



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Roy Cooper
GOVERNOR

Walter E. Gaskin, Sr.
SECRETARY

August 1, 2022

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on General Government, North Carolina General Assembly
Fiscal Research Division, North Carolina General Assembly
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

Re: Initial Report on the Veteran's Life Center (VLC)

To Whom It May Concern:

Pursuant to Session Law 2021-180, Section 33.3 (c), the attached report information is provided about the Veteran's Life Center program.

At this time, the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs (NCDMVA) is currently verifying all provided information regarding VLC's achievement of their fund-raising target for fiscal year 2022.

During the 2021/2022 period, the VLC asserts to have raised over \$763,135.72 in non-State funds. During the same time frame, the VLC asserts to have spent over \$1,666,000 on programs and staff. Neither of these claims have been certified as of the date of this report. The NCDMVA continues to work with the VLC to identify the appropriate documentation, as provided in law, demonstrating the qualifying fund-raising efforts of the VLC.

The NCDMVA continues to work with the VLC to develop a process to evaluate the challenge grant and fundraising efforts of the VLC, including a review of banking statements and other supporting documents. As of August 1, 2022, that effort is ongoing, and no monies have been made available to the VLC. Funds appropriated by the General Assembly remain available and it is the NCDMVA's expectation that payment to the VLC for Fiscal Year 2022 is forthcoming.

All services provided by the VLC are documented in the attachment. An update will be provided when all information has been verified and funds have been dispersed.

Sincerely,

LtGen, USMC (ret) Walter E. Gaskin
Secretary, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Attachment
AS

VETERANS
LIFE CENTER
NORTH CAROLINA

To: North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

From: The Veterans Life Center



Date: August 1, 2022

Re: Report on the Veteran's Life Center (VLC) Activities in Fiscal Year 2022

The VLC is located at 1005 9th Street, Butner, North Carolina 27509, Phone Number (919) 803-5516, Email Address info@vlcnc.org.

From July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, the VLC has been a statewide resource for at-risk Veterans. The VLC's mission is to improve the lives of 21st Century North Carolina veterans who are experiencing reintegration problems by providing temporary housing and services with the goal of achieving self-reliance in two years or less. Despite the lingering effects of COVID-19 during this period, the VLC has made a substantial impact on the lives of the many Veterans it served. Some statistics supporting this mission are:

- 1) North Carolina is home to approximately 700,000 veterans and has the greatest number of active-duty troops on the East Coast.
- 2) North Carolina is also in the top 5 per capita nationally for 21st Century veteran residents.
- 3) In 2018, some 9,268 unique individual veterans from North Carolina contacted or were referred to the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs (USDVA) as homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- 4) Veterans account for approximately 9% of the total population of North Carolina, but 18-20% of all homeless individuals in North Carolina are Veterans.
- 5) More than 2,589 Veterans are currently incarcerated in North Carolina, of which some 22.7% are likely 21st Century Veterans.
- 6) On average, 3.5 Veterans commit suicide in North Carolina every week.

The VLC's Coordinated Care program provides offers the intervention need in many cases. Crisis consists of one or more of the following:

- 1) Chronic Homelessness
- 2) Incarceration
- 3) Suicide
- 4) Premature Death

The VLC Coordinated Care program is designed to rescue at-risk Veterans from the nearly inevitable crisis they face. The VLC's goal is successful community reintegration for every North Carolina Veteran, but the path to that goal is unique to each of them. The VLC is the only statewide Veterans organization designed to provide specialized counseling, training, and mentoring to those suffering heroes that are working to reintegrate into the North Carolina community.

In designing the Coordinated Care program, the VLC studied the best practices of similar programs throughout the United States and combined them into a comprehensive and synergistic system. A committee of local, state, and federal level experts worked with the VLC professionals to develop the details of the program. Parts of the overall program are conducted in-house by the VLC staff, consultants, and contract agencies. Others are conducted off-campus at recognized facilities with which

the VLC is partnering.

Some VLC residents may need all or most of the services; others may need only one or a few. These details are worked out on a customized, individual basis by the VLC case managers and the residents themselves and constitute each resident's Individualized Veteran's Reintegration Plan (IVRP). Specific coordinated care services offered during the period in question include:

- 1) Mental Fitness and Behavioral Health Therapy
- 2) Physical Health Care
- 3) Life Skills Training
- 4) Family Reunification Counseling
- 5) Spiritual Counseling
- 6) Educational Advancement and Certification
- 7) Community Integration and Post Graduate Mentoring

The VLC has a total of 50 sleeping rooms with showers and bathroom facilities divided between four wings. There is a full commercial kitchen with both a serving area and a dining room, plus a large multipurpose room, two (2) day rooms, a library, a computer lab, a conference room, a physical fitness room, store, dispensary, nurse/first aid room, and two laundry rooms as well as various storage and mechanical rooms and office space for a staff of 30-plus.

The facility is a handsome 9.5-acre hillside lot featuring scattered old-growth oak trees and is conveniently located less than 3 miles from the South Campus of Vance-Granville Community College with which the VLC has an MOA to provide vocational training for VLC residents. It is adjacent to the R.J. Blackley Center, a state-operated substance abuse treatment center, and about a half mile from the North Carolina Central Regional Hospital, a major mental health care facility. The VLC is 18 miles north of the Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Center on I-85.

The clientele the VLC serves consists of 21st Century Veterans whose discharge status makes them eligible for USDVA services. Most need therapy, counseling, and/or educational, vocational, or life skill development. Perhaps most importantly, they want to be here and have so signified in writing. They have also agreed to abide by the VLC's behavioral and operational policies and to participate in designing their own reintegration program.

The success of the programs will be measured by metrics that assess various key points during the program, as well as regular post-graduate status checks with regard to a graduate's job, housing, transportation situation, ongoing mental and physical care, community involvement and participation in a mentorship program the VLC will initiate for each resident.

Demographic information regarding the population served is as follows:

1) Military and Veteran	159
2) First in family	35
3) LGBTQIA + Individuals	12
4) Economically Disenfranchised	159
5) Rural	121
6) Houseless/Housing Insecure	158
7) Chronically ill/Disabled	116
8) Female	15
9) Male	144
10) Other/Gender Non-Binary	N/A
11) Hispanic and Latinx	5
12) Not Hispanic and Latinx	154
13) African American/Black	76
14) American Indian/Alaskan Native	3
15) Asian	1
16) Caucasian	78
17) Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0

18) Southwest Asian and North African	0
19) Multiple/Other not Specific	1

Suicides Prevented: 9

The VLC serves the North Carolina Veterans' population exclusively.

The VLC is not an appropriate setting for all Veterans experiencing life challenges. The VLC works with multiple community partners to get Veterans the help they need. Of the 159 total Veterans served, 71 residents enrolled, committed, and stayed with the program (as above, individual stays vary on a case-by-case basis), with 68 of the 71 completing IVRPs.

The North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NCDMVA) has stationed an accredited Veterans' Services Officer (VSO) at the facility on a part-time basis. This VSO has assisted 35 of 71 of the VLC's residents with disability claims that resulted in obtaining disability ratings from 10 - 100 percent.

Notwithstanding the COVID pandemic which severely hindered the VLC's residents from enrolling and completing programs at both Vance Granville Community College and Apprenticeship programs offered through the state/private companies, over half of the residents are now attending community college courses. Life skills education has been completed by 65 of 71 residents. 22 individuals have successfully 'graduated' from the VLC.