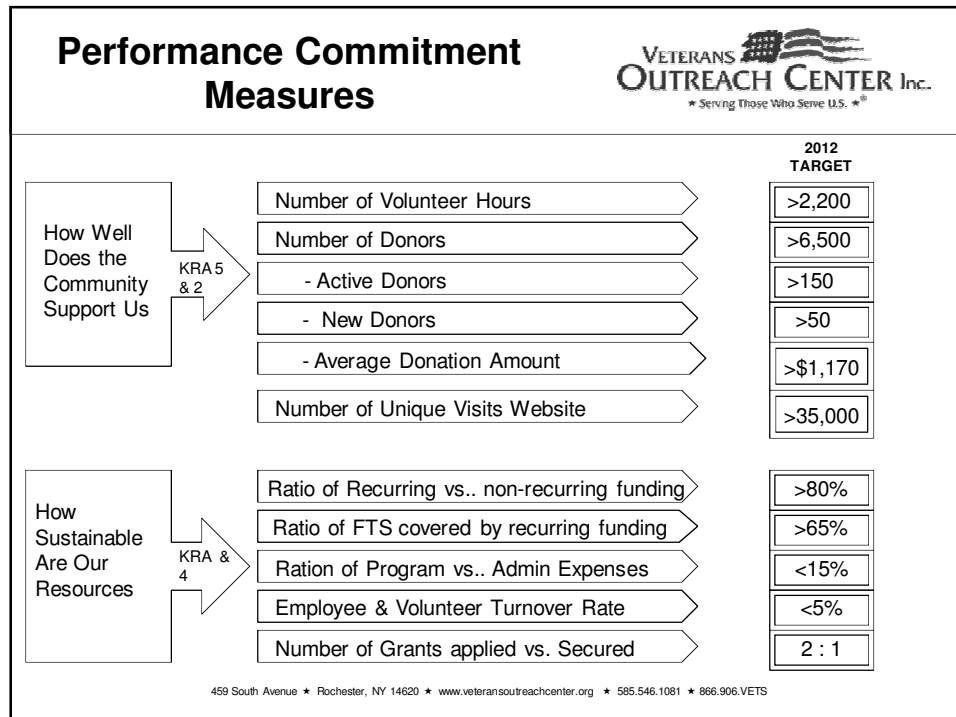
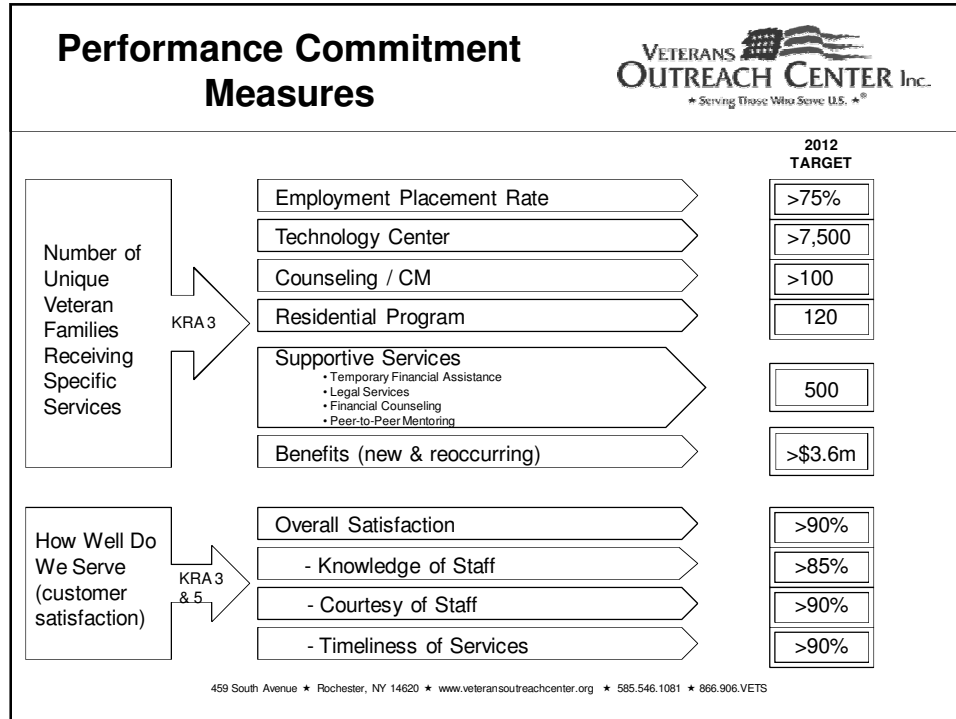
Professionalism – Motivate each other by being accountable and responsible

Sustainability – Serve as a good steward of resources


Communication – Practice open, truthful and timely communication

Volunteerism – Serve alongside one another in unison

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Performance Commitment Measures




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	2012 TARGET
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> How Recognized Are We and Our Performance </div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> KRA 3 & 2 </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 20px;"> Number of Documented Best Practices </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> > 3 </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 20px;"> Number of Strategic Partnerships </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> > 2 </div>

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Funding Enterprise Model

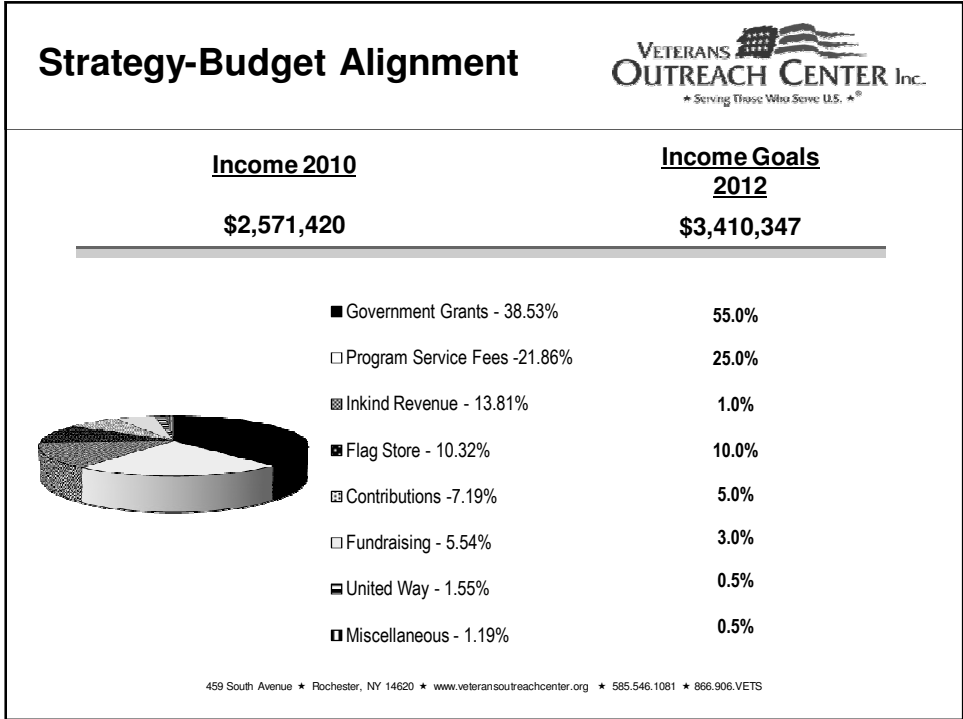


VETERANS
OUTREACH CENTER Inc.
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\$3.4 million annual operating budget (2012)

- 80% derived from Competitive Grants & Program Fees
 - VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)
 - US DOL VETS – Employment & Training
 - HVRP & VWIP (only one in New York State)
 - 14 years of veteran employment experience
 - VA Grant & Per Diem Program
 - Residential Services – Richards & Otto Houses (28 units)
 - » OASAS certified facility
- 20% derived from Foundations, State & Municipal programs, sponsored events and individual donors
 - 6 events annually
 - Flag Day, Golf Outing, 5K/10K Race, Stars & Stripes Gala, “Coming Home from War” Discussion Series, National Veterans Job Expo

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Governance Model

- 24 Members (Maximum)
 - Chairman, Bob Janson, USN, Underberg & Kessler
 - Vice Chairman, Craig Cairns, USA, President, Howe & Rusling

- Committee Structure

– Strategic Planning	John Batiste, MG, USA (Ret.), Klein Steel
– Finance / Audit	Arnold Gray, USMC, Freed Maxick & Battaglia
– General Counsel	Edmund Russell III, Underberg & Kessler, LLP
– Development	Bill Santmyer, USMC, Harter, Secrest & Emery, LLP
– Wellness / SS	Brian Shapley, USA, MVP Healthcare
– Governance	Lynette Loomis, Your Best Life Coaching, LLC

- Good ratio of veterans & non-veterans
- Monthly Executive Committee meetings / Full Board 10/12 months
- Annual Audit

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Current Initiatives



- Recently selected by the VA for its SSVF funding - \$1 million annually
- Overhauling creative arts therapy studio and gallery space
- Expand Volunteer Opportunities – Retail Store, Residential Programs, Events, Welcome Center
- Expand underwriting & sponsorship opportunities
- Merchant’s Representative w/ Monroe County and their Veteran ID card initiative
- Create tenant arrangements with Veteran Service Organizations and like-minded collaborative organizations
- Community Discussion Series to expand intellectual following and friends
- Serve veteran students on-campus at MCC
- Rochester Colgate Divinity School Re-use initiative
 - 12 Permanent Supportive Housing “Units”
- Planning initiative to ‘blueprint’ VOC model
- Semi-Annual Appeal Initiative
- Expanded web presence & new media operations

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Thank you
Questions?

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INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN			
Client Name	DOB	SS# (last 4)	Case Manager Name Date
IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND INTERESTS			
Needs and interests correspond with intake page one. Client and case manager prioritize needs and interest and list below.			
1. _____	_____	4. _____	_____
2. _____	_____	5. _____	_____
3. _____	_____	6. _____	_____
INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (Completed by client & case manager)			
Need/Interest #1 Copy from above and add further details if needed.	Client will: List steps client will take to accomplish need/interest (appointments to keep, follow-up, etc.)	Case manager will: List steps case manager will take to support client in accomplishing need/interest (referrals, follow-up with various providers, etc.)	

9/2011

Veterans Outreach Center/Individual Development Plan

<p>Need/Interest #2</p>	<p>Client will:</p>	<p>Case manager will:</p>
<p>Need/Interest #3</p>	<p>Client will:</p>	<p>Case manager will:</p>

FOLLOW-UP PLAN
(Completed by client & case manager)

- Case management services were recommended.
Referral was accepted not accepted
- Case management services were not indicated. Case manager will follow-up on referrals made within 30 days of intake appointment.
I prefer follow-up by phone (or) scheduled appointment on _____.

BY SIGNING THIS FORM I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE PARTICIPATED IN DEVELOPING THIS PLAN AND AGREE WITH THE CONTENTS.

Client Signature _____ Date _____

Case Manager Signature _____ Date _____

Check if OIF / OEF

VETERANS OUTREACH CENTER, INC. CLIENT INTAKE FORM

CLIENT BASICS This Intake Date _____ Initial Entry Date into Agency _____

Social Security # _____ - _____ - _____ Purpose of Visit: _____

Name _____
 (Please print) First _____ Middle Name _____ Last _____ Suffix (Jr., III, etc) _____

Date of Birth _____ Age _____ Gender: Male Female

Veteran Dependent Name during military service (if different from above) _____

If Dependent: Relationship _____	Vet's Name _____
Vet's SS # _____	Do you live in same household as Vet? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N

Address _____
 City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Phone: Home (____) _____ Cell (____) _____ Work (____) _____

E-mail: _____ Birthplace _____
 City _____ State _____ Country _____

Marital Status: Single Married Separated Divorced Widow/ Widower

Ethnicity: African-American Caucasian Hispanic / Latino Asian/Pacific Islander Native American Other

EDUCATION: High School Diploma/GED Some College Associates Bachelors Masters + Technical/Trade School

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____
 Name _____ Telephone _____ Relationship _____

LEGAL STATUS: N/A Convicted of crime On Probation/Parole Pending Action Veterans Court

HEALTH INFORMATION (Check all that apply)

Maintain health care insurance? Yes No Type: Public (i.e. Medicare/Medicaid) Private (i.e. MVP, Excellus, etc.)

Enrolled for VA Medical Benefits? Yes No Serious medical problems now? Yes No

Do you have a disability? Yes No If Service Connected, Percentage _____ Non-Service Connected

ALCOHOL / DRUGS: N/A Dependency at present Dependency in the past Ever in treatment for?

If currently in treatment, where: _____ In a domestic violence situation

Concerned with any mental health issues at present? Yes No Ever received mental health treatment? Yes No

VETERAN AGENCIES Check the following agencies where services were previously received:

VA State Div. of Veterans Affairs Veterans Service Agency, County of _____

** Check if you have ever attended a Stand Down event.

CLIENT INTAKE FORM

PAGE 2

MILITARY SERVICE: Branch: Army Navy Air Force Marines Coast Guard National Guard
 Army Reserves Navy Reserves Air Force Reserves Marine Reserves

Current Status: Active Duty Reserves Fully Discharged Retired

Service Era: (check all that apply)
 Korean War or prior Between Korean and Vietnam Eras (2/55-7/64) Vietnam Era (8/64-4/75) Post-Vietnam (5/75-7/90)
 Persian Gulf (8/90-) Afghanistan / Iraq (9/01-)

Combat Service? Y N Vietnam OIF OEF Other _____

Served at least 1 Day Active Duty? (other than "for training only") Month and Year of Separation _____

Type of Discharge: Honorable Under Honorable Conditions (General) Other Than Honorable Dishonorable Other

FOR MULTIPLE ENLISTMENTS:
 Branch, Month & Year of Discharge _____ Type of Discharge _____
 Branch, Month & Year of Discharge _____ Type of Discharge _____

FOR STAFF ONLY: DD-214 RECEIVED Yes No DD-214 REQUESTED Yes No
 Request date _____ Requested by Staff _____ Comments _____

INCOME SOURCES (Check all that apply): Supplemental Security Income Non-Service Pension Unemployment benefits
 Employed Spouse/Significant Other Soc. Sec. Disability. Income VA Pension VA Disability Disability Food Stamps
 Workers' Compensation Social Security Temporary Aid Needy Families (TANF) Employment No financial resources

If other, specify _____

Estimated Annual Family Income: _____ **Receiving benefits from DHS?** **Pending?**

CURRENT HOUSING / LIVING STATUS: Own Home Rental Emergency Shelter Transitional Housing
 Supportive Housing Substance abuse treatment facility Community Residence VA facility Healthcare facility
 Homeless Other _____ **Living with others:** family / dependents friends / others
 At risk for homelessness If homeless, first time homeless? Y N Number of times homeless in 1 year: 1 2 3 4

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS: **WORKING:** Full Time Part Time Per diem / on call Retired Student
 UNEMPLOYED: Date Last worked _____ Position/Job Title _____

Transportation: Own car Bus Walk Friends/Family Other _____ None Have Valid Driver's License

How did you hear about Veterans Outreach Center?

COMMENTS:

Client Signature _____

Staff Member _____

Date _____



Thank you for your service to our country.

How can we help you today?

Check all that you are interested in...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment & Training: | <input type="checkbox"/> Income tax preparation by certified representatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Readjustment counseling from licensed staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative arts therapy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational / technical training | <input type="checkbox"/> CompeerCORPS mentoring services - |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance for college education | <i>"Vets Helping Vets"</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with career advancement | <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol / substance abuse counseling referrals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans benefits counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary or permanent housing needs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal services and resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited temporary financial assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial counseling and coaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational counseling services |

Please take just a moment to fill out the following basic information, too. Thank you!

Name _____	_____	_____	_____
<small>First</small>	<small>Middle Name</small>	<small>Last</small>	<small>Suffix (Jr., III, etc)</small>
Today's Date _____	Staff Person _____		

09/27/2011



★ YOU'RE HOME ★

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★ Serving Those Who Serve U.S. ★[®]

www.VeteransOutreachCenter.org

585-546-1081 ★ (toll free) 866-906-VETS

459 South Avenue ★ Rochester, NY 14620

★ WE CAN HELP ★



Serving Those Who Serve U.S.[®]

Our no-cost supportive services are available on-site to all veterans and their immediate family members:

- Accredited veterans benefits counseling
- Dedicated case management services
- Licensed staff offering readjustment counseling and creative arts therapy
- Comprehensive one-stop employment services:
 - Vocational counseling, job search, advocacy and placement assistance
 - Resume preparation and job readiness training
 - Community Tech Center (occupational skills training)
 - Employment networking activities and focus groups
 - Help with career advancement
- Limited and time-durational temporary financial assistance
- Legal services and resources
- CompeerCORPS mentoring services—*"Vets Helping Vets"*
- Educational counseling services
- Certified financial counseling and coaching
- Seasonal income tax preparation assistance by certified representatives
- 28-unit residential program supporting emergency, transitional, supportive and independent housing needs of homeless veterans
- Certified alcohol & substance abuse counseling services

Volunteer Candidate Information



Contact Information	
Name	
Street Address	
City State Zip	
Home Phone	
Work Phone	
Cell Phone	
E-Mail Address	
Are you a United States citizen? ___ NO ___ YES	
Have you ever served in the military? ___ NO ___ YES	
If yes, please indicate dates of service and branch. MMYT_____ to MMYT_____ Branch ___	
Has anyone in your family served in the military? ___ NO ___ YES	

Availability

During which hours are you available for volunteer assignments?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekday mornings | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekend mornings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekday afternoons | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekend afternoons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekday evenings | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekend evenings |

Interests

Tell us in which areas you are interested in volunteering:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boy Scout Leader / Assistant Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Receptionist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driver <i>(Please provide photocopy of NYS license.)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Sales and Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Counseling Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonal Decorating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising & Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Speakers Bureau |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor <i>(computer/technology, health & wellness, cooking, arts)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran Mentor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light Maintenance (painting, lawn work, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Recruiter / Trainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and Promotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Welcome Center Greeter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Operation Welcome Home Greeter | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER |

Dated 1 OCT 2011

Qualifications (Please attach resume if available.)

State any qualifications (training, certificates, licenses, degrees, experience) that you have which help demonstrate your ability to assist in the interest areas that you checked above.

Special Skills or Qualifications / Previous Volunteer Experience

Have you ever worked for Veterans Outreach Center? NO YES

Do you have a valid NYS Driver's License? NO YES

Summarize special skills and qualifications you have acquired from employment, previous volunteer work, or through other activities, including hobbies or sports.

Personal History

1. Are you currently employed or enrolled in school? NO YES

2. Do you have any physical limitations: NO YES

3. Have you ever been convicted of a crime? NO YES
(A conviction does not necessarily bar an applicant from consideration for a volunteer assignment)

4. Have you ever been convicted of child abuse? NO YES

5. Have you ever been disciplined / censured by a professional organization? NO YES

Please explain all YES answers:

Person to Notify in Case of Emergency

Name	
Relationship	
Street Address	
City ST ZIP	
Home Phone	
Work Phone	
Cell Phone	
E-Mail Address	

Agreement and Signature

By submitting this application, I affirm that the facts set forth in it are true and complete. I understand that if I am accepted as a volunteer, any false statements, omissions, or other misrepresentations made by me on this application may result in my immediate dismissal.

I acknowledge that I am volunteering my services freely without any understanding or promise of reward or compensation for my services.

As part of my Veterans Outreach Center volunteer service, confidential information may be disclosed to me. I agree that whenever that is done, I will respect the confidentiality of that information.

Name (printed)	
Signature	
Date	

Our Policy

It is the policy of this organization to provide equal opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, genetics, sexual preference, age, or disability.

Thank you for completing this application form and for your interest in volunteering with us.

T-SHIRT SIZE: **SMALL** **MEDIUM** **LARGE** **X-LARGE** **2X-LARGE**

BIRTHDAY: Month/Day _____

Please mail to:

Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.

ATTN: Volunteer Coordinator
 459 South Avenue
 Rochester, NY 14620

Or email to:

volunteer@VeteransOutreachCenter.org



(585) 546-1081 ★ Toll-Free 866-906-VETS (8387)

Dated 1 OCT 2011

GLOSSARY

VETERAN – Any person who served in the active U.S. military – regardless of length of service, duty assignment, or character of discharge

AC (Active Component) – Organizations in the military that are on continuous active duty as opposed to the Reserve Components, which are usually on active duty only during training.

Community-Based Care – A collection of services provided by local community organizations that complement the resources provided by government.

Continuum of Care – Includes prevention, outreach and assessment, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and affordable housing, plus supportive services in all components. This model relies on multiple organizations working together providing the components in the volume needed to serve the homeless population.

DEERS (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) – Computer database for tracking information about servicemembers and family members and their eligibility for access to services and benefits.

Dependent (Family Member) – Someone who is recognized by the military as being a member of the immediate family of a soldier.

Deployment – Any current or past event or activity that relates to duty in the armed forces that involves an operation, location, command, or duty that is different from the military member's normal duty assignment.

DoD (Department of Defense) – The branch of government responsible for all of the armed services.

DOL (Department of Labor) – The purpose of the Department of Labor (DOL) is to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States.

Domain – A realm or range of personal knowledge or responsibility.

EFMP (Exceptional Family Member Program) – A program that works with various agencies to provide services to family members with special needs.

Emergency Housing – Short-term shelter and services, such as outreach, food, health care, and clothing, to persons who reside on the streets or who are otherwise homeless.

ETS (End Tour of Service) – The date when the soldier's contractual obligation for duty will be complete, and the soldier can separate from the Army.

FRG (Family Readiness Group) – A group of people within a unit/organization who volunteer to provide soldiers and families support. The FRG helps information flow among its members, the chain of command, and participating community activities.

HUD-VASH - Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) Program, through a cooperative partnership, provides long-term case management, supportive services, and permanent housing support.

IT – Information Technology

OCONUS (Outside CONUS) – A duty assignment outside the Continental United States.

OEF/OIF/OND (Operation Enduring Freedom / Operation Iraqi Freedom / Operation New Dawn)

PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) – An anxiety disorder that can occur after having been through a traumatic event.

Supportive Housing – A combination of housing and services intended as a cost-effective way to help people live more stable, productive lives.

TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) – Occurs when an external force traumatically injures the brain.

Transitional Housing – A project that aims to facilitate moving homeless veterans to permanent housing within a reasonable amount of time (usually 24 months).

TRICARE (Tri-Service Medical Care) – The DoD medical and dental entitlement program for people in uniform and their families.

VA – Veterans Administration

VBA – Veterans Benefits Administration

VHA – Veterans Health Administration

VISN (Veterans Integrated Services Network) – The Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs is divided into 23 different health system networks called Veterans Integrated Service Networks, or VISNs, which are distributed in different regions of the country and are usually located in more than one state. They contain medical centers, vet centers, and outpatient clinics offering primary and specialized care.

VSO – Veterans Service Organization

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