



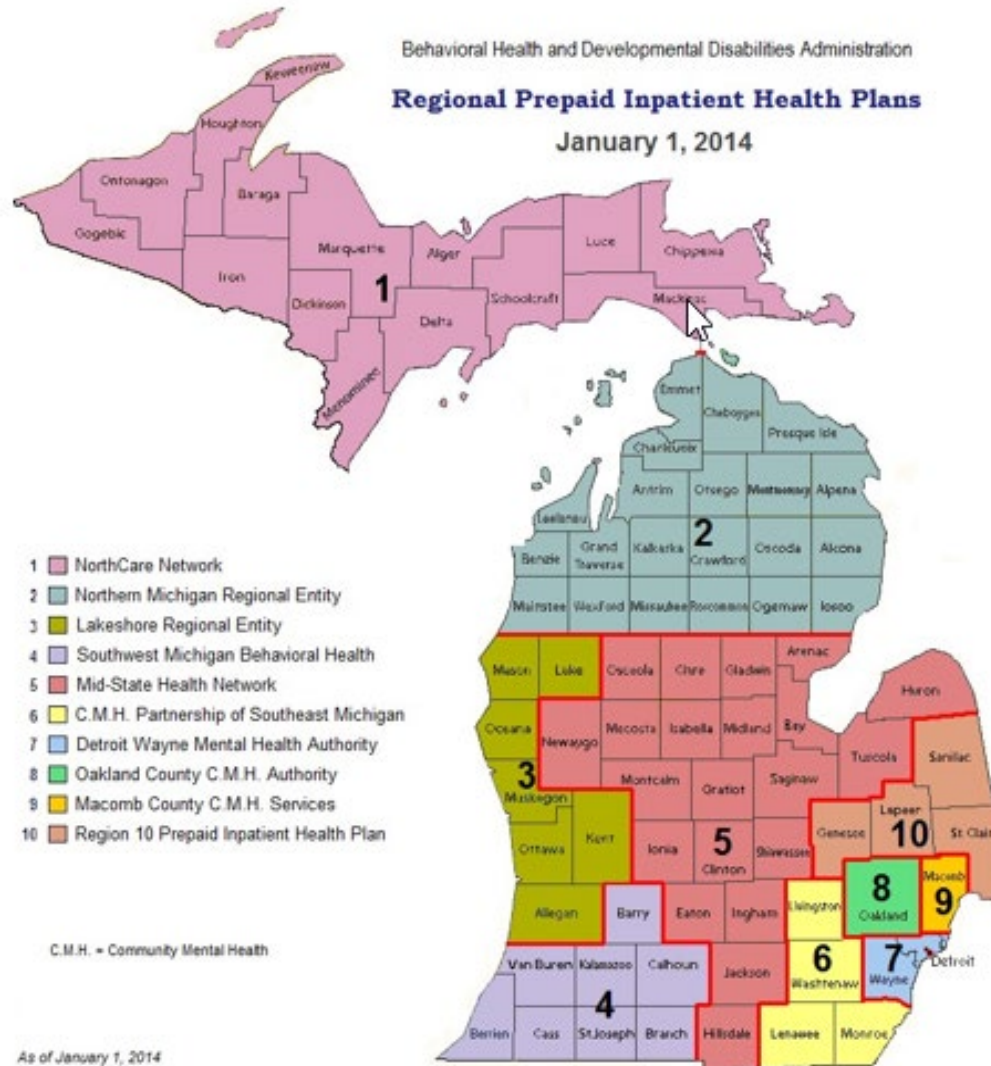
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

# VETERAN NAVIGATOR PROJECT FY21 REVIEW

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*Putting people first, with the goal of helping all Michiganders lead healthier and more productive lives, no matter their stage in life.*

# Michigan PIHP Restructure



# FY21 SUCCESSES

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- ❖ 10 of 10 PREPAID INPATIENT HEALTH PLAN (PIHP) REGIONAL VETERAN NAVIGATOR POSITIONS FULL. 8 COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH VETERAN NAVIGATORS THAT COVER 12 COUNTIES, WITH NEW CONNECTION IN SAGINAW, BAY AND MIDLAND COUNTIES.
- ❖ GREW OUR OUTREACH BY ALMOST 600 VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES AND ASSISTED IN 17 OPERATION CARE PACKAGE EVENTS FOR VETERANS.
- ❖ FEMALE VETERAN PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM CONTINUED, FULLY FUNDED FOR FY22. 1,184 FEMALE VETERANS CONNECTED WITH, ROBUST VIRTUAL PEER SUPPORT, SUCCESSFUL OUTINGS, ART THERAPY, AND RECREATIONAL THERAPY.
- ❖ FAITH BASED LEADERS ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM REVISED TO BETTER MEET THE ORIGINAL INTENT OF OUR PROGRAM. WE HELD 4 VIRTUAL WEBINARS THAT ENGAGED WITH 450 FAITH LEADERS ACROSS 4 REGIONS. WE WILL COVER 3 MORE REGIONS IN FY22.
- ❖ ONGOING ROBUST RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE 5 VETERAN HEALTH ADMINISTRATION ORGANIZATIONS COLLABORATING AND COORDINATING TO MITIGATE BARRIERS TO TREATMENT.

# VETERAN NAVIGATOR PROVIDES HOPE

With Veterans Day around the corner, 74-year-old Joe\* of Muskegon leans on heavy doses of resilience and gratitude to those who continue to help the Vietnam Veteran enjoy each day.

Surviving two open-heart surgeries and kidney cancer since his return from Vietnam, Joe's current health status requires him to depend on oxygen, full-time. His personal journey has been equally difficult, from his adoption as an infant to several years of challenging housing situations that played havoc on his emotional health.

Earlier this year he was given a new "lifeline" of sorts, connecting with the Lakeshore Regional Entity's (LRE) Veteran Services Navigator. The LRE is the public health non-profit serving individuals throughout Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, Oceana, Mason, Allegan and Lake counties.

From their first phone call, Joe said he felt immediately validated; the Veteran Navigator is a U.S. Navy Veteran, who helps more than 150 veterans annually find the resources they need to prosper. It's a role that exceeds the traditional office hours, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

"Each day, I'm helping make an impact on those who have fought so hard for our freedoms. It feels amazing."

\*Individuals name has been changed

# VETERAN NAVIGATOR PROVIDES HOPE CONTINUED

Echoes Joe: "It's a brotherhood; he listens and understands me and what I'm going through."

The LRE Veteran Navigator recently teamed with 92 for 22, a non-profit in the west Michigan area to help Joe move to his current apartment that's located one mile from the fishing hole Joe recalls frequenting as teen. The LRE VN also identified resources to donate a couch, bedding, tv, pots and pans, and other basic living items to Joe.

The LRE VN's role doesn't stop there; he maintains contact with all clients as their needs change, and even is available for late night calls to ease a veteran's anxieties or other concerns. He's currently helping Joe locate his Army discharge papers, lost in his many moves.

"It's [Veterans Day] the most special holiday of the year," Joe said. "It reminds me to keep your light burning."

# Previously Unidentified Veterans and Military Families for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment

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❖ FY21 GOAL - 300

❖ FY21 Veterans and Military Families Identified - 3,609

❖ Veterans=2,239 Military Families=1,370

# Snapshot of Demographics of Veterans Reached Age Groups

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❖ 20 or less	43
❖ 21-29	212
❖ 30-39	482
❖ 40-49	379
❖ 50-54	422
❖ 55+	701

# **SAGINAW, BAY, MIDLAND VETERANS BEING IMPACTED**

On November 04, 2021, Veteran beneficiary called requesting navigation services. Veteran beneficiary had been referred to the Walking with Warriors Veteran and Military Family Navigation program by the Veteran Services Department at Delta College. Veteran beneficiary was facing several barriers including recently having a child, being new to Saginaw, unemployment and loss of income, and trouble paying bills. Veteran beneficiary was very concerned that they were facing a utility shut off and an eviction notice. They were unemployed and had never been faced with the inability to pay their bills. Veteran had recently relocated to Saginaw, consequently they lacked a support structure or community. Veteran beneficiary was referred to MDHHS to apply for SNAP benefits and Medicaid. They were also referred to the Food4Vets program through the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA), to receive a \$100 gift card to enhance their food security. Veteran beneficiary was referred to Veteran Career Advisor at Michigan Works to secure employment and to Partner Center of Saginaw to apply for utility assistance.

When this Veteran Navigator followed up with the Veteran the following week, they had already received their \$100 gift card from the MVAA. They had been job searching and established employment as a supervisor at a local business. Due to being newly employed, the Veteran would not be paid for several weeks, and their financial burdens were causing anxiety. This Veteran was especially worried about their impending eviction notice. Beneficiary shared that they had received funds from the Partner Center to pay their overdue utility bills. To assist with rent and to connect with a community of



# **SAGINAW, BAY, MIDLAND VETERANS BEING IMPACTED CONTINUED – Part 2**

veterans, I referred the Veteran to Great Lakes Bay Veterans Foundation. The Foundation provided \$500 towards Veteran's rent. They reported that they had received their SNAP benefits but that much of it went to feed their 1-year-old child. Veteran was referred to several food pantries and churches in the Saginaw area. Veteran reported that their experience with the Partner Center was so positive that they are considering volunteering for their program.

They reported that they were feeling much more stable but still faced continuing financial challenges. Their paychecks had not caught up to their budget deficit, they were unsure how to pay the new month's utilities. Also, they were struggling to pay their auto insurance. The Saginaw County Veteran Navigator referred them to the National Guard Association grant program. He also referred them to 211 for financial supports. Veteran was referred to local churches and Toys for Tots to provide resources and gifts for their family holiday. They agreed to follow up within two weeks. As of this writing, Veteran Navigator is awaiting the results of these referrals. Veteran mentioned that they would have never been aware of these resources without the guidance of the Walking with Warriors Veteran Navigator program.

They also revealed their coparent was also a Veteran. The co-parent is very reluctant to reach out for assistance. Veteran shared that the co-parent needed to establish a

# **SAGINAW, BAY, MIDLAND VETERANS BEING IMPACTED CONTINUED – Part 3**

service-connected disability with Veterans Affairs (VA). We discussed strategies to establish a connection with the Veteran co-parent, and to encourage them to reach out to the Veteran Navigator program. I referred the Veteran and their co-parent to the American Legion Veterans Service Officer at the Saginaw VA facility. I also mailed the Veteran 2 State of Michigan Veteran's Benefits manuals and a Walking with Warriors/Veteran Navigator brochure with my contact information.

Veteran also expressed a desire to engage with Veteran-centered counseling. Veteran was referred to the Vet Center and to the head of Social Work at the Saginaw VA facility. Veteran expressed gratitude and satisfaction with their navigation experience. They reported feeling more connected, especially to the Saginaw Community, and looked forward to volunteering or collaborating with the Partner Center and Great Lakes Bay Veterans Coalition. Veteran reported feeling much more confident that they can make ends meet while they wait for their pay checks to accumulate. This Veteran's story highlights the power of effective partner collaboration, community outreach, and the resilience and determination of our Veterans to reach their goals. The Veteran was referred to our program because of the relationship that we had previously established with Delta College Veteran Services, highlighting the effectiveness of community outreach. The Veteran benefitted from high-quality referrals that provided tangible assistance, including \$500 for rent and funds for utilities. This Veteran feels they are in better position to provide for their family and truly benefited from the Veteran navigation program.

# Snapshot of Demographics of Veterans Reached

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❖ Male	1,621
❖ Female	582
❖ Other	36

# Snapshot of Demographics of Veterans Reached per Military Branch

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❖ Army	1164
❖ Navy	376
❖ Air Force	267
❖ Marines	424
❖ Coast Guard	18

# VETERAN NAVIGATORS CONNECTING VETERANS TO THEIR EARNED BENEFITS

The Summit Pointe Veteran Navigator worked with a wife of a Veteran whose husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I assisted in getting them the information for pre burial. She also registered herself. When he passed away, she did say that the info the Veteran Navigator gave her, and her husband helped significantly alleviated some of the stress because he was already pre-registered. She also reported prior to talking with that Veteran Navigator that she did not know he qualified for that. These types of assistance while not appearing to be mental health related, most definitely mitigated any ongoing crisis.

She also assisted a Veteran with a CSC charge and was having a difficult time with finding housing. He also had a run in with the law and had charges against him. She was able to get him linked to a transition home for SUD and homelessness that allowed CSC offenders to reside there. Also, helped with the court issues and now he reports he has a job and is on probation. He calls her every so often to tell me thank you and that he is doing well and that he remains being employed and clean of substances.

## **VETERAN NAVIGATORS CONNECTING VETERANS TO THEIR EARNED BENEFITS CONTINUED**

And continued to work with a Veteran who reported he has been trying to get an appt with the VA for healthcare appt and was not having luck. He said he called and even sent paperwork in and never heard back. I went to the Veterans home and assisted again with filling out the paperwork and personally handed it in to eligibility at the VA. He finally did get a call after 2 weeks and now is scheduled at the VA. He thanked this worker for helping him.

I had the chance to talk to and refer a combat Veteran that should have been rated at 100% for his injuries sustained during Iraq and Afghanistan, to get his benefits. Veteran did not think that he deserved, nor did he feel his actions warranted accessing his benefits. Veteran was in the Navy and in a special forces unit that engaged in direct action missions. Veteran was wounded three times and received a purple heart. Veteran has PTSD and some moral injury and had some childhood trauma's that he never addressed. He was connected with one our community providers for behavioral health treatment via our Access department. I convinced him that he should apply to get his benefits and referred him to the Holly Area Veterans Center to meet with a benefits counselor to file a claim(s) and get connected. These types of wrap around services are vital to the ongoing welfare and mental health stability of our Veterans and their families. This man was a true hero and deserving of the benefits he earned in his service to our Nation.

# Snapshot of Demographics of Veterans Reached

❖ Honorable	1282
❖ General/Hon	262
❖ Medical	102
❖ Other Than Honorable	192
❖ Dishonorable	106
❖ Administrative/Other	295

# Veteran Eras Most Identified for Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Referral

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❖ Korea	103
❖ Vietnam	561
❖ Peace Time	479
❖ Gulf War	416
❖ OIF/OEF Veterans	680



# Veteran and Military Family Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder Primary Challenges

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4 largest challenges:

❖ SUD - ALCOHOL	384
❖ SUD – OPIOIDS/NARCOTICS	193
❖ PTSD	466
❖ DEPRESSION/ANXIETY	832
❖ BI-POLAR	126
❖ OTHER	114

# WAYNE COUNTY VETERAN NAVIGATOR MEETS VETERANS WHERE THEY ARE

I had an 83-year-old Veteran who was in a bad living situation in a trailer park, and he didn't feel safe and had many structural problems that he could not afford to resolve. He also was developing health issues which required constant trips to the doctor or specialist. He was also not connected to the VA and did not believe his civilian doctor was solving his health problems. After 8 months and many trips to a senior living facility, I was able to get him an apartment that supported seniors and where he could make some friends and get to appointments easier. He was also connected to the VA hospital in Ann Arbor and that is where he gets his medical treatment now. It was very timely because he was hit by a car while walking to the bus stop. He received a severe concussion and was taken to Garden City hospital. For some reason, they let him go home that same day and I was notified by his cousin that he was not doing well. I went to his house immediately and he did not even recognize me at first. I took him to the VA, and he went into physical therapy for 6 weeks. He is doing better now but I helped him get legal assistance into this matter and it is pending. At his new house he was connected to food stamps and meals on wheels. He also obtained a free Caption Call phone because he is hard of hearing. He got a 10% service connection for hearing loss. The pandemic has made it difficult for him to socialize but he is slowly making connections in his new community.

# WAYNE COUNTY VETERAN NAVIGATOR MEETS VETERANS WHERE THEY ARE CONTINUED – Part 2

I had a Veteran who was not service connected. He has two young boys. He lost his wife to breast cancer and never dealt with the loss. He lost his job because of his mental health symptoms and began to drink heavily. While under the influence he ran off the road and went into a ditch which caused him back and neck injuries. He did not qualify for Veteran services, so I plugged him into community mental health and SUD services. I assisted him in obtaining SSDI because of his injuries and the time it would take him to recover. I helped him in keeping his home and eventually obtaining a vehicle. His physical health and mental health are improving, and he is beginning the process of finding work that he can do, but the disability assistance has allowed him to have more time with his sons which was especially crucial during the pandemic. He is also looking to make some improvements on his home so he can sell it and move into a condominium, so he doesn't have to deal with lawn and driveway anymore.

# **WAYNE COUNTY VETERAN NAVIGATOR MEETS VETERANS WHERE THEY ARE CONTINUED – Part 3**

I had a Veteran in a shelter in Detroit. He had just got out of prison and was residing at the Oasis Shelter in Detroit, where many homeless Veterans end up going when they are released from prison. He suffered from PTSD due to combat and separation guilt. In a rage he nearly killed a guy in a transition home he was staying in. The prison was nice enough to notify me before his release so that I could find better accommodations for him because I knew a shelter is not a good place for someone in his condition. The VOA was able to take him in and from there he got plugged into services at the Detroit VA. He is attending the Vet-to-Vet program and is still awaiting a decision on his service connection. He attended the Stand-Down that we had and was in a much better mood and mindset when I talked to him, compared to when I picked him up from the shelter. He was connected to Hud-Vash so that he can obtain a housing voucher, but he is not rushing the process because he is surrounded by positive supports right now and will cross that bridge when he is ready.

# Veteran Insurance Coverage

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❖ PRIVATE	281
❖ MEDICAID/MEDICARE	956
❖ VHA	688
❖ NO MEDICAID/NO INSURANCE	314

# Where are We Referring Newly Identified Veterans and Military Families?

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- ❖ Community Mental Health/SUD Providers - 1623
- ❖ Veterans Affairs (VHA, VBA) CBOCs, Local County VA's – 1314
- ❖ Housing – 621
- ❖ Employment – 523
- ❖ Education – 228
- ❖ Transportation – 347
- ❖ Veteran Service Officer – 489
- ❖ Legal/Veteran Court – 179
- ❖ Faith – 128 200% increase from FY20
- ❖ Other – 621

# Increased Revenue Discovery FY21

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29 Veterans FY21 :

- ❖ Contact initiated by Veteran Navigator.
- ❖ Veteran Service Connection increased from 0%-100%.
- ❖ Great majority with dependents = \$1.8 million based on \$3,000 monthly.
- ❖ 83 in FY19, 30 in FY20, 29 in FY21 for total revenue of approx. \$4.875 million based on increases in disability payments.
- ❖ Most information gathered directly from Veteran or family member.
- ❖ This is residual income assuming Veterans maintain their Service Connection disability rating.

# SURVEY RESULTS

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Regarding two outcomes:

❖ *Individual reports being better equipped to function effectively in community =*

❖ *633 yes and 43 No*

❖ *Individual reports greater willingness to reach out for help =*

*784 yes and 37 No*

❖ *Numbers are directly related to our Strategic Plan outcomes. Final numbers represent 100% of those surveyed and 30% of all of our direct interactions with Veterans and Military family members.*



# FY22 GOALS

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- ❖ Identify Veterans and families that would otherwise go unidentified and track new VA Service Connection or increases to demonstrate Federal Revenue increases based on initial contact.
- ❖ Recreational/Adventure/Healthy Habits program now with Zero Day.
- ❖ Faith-based workshops extend into 3 additional PIHP Regions.
- ❖ Military Cultural Competency Training will include a more complete mission process into FY22/23.
- ❖ Women Veteran Strong program increases capacity into SW Michigan.
- ❖ Veteran Peer Support Specialists begin to embed into PIHP Regions and Counties.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, AND LOCAL RESOURCES  
WE LOOK TO DAILY! OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE A  
BRIGHTER FUTURE BECAUSE OF YOU!

WE ARE PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE WALKING WITH WARRIORS PROJECT THAT  
IS IMPACTING OUR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES ON A DAILY BASIS ACROSS  
THE STATE OF MICHIGAN. TO CONNECT WITH US OR A VETERAN NAVIGATOR:

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**Veteran Navigators**  
**Walking with Warriors**

