New Mexico Veterans Integration Centers (VIC)

JAIL DIVERSION PROGRAM

“Working with the community and court systems to minimize Veteran Incarceration”

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Presenters

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Background

• Veteran Problem:
  – Number of letters received from Veterans who were incarcerated and needed place to live after leaving prison
    • Homeless
    • On Parole
    • Some Veterans thrown in jail on misdemeanor charges were being kept in jail due to lack of funds to post bail
  – The VIC and VA require interviews and assessments prior to acceptance into the Transitional Housing/GPD Program

• Information Issues:
  – Prison/Jail Systems do not keep Veteran Status Information, thus the number incarcerated is difficult to Quantify

• Geographic Issues: New Mexico is a large geographic state, thus prisons and jails are spread throughout the state
Approach

• Locations:
  – Research all the Jails and Prison locations in the territory
  – Determine location of Veteran Courts (if any)
  – Locate local VA Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) program

• Outreach:
  – Establish Contacts within the prison and jail Social Workers
  – Schedule Outreach activities to the Social Workers and Prison Veteran Groups at their facilities
  – Leverage the VJO program and local Veteran Courts for Support
  – Conduct Outreach to judges/lawyers working with Veterans (contacts from Stand Down events, call Judges)

• Interviews:
  – Setup collaboration to allow interviews at the facilities
  – The VIC setup a collaboration with the local Probation and Parole to use their video conferencing system with other jails/prisons who have the capability
  – VA Liaison support is important to obtain “buy-in” on the process
    • Interviews when the Veteran exits incarceration
    • Provide as much information to the Liaison as possible prior to release
Data

• Data for incarcerated Veterans similar to those not incarcerated
  – Less difficulty adapting to roommates & rules
  – Some struggle with freedom to come and go throughout the day
  – If issues arise, they are typically “immediate”
    • Relapse
    • Reconnect with previous “friends”
Data Continued

Population by Year

Year 2014  Year 2015  Year 2016  Year 2017

Ethnicity

- African-American: 52.8%
- American Indian: 5.7%
- Hispanic: 34.0%
- Native Hawaiian: 1.9%
- White: 5.7%
Data Continued

Adding Notes:
- 1 of the 53 was female
- 55% left the program stably housed
- Average stay is 4 months
Funding

- Local City funds
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- States
  - Department of Veteran Services
  - Behavioral Health Departments
Why is this a Community Benefit?

• Potentially reduces the number of Veterans sent to jail for misdemeanors:
  – Judges are open to having them transfer to the VIC versus jail

• Allows judges and lawyers to:
  – Work with the VIC for early paroles
  – Provide them with a stable environment while on parole

• Veterans
  – Gives them a place to “land” and work on stabilization
  – Provides resources to obtain jobs, benefits, medical and mental health