

KNOXVILLE REGIONAL VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL



TNVHC
.ORG

4812 Asheville Hwy Knoxville, TN 37914
865-336-2624

2014 Annual Review Knoxville Regional Veterans Mental Health Council

October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014

Date Council Began: November 29, 2012

Clinic Information:

The Knoxville Regional Veterans Mental Health Council (Council) is located at 4812 Asheville Highway, Knoxville Tennessee in a region metropolitan area of approximately 1,250,000.

The William C. Tallent VA Outpatient Clinic (KOPC) serves Knoxville Tennessee and 8 surrounding counties, a very large outpatient clinic in a region with a large veteran population of 87,213. The Council's service area includes 15 counties with a veteran population of 150,000. The parent medical facility is Mountain Home, TN, about 110 miles away.

Council Mission Statement:

The mission of the Council is to be a bridge between veterans receiving mental health services and their families, the VA Mental Health professionals and the community support or Veterans service organizations. This bridge allows information and services to flow both ways to develop methods of measuring Veteran's satisfaction and advocate needed changes. Most importantly, to improve the communication and understanding between Veterans and the MH staff in reducing the stigma associated with seeking and using mental health services.

Fiscal Year 2014 Activities and Accomplishments:

1. *Achieved 13 of the 14 KRVHMC 2014 Goals on March 13, 2014.*
 - a. *Increased # of regularly scheduled Outreach activities; i.e. having a booth in the clinic's lobby on a regular basis to support the OEF, OIF, OND outreach initiatives. Started for OEF/OIF/OND Legacy Peer Support Group on April 30, 2014.*
 - b. *Knox County Veterans Treatment Court (KCVTC) to begin no later than 2nd quarter 2014. Started first East Tennessee VTC in December 2013; received 1st justice involved veteran on January 10, 2014.*
 - c. *Establish KCVTC as a hub for surrounding counties which will support all Veterans in in the Knoxville Outpatient Clinic and Sevierville COB service areas. Created the East Tennessee VTC committee which serves as a VTC Hub. As of 9-22-14 the committee has 1 VTC operating, 13 counties in progress and 4 counties considering a VTC.*
 - d. *Obtain KCVTC certification from Justice For Veterans (JFV) for KCVTC. (Could not submit for JFV certification since our VTC did not have a Veterans Justice*

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Outreach Specialist from the VA; received financial support from VA General Counsel in January 2014, however, VA did not hire a VJO until August 2014 but not available until October 2014 due to training and current position workload.

- e. *Train other TN Recovery Courts. First Hub VTC with Judge Shayne Sexton in the Eight Judicial District on 3-6-14.*
- f. *Open 2nd LPG in Sevier County January 2014. Started first Sevier County LPG on January 8, 2014 at 2PM.*
- g. *Open 3rd LPG in Blount County 2014. (Could not locate enough Blount County veterans to begin a LPG, however, opened a 3rd and 4th LPG in Knox County).*
- h. *Host "When War Comes Home" Forum for community clergy. Forum was held on May 1, 2014 and supported by the Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett and Randall Baxter (Host of the Veteran Next Door); 96 congregations attended.*
- i. *Establish Veteran Friendly congregations (VFC), cities and counties. First VFC in Blount County established 3-22-14. As of 09-30-14 ten VFCs, two Veteran Friendly Ministries (VFM) and one Veteran Friendly Organizations (VFO) were established.*
- j. *Increase number of Veterans transitioning from evidence-based to strength-based programs. Began 2nd LPG from Sevier County CBOC's Dr. Gannon's workgroup on January 8, 2014, began 3rd LPG from KOPC's Dr. Richardson workgroup on February 4, 2014 and began a 4th LPG from KOPC's Dr. Richardson workgroup on April 30, 2014. 4th LPG is the 1st OEF/OIF/OND group.*
- k. *Continue to identify and train Peer Facilitators (PF). Training 2 members of each of the new LPGs for a total of 6 new PFs.*
- l. *Identify and train KCVTC Mentors. Identified and trained 13 VTC mentors for a total of 16 VTC mentors.*
- m. *Identify and train VFC Facilitators. Trained a total of 10 VFC and 2 VFM facilitators.*
- n. *Collaborate with TN Mental Health Commissioner, TN Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner and TN Chief Justice on Council's initiatives to help achieve best-in-class service to TN veterans, their families and to their communities. Met with MH Commissioner Doug Varney and TN VA Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder on January 29, 2014. Commissioners and Council agreed to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate on Council's Veterans Treatment Court and Veteran Friendly Congregation initiatives. Tennessee Supreme Court's Administrative Office of the Courts supported the VTC committee and funded four (4) VTC committee members attendance at the Inaugural Vet Court Con in December 2013.*

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2. October 14, 2013 four (4) Council members attend the Tennessee Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Conference. Council members presented “*From Adversary to Ally: How Tennessee Veterans Created a Grassroots Peer Movement in Cooperation with of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)*”.
3. The Knoxville Vet Center continues to supports LPG’s strength-based meeting and provides one of their employees as a “member” of LPG to all four (4) LPG meetings. Vet Center also supports the VTC hub and new Veterans PTSD Law enforcement training.
4. November 27, 2013 FBCC partner with Peter McCall, Executive CareForTheTroops.org and adopt their “Veteran Friendly Congregation (VFC)” program. CareForTheTroops.org is national organization and has helped Alabama and Georgia adopt a VFC program.
5. November 21, 2013 Council meeting: Topics
 - a. Guest, new KOPC Mental Health Director.
 - b. Mountain Home VA Mental Health Leadership MH ACOS, cancelled due to an unexpected personal issue. Council members were very disappointed but understood. The Council waited over 18 months to meet with the ACOS to discuss Council barriers and challenges.
 - c. Discussion for today’s Council Meeting: "To learn from each other and promote greater understanding of and collaboration with each other to the benefit of both", VA Veterans Mental Health Council Guide.
6. November 29, 2013 Shelby County VTC member request we receive one of their Justice Involved Veterans (JIV) into our Court. Honorable Chuck Cerny, Ron Hanaver and the VTCC members agree to accept the first JIV in KCVTC even though were are in the middle of our planning phase. Judge Cerny stated “*we could only help by starting now*”.
7. December 11, 2013 KCVTC mentors speak with Department of Veterans Affairs General Counsel Will Gunn about our KCVTC and ask for support and funding for a VJO at KOPC.
8. July 1, 2013 1st VA Peer Support Specialist (PSS) hired at KOPC. PSS would attend LPG meeting July 15, 2013 and travel pay reinstatement would occur. This did not happen. The VA PSS began on February 17, 2014.
9. January 13, 2014 KOPC PSS apprentice attended LPG meeting which reinstated travel pay. The Mountain Home Mental Health Leadership Board (MHEB) approved monthly attendance which is a violation of the previous agreement to provide travel to veterans attending weekly meetings. Council submitted a request for the PS apprentice to attend the Sevier County LPG. VA responded the PSS could not presently support the Sevier County LPG, but the Council’s request will be reviewed at three month intervals.
10. January 16, 2014 Council officers were unanimously approved for a second term.
11. January 16, 2014 First member of the Mountain Home MHEB, MH ACOS, attended our Council meeting. Topic: Elements of a Successful Partnership
 - a. MH ACOS identified three areas to review.

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- i. Agree to mutually maintain professional, respectful communication; unanimously agreed.
 - ii. Translate the three affiliations and language into VA terms for better understanding.
 - iii. Improve partnership relations; unanimously agreed
 - b. Council Parliamentarian & Chaplin Ron Morton made a motion to declare an amnesty on past issues and move forward; unanimously approved.
12. January 28, 2014 set up a Council booth at the Tennessee Veterans Business Association (TVBA) 4th Annual Expo. TVBA approved the Council as its first non-profit member.
 13. February 11, 2014 Council began a three (3) part radio series of the “*Veteran Friendly Congregation Initiative*” hosted by Randy Baxter on the “*The Veteran Next Door*” radio program. Freddie Owens, Dennis Lovin, Ron Morton, Dean Powell, JL Tucker and Howard Jenkins were the featured guest.
 14. February 17, 2014 VA PSS attends LPG meeting and travel pay will be reimbursed. The PSS will attend on the 3rd Monday of each month beginning February 17th.
 15. February 18, 2014 Council’s part two (2) “*Veterans Stories*” of a three (3) part radio series of the “*Veteran Friendly Congregation Initiative*” hosted by Randy Baxter on the “*The Veteran Next Door*” radio program. Freddie Owens, Dean Powell, Howard Jenkins, JL Tucker, Ed Junod were the featured guest.
 16. February 25, 2014 Council’s part three (3) “*Clergy Stories*” of a three (3) part radio series of the “*Veteran Friendly Congregation Initiative*” hosted by Randy Baxter on the “*The Veteran Next Door*” radio program. Dennis Lovin, Ron Morton, Tom Gage, Freddie Owens, JL Tucker, Ed Junod were the featured guest.
 17. March 11, 2014 Council began a three (3) part radio series of the “*Why a Veterans Treatment Court in East Tennessee*” hosted by Randy Baxter on the “*The Veteran Next Door*” radio program. Frank Vollmer, Freddie Owens, Tom Gage, JL Tucker, Ed Junod were the featured guest.
 18. March 18, 2014 Terry Lockwood, musician, singer and song writer gave permission to use his “*It’s Good to Have Your Back America*” song as the Council’s theme song.
 19. March 25, 2014 Council’s part two (2) “*Veterans Stories*” of a three (3) part radio series of the “*Veterans Treatment Courts*” hosted by Randy Baxter on the “*The Veteran Next Door*” radio program. Ron Hanaver, Frank Vollmer, JL Tucker, Tom Gage, Terry Lockwood-singer/songwriter, Ed Junod were the featured guest.
 20. March 31, 2014 Council’s subcommittee presents its 1st PTSD Veterans Law Enforcement training to Blount County Sheriff Office. Weekly training ended on 5-19-14; trained 235 road officers including 3 road officers involved in a veteran suicide by cop. One of the officers stated “*he may not have shot the veteran if he had this training.*”

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21. April 1, 2014 Council's part three (3) "*Judicial Perspective*" of a three (3) part radio series of the "*Veterans Treatment Courts*" hosted by Randy Baxter on the "*The Veteran Next Door*" radio program. Hon. Chuck Cerny, Ron Hanaver, Dean Powell, JL Tucker, Howard Jenkins, Tom Gage, Ed Junod were the featured guest.
22. April 3, 2014 Press conference by Knox County Mayor Burchett, Redemption Church Pastor Ed King and Faith-Based Community Committee (FBCC) Chairman Freddie Owens about the upcoming May 1, 2014 Forum.
23. April 10, 2014
 - a. VA PSSs have attended LPG meetings for several months. The Council requested a report from the VA liaison on their feedback based on their attendance, observations and recommendations.
 - b. Charles Dabbs a retired VA employee was unanimously elected as new Council.
24. May1, 2014 "When War Comes Home" Forum sponsored and presented by the FBCC. Almost 100 congregational leaders attended. Partnered with CareForTheTroops and Cru Military.
25. May 8, 2014 VA reported to the Council that the VJO position has been filled; the individual is currently employed as a professor, but has VJO experience and is expected to report to KOPC in July after the end of the school year. The position is a "full-time, permanent" and will service the counties covered by KOPC
26. June 2, 2014 Council's subcommittee presents its PTSD Veterans Law Enforcement training to the Union County Sheriff Office (UCSO) including Sheriff Loy and Plainview Police Chief Tripp. Trained 20 road officers.
27. June 12, 2014 the Council files a complaint with the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (OIG), U. S. Senators Alexander and Corker, U.S. Representative Duncan and the VA Office of General Counsel (OGC).
28. June 12, 2014 4-H Academic Conference at the University of Tennessee. Freddie Owens and Ed Junod present to over 100 4-H youth attendees. Great veteran awareness opportunity.
29. June 13, 2014 Knox County Sheriff Office (KCSO) Detention Center Orientation and Tour. Captain Robert Anderson led the tour. Two items of concern:
 - a. The veteran intake form is not being forwarded to the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court (KCVTC); need to establish a "pipeline" between KCSO and KCVTC.
 - b. Met with Detention Center Mental Health nurse and counselor who advised the attendees that veteran JIVs wait anywhere from 3 to 7 days for their VA medication confirmation. They stated the "*VA is the worse health care provider to work with*".
30. June 20, 2014 VA OGC scheduled a meeting with the Council Chair and Dr. Thomas Lynch, VA Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Operations. The 1 hour meeting was not productive; no one from the VA took any notes.

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31. July 7, 2014 Council officers met with VISN 9 Network Director John Patrick, VISN 9 Mental Health Director Dr. Cecilia Farina-Morin, and Executive Assistant to Mr. Patrick Joseph Schoeck. Council submitted to Mr. Schoeck a copy of the Council's OIG complaint with attachments and a July 3, 2014 letter to the Network Director. Also presented a letter dated July 7, 2014 to Mr. Patrick with 11 action items. Mr. Patrick's *"stated that the VA needs to earn the trust of veterans and he and VISN 9 would do whatever it takes to earn the trust."* Mr. Patrick requested the Council meet with the Mountain Home Director et al. The Council agreed on Mr. Patrick's offer to have a senior representative from VISN 9 present at all future meetings with the Mountain Home VAMC Director and MHEB.
32. July 15, 2014 First Council meeting with Mountain Home Director Charlene Ehret, MHEB and VISN 9 representative Dr. Cecilia Farina-Morin. Special agenda included the 11 action items presented to ND John Patrick. Ms. Ehret stated they would only respond to the first 7 items. Since this was the first time the Council has meet with the Mountain Home Director the meeting comprised mostly of each side reflecting on previous issues which were unresolved since 2012. Ms. Ehret agreed to provide a written response to the 7 action items.
33. July 23, 2014 Council prepares a Veteran Service Organization endorsement letter. That evening DAV Chapter #93 in Monroe County unanimous approved to endorse our organizations. Not only did they endorse us but they also wrote a check to show the support in the amount of \$1,000.00. Bob Hatley said that he did not request funding but their support went beyond just a letter. Council is grateful to DAV Chapter #93 who has contributed \$2,500.00 to us this year.
34. July 25, 2014 KCSO Chief Stella conducted a roundtable discussion with the VTC committee members. Topics included:
 - a. Improving pipeline communications
 - b. Provide KCSO orientation training to all VTC members including mentors.
 - c. Assist the VTC subcommittee's PTSD Veteran Law enforcement training
 - d. Consider a KCSO POD.
35. August 11, 2014 Council meeting.
 - a. Council approves 1st Desert Storm Veteran, Robert Cooter, to serve on the Council.
 - b. MHEB announce that the Mountain Home ACOS and Deputy ACOS will serve as Council liaisons.
 - c. VA approved Recovery & Resiliency Support Group request.
 - d. VA guarantees a 24 hour medication confirmation response to KCSO and appoints a POC.
 - e. Council relocates future meetings to Elmcroft of West Knoxville beginning 9-11-04.
 - f. Council requested the immediate removal of a Mountain Home VAMC care provider based on the history at the Jackson MS VAMC, complaints and concerns of the VA staff and concern. Chair sent email to ND John Patrick.
36. September 10, 2014 First Justice Involved Veteran the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court is the 1st to graduate from the program. Tennessee Veterans Affairs Commissioner Grinder and Assistant Commissioner Smith were present for the graduation.

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37. September 10, 2014 Council members attend Mountain Home VAMC Mental Health Summit.
38. September 16, 2014 Mountain Home MH ACOS telephoned and emailed the Council Chair to advise the Council "I wanted to let you know that we have decided to pull VA PSS from the Legacy Peer Support group for the time being".
39. September 20, 2014 Council and Mountain Home VAMC establishes first "Recovery and Resiliency Support Group" after 15 months of negotiations. Dr. Richardson will lead the group once a month at Elmcroft.
40. September 24, 2014 Council's Faith-Based Community Committee creates new categories for the Veterans Friendly Congregation (VFC) Initiative.
 - a. Veteran Friendly Ministries (VFM). First to enroll is C.O.N.N.E.C.T. Ministries.
 - b. Veteran Friendly Organizations (VFO). First to enroll is Volunteers of America.
41. September 25, 2014 Mountain Home VAMC holds a Veterans Town Hall Meeting at KOPC.
42. September 28, 2014 Vet to Vet TN expands to middle Tennessee. James "Moe" Armstrong, founder of Vet to Vet USA was present when Vet to Vet TN expanded its service area by authorizing the creation of Vet to Vet Middle Tennessee. Harry "Top" Hinson was elected as President and is currently the Chairman of the Middle Tennessee Veterans Mental Health Council. Charlie Trawick was elected as Vice President and is currently the Chairman of the Veterans Council of the Veterans Recovery Center Council. The veteran population in the middle Tennessee grand division is 197,304.
43. September 29, 2014 East Tennessee Veterans Treatment Court Committee Public Announcement to publically announce the 1st JIV graduation, our VTC hub, veteran PTSD law enforcement training and statewide VTC implementation training sponsored by the East Tennessee VTC committee in April 2015.
44. VA OIG schedules interviews with Council Officers and OIG Team for Tuesday, October 14, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.; all council members to agree to testify to the OIG team.
45. Conducted 146 Legacy Peer Support Group meetings in fiscal year 2014.
46. Peer Facilitators provided **5,325** VA volunteer hours in fiscal year 2014. Volunteer hours are actually substantially higher since only 6 veteran volunteers are registered with the VA; does not include VTC mentor volunteer hours.
47. Over 20,000 hits on our www.tnvhc.org website. Website newly designed in April 2014.

Concerns brought up during the year that impact Veterans and the delivery of mental health services:

1. ***Establish communications between Council, VAMC Director and Mental Health Executive Board (MHEB):***

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- a. Several unresolved conflicts. VISN 9's support has provided the Council, the Mountain Home Director and the MHEB an opportunity to begin an open dialogue. Fourth quarter Council meetings beginning to resolve several action items.
2. ***VA staff participation:*** The success of our Council will depend on how well it collaborates with mental health and medical leadership. Request to have one or two mental health staff members regularly attend Council meetings and invite additional staff members to attend only as a particular topic or issues arise. Council still concerned about KOPC leadership and support. Only 2 VA therapists refer veterans to peer support.
3. ***VJO position:*** *KOPC hired a full time VJO in August 2014; 8 months after the VTC was implemented. The VJP will be located in the Sevier CBOC due to facility restrictions at KOPC.*
 - a. *New VJO does not have VJO experience nor does the VJO supervisor.*
 - b. *New VJO has a large case load to resolve; cannot provide full time VJO services.*
 - c. *Council cannot understand the VA's VJO posting and hiring since the VA hired a qualified VJO in April 2012 and is working at the KOPC annex.*
4. ***VA Peer Support (PS) Apprentice:***
 - a. *KOPC hired their first full time Peer Support Apprentice in July 2013.*
 - b. *PSS did not provide peer support until February 17, 2014. The service was available once a month to 1 group.*
 - c. *Second PSS hired in 2014.*
 - d. *VAMH ACOS terminated PSS services on September 16, 2014. PSS services are mandated in the VHA Handbook.*
 - e. *Unresolved issue.*
5. ***Travel Pay Reinstatement:***
 - a. *Travel pay reinstatement has been predicated on the attendance of the VA's PSS.*
 - b. *This agreement was approved in June 2012 and is currently on hold due to the PSS issue.*
 - c. *Travel pay was reinstated on February 17, 2014 and terminated on September 16, 2014.*
 - d. *Unresolved issue.*
6. ***Council's June 12, 2014 OIG Complaint still under investigation.***
7. ***Removal of Mountain Home VAMC Doctor due to previous employment at the Jackson Mississippi's VAMC.***
8. ***KOPC's Whistleblowers provided Council with numerous maladministrative complaints about Mountain Home VAMC and KOPC leadership.***
9. ***VA hired a KOPC LRC. VA should develop an open line of communications with the KOPC LRC and the Council.***

VA Staff Presentations during the Fiscal Year 2014:

1. January 16, 2014 First member of the Mountain Home MHEB, MH ACOS, attended our Council meeting. Topic: Elements of a Successful Partnership,

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2. April 10, 2014 VA guest described the VA's Aid and Attendance program to the Council.
3. March 12, 2014 VA liaison described VA veteran homeless program to the Council and Knox County VTC Director

Veterans Mental Health Council Information Sharing to Medical Center:

Council shares minutes from Council meetings, Committee & Outreach briefings with the VA Liaison, MHEB and Mountain Home VAMC Director.

Council provided the Mountain Home MHEB and VISN 9 leadership with *VA Veterans Mental Health Council Guide, VHA Handbook 1003.4, VHA Patient Advocacy Program, VHA Handbook 1160.01 Uniform Mental Health Services in VAMC and Clinics, VHA Handbook 1163.01 Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Services, VHA Handbook 1163.05 Rehab & Recovery Peer Support Handbook, International National Association of Peer Supporters (iNAPS) National Ethical Guidelines and Practice Standards for Peer Supporters and the Peer Specialist Toolkit (This document is a collaborative project between the VISN 1 New England MIRECC Peer Education Center, and VISN 4 MIRECC Peer Resource Center, Knox County Veterans Treatment Court Policy & Procedures manual, VA's Veterans Justice Outreach Program: Services for Veterans Involved in the Justice System, January 2014, Executive Summary for the Veterans Friendly Congregation Initiative, Council OIG & OGC complaint with attachments.*

Mountain Home Liaisons provided the Council Mountain Home VAMC Medical Center Memorandum No. 00-13-09 Management of Patient Complaints and Compliments and No. 05-14-09 Awards Committee.

Goals for Fiscal Year 2015:

1. Council's VTC Committee to help start ten (10) Veterans Treatment Courts/Track
1. Council's VTC Committee to start a VTC outreach intern program with the University of Tennessee and the Knox County Veterans Treatment Court. Course title - "East Tennessee Center for Transformative Justice"
2. Council's VFC Committee to register ten (10) Veteran Friendly Congregations/Ministries
3. Council's Veteran PTSD Law Enforcement subcommittee to train 530 law enforcement officers
4. Council to begin a Women's Legacy Peer Support Group Committee
5. Council meetings to include more Department of Veterans Affairs guest speakers

Respectfully Submitted:

Edouard "Ed" Junod
Chair, Knoxville Regional Veterans Mental Health Council

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Mountain Home MH Liaisons

1. The council gives permission for a copy of this report to be shared on the VA VMHC SharePoint.

yes no

2. The council gives permission for a copy of this report to be shared with other VMHCs.

yes no