



## Building a Veteran-Centric Culture in Your Hospice Agency

VISN VISION: Promoting Partnership  
San Pedro, CA  
September 1, 2010

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Reaching Out: Improving End of Life Care for Rural & Homeless Veterans  
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## Objectives

- Provide brief history of "Reaching Out" grant
- Briefly discuss rural and homeless data
- Describe six partnership models that can be replicated
- Identify various challenges and potential solutions
- Offer lessons learned and recommendations for future partnership opportunities.

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## Reaching Out: Improving End of Life Care for Rural and Homeless Veterans

- Partnership between NHPCO and the Department of Veteran Affairs.
- Funding: Department of Veteran Affairs.
- Goal: Develop partnerships that focus on needs of rural and homeless veterans.
- Base Year: 2009.
- Option Year One: 2010.

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## Homeless Veterans

- VA estimates there are up to 107,000 veterans without shelter on any given night
- POC sites reported working with 396 homeless veterans who needed e-o-l care. This was up from 220 in 2008.
- Veterans account for 15% of all homeless adults

2008 CHALENG Report

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## Homeless Veterans in California and Nevada

- VISN 21: 12,771
- VISN 22: 13,847

VA CHALENG Report 2009

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## Rural Population

- California: 5.5% of population (1,876,753)
- Nevada: 8.4% (168,476)

2000 Census

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## Concern

47% of Homeless Worry About the Care They Would Receive at EOL

Dr. Ed Ratner, U of MN

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## Concerns and Fears

- Service provider: "Another guy asked me to make sure I come to see his body if I should die. And I said, why are you asking me? Are you ill? And he said, yes. I have lung cancer and I'm not going to live very long. 'And so, will you come and see me, see my body?'"

Dr. Ed Ratner, U of MN

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## Meaning of Life and Death

Homeless person: "I know I believe in the Creator and the Bible, but I feel that I want more time to get myself together and be ready because I feel right now I'm going to be judged and I ain't ready."

Dr. Ed Ratner, U of MN

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## Demographic Imperative

- 45% suffer from mental illness
- 50% have substance abuse problems
- 47% of homeless veterans served during the Vietnam War
- More than 67% served the country for at least three years
- 33% were stationed in a war zone

Dr. Ed Ratner, U of MN

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## Rural Demographics

- Rates of poverty are higher in rural areas than urban areas (15% vs 12%)
- Nearly one in five of the uninsured (8.5 million people) live in rural areas

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## Rural Veterans

- 5.7 million veterans living in rural areas
- These veterans are in poorer health than their suburban and urban counterparts
- More than 44% of military recruits are from rural areas (14% from major cities)

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## We Need to Work Together

- Challenging?

**Always**

- Necessary?

**Absolutely**

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## Reaching Out: Base Year

- 18 grantees
- 15 states
- Develop partnerships to identify and begin addressing rural and homeless issues

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## Option Year One

- Six Projects
- Six Models that can be replicated
  - **CBOC Community Coalition Model**
  - **Clinical Model**
  - **Community –Private Home Model**
  - **VAMC Model**
  - **Veteran-to-veteran Model**
  - **VISN Model**

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## CBOC Community Coalition Model, Chattanooga, TN

- Provide access to Hospice and Palliative Care services by formalizing relationships between Chattanooga CBOC and Homeless Partnership member agencies
- Engage Veteran Service Officers to assist CBOC and HOC with e-o-I needs for veterans in 16 rural counties
- Expedite veteran enrollment and initial physician visits for those with e-o-I needs
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## Clinical Model - Hospice of the Bluegrass - Kentucky

- Disseminate evidence-based data about veteran's health conditions to local healthcare providers
- Link veterans with appropriate end of life services in rural Kentucky
- Partner with local service providers to serve homeless veterans
- Develop and distribute a directory of service providers

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## Clinical Model - Hospice of the Bluegrass - KY (cont.)

- Identify all veterans admitted to HOB, using the Military History checklist
- Engage HOB staff about potential needs of combat veterans

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### Community – Private Home Model - LINK of Hampton Roads, Inc., - Virginia

- Provide physical care and emotional support to 10 homeless veterans in private homes
- Develop a hospice advisory committee for program support and evaluation
- Develop a manual for replication of the "private-home" model
- Engage Richmond and Roanoke in hosting homeless veterans.

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### VAMC Model - Delaware

- Gather information from veteran focus groups to plan and implement training sessions for homeless and rural veterans
- Conduct education programs for first responders
- Conduct education programs with homeless shelters
- Develop pocket guides and other materials for distribution

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### VAMC Model – Delaware (cont.)

- Conduct training for 20 health care organizations
- Publish veteran's stories and other articles on end of life care for veterans

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## Veteran to Veteran Model Arkansas

- Create a “village” of educated citizens to assist rural and homeless veterans
- Train “Teacher Vets” to educate and assist one another
- Hold a “Stand Down” for the six county project area
- Develop resource materials for distribution to various target audiences

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## VISN Model CHAPCA - California

- Educate community hospice providers about veteran needs
- Develop State and local relationships between Hospice, the staff of VAMCs, and VSOs

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## What We Have Learned

- Partnerships, like any relationship, require an investment of time.
- Communication is the key to a healthy partnership
- Champions are key to a sustained effort
- Understanding each other’s culture is important

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## What We Have Learned (cont.)

- Staying focused on the veteran and his/her family is one key to success.
- Veteran voices and stories are essential. Involve veterans/families in planning.
- Be patient – never give up.
- Veterans are depending on us to work together.

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## Question?

Are we really committed to working together to create a more socially responsive environment for veterans at end of life?

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## Vision

Vision without action is merely a dream  
Action without vision just passes time  
Vision with action can change the world

“The Power of Vision” by Joel Arthur Baker  
Inspired by the writing of Loren Eiseley

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