

Rural Veterans Coordination Pilot



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) created the Rural Veterans Coordination Pilot (RVCP) grant program to support Veterans and their families who reside in rural and/or underserved areas of the country. Grantees are expected to use the funds to aid Veterans with the transition to civilian life in one or more of the following areas:

1. Increase coordination of health care and benefits for Veterans;
2. Increase availability of high quality medical and mental health services;
3. Provide assistance to families of transitioning Veterans; and
4. Outreach to Veterans and their families.

RVCP was created in accordance with Section 506, Public Law 111-163, The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010. Eligible grant recipients are either community based organizations and/or local, state or tribal government entities.

This pilot enables each grant recipient to support local Veterans in unique ways that will be suitable for the challenges faced by these locations. Additionally, it will seek to determine if there is an effective model in which state and local entities are able to successfully coordinate multi-sector benefits for Veterans and their families who reside in rural or underserved communities.

VA's Office of Rural Health (ORH) is responsible for providing oversight, guidance and evaluation of RVCP. Starting September 2014, ORH will administer \$10 million in grants to assist Veterans and their families who reside in rural and/or underserved areas of the country. Grantees are responsible for day-to-day management and reporting on the types of services provided and numbers of Veterans served. At the end of the two-year pilot, ORH will compile a report to Congress on the impact of RVCP. It will also identify best practices in delivery of Veteran transition services coordinated by community-based organizations and/or local, state and tribal government entities.

RVCP Across the Country

The Maine Department of Labor connects Veterans with career counselors who help identify opportunities, arrange training and translate military skills to civilian jobs—especially for thousands of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans returning home. A portion of the funding also helps Easter Seals expand their Veteran outreach services deeper into rural Maine.

The Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors trains local health departments and community organizations to address Veteran-specific needs, so they can provide more comprehensive, patient-centered care to Veterans and their families. Project coordinators also link Veterans to other benefits.

This growing network of VA and community partners means more access points for Veterans to connect with health care and services.

The New Mexico Department of Veteran Services arranges job counseling, benefits advice, and free mental health services to transitioning Veterans and their families. They host benefits fairs and are establishing Veteran and family transition centers in four regions of the state. This growing network of VA and community partners means more access points for Veterans to connect with health care and services.

The Volunteers of America of North Louisiana organizes telemedicine care and works to prevent homelessness among rural Veterans and their families in parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. They also coordinate transportation for rural Veterans and use telehealth technology to increase access to health providers.

WestCare Washington Foundation provides health services, benefits advice, and phone counseling to Veterans and their families in Washington and Oregon. Boots-on-the-ground “navigators,” many of whom served in the military themselves, conduct personalized outreach to other Veterans in their rural communities.

By The Numbers

- ▶ **3.2 million** rural Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system
- ▶ **5.3 million** rural Veterans in the United States
- ▶ **\$10 million** dollars invested in RVCP over two years
- ▶ **300+ community partnerships** established in the first nine months of program operations

Timeline

2010 The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 includes a provision for community grants to assist rural Veterans.

2011-2012 Grant funding allotted to support rural Veterans and their families during the transition period after military service.

2013 A competitive grant process garners nearly 100 submissions. Eligible recipients are community-based organizations, or local, state or tribal government entities.

2014 The VA Secretary announced grant recipients, who began expanding programming that supports rural Veterans and their families during the transition from military service to civilian life.

2015 The Office of Rural Health hosts RVCP program leaders in a four-part national training series to provide guidance about the national Veteran rural health landscape, developing and expanding community partnerships, and program best practices.

2016 The Office of Rural Health will assess the RVCP grantees progress.

2017 The Office of Rural Health will report to Congress about coordinating with community-based organizations to serve rural Veterans.

Office of Rural Health (ORH) implements a targeted, solution-driven approach to increase access to care for the 3 million Veterans living in rural communities who rely on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for health care. As VA's lead advocate for rural Veterans, ORH works to see that America's Veterans thrive in rural communities. To accomplish this, ORH leverages its resources to increase rural Veterans' access to care and services. To learn more, visit www.ruralhealth.va.gov.



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