



2016
Annual Report

Loree Sutton
Commissioner

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Commissioner's Message

Greetings! My name is Loree Sutton and I am honored to serve as the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS).

I would like to thank all of you for your commitment to continually pushing forward the needs of our veterans and their families. It was thanks to the collaboration between the City Council, the Mayor of the City of New York, and veteran advocates that 2016 was such a historic year for veterans, as well as members of our military transitioning into productive and fulfilling post-service lives. It bears repeating that our veterans and their families are extraordinary civic assets whose continued leadership and service on behalf of others strengthen the social fiber of our City.

New York City has transitioned the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) into a full City-wide agency specifically devoted to the well-being and support of veterans and their families. Since the passage of historic legislation by the City Council, and the signing of Local Law 113 by Mayor de Blasio, DVS has grown in vision, scope, and capacity. We are building the strongest foundation possible to connect veterans and their families with high quality services, and strengthen their capacity for and commitment to continued service within our City.

Looking back, 2016 was a year of collaboration and engagement with veterans and families from all generations. It's truly extraordinary how far our City has come. At times, I find it surreal and truly humbling, not only at the level of support we have seen from veterans, the City Council, the Mayor, and veteran service organizations – but how that support has materialized in some very real gains for our transitioning service members and their families.

This is just the beginning. We are embarking upon the next chapter of our historic journey advocating for and enfranchising NYC veterans and their families. I want to thank Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Chair Eric Ulrich, and members of the City Council Committee on Veterans; family members of our military service members and veterans, especially our Gold Star families; civic leaders and concerned citizens who embrace the social and moral contract to serve those who have served us; members of Team DVS, as well as so many friends of DVS serving in City Hall and across government; City officials, agency leaders, service providers; and lastly, NYC's veterans'



Commissioner Loree Sutton showing off her patriotic style at an event on the USS Intrepid. Photo credit Erika Kapin, Erika Kapin Photography

advocates, whose pioneering voices afford our veterans a distinct and tangible connection to government, such has never been seen before.

As 2017 rolls on, I eagerly look forward to renewed partnership in this inaugural year for DVS. We look forward to hearing from you -- now, early and often.

Ever onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Sutton", with a stylized flourish at the end.

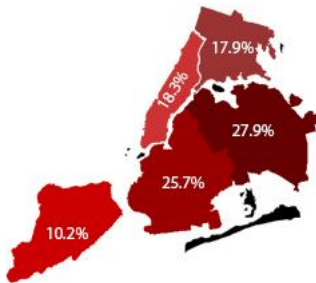
Loree Sutton, MD
Brigadier General, US Army (Ret.)
Commissioner

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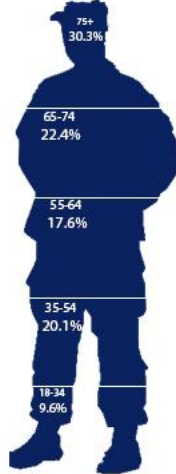


By June 30 2017, about **1894** servicemembers will have transitioned to NYC since January 2015



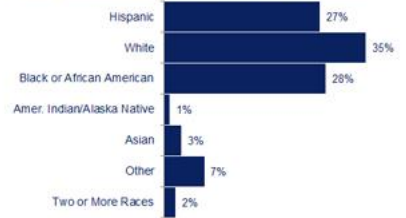
The NYC Veteran population is distributed across the five boroughs, but Veterans predominantly reside in Queens and Brooklyn

Proportion of NYC Veterans by Borough



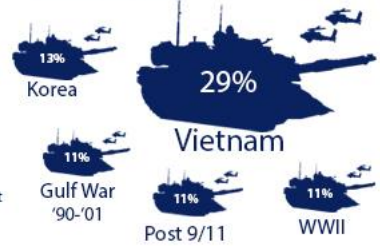
Proportion of NYC Veterans by Age
The majority of NYC Veterans are under the age of 64. However, significant whole number percentages are beyond retirement age.

Proportion of NYC Veterans by Race

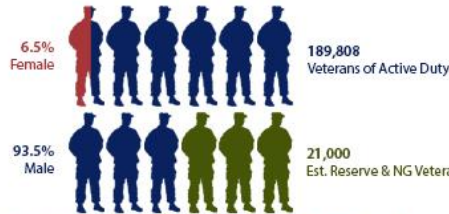


NYC Veterans by Era of Conflict

NYC Veterans mostly served in Vietnam, with sizeable proportions from WWII and Korea still residing in the City. About 25% of NYC Veterans served between declared eras of conflict.



NYC Veterans Employment **88.1%**



210,808 NYC Veterans

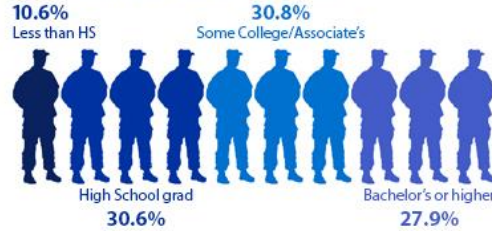


NYC Veterans Median Income
Female: **\$34,794** Male: **\$36,582**



NYC Veterans w/any disability **26.6%**

NYC Veterans' Educational Attainment



NYC Veterans Below Poverty **10.1%**

1. Departmental Mission

DVS fosters purpose-driven lives for NYC service members, veterans, and their families through:

- **Community engagement**, amplifying life strategies for successful transition and renewed service
- **Targeted advocacy**, championing legislative and policy actions at the local, state, and national level
- **Compassionate service**, ensuring coordinated access to earned benefits, services and resources

2. Commissioner's Intent

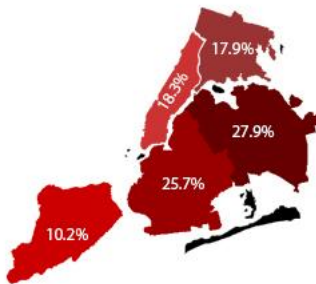
ENDSTATE: With service to others as our North Star, DVS will be fully established as the trusted and enduring hub for the NYC veterans' community and serve as a working prototype for other cities within the next 3-5 years.

Achieving this end state requires operating in the following ways:

- We will establish our network to meet our veterans' and families' needs and leverage their strengths. This means building knowledge and relationships focused on helping veterans and their families thrive.
- We will work with all NYC service members, veterans and their families, to assist them in renewing their purpose, retooling their capacity to serve others, and fulfilling their potential as extraordinary civic assets.
- We will cultivate a compassionate relationship with NYC's veterans and their families, navigating hardships and celebrating successes together, knowing that we are often their last and best hope.
- We will make it easier for veterans and their families to access the services and benefits that they've earned. When a veteran comes in the door, we will do everything we can to get them what they need.



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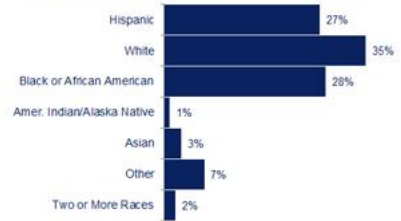
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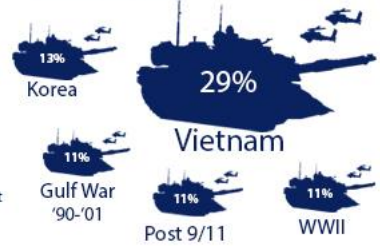
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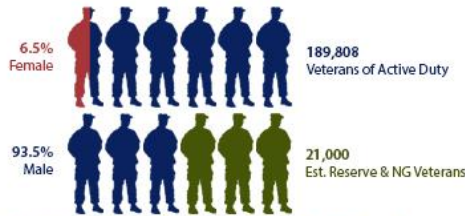


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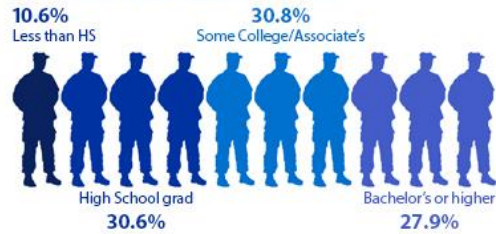


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3. Connecting to the NYC Veterans Community

Recognizing the need to better serve New York City's 210,808 veterans and their families, New York City's Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) – formerly the Mayor's Office of Veteran's Affairs (MOVA) – was officially established in 2016 by Local Law 113. DVS strives to improve the lives of all veterans and their families, regardless of discharge status.

We view veterans as civic assets, whose strength and demonstrated commitment to public service will help New York City thrive. To that end, DVS works to match veterans with programs and services to support fulfilling and purpose-driven lives.

The City of New York has made tremendous strides over the past year to better serve our veterans community. These efforts include engaging with veterans and families from all generations, from those who's service in uniform ended decades ago to those who have recently transitioned or are currently preparing to do so. One integral part of connecting City government to the veteran population has been the Veterans Advisory Board, or VAB. Appointed by Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Mark-Viverito, the VAB was strategically selected to sustain a diverse range of service backgrounds, community engagement interests, and professional expertise to help facilitate dialogue with the New York City veterans' community.

New York City was also the first city in the nation to honor the service of our veterans by adding a veteran designator to our municipal ID card program (IDNYC), thereby facilitating enhanced access to services and benefits specifically available to veteran New Yorkers.

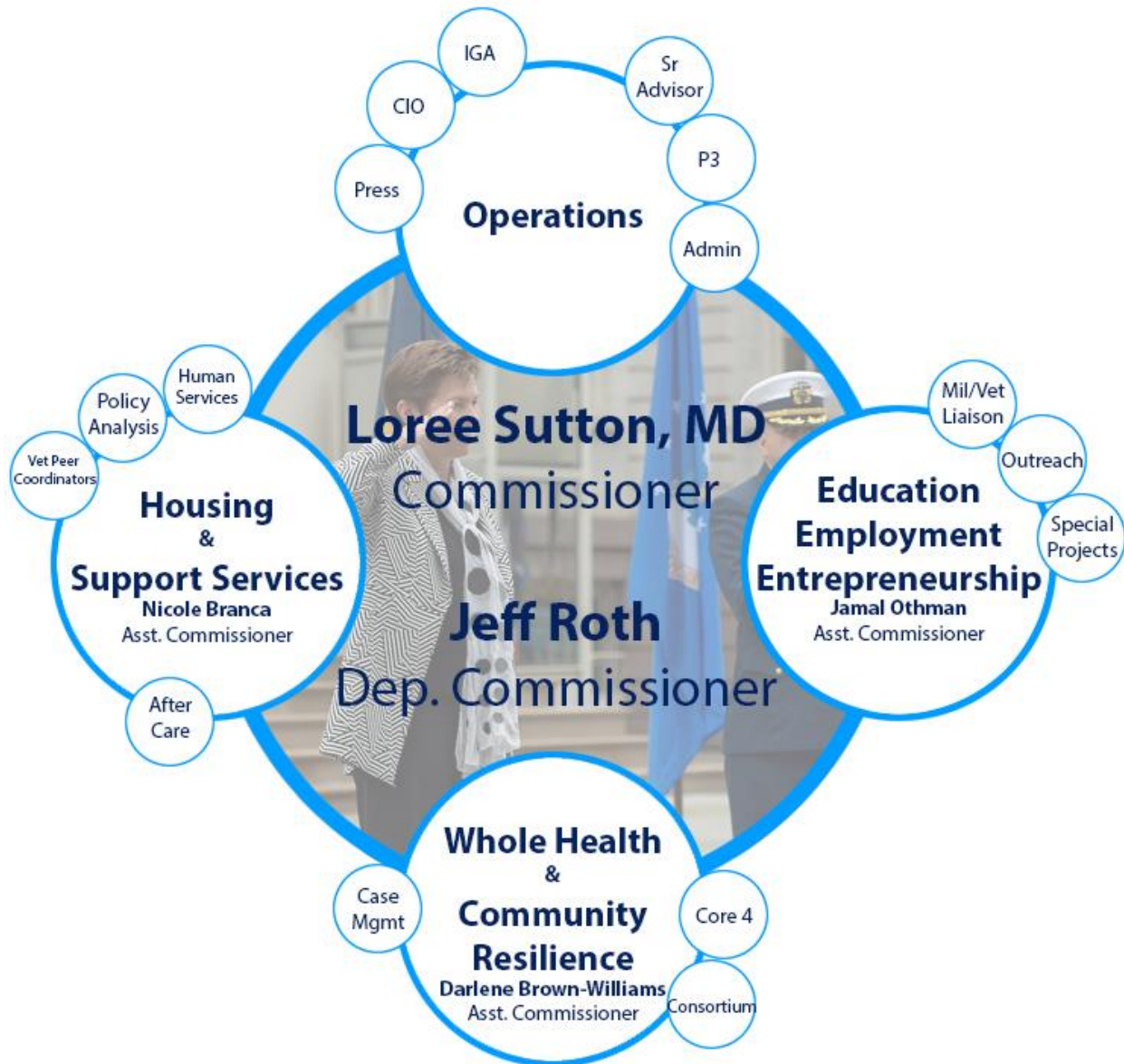
Most dramatically, New York City transitioned the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs into a full City-wide agency specifically devoted to the well-being and support of veterans and their families, now known as the New York City Department of Veterans Services (DVS). Since the passage of historic legislation by the New York City Council and the subsequent signing of Local Law 113 by Mayor de Blasio in 2015, the Department of Veterans' Services has grown in vision, scope, and capacity. We are now building the strongest foundation possible to connect veterans and their families with high quality services across a variety of needs, as well as strengthening their capacity for and commitment to continued service within New York City.

4. Staffing & Administration

As the first new agency in the City of New York in over 15 years, DVS has diligently worked to on-board a talented and diverse group of professionals. Since April 2016, DVS has grown to 29 people and is well on its way to hiring the additional professionals who will bring us to a total of 35 staff members by the end of first-quarter 2017. In addition to Deputy Commissioner Jeffrey Roth, who brings a wealth of City experience, DVS has on-boarded the leadership of all three lines of action: Assistant Commissioner Nicole Branca heads Housing & Support Services; Assistant Commissioner Jamal Othman leads efforts on City Employment, Education, Entrepreneurship, Events & Engagement (or CE5); and Assistant Commissioner Darlene Brown-Williams, PhD, takes the helm of Whole Health and Community Resilience. DVS has also hired Chief Information Officer Venkat Motupalli, Senior Advisor of Communications and

Press Secretary Alexis Wichowski; Senior Advisor of Public and Private Partnerships Jason Mangone, Director of Intergovernmental and External Affairs Eric C. Henry, and Director of Administration Jason Parker.

Designing, staffing, and leading a ‘start-up’ agency within NYC government is an enormous privilege and responsibility. The process of building a team and creating an organizational culture rooted in the value of service to others is well underway. This constitutes an ongoing leadership imperative at all levels, particularly as the agency aligns its key priorities within a strategic planning framework that will guide and shape our actions going forward.



DVS' "Orb" chart, reflecting the cross-functional leadership and execution necessary in a government startup

5. Lines of Action

Core to DVS is the belief that veterans and their families are our City's leading natural renewable resource, and that their strength and demonstrated commitment to public service will help New York City thrive.

DVS operates through three strategic lines of action:

1. City Employment, Entrepreneurship, Education, Events & Engagement
2. Whole Health & Community Resilience
3. Housing & Support Services

5.1 City Employment, Education, Entrepreneurship, Events & Engagement (CE5)

5.1.1 Outreach

DVS aims to improve access to veteran benefits by placing Community Outreach Specialists in each of the five boroughs. Outreach Specialists serve as a direct link



CE5 in action. Community Outreach Specialist Matt Basile (L) and Dir. of Human Services Ines Adan (R) field questions at the Staten Island Borough Hall

between the community and DVS, providing the human element of one-on-one support. Deployed to the boroughs through collaborative partnership with host sites, our Outreach Specialists create a City-wide presence for DVS, bringing help to veterans in their home communities. With personalized, on-site support, Outreach Specialists can connect veterans and their families to trusted, appropriate resources from the City, state, and federal government. Thus far, DVS has embedded Outreach Specialists in the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island, and is in the process of identifying sites for Manhattan and Brooklyn.

5.1.2 Careers

DVS also connect veterans and their families to recruitment and City careers opportunities. This is being accomplished through a four-staged phased action plan: 1. upgrading the DVS website for direct access to City job opportunities; 2. collaborating with DCAS City-wide Recruitment / WorkForce 1 and the public / private sectors to identify HR best practices; 3. standardizing City-wide intake forms to encourage self-identification of veterans & families; and 4. exploring ways to engage with the veteran business community to enhance business and procurement opportunities for veteran business owners and entrepreneurs.

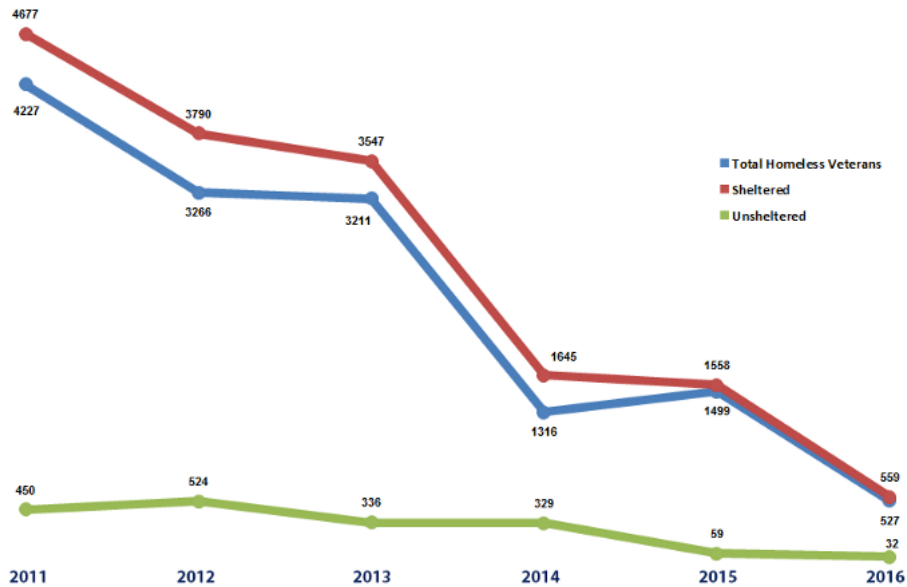
5.1.3 Events

DVS honors veterans and their families at events throughout the year, with a special focus around Veterans' Day and Fleet Week. DVS works collaboratively with the Mayor's Office of Special Projects and Community Events, the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination, and Management & Veteran Service Organization partners to assist and organize major veterans' commemorative ceremonies and other special events that honor service.

5.2 Housing & Support Services

DVS is dedicated to effectively ending veteran homelessness in New York City. The Housing and Support Services (HSS) Unit leads and supports initiatives to expand and improve housing and social service resources available to NYC veterans and their families, as well as providing assistance for veterans navigating existing resources. Our top priority is working with homeless veterans, specifically by: 1. developing and sustaining a system that rapidly rehouses all those that become homeless; and 2. working with DVS' public and private partners to prevent homelessness in the first place.

Reduction In NYC Veteran Homelessness 2011-2016



The team at HSS was a critical part in NYC's remarkable work reducing veteran homelessness since 2011

In fact, in December of 2015, the federal government certified that the City of New York ended *chronic* veteran homelessness: housing veterans who were living with a disability and had been homeless for the longest period. The New York City Department of Veterans' Services has led the nation in its response to homelessness, connecting 1,600 homeless veterans with permanent, affordable housing this past year alone.

In addition to housing homeless veterans, HSS identifies barriers and creates inroads for all veterans to secure the housing they require. Most recently, DVS and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) worked together to require landlords to take the basic allowance for housing (BAH) integrated in the GI Bill as a source of income for rent for student veterans.

DVS will continue to work with its City, state, federal and community partners, focusing on:

- **Meeting “Functional Zero”**: ending homelessness for veterans currently in shelter and developing a rapid rehousing system for housing new veterans within 90 days of entry.
- **Mitigating recidivism**: bolstering ‘aftercare’ services through a dedicated coordinator who drives assessment priorities and fully leverages the vital veteran peer coordinator role. This coordinator, Angela Guyton-Cyril, is now on board and already making a real difference.
- **Systematizing placement**: leading efforts to systematize the assessment and housing placement of homeless veterans across systems and resources and to scale this system to benefit all homeless New Yorkers.

5.3 Whole Health & Community Resilience

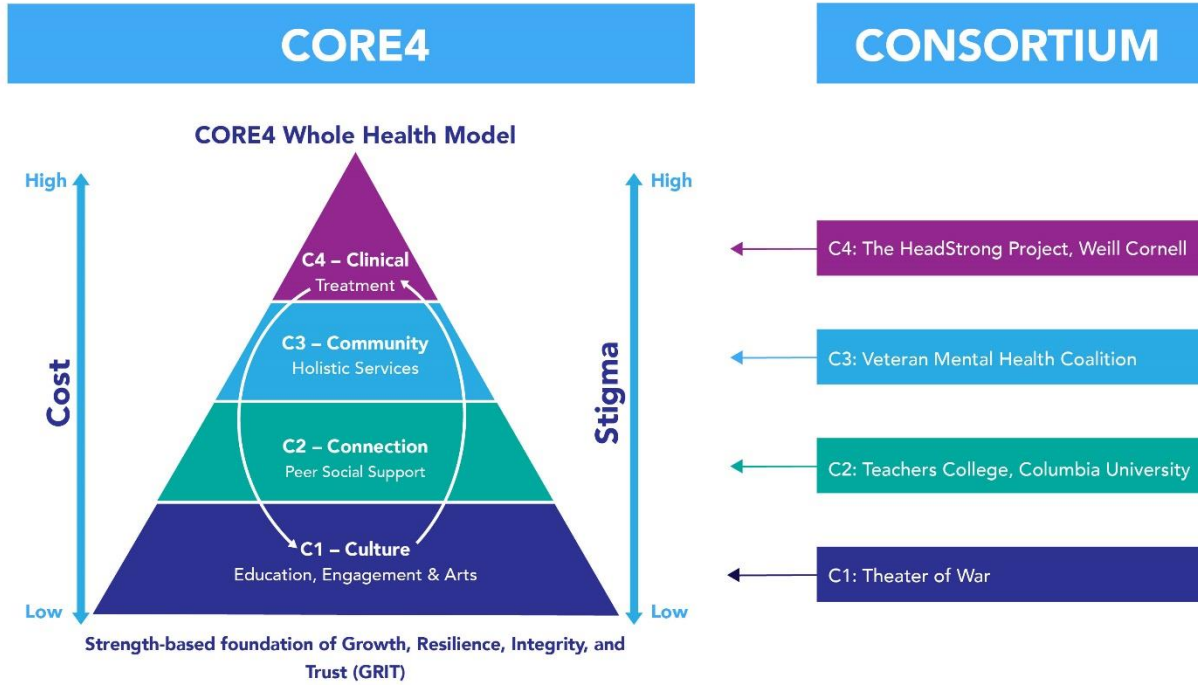
DVS is actively working to advance whole health for veterans and their families: specifically, to erode stigma, foster engagement, and connect individuals to professional services. The VetsThriveNYC Whole Health Program is DVS’s veteran-focused complement to First Lady Chirlane McCray’s pioneering ThriveNYC Mental Health Roadmap. The goal of VetsThriveNYC is to improve the lives of NYC veterans and their families by enhancing access to a comprehensive range of services specifically tailored to their needs and strengths. This approach includes coordinated integration of clinical and holistic services that address the full impact of war on the mind, body, and spirit.

The VetsThriveNYC Whole Health Program is rooted in our commitment to extend the front-line of hope, healing, and wholeness from the clinic to the community, where foundational paths to well-being traverse the domains of peer connection, holistic services, and cultural engagement. The VetsThriveNYC Whole Health Program consists of two components: the Core4 Whole Health Model and the Consortium Steering Group.



Dr. Darlene Williams-Brown and her WHCR team

VetsThriveNYC



The CORE4 Whole Health Model and Consortium Steering Group

5.3.1 Core4 Whole Health Model

The Core4 Whole Health Model is a non-linear dynamic model featuring four domains:

- C1 Culture: Cultural engagement through outreach, education & the arts
- C2 Connection via Peer Social Support: Peer-to-peer connections for veterans and families
- C3 Community: Community holistic services in non-clinical settings
- C4 Clinical: Clinical treatment spanning the spectrum of trauma needs

5.3.2 Consortium Steering Group

The Consortium Steering Group are community experts who serve as leads for each of the Core 4 domains. DVS and its steering group partners will engage the broader NYC community to form the City-wide consortium in Spring 2017.

6. Looking to the Future

Since its launch in summer of 2016, the Department of Veterans' Services has accomplished a great deal through facilitating veterans' access to services through all levels of government, as well as providers in the non-profit and private sectors. Our most important work is still in front of us as we augment our current initiatives.

6.1 Launching VetConnectNYC

VetConnectNYC will be a digital platform connecting veterans and their families with a coordinated service network for comprehensive referrals, counseling, and benefit support across a growing constellation of service providers. Currently, DVS is working through the procurement process, with a target completion date in late first-quarter 2017.

6.2 Legal Support for NYC Veterans

DVS anticipates continued progress in building upon the pioneering work led by the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice and its Task Force on Behavioral Health and the Criminal Justice System. A systems lens is essential to fully assess veteran issues, needs, and opportunities in order to improve all aspects of the criminal justice system. This includes: coordinated access to housing; employment; legal and health services upon community re-entry; and, whenever possible, to maximize the positive impact of the NYC Veteran Treatment Courts now operating in each borough.

6.3 Collaborating with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York

Together with the Fund, DVS will establish and maintain strategic partnerships with private entities, non-profit organizations, and foundations to generate support and foster bold investment designed to: plug gaps in service; test, pilot, and scale innovative new programs; and leverage the flexibility of the private sector to support our public initiatives—all aimed at empowering NYC veterans and families of all generations. To this end, DVS was the recipient of the first-ever Pay For Success grant in the veterans' space. The grant will support employment for post-9/11 veterans with PTSD.

6.4 Digital Trans-Media Plan

Over the past few months, DVS has set media targets for maximal awareness, engagement, and activity. DVS will continue to engage strategic media outlets to amplify DVS' key messages and activities, as well as those pertinent to constituent veterans.

6.5 Continued partnership with the Veterans Advisory Board

The Veterans Advisory Board's (VAB) counsel and advice serves as a finger on the pulse of the veterans' community. Appointed by Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Mark-Viverito, the Veterans Advisory Board was strategically selected to represent a diverse range of service backgrounds, community-engagement interests, and professional expertise in order to facilitate dialogue between the City of New York and the New York City veterans' community.

6.6 Making full use of Local Law No. 42

Local Law No. 42 requires the head of each City agency to designate an employee to act as liaison with veterans and the Department of Veterans' Services. The liaison shall advise veterans within each agency of benefits and services available to veterans their agency, as well as employee personnel policies applicable to veterans at each agency.

7. Reach Out

Although DVS officially opened for business less than one year ago, it achieved a great deal in a short period. We look forward to a robust future dedicated to improving the lives of NYC veterans and their families.

Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter with the handle @nycveterans and visit us at www.nyc.gov/vets. Members of the public with suggestions or inquiries can reach us at info@veterans.nyc.gov. The point of contact for this report is Eric C Henry Jr, Esq., Director of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, at ehenry@veterans.nyc.gov.