

# Annual Report FY 2017-2018



## FLORIDA VETERANS — F O U N D A T I O N —

In 2008, the Florida Legislature established the Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF) as a Direct Support Organization of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA). The Foundation operates for the direct and indirect benefit of the veterans of Florida, the FDVA, state Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) and County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO). The FVF is also a nonprofit organization operating for charitable and educational purposes under Section 501(c) (3). While many of Florida's veterans successfully transitioned to a post-military career, many encountered challenges that impede their progress. Veterans report priority services needed during this transition were employment assistance, transportation, housing, mental health and utility assistance in emergencies.

The Florida Veterans Foundation team is composed of a volunteer Chairman and Board of Directors. The majority of the Foundation Directors are retired, military disabled veterans who donate more than 40 hours per week of their time to support the Foundation's mission to align support with the FDVA mission of Advocacy, to ensure greater global impact for Veterans throughout the state of Florida. FVF has taken charge of representing Florida veterans and their families through congressionally chartered Florida-based Veterans Service Organizations.

Florida Veterans Foundation collaborates with entities and state agencies with an interest in solving issues that ultimately affect Florida and the economy. Our staunch effort is realizing successes throughout the veteran community and gaining incredible interest at all levels of the government within Florida and through recognized accomplishments.

### **Suicide Prevention, Opioids/Mental Health Initiative**

The Foundation made a collaborative commitment with the 2-1-1 Contact Center, Crisis Center of Tampa Bay to reach-out the pilot veteran population in Florida. The contact center provides useful information and referral services through a fellow veteran and connect them with VA funded mental health service providers according to determined conditions such as Suicide Prevention, Opioid Abuse, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Mental Health Treatment. Worthwhile, an initiative approached with crisis center on statewide campaign of "Get Help Now" phone app to connect veterans with the Crisis Center Referral program.

In 2017, the governor, through the FDVA, provided funding for the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay to establish a dedicated phone line 1-844-MYFLVET, hire and train personnel, maintain a veteran-specific resource database, conduct marketing and outreach, and to manage daily operations. The Crisis Center created to provide an operational service to the five counties around Tampa Bay including Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Manatee County.

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration agreed to provide funding to the Crisis Center to support the following tasks:

- Identify other 2-1-1 agencies who will provide Peer-to-Peer Veteran Care Coordination
- Crisis Center will train 2-1-1 agencies across the state on how to recruit, support and retain veteran peers to provide Care Coordination



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- Continue Awareness and Outreach Efforts through advertising and marketing
- Support efforts to identify appropriate service providers across the state and manage that information to keep it up to date and relevant to the needs of callers
- Decreased recidivism rate
- Reduction in ER visits
- Decreased harm to self-others
- Referrals and Linkages to VA
- Promote best practices and successful treatment reinforcement
- Set model for national replication

According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) veterans identified numerous potential benefits to a peer support program for normalization to social process including social support, purpose, meaning and hope, and link them to therapeutic benefits. However, peer support could complement psychotherapy for veterans with PTSD by increasing initiation and adherence to treatment and continuing key peer support by providing training and continuing education throughout transition. The studies indicated that the peer support groups can be defined according to trauma type, gender, and era of service. In addition, studies highlighted the importance of the leadership and interpersonal skills of a peer support group leader. Overall, peer support is highly acceptable complement to existing PTSD treatments.

FVF has worked with FDVA to move forward on expanding services by addressing Attorney General (AG), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and others for Opioids Resources to execute program.

## Aging Veteran Outreach

There are approximately 40,000 aging veterans in home receiving In-Home Health Care services and 20,000 veterans residing in the more than 3,100 Assisted Living Facilities (ALF's) across the State of Florida. This demographic desperately seeks the benefit of Aid and Attendance, Pension, and Disability Claims. This effort is to meet the needs of the elder and disabled veterans. This effort can potentially bring in over \$3 billion in federal VA funding to Florida that will free up state Medicaid resources.

With support of Direct Support Organization (DSO), FDVA has committed to help the veterans' aging dilemma with hope to keep them in their home as long as possible and continued to garner the earned VA benefits. A video has been produced by DSO and have been distributed to ALF's and Florida VSO, Florida State Agencies, Legislators, and State Elder Care Affiliates. This outreach research project is to determine if a statewide intensive campaign reaching out to the new generation of elderly veterans in Florida.





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FVF is looking for support and resources to continue this initiative. FVF has collaborated with the American Patriot Service Corp and the National Association of Veterans and Families. The center of interest is to keep elder veterans in their home in comfortable environment with trusted family members, while utilizing earned VA benefits, such as VA Pension with Aid and Attendance, which helps to support their financial and medical needs, and enhance their quality of life.

Furthermore, with DSO's administrative support FDVA collaborated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide a medical supervision model adult day health care pilot program for veterans, pursuant to the legislative intent for the language in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) pertaining to care for veterans.

## Veterans Legal Services

FVF has established a groundwork through collaboration with the Bay Area Legal Services (BALS) of Tampa Bay to reach out veteran with legal services. While, veterans transitioning through civilian life, veterans often face complex legal problems. They need lead to a stable healthy lifestyle to reinforce in the community.

The statewide Veterans Legal Helpline project will create the necessary collaborations and service structures to respond to the needs of our growing, aging, and diverse veteran population. Using helpline, veterans can get immediate appointment to speak with an experienced attorney, schedule appointments for extended services and coordinate referrals to partners throughout the state. In addition, the FVF has served on the Veterans' Access Panel for Civil Justice and gained momentum to create a standard with the Florida Courts system for Veterans Treatment Courts that includes:

- Wrongful eviction and foreclosure
- ID issues for homeless veterans (driver licenses and/or Florida ID)
- Discharge upgrades
- Disaster / FEMA assistance
- Family Law issues

In addition, FVF has provided financial and administrative support to the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council and Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame, and publication of the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guides.

