



Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs

WELCOME

Aug. 7, 2024

Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

Dept. of Agriculture HQ

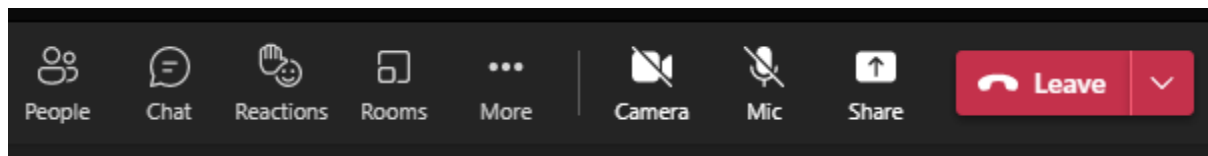
2301 N. Cameron Street, Harrisburg

**This meeting, and all content, is being recorded for executive documentation only.
Your continued participation is acknowledgement and approval of recording.**

--We will begin shortly--



Chat function is used to submit comments or questions



*Please enter your **full name and agency** for attendance purposes





Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs

INTRODUCTIONS & OPENING COMMENTS



Pennsylvania
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and Veterans Affairs

OLD BUSINESS

VETERAN OF THE QUARTER



Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs

Mr. William “Bill” Reed

- For outstanding community engagement and assistance helping those in need.
- Mr. Reed has done amazing work with the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg, homeless veteran initiatives, and collaborative efforts with numerous advocates.
- Mr. Reed works tirelessly to share his knowledge and connect people who can assist our vulnerable populations.





GUEST SPEAKER

- **VETERAN RESPONSE TEAMS**
Mr. William “Bill” Cress
Ms. Rhonda Sanford

VISN 4 Veterans Response Team (VRT) Overview

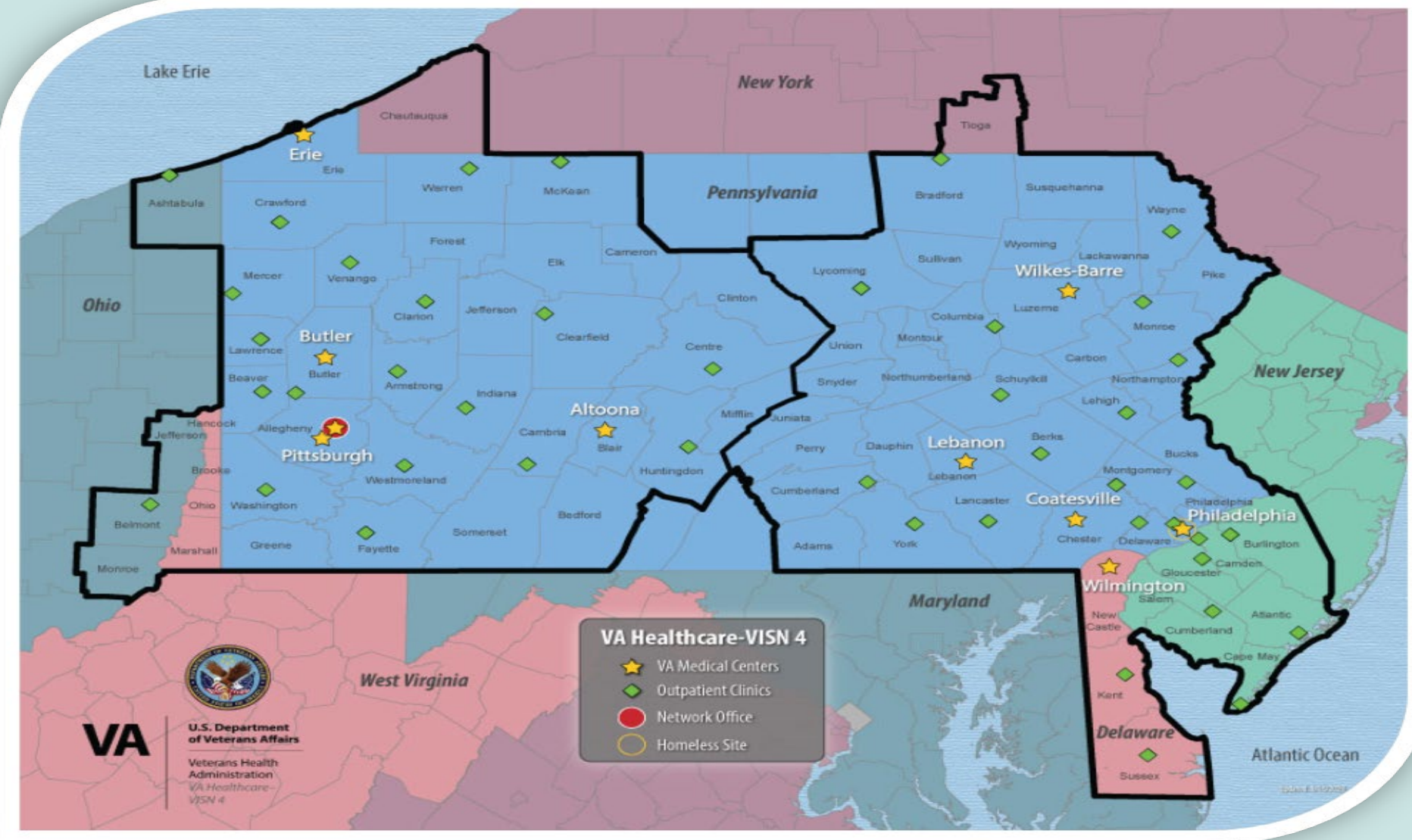
Rhonda Sandford, LCSW

Coatesville VAMC Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialist

Bill Cress, LCSW

VA Healthcare, VISN 4 Network Homeless Coordinator





Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 4 Coverage Area



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Cootesville VA Medical Center



VETCENTER

Connection.
Camaraderie.
Community.



Montgomery County Veterans Response Team

WELCOME!

Introductions

- ❑ Rhonda Sanford, Coatesville VA
- ❑ Lt. Mark Huzzard, Montgomery County Sheriff
- ❑ Chief Mike Jackson, Lower Providence Township Police
- ❑ Dennis Miller and Karin Smith, Montgomery County Office of Veterans Affairs
- ❑ Anna Trout, Montgomery County Office of Mental Health



What is the VRT?

The Montgomery County VRT consists of LEO's with Military Service Experience who have completed specialized training specific to serving veterans in crisis and have access to the highest priority connections to the Coatesville VA, mental health crisis responders, local veteran service organizations, and the MontCo Veterans Treatment Court.



Why special training for Veteran Response?

- ❑ Experience that the general population doesn't have, beginning with initial entry training
- ❑ Our experiences shape us and give us something in common with one another
- ❑ Experiences before, during, and after service impact who we are
- ❑ Being a Veteran is one part of a larger picture



VRT Snap Shot: Who's on the Team

- VRT Advisory Committee:
 - Coatesville VA
 - Montgomery County Office of Veterans Affairs
 - Montgomery County Sheriff
 - Montgomery County Offices of Mental Health and Senior Services
 - Montgomery County Department of Public Safety
 - Lower Providence Police Department (Liaison to the Police Chief's Association)
 - Norristown Vet Center

- 100 VRT responder's trained:
 - 29 law enforcement agencies
 - 3 fire/EMS departments
 - Behavioral health crisis responders



VRT Referrals: Observations & Trends

- **73 referrals in first 18 months – (currently about 150 in 30 mths)**
- **1/2 are for Veterans who are older/elderly**
 - Dementia
 - APS collaboration
 - Scams
 - Inability to care
- **1/3 (7) for Veterans mid 20s-mid 30s**
 - Drug and alcohol use
 - Mental health crisis
 - Concern re: weapons
 - Relationship challenges
- **Trends/Observations**
 - mental health crisis
 - Criminal justice involved
 - Suicidal ideation and attempts
 - homeless situations
 - domestic violence
 - referrals for non-veterans
 - Less referrals for women
 - About 1/4 came in initially from non-VRT officers



VRT: What's in the two (2) Day Training?

- ❑ Listen to guidance from LEO's
- ❑ MH/Crisis intervention training as foundation is essential
- ❑ Keep it practical
- ❑ Frequent breaks
- ❑ Make connection between attendees benefits and experiences and ability to assist other Veterans
- ❑ Personal Testimony
- ❑ Modules no longer than 45 minutes
- ❑ Mix up the media (present, roundtable, videos, interactive)
- ❑ Current VRT Officers as presenters and training contributors



Nuts & Bolts of VRT Implementation

□ Dispatch

- Self-Referral, Family Referral
- Non-emergency vs Emergency
- 911, VRT tag, Smart 911, MCORT
- Everbridge Platform

□ Response

- Intentional vs Spontaneous

□ Data & Outcome Tracking

- Veteran tag on RMS demo screen
- VRT group email thread
- Wishlist: Data dashboard/VRT Portal



VRT: Connection with County Veterans Services

- Outreach, impact, and partnership
- Example:
 - Tough Customer Talk: Once a month meeting where participants discuss their most difficult cases where residents are most likely to need services from multiple providers. Goal: No one leaves empty handed, TCT participants receive warmer referrals and wrap around care.



Review of Real VRT Responses

- 84 yo, dying of cancer, family called for well-check, passed away shortly after but because of VRT, family knew where he wanted to be buried and final wishes
- 47 yo, Referred by VRT officer, on scene Veteran was manic, pressured speech, agitated, VRT officer de-escalated, supported and was able to facilitate a voluntary MH admission without incident, VRT followed-up with inpatient hospital to ensure social worker had Veterans resources information
- Referral from VRT officer, father came into police station to request assistance with his son
- 3 tour VN Vet with PH, Severe Dementia, Wanderer, referred to Office of Mental Health by PD (non-VRT LEO), immediately connected to VRT, MontCO VA office connected with wife, Coatesville VA connected to VA treatment team, since referral ongoing support and coordination offered to Veteran and wife, moving towards assisted living placement, VRT assisted with hospital admission facilitation



Review of Real VRT Responses

- Referred by non-VRT LEO via Norristown Vet Center, veteran was in his apartment and could be heard screaming, several complaints of screaming in the hallways by neighbors, discharged from the USMC for mental health, trauma history starting with adoption, officer suspected depression and possibly schizophrenia, VRT facilitated VA referral, Attempted suicide 6/2/2022, VRT coordinated with PD that night, linked with VA
- Self-referred (emailed MontCo Veterans Affairs), In abusive relationship trying to eject roommate, VRT team (VA, MontCo VA, and VRT Sheriff Deputy) met in person at apartment, educated on options, facilitating PFA and ejection process, linking with services, investigating mental health supports for roommate
- VRT officer interaction. Veteran currently at Malvern Institute (Willow Grove) for a relapse. Involved in altercation with another patient. No criminal charges at this point. Veteran was expelled from treatment (as a result of incident), VRT officer assisted with transportation back to home (Easton PA), confirmed that he does have Tricare and some community support (We are Battle Born), VRT officer shared contact information for himself and Northampton/Allentown social services and encouraged Vet to reach out if future assistance is needed.



Review of Real VRT Responses

- Referred by VRT officer after drop off at Paoli ER. Non-VRT officer present at ER explained VRT and as a result Anna was able to get immediate response and connection after outreach. Has current treatment providers at VA who were alerted to medical admission.
- VRT crisis worker noticed person in road and police presence while driving. Pulled over, crisis worker was wearing USMC jacket. Rapport built. Referred to Coatesville VA. Rhonda able to get into system immediately and was admitted that day for treatment. Young vet.
- Cross/multi jurisdiction situation. Huffing and domestic issues. Multiple outreach attempts. Finally, Veteran called 911 himself, VRT officer met him at Abington ER. Immediate collaboration between officer, ER staff and Coatesville VA. Went into SUD treatment.



Montgomery County Veterans Response Team (VRT) QUICK GUIDE FOR OFFICERS

The Montgomery County VRT consists of LEO's with Military Service Experience who have completed specialized training specific to serving veterans in crisis and have access to the highest priority connections to the Coatesville VA, mental health crisis responders, local veteran service organizations, and the MontCo Veterans Treatment Court.

Anyone interested in learning more about the MontCo VRT should contact:
VeteransResponseTeamMontcoPA@gmail.com

VRT Response and Resource Connection Flow

A VRT response occurs anytime a VRT trained officer is on scene with a veteran in crisis or in need. VRT responses may be initiated intentionally or identified as a VRT response during the course of the interaction. A VRT response may be an emergency or part of a planned co-response with a social service partner.

Who can Request a VRT Response?

911/Dispatch: The County's 911 Call Center has added a "Veteran" identification marker to identify VRT trained officers.	Social Service/Crisis Provider: Mental health crisis providers and key Veteran Service agencies will have access to a roster of VRT officers.	Law Enforcement: Departments who choose to "OPT IN" to the Shared Effort Collaborative (SEC) may receive requests from other LEO's for VRT assistance.
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Initiation of VRT responses are at the sole discretion of police departments and are not mandatory or prescribed by any other entity.

Connections Available to VRT Officers: On-Scene & Off

Crisis

Veterans Crisis Line | 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1) | Text: 838255

24/7 hotline answered by a veteran-dedicated call center. If a veteran expresses thoughts of hurting themselves or suicide.

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Hotline | Available 24/7 | 1-855-634-4673

In addition to their standard hotline and mobile services, the Mobile Crisis Team is able to consult on VRT responses and facilitate connections to VRT partners such as the Coatesville VA, Veterans Treatment Court, and OVA.

Urgent

Coatesville VA Medical Center | Direct Line to VA Police: 610-383-0222

Daytime Hours: Social Workers are available to assist with confirming benefits, navigating existing therapeutic and clinical connections, providing history and context, consulting on a care plan, and facilitating admission to a VA facility.

Off Hours: The VA Police Line is answered 24/7. Access to a VA Social Worker will be available during normal business hours, and as possible on nights and weekends (may be next business day). When a Social Worker is not available, VA Police will relay a message to be answered as soon as possible and advise to follow regular crisis protocols if the situation is emergent.

Non-Emergency, Service Collaboration Connections

Montgomery County Office of Veterans Affairs | 610-278-3285 | TeamVeterans@montcopa.org | M-F, 8:30AM-4:25PM
100% Veteran operated. OVA staff are available to assist with connections, consultation, benefits counseling, advocacy, and access to County Benefits. MCOVA runs a bi-weekly multi-provider collaborative: **Tough Customer Talk**. VRT officers can make referrals for veterans in need: *No one leaves empty-handed, TCT participants receive warmer referrals and multi-stakeholder support.*

Veterans Treatment Court

VTC Coordinator: Kasey Lauro (610-996-0348) | VRT Contact: Sgt. Mark Huzzard (610-496-8123)

The mission of the VTC is to enhance public safety and reduce recidivism of criminal defendants who are veterans by connecting them with VA benefits, treatment services, and supports. VRT Officers are encouraged to contact the VTC about any veterans they suspect may be connected to the VTC or may benefit from a referral to the VTC.



Tracking VRT Responses & Outcomes

VRT Outcome Tracking is a collaborative effort that involves data sharing between VRT officers and VRT partners. Each VRT Officer is encouraged to send confirmation of VRT responses to **VeteransResponseTeamMontcoPA@gmail.com**. VRT Partners (VA, MCOVA, VTC) will then cross-reference with available service databases and use that information to tag the VRT response and collect data on impact and outcomes. Automatic VRT tracking via RMS and other reporting systems is in the planning stages. Officers with ideas for improved data collection processes are encouraged to connect with the VRT Advisory Committee.

****Relevant privacy practices and confidentiality mandates are followed by all participating VRT stakeholders, with deference given to the strictest of policies****

Submitting Feedback/Concerns/Ideas

VRT officers are key informants to improving the impact of the VRT initiative in Montgomery County. Any and all feedback and collaboration is greatly appreciated. Officers may reach out via the shared VRT Advisory Committee Email: **VeteransResponseTeamMontcoPA@gmail.com**, or by connecting directly with any of the VRT's points of contact:

Coatesville VA Medical Center	Rhonda Sanford, Justice Outreach Social Worker, Rhonda.Sanford@va.gov, Lt. Dennis Basmajian, Training Officer, Dennis.Basmajian@va.gov
Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff	Sgt. Mark Huzzard, Warrants Division, mhuzzard@montcopa.org
Montgomery County Office of Veterans Affairs	Dennis Miller, Administrator, dmiller5@montcopa.org
Montgomery County Office of Mental Health	Anna Trout, Crisis & Diversion Director, atrout@montcopa.org

Key VRT De-Escalation and Engagement Skills

Utilize peer experience to engage and establish rapport

Navigate the veteran's perception of safety

Consider trauma history and experiences, and tailor approach so as not to perpetuate trauma responses

Remember to seek out support and connection for yourself

Additional Contacts to Know (Not Veteran Specific)

Montgomery County Commitment Office/Mental Health Delegates (24/7) | 610-279-6102

Guidance on the involuntary commitment process. Requests to dispatch 305 ambulance service. Petition review, deny or approve mental health civil warrants.

Community Connections Navigate Program (Mon-Fri, Bus. Hours) | 610-278-3522

Available to help those struggling with a social services need, but don't know where to turn. Trained professionals ready to connect people to resources and services in Montgomery County.

ChildLine (24/7 Hotline) | 1-800-932-0313

Mandated statewide child protective services program.

Adult Protective Services (24/7 Hotline) | 1-800-490-8505

Report suspected abuse of an elder or an adult with a disability.

Domestic Violence (24/7 Confidential Hotline): 1-800-642-3150 | Text "HOPE" to 85511

The Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) provides 24-hour in person or over the phone crisis response, safety planning, and advocacy.



VRT referral flow chart



Making a VRT Referral Guide for VRT Officers and Team Members



VRT Best Practices:

- When coming on shift, check with dispatch if any other VRT officers from nearby departments are also on.
- Check with Mobile Crisis to see if any VRT crisis workers are on (1-855-634-4673).
- When talking over the radio, identify individual as a Veteran if known or suspected.
- Gather as much info about Veteran as possible: Name, DOB, SSN, Branch of Service and years of service are ideal.

Situation: High (Active Crisis)

- Inpatient Hospitalization is only path forward
- Individual is not safe to remain in the community (is NOT being arrested)
- MHPA criteria appears to be met
- There is an urgent medical need (including overdose)

Situation: Medium (Crisis is building)

- Individual does not need to be taken to an ER, but contact with VRT partners should be made before LEO leaves the scene to prevent escalation
- Any other reason that making contact with VRT team while you are still on scene would be the most helpful to the Veteran and/or their family

Situation: Low Risk

- Veteran has unmet social service needs and a referral to support could benefit them
- Veteran is being arrested and taken to MCCC
- Veteran is in a safe or secure situation and does not need immediate assistance

Follow department protocol on emergency transport to an ER or MCES Crisis Walk-in.

- Upon arrival at ER or MCES Crisis Walk-in, advise staff that individual is (or may be) a Veteran. If possible, share the referral lines for the Local VAs: Coatesville 610-384-7711, ext. 3667 (REGULAR business hours). Philly VA 215-823-4591 (Evenings, nights, weekends) and tell hospital staff that the Montgomery County VRT will be attempting to contact them to assist with coordination for Veteran.
- While at the ER or when leaving, call Rhonda (VRT Lead at Coatesville VA), 484-667-1988 to update on status.
- If Rhonda is not available, you can call Mobile Crisis 1-855-634-4673 and they will relay the message. Or email rhonda.sanford@va.gov and anna.trout@montgomerycountypa.gov
- **What will happen next:** Rhonda and Anna will loop in additional VRT members as needed, work to confirm Veteran status, and assist with coordination between ER and VA Hospital(s).

Mon. - Fri. 7:30am to 4:00pm:

- Call Rhonda (VRT Lead at Coatesville VA) at 484-667-1988. If she is available, she'll speak to you and the Veteran right on the scene.
- If Rhonda or another VJO is not available, call Mobile Crisis 1-855-634-4673 and ask if they have a Veteran Crisis Worker Available. Even if a VRT Crisis worker is not available, Mobile Crisis can provide a regular crisis engagement response.
- **What will happen next:** VRT partners will work to confirm Veteran status and then assess needs and what may be available, anything from mental health, drug and alcohol, housing needs, DV resources, etc.

Off Hours (Evening, Overnight, Weekend, Holiday):

- Ask County Dispatcher if any VRT officers are logged on, nearby, and able to join you on scene.
- If VRT officer is not available, call Mobile Crisis 1-855-634-4673 and ask if they have a Veteran Crisis Worker Available. Even if a VRT Crisis worker is not available, Mobile Crisis can provide a regular crisis engagement response.
- If possible, also email rhonda.sanford@va.gov and anna.trout@montgomerycountypa.gov with information about interaction so that they can follow up next business day.
- **What will happen next:** VRT partners will work to confirm Veteran status and then assess needs and what may be available, anything from mental health, drug and alcohol, housing needs, DV resources, etc.

Anytime (Please note, calls may not be returned until next business day)

Call Rhonda (VRT Lead at Coatesville VA) at 484-667-1988. OR Send an email to rhonda.sanford@va.gov and anna.trout@montgomerycountypa.gov

IF POSSIBLE: Include Veterans Name, DOB, and SSN. As well as a contact number and address. Please advise Veteran that someone from the VRT will be connecting with them, so they should make sure there's room in their voicemail inbox and be prepared to answer a call from an unknown number.

What will happen next: VRT partners will work to confirm Veteran status and include other resources as appropriate (ex. County Office of Veterans Affairs, Norristown Vet Center, Mental Health, D&A, etc).

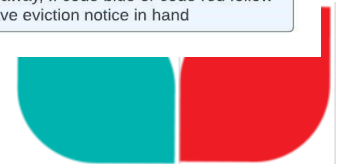
Utilize the VRT QR Code for a quick guide of phone numbers and hotlines available to provide assistance.

What if I need to consult with another VRT Law Enforcement Officer or First Responder?

Ask Dispatch for list of VRT members logged on
Utilize VRT officers internal to your department
If not urgent, see VRT Roster for contact info.

QUICK TIP: Homelessness

Call VA Homeless Hotline or give the number to the Veteran (gets sent to homeless outreach team and they have to respond within 24 business hours, then send email to Rhonda for her to follow up on her end), VA homeless outreach is not an immediate response, 877-424-3838- 24/7 number even though not coming out right away, if code blue or code red follow procedures if Veteran wants, call hotline also in case of eviction, must have eviction notice in hand



Montgomery County Veterans Response Team (VRT) Communication Protocol

For VRT Team Members: LEO's, Crisis Workers, Veterans Service Organizations, Public Safety, VRT Advisory Group

Level of Urgency	Contact Utilized	Response Type	Process
Low	VRT General Contact List (email Anna for a copy)	Planned Co-Response	<p>Any member of the VRT can utilize the VRT Contact List to request assistance with a planned co-response or case consultation. OR, any member of the VRT can request that a member of the Advisory Group send out a VRT request on their behalf and assist with case coordination until a plan is developed.</p> <p><u>Advisory Group Member Emails (or use VeteransResponseTeamMontCoPa@gmail.com):</u> Rhonda Sanford (Coatesville VA): Rhonda.sanford@va.gov Lt. Dennis Basmajian (Coatesville VA): dennis.basmajian@va.gov Dennis Miller & Karin Smith (County OVA): teamveterans@montcopa.org, Sgt. Mark Huzzard (Sheriff): mark.huzzard@montgomerycountypa.gov Anna Trout (County Office of Mental Health): anna.trout@montgomerycountypa.gov Nora Buck (County Senior Services): nora.buck@montgomerycountypa.gov</p>
	VRT Advisory Group Email	Planned Outreach	
	Team SNAP (Pending)	Case Consultation	
Medium	Coatesville VA Police Direct Line: 610-383-0222	Case consultation, Planned Co-Response at Coatesville VA, Connection to Coatesville VA and contacts	<p>Any member of the VRT can contact the Coatesville VA police directly for assistance directing patients to campus, coordinating treatment post detention/arrest, assistance connecting with other team members, assistance locating a missing Veteran.</p> <p>In particular, Coatesville VA Police can be utilized to take urgent messages during off-hours.</p>
	911 Supervisors Line: 610-635-4350	Planned Co-Response LEO Well Check	Any member of the VRT or Advisory Group can call the 911 Supervisors Line and ask for a list of LEO's currently logged on with "VRT" skill, then contact those officers directly.
	Mobile Crisis: 1-855-634-4673	Crisis co-response, (planned or urgent), Planned Outreach, Case Consultation	Any member of the VRT or Advisory Group can call Mobile Crisis and ask if a VRT crisis worker is currently on. Ability to consult and/or co respond will be situation and circumstances dependent. If a VRT Crisis Worker is not available, Mobile Crisis can assist with their typical response.
Medium +	Everbridge	Co-Response (Planned or Urgent)	Any member of the VRT Advisory Group can initiate an Everbridge Alert that is sent to all VRT contacts cell phones and emails, must include contact information and brief summary of the request. All other members of the VRT can request that an Advisory Group member send an Everbridge Alert on their behalf.
	911/Dispatch	LEO to LEO communication/ response request	Any LEO member of the VRT can ask dispatch to check for "VRT" skill currently logged on
High	911	Immediate assistance	Anyone can call 911 to request immediate assistance and identify that the person in need/crisis is a Veteran

Referrals from the General Public:

Low: Contact County Office of Veterans Affairs at 610-278-3285 or email VeteransResponseTeamMontCoPA@gmail.com
 (Individual Departments may also promote utilization of their own VRT officers for connections and information)
Medium: Call Mobile Crisis at 1-855-634-4673 **High:** Call 911 and identify the person in crisis as a Veteran

DID YOU KNOW?

Montgomery County has a VRT- Veterans Response Team!

What is the VRT?

The Montgomery County VRT is **Veterans helping Veterans**: a dedicated network of Law enforcement Officers with Military Service Experience working together with social services to support Veterans (and their families). The VRT has access to the highest priority connections at the Coatesville VA, mental health crisis responders, local Veteran service organizations, and the Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court.

How Can the VRT Help Me or My Loved one?



Utilize shared experiences to engage and establish rapport



Navigate the Veteran's needs and opportunities for support



Recognize signs of crisis and initiate interactions designed to de-escalate and promote safety for the Veteran, their family, and the community



Facilitate direct connections to Veteran- and social service organizations who can help

How do I connect to the VRT?

Anyone can make a referral to the VRT. Call the Montgomery County Office of Veterans Affairs at 610-278-3285 or ask your local Police Department if they participate in VRT.

If a situation is (urgent): call Mobile Crisis at 1-855-634-4673 (available 24/7), (life-threatening): dial 9-1-1 and identify the person in crisis as a Veteran.

Want to learn more? Email us! VeteransResponseTeamMontcoPA@gmail.com



Connection,
Compassion,
Community.



LEO's with Military Service Experience: YOU'RE INVITED to a FREE Two (2) Day Training

Montgomery County is proud to operate a:

VETERANS RESPONSE TEAM

A Veterans Response Team (VRT) integrates specialized training for law enforcement officers and establishes the highest priority connections with mental health crisis responders, local veteran service organizations, and the MontCo Veterans Treatment Court.

This two (2) day training prepares LEO's with the skills, resources and contacts needed to join the newly formed Montgomery County Veterans Response Team.

*****Pre-Requisites:** Eligible LEO's will be Veterans who have taken the 3 Day Basic CIS Course (or an approved equivalent). Prioritization of training slots will be given to LEO's who have also taken the 3 Day CIS Advanced.

June 15 & 16, 2023 | 0900 to 1600 (both days)

**Lower Providence Township Administration Building
100 Parklane Dr, Eagleville PA 19403**

Day 1: Intro to VRT Concepts and Skills

What is VRT | VRT Response Analysis |
Intro to Resources and Connections

*Presenters: Norristown Vet Center, Coatesville VA,
MontCo Offices of the Sheriff and Veterans Affairs*

Day 2: Roles & Expectations of a VRT

Connecting to Resources/Supports | Data
& Outcome Tracking | Roll Play | Personal
Testimony

*Presenters: Veterans Treatment Court, NAMI, Mobile
Crisis, Current VRT Officers*

To Register (or with questions):

Email: anna.trout@montgomerycountypa.gov **or Call:** 610-278-5663

The Veterans Response Team implementation is a partnership between **Montgomery County Offices of the Sheriff, Veterans Affairs, & MH/DD/EI, Coatesville VA Medical Center, and Norristown Vet Center.**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Coatesville VA Medical Center



Connection,
Compassion,
Community.





Thank you!

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Cootersville VA Medical Center

Contacts

- **Coatesville VA Medical Center**
 - Rhonda Sanford, Rhonda.Sanford@va.gov

- **Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff**
 - Lt. Mark Huzzard, mark.huzzard@montgomerycountypa.gov

- **Montgomery County Office of Veterans Affairs**
 - Dennis Miller, dennis.miller@montgomerycountypa.gov

- **Montgomery County Office of Mental Health**
 - Anna Trout, anna.trout@montgomerycountypa.gov



VISN 4 VRT Updates

- ❑ **VISN-wide meeting was held in November 2023 that included VJO's, VA Police, and behavioral health staff.**
- ❑ **Coatesville & Wilmington, DE:** Fully implemented VRT (DE – Statewide)
- ❑ **Butler:** Currently working on developing a VRT for Butler county. First inaugural VRT training for police officers and first responders November 14th and 15th, 2024.
- ❑ **Philadelphia:** Bucks County did their first VRT training June 6th/7th (25 officers completed the course) The next training is scheduled for November 2024.
- ❑ **Altoona, Erie, Lebanon, Wilkes Barre, Pittsburgh :** VRT is in various initial stages of planning, which includes collaboration with community partners- law enforcement, crisis services, constables, etc. to provide education on VA services and process for how they can contact VA staff when they have Veteran encounters.





HOMELESS

Mr. Jim Rowland, Co-Chair



Goals/Initiatives

- Explore existing programs/resources to help house our “hard to place” veterans
- Expand committee participation to new stakeholders
- Share local, state, and federal resources available to improve service delivery
- Advocate for new, safe, and affordable housing



Updates

- Highlighted housing programs:
 - DCED – HOME ARP & Federal Home Loan Bank - Home4Good

- Grants Pass Vs. Johnson Outcome

- VISN 4 Housing Goals (October 2023 – June 2024)
 - **Goal 1: Permanently House 1,631 unique Veterans in PA**
 - A/O June: 1,441 Veterans. (88.4% of goal) / National: 84.8%

 - **Goal 2: Prevent Returns to Homelessness: no more than 5% returning**
 - 45 Veterans (3.1.%) housed thru June returned to homelessness / National: 3%

 - **Goal 3: Engagement with 1,528 Unsheltered Veterans in PA**
 - 1,138 unsheltered Veterans engaged through June 2024. (74.5%) / National: 78.2%

- Christian Life Assembly



Challenges/Barriers

- Safe, accessible, and affordable housing availability
- Connection to the Continuums of Care and Coordinated Entry systems
- Housing hard-to-place veterans
- Data to inform committee efforts



EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Crystal Houser, Chair



Veteran Focused Financial Education Events

- Live events/webinars providing scam prevention and financial education
- Veteran \$cam Jams are noncommercial events featuring speakers and exhibitors offering free resources to help financially prepare veterans and their families.

Updates

- November 7: Veteran \$cam Jam at the VFW Monroe County 10-noon VFW Post 3448 119 VFW Dr. Tobyhanna, PA 18466
- November 14: Veteran \$cam Jam with Senator Lindsey Williams 11:00-1:00 Allegheny Valley Detachment 827 838 Pittsburgh St. Springdale, PA 15144
- Veteran \$cam Jam took place on April 19, at the Montgomery County Human Services Center

Challenges/Barriers

- Frauds against veterans, military personnel and spouses is on the rise
- Veterans reported the greatest instances of fraud attacks within the military community.



HIRE Vets Medallion Program

Goals/Initiatives

- Recognition Program for private business
 - Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining Vets

Updates

- 2023 Participation in PA
 - 23 recognized by DoL (6th most in US)
 - 8 small employer gold
 - 4 small employer platinum
 - 9 medium employer gold
 - 2 medium employer platinum

Challenges/Barriers

- Effective marketing techniques on a wider scale



PA Business One-Stop Shop (BOSS)

- YTD: 1700 veterans have self-identified utilizing BOSS tools and resources

Updates

- New resources: Find Business Experts tool and the Veteran Business Enterprise and Military Spouse Resource event handout.
- Training provided to OVR staff.
- Completed the 2023 AMP Digital Accessibility training program.
- Presents quarterly with the Small Business Administration (SBA) at the Carlisle Barracks Boots to Business Program.

Challenges/Barriers

- Identifying innovative ways to create collaborative outreach initiatives for stakeholder awareness



Boots to Business/Reboot

- In FY24, 60 Veterans have attended a B2B or Reboot course. Entrepreneurial resource demand remains steady.
- Monthly Veterans Hour Q&A Webinar has proven successful. Veterans can ask SBA questions and receive a brief on programs and resources. 470 attendees in FY24.

Updates

- SBA Grant Funding Opportunity opened in June 2024 for eligible organizations to become a Veteran Business Outreach Center. If PA is selected as an awardee, Veterans would have direct access to no-cost business consulting services.
- SBA partnered with Penn State to offer the first Reboot hybrid course for November 2024. Penn State will start teaching B2B modules at the Carlisle Barracks.
- SBA has engaged with USDA in PA with the goal of bringing government organizations together, making it easier for Veterans to understand available benefits.

Challenges/Barriers

- Outreach to the most rural areas



Homegrown by Heroes

- PA Preferred Homegrown by Heroes:
 - 63 members
 - 33 counties

Updates

- The Department awarded two Veterans in Ag Grants
 - \$100,000 to Butler Community Action
 - \$200,000 to PA Veteran Farming Network
- There are currently 8 agricultural apprenticeship programs registered in PA. Rodale Institute is working to create an Organic Inspector apprenticeship with funding from the Department of Labor and Industry which may assist veterans.



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

--SHORT BREAK--



JUDICIARY

Mr. Michael Carrington, Chair



Goals/Initiatives

- Improve outreach efforts to veteran staff within the Department of Corrections (DOC) through collaboration with external agencies
- Expand/enhance programming, workshops, and educational/employment opportunities within the veteran service units (VSUs)
- Increase the amount/availability of veteran-specific trainings and/or educational opportunities for employees/spouses/dependents
- Advocate for the creation/enhancement of veteran courts/tracks
- Expand veteran services within the DOC to field supervision to enhance the care continuum



Updates

- Regional Veteran Treatment Court is active with 5 participants in the northern region and 1 in the southern region. Counties include Blair, Clinton, Centre, Mifflin, Huntingdon, Perry, Juniata, and Clearfield
- SCI Mercer has hired a VSU Social Worker with a start date of 8/5/24
- SCI Dallas will have a new VSU Manager in the coming weeks (Robert Baker)
- SCI Muncy will host a veteran standdown on 8/14/24 for staff
- PA DOC hired 90 new veteran employees between January and June
- SCI Huntingdon (7/31/24) and SCI Albion (9/17/24) hosting veteran employee outreach events
- Shining Light Reentry Academy active at Dallas & Muncy (soon Phoenix too)



Challenges/Barriers

- Early identification for criminal-justice involved veterans
- Nursing home care for Hard-To-Place veterans that have been paroled or are approaching their maximum date of sentence
- Housing for veterans with prior sex offenses
- Enhanced training for first responders dealing with veterans in crisis
- Additional programming for those incarcerated with PTSD and/or TBI
- Technological needs continue to create barriers for PA VETConnect delivery to incarcerated veterans



WOMEN VETERANS

Ms. Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta, Chair



Goals/Initiatives

Awareness Initiatives

- I Am Not Invisible campaign

Community and Intra-agency Engagement

- Develop a resource guide specific to women and minority populations for internal use

Needs Assessment/Analysis

- Dashboard to monitor data and trends



Updates

I AM NOT INVISIBLE (IANI) STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN

- Concept paper has been submitted, reviewed and approved.
- Planning committee

PA VETCON

- Women Veterans Panel Discussion on Issues & Healthcare
[Link to Online Registration](#)

WOMEN VETERANS



Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs

Challenges/Barriers

Reaching women veterans

- Both Rural and Urban

Current data on women veterans in Pennsylvania

- PA snapshot of national data tracked



Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs

GOOD OF THE ORDER / ANNOUNCEMENTS



GAC-VS Meeting Dates for 2025:

February 5,

May 7

August 6

November 5

*All meetings are 1:00-3:00pm



- **DMVA website: www.dmva.pa.gov**
- **GAC-VS page: [Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services \(pa.gov\)](http://www.gac-vs.pa.gov)**
- **Sign up for the Veterans Registry and DMVA Digest!
www.register.dmva.pa.gov**



Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs

NEXT MEETING:

November 6 at 1:00PM
Information to come