



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

# Meeting the Needs of Justice Involved Veterans in VISN 2

George Basher  
Vincent Schillaci, LMSW  
Courtney Slade, LCSW

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans Conference  
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# Prevention

The VJO program is a prevention focused component of the VHA Homeless programs.

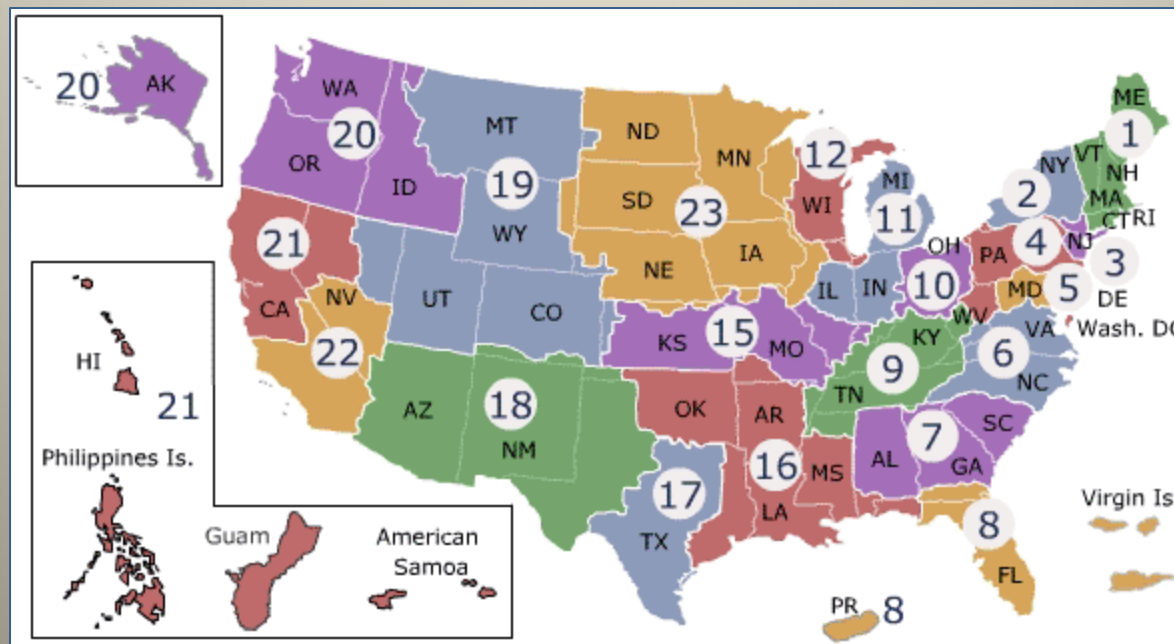
VJO serves as the clinical linkage to necessary treatment alternatives.

Link eligible justice-involved veterans to needed medical care (including mental health, substance abuse and vocational treatment).

# National Initiative, Mission and Brief History

## Purpose

To avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans by ensuring that eligible justice-involved Veterans have timely access to VHA mental health and substance use services when clinically indicated, and other VA services and benefits as appropriate.



# Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)

- 2002: **9.3** percent of people incarcerated in county jails were Veterans
- 82% of those are eligible for VA services

# Access

- Goal is to provide **timely access** to VA services for eligible justice-involved veterans.
- Avoid unnecessary criminalization and incarceration of veteran defendants and offenders with mental illness, substance abuse, and/or traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Diversion to treatment, when legally appropriate, is encouraged.

# “No Wrong Door”

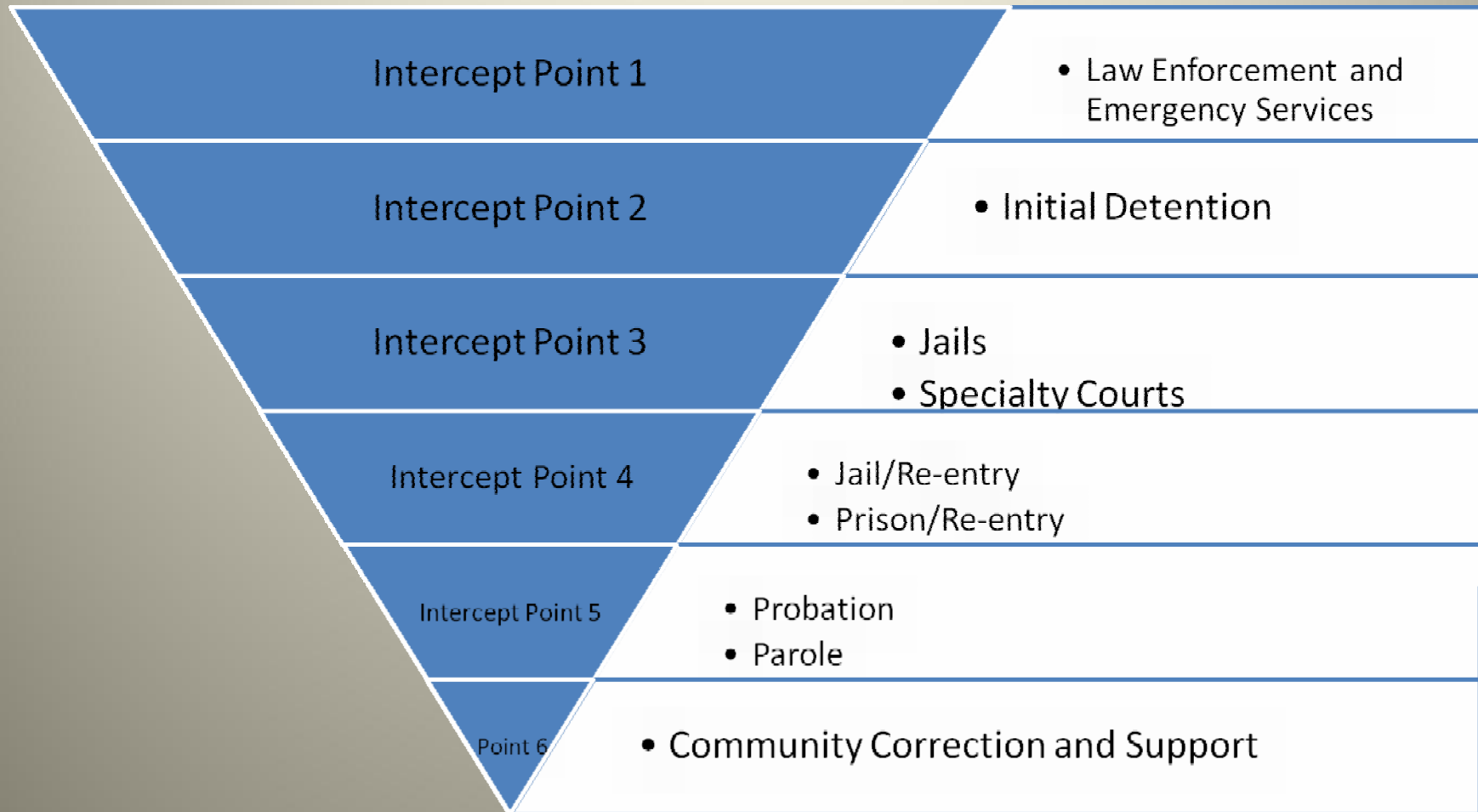
Collaboration between the VA medical centers, community partners, and veteran service agencies (state and local).



# Justice Involved Veteran

- A Veteran in a local county **jail** or county correctional facility awaiting adjudication for a criminal charge (not yet sentenced).
- A Veteran in contact with local **law enforcement** who can be potentially diverted from arrest into mental health /substance abuse treatment.
- A veteran involved in some level of monitoring by a **court**

# Early Intervention





# Our Locations



# Law Enforcement

- 1<sup>st</sup> Law Enforcement on 10/21/2011 at the VISN 67 Building. 100+ Law Enforcement agencies were invited.
- NYS Trooper Hostage Negotiators, Albany Hostage Negotiators, Saratoga Law Enforcement, Albany Crisis Intervention Team
- Quick Cards

# Quick Card

## ***Ever find that you:***

*Can't sleep;*  
*Family says you've changed;*  
*Have racing thoughts;*  
*Exhibit road rage;*  
*Drive impaired;*  
*Nervous in crowds or traffic;*  
*Feel anxious?*

## ***Are you:***

*Sensitive to light;*  
*Forgetful;*  
*Drinking more often;*  
*Using drugs;*  
*Constantly searching for an*  
*adrenalin rush;*  
*Have trouble with*  
*relationships?*

## **Do you feel alone?**

**Wonder who could  
possibly understand?**



**VA** | Defining  
**HEALTH CARE** | **EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

**We understand!**

**We can help!**

# Quick Card

Albany Stratton



Medical Center

*Our exceptional staff provides Veterans a full range of patient care services with state-of-the-art technology, providing you the*

***"Best Care Anywhere!"***

*Call now and get the benefits **you** earned.*

*We're waiting for **your** call.*



24-Hour Crisis Hotline  
**1 .800.273.TALK**

Returning Combat  
Veterans Program  
518.626.5335

24-Hour Veteran  
Call Center for Service,  
Pharmacy & Appointment  
1 .800.585.9772 or  
518.626.5780

Enroll: 518.626.JOIN

Coming Home  
Can Be Difficult.  
Getting Help Isn't!



**VA** Defining  
HEALTH CARE EXCELLENCE  
in the 21st Century

We're waiting for you.  
(518) 626-JOIN  
[www.albany.va.gov](http://www.albany.va.gov)

Produced with the assistance  
of The Second Front Exhibit  
of the Lewis Henry Morgan Institute,

# Jail Outreach

- The Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator covers the **18** county catchment area around the Albany VA Hospital.
- Most counties have incorporated the screening of veterans into each of the jails booking systems.
  - Rensselaer, **Ulster**, Clinton, Washington, Otsego

# Jail Outreach

- Posters are placed in the jails indicating the VJO point of contact (POC) for each catchment area.
- Interviews (face to face or by phone) are arranged from this point by the Albany VJO (i.e. medical, substance abuse, mental health, and benefits)
- All questions related to benefits, discharge upgrades, and service connection are deferred to the Veteran Service Officer in the respected county.

## ▶ Have You Served in the United States Military?

### Are you currently:

- In jail or a county correctional facility
- Detained pre-sentence or pre-trial

## The Veterans Justice Outreach Program may be able to help you

Please contact the classification officer in the booking area to identify yourself as a Veteran.

The Veterans Justice Outreach coordinator comes to the jail on a regular basis to meet with Veterans that are incarcerated.



### Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators

Albany VA Medical Center (518) 626-5368

Bath VA Medical Center (607) 664-4372

Buffalo VA Medical Center (716) 881-5855

Rochester VA Outpatient Clinic (585) 208-2108

Syracuse VA Medical Center (315) 425-4400 ext. 51016

# Veterans Seen In Jail

5/2011-3/2012

## Counties

Albany	21
Clinton	0
Columbia	11/35
Delaware	0
Essex	3/31
Franklin	2
Fulton	3/27
Greene	3
Hamilton	0

## Counties

Montgomery	2
Otsego	4/31
Rensselaer	36/113
Saratoga	1
Schenectady	12/63
Schoharie	0
Ulster	18
Warren	32/75
Washington	7/55



# Albany County

## Law Enforcement:

- Training for hostage negotiators and Crisis Intervention team
- CIT development on system level

## Jails:

- 5/2012: Daily report of veterans in jail sent to VJO

## Courts:

- Albany Regional and County VetTrak
- Mentor training, collaboration with Albany Housing Coalition

# Warren County

## Law Enforcement:

- 5/2012 brief presentation to patrol

## Jails:

- First county to implement standard screening-very detailed

## Courts:

- DA invested in “helping veterans”
- Drug Court interested-held large meeting
- Public defender strong communication

# Schenectady

## Law Enforcement:

- Interested in training.

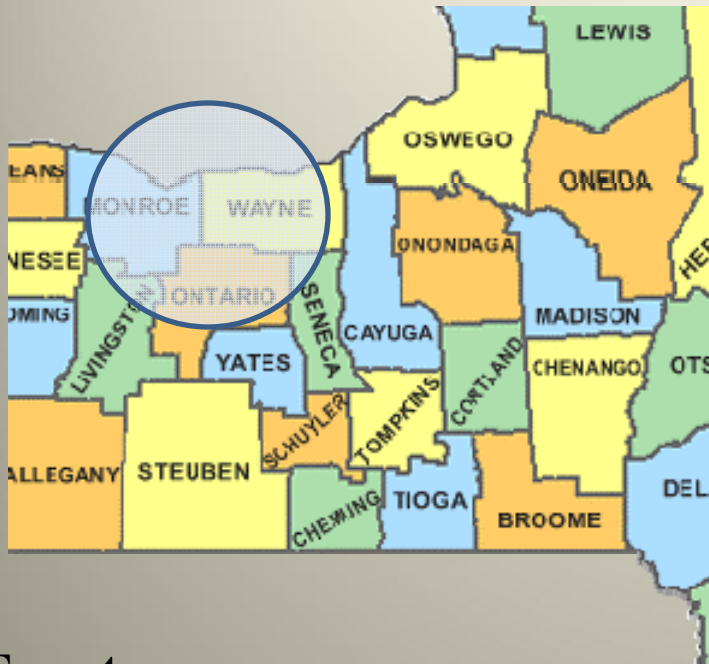
## Jails:

- Lists as of late 2011; active screening as of 3/2012.

## Courts:

- Limited interaction.

# Rochester Catchment Area



## Five County Catchment Area

Monroe

Ontario

Wayne

Livingston

Seneca

## Targets:

- Law Enforcement
  - Local (County) Jails – pre-sentence (VJO)
- vs.
- Prison (State an- post adjudicated (HCRV))
  - Providers – Internal and External
  - Criminal Courts (treatment models, veteran focused, ATI)

# Systemic Case Example:

The Ontario County Model (New York)  
Development (April 2011 – May 2012)

## Jail collaboration

- Beginnings, changes and successes

## Community Partnerships

- Criminal Justice System, Behavioral Health Service Providers, Committees and Local Government

## Criminal Justice System and the VHA Interface

- Internal and External Partnerships, Outreach endeavors and Outcome “matching”

## Training and Consultation

- Corrections, Law Enforcement and the Community

## Obstacles and Successes

- Goals and Objectives among the Five Counties

# Benefits of Knowing Veteran's Issues

- Better communication and understanding which can ultimately lead to:
  - Less arrests
  - Greater diversion rates
  - Refer to local VAMC and/or community resources as opposed to local Jail  
(less taxpayer \$\$)

# Courts

- VJO serves as a liaison between the court system and treatment providers.
  - Reports, treatment coordination, education/information
- The VJO is also responsible for encouraging the establishment of Veteran Treatment Courts within those court systems.
  - Buffalo Veterans Court, Western NY and NYC courts
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District has adopted VetTrak model.
    - Rensselaer and Albany counties

# Legal Clinics

- VA legal clinics
  - VHA DIRECTIVE 2011-034
  - Promote pro-bono services and consultation to veterans at the VA Medical Center
  - VA offers space for Legal Aid, Bar Association, and/or Albany Law School to provide services to veterans
  - Veterans coming in on van and coming to VA for appointments can have better access to legal services





# Veterans Legal Clinic

Offered by the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern NY



## Free Legal Consultation for Eligible Veterans

**Family Law**

**Child Support**

**Employment/Unemployment**

**Housing (landlord/tenant, foreclosure)**

**Social Security Disability Claims**

**Estate Planning (wills, healthcare proxy, and power of attorney)**

**Other civil (non-criminal) legal issues**

**For screening and appointment  
call:**

**Christopher**

**518-689-6334**

**Kristie**

**518-689-6322**

Disclaimer: VA assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of Legal Aid Society of Northeastern NY. This referral does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the VA.



VA Liaison:  
Courtney Slade, LCSW  
Veterans Justice  
Outreach Coordinator  
518-626-5368

# The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program:

## Can

- Operate as an advocate for the Justice Involved Veteran
- Heighten awareness and offer education to the various departments in law enforcement and justice related personnel to the unique issues of Veterans.
- Liaison and create partnership with law enforcement, jails, and courts
- Communicate information for continuity of care of the Justice Involved Veteran (with consent)
- Serve all Veteran eras
- Function as court team member
- Assess Veteran's needs, identify appropriate VA and non-VA services
- Refer and link the Veteran to services

## Can Not

- Write lengthy court reports
- Offer legal advice
- Perform forensic evaluations or Risk assessments for the court
- Accept physical custody of an inmate
- Pay bail or bond
- Guarantee VA program acceptance
- Serve VHA ineligible Veterans.

# **CASE EXAMPLES**

# Pre-Sentence

Mr. F is a 25 y/o OIF combat veteran with long standing history of polysubstance use. Veteran was pulled over in the car for driving with drugs in the vehicle along with his two daughters. Due to overcapacity veteran was housed in a jail in the Albany VA catchment area, charges were from another county, and he was from another state. Veteran was accepted to inpatient treatment and the county where his charges stood agreed to this plan. The veteran completed an inpatient course of treatment followed by long term residential treatment.

Veteran remains engaged in outpatient treatment, is enrolled in school, following court mandates, and working to get his family more stabilized.

# Post-Sentence

Mr. A is a 22 y/o combat veteran with physical and mental health injuries related to his service. Once back home in NY, he experienced symptoms of PTSD, depression, and chronic pain. Veteran self-medicated with alcohol, resulting in 2 DWIs. Veteran was never seen in the jail or in subsequent court appearances, however after a “cold call” by the OEF-OIF case manager, he detailed his situation and was interested in services.

Veteran engaged in treatment services for substance abuse and mental health after that and the Judge agreed to weekends in jail, so he could attend his treatment appointments. Veteran would have faced 6 months for these charges otherwise, without treatment.

# Case Examples: What VJO Looks Like

- “Roger That”
- “Locked and Loaded”
- “The Revolving Door”



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**Vincent L. Schillaci, LMSW**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialist  
Rochester, New York  
585.208.2108  
585.463.2600 x2300#  
[Vincent.Schillaci@va.gov](mailto:Vincent.Schillaci@va.gov)

**Courtney Slade, LCSW**

Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator  
Stratton VA Medical Center  
113 Holland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12208  
(518) 626-5368  
(518) 626-5383 (Fax)  
[courtney.slade@va.gov](mailto:courtney.slade@va.gov)

**George Basher**

Health System Specialist  
VA Healthcare Upstate New York  
113 Holland Avenue Bldg 67  
Albany, NY 12208  
(518) 626-7314  
[George.Basher@va.gov](mailto:George.Basher@va.gov)