

Struggling to adjust? Call & Connect Florida Veterans Support Line 1-844-MYFLVET (693-5838)



STRUGGLING TO ADJUST? CALL AND CONNECT.

Florida Veterans Outreach Initiative

Currently serving
Hillsborough, Pasco,
Pinellas, Polk, &
Manatee Counties.

IN THIS ISSUE

Support Line, one can **expect to receive specialized assessment of immediate needs, including safety planning** when needed. Callers can also expect **comprehensive information and referral to VA-funded services and hundreds of community-based services.**

Support for the Bay Area's Veterans is a phone call away

by Debra Harris

Earlier this year Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature, with support from the Statewide Veterans Advisory Council, Department of Children and Families Substance Abuse & Mental Health Program, Florida Alcohol & Drug Abuse Association, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and Florida Alliance of Information & Referral Services, approved funding to pilot the Florida Veterans Support Line; allowing us to expand our service reach through our 2-1-1 Contact Center. **844-MY-FLVET** is a live number staffed with **Peer Specialists** who are military veterans who have faced the difficulties of transition and are now stepping up to serve once more in the capacity of a willing ear and a professional guide to their peers. Currently, the Florida Veterans Support Line **serves Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Manatee counties.**

What You Can Expect

The Tampa Bay area has one of the largest veteran populations in the nation.



**Jamie McPherson, US Marine Corps
Veteran & Peer**

There are **over 300,000 veterans residing in the five counties served** through this project. We recognize the unique challenges faced by returning military personnel and their families. During a call to the Florida Veterans

Most importantly and unique to the Crisis Center, a veteran can receive **support** provided by a peer who, like the caller, has experienced the difficulties of transition from the military back to civilian life. Assisted by the peer, veterans who need more assistance than a phone call will be connected to **ongoing Care Coordination and follow-up support** by a Care Coordinator. We believe that Care Coordination is essential to engaging veterans in the myriad services available to them. Care Coordination is the vital link of service navigation and advocacy that breaks down barriers and that is what makes our program unique.

Florida Outpaces Other States

Florida has been ahead of the curve in addressing critical issues like human trafficking, pill mills and sexual exploitation of children. Once again, Florida is out in

front of a critical wave of need, willing to take a unique approach to serving the men and women who courageously served our country.



Manny Guevara-Ruiz, US Army Veteran & Peer

CALL NOW...

Thank You for Calling MYFLVET

844-MYFLVET went live on October 28, 2014. Currently, hours of operation are from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, Monday through Friday. To date we've served over 100 veterans that have availed themselves of the service.

Care Coordination

Short-term system navigation, advocacy and ongoing support has been provided to **58% of the veterans** who've contacted MYFLVET. **Four (4) of those individuals enrolled in care coordination** are veterans recently placed in their own homes after being rapidly rehoused on Veterans Day 2014 through efforts of the Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative & partner agencies including **Crisis Center of Tampa Bay's Veterans Outreach Team at Operation Reveille**.



Ryan Callahan, US Navy Veteran & Peer with newly housed Veteran, Operation Reveille 2014

In addition to identifying unmet needs such as housing, financial assistance and

substance abuse treatment; many of the **callers to MYFLVET** are **sharing** their stories about struggles with current **bouts of depression, isolation** and even **thoughts of suicide**. For veterans who have shared concerns for their safety and wellbeing; they are also **linked to our care coordination services**. Not only are these veterans linked to longer-term treatment programs through the VA and/or community based treatment facilities, but our care coordinator also ensures regular contact, engagement and support during the process by making reassurance and follow up calls to clients.



Crisis Center's FL Veterans Outreach Team helping to house homeless veterans at Operation Reveille, Veterans Day 2014

Research has shown that connectedness is key to survival of persons contemplating, or those who've attempted, suicide. With alarming statistics such as, **"22 veterans die by suicide every day"**, being the catalyst for the **Clay Hunt Bill** (passed the House unanimously Tuesday, 09DEC14), we can't afford not to try and connect with this vulnerable population. The suicide rate among veterans is about triple the average rate for the general population. **"Despite record mental health staffing and budget levels at the Department of Veteran Affairs, today's veterans are falling victim to the invisible wounds of war all too often,"** said Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., called the Clay Hunt bill a **starting point** and said **Congress and the VA must do more to improve mental health care for veterans**. Florida has made a preemptive strike at putting an end to this "grim status quo" by appropriating funds to support the Florida Veterans Outreach Initiative. It is our hope that the State will continue to support, expand and fund this

very important, impactful, live-saving initiative in 2015 and beyond.

FAST FACTS

58%

58% of the veterans who've contacted MYFLVET have enrolled in care coordination.

78%

78% of the callers to MYFLVET are men needing support and connection.

How You Can Help...Easy As 1, 2, 3!

- 1) If you are a **US military veteran interesting in volunteering** as a Peer Specialist please join us for an information session every Monday at 3:30 PM at the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay located at 1 Crisis Center Plaza, Tampa, FL 33613. Please RSVP to Lezlie Garcia in Human Resources (lgarcia@crisiscenter.com).
- 2) The **Regional Veterans Advisory Council** is a group of community stakeholders and experts collaborating on how to best serve veterans in Tampa Bay. For more information or if you are interested in joining this group please contact Brandee Baker (bbaker@crisiscenter.com).
- 3) All can help by **writing letters of support and/or testimonial** for the program expressing why this program is necessary and beneficial to our communities. These letters will be used to highlight the impact this program is making in the lives of Florida's veterans. Please send any letters of support to: Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, Inc., ATTN: Debra Harris, One Crisis Center Plaza, Tampa FL 33613-1238; or email signed pdf to dharris@crisiscenter.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Brandee Baker, Peer Support Program Coordinator

813-964-1964 X 3424
bbaker@crisiscenter.com

Visit us online at: www.crisiscenter.com