Program Overview

The Florida Jail Diversion and Trauma Recovery – Priority to Veterans statewide project is operated by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). The program has established two pilots: 1) Hillsborough as the initial pilot, and 2) Pinellas as the expansion site beginning operation in October 2012. The program has formed a joint State Advisory Committee and Statewide Veterans Council, as well as a Local Advisory Committee in each community to ensure coordination and collaboration. The Hillsborough program is no longer in formal operation; however, a number of program components have endured in the county, such as screening for veterans in various criminal justice programs, Seeking Safety groups, peer involvement in services, and referrals to the local VJO Specialist and the VAMC. DCF continues to prioritize evidence-based practices, including Trauma-Informed Care (TIC), for all their providers and has provided training in the “Impact of Traumatic Experience in Justice Settings” to all collaborating judicial districts and managing entities. The program in Pinellas is coordinated by the Agency for Community Treatment Services (ACTS) and managed by Central Florida Behavioral Network. Most referrals to the Pinellas pilot come from the existing Drug Court, which has a special docket to focus on veterans. The Public Defender’s Office is central to the diversion process and screens and initiates most referrals. Pre-booking diversion referrals are received from the Pinellas Sheriff’s Office and Safe Harbor homeless shelter. Through ACTS or local partnerships with NAMI and other organizations, the program incorporates the evidence-based “Critical Time Intervention” approach and offers case management, peer support services, crisis services, Seeking Safety, family/individual therapy, and transportation assistance.

Statewide Rollout & Sustainability

The major rollout activities include the expansion to the second pilot site in Pinellas, growth of veteran treatment courts, a state certification for veteran peer support, and a new option in the state of Florida to feature a “V” on veterans’ driver licenses. Florida recently legislation authorizing the chief judge of each judicial circuit to establish a Military Veterans and Sevice Members Court Program for veterans convicted of a criminal offense who suffer from a mental illness, traumatic brain injury, substance use disorder, or psychological problems as a result of their military service. DCF continues to explore sustainability options and recently participated in a GAINS sponsored conference call on this topic.

Point of Diversion

Intercept 2 – Pre-booking referrals from the Sheriff’s Office and area homeless shelters
Intercept 3 – Post-arraignment referrals from Drug Court, public-defenders, Safe Harbor Pre-Booking, and Veteran’s Courts referrals

Summary of JDTR Features

Trauma-Informed Care

The “Impact of Traumatic Experience in Justice Settings” training was delivered to pilot area and regional stakeholders in 2011. Trainings on trauma screening have been delivered to pilot area criminal justice agencies. In June 2011 a workshop was held to launch the development of the statewide rollout plan, focusing on trauma-informed care training, trauma and military service screening, veteran peer specialists, and expanding veterans diversion across Florida.

Veteran/Peer Involvement

Shawn O’Bryan is the Peer Representative hired for the Pinellas site. Kevin Edwards remains involved with the State Advisory Committee. As noted above, there is a state certification for veteran peer support.
### Florida

#### The Florida Jail Diversion and Trauma Recovery - Priority to Veterans Program

| Grant awarded September 2009 - ending September 2014 (6 month/12 month no-cost extension available) |

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### Program Overview

The purpose of Florida's Jail Diversion and Trauma Recovery (JDTR) program is to develop and operate two representative pilot programs that will demonstrate how to transform Florida's behavioral health system to better serve veterans. This is accomplished through diversion from incarceration, when appropriate, and provision of trauma informed care and support services that will enable veterans and their families to function as responsible and law-abiding citizens in their communities. In December 2010, Florida implemented the first pilot diversion program in Hillsborough County with Northside Mental Health Center serving as the pilot site provider. Services for the first pilot site ended September 30, 2012. The second pilot site was competitively procured and the Agency for Community Treatment Services, Inc. (ACTS) was selected to provide services to veterans in Pinellas County in conjunction with the Public Defender's Office and the Sixth Judicial Circuit. Services began on October 1, 2012 including provision of early identification/screening, engagement in specialized treatment services and coordination of appropriate ancillary services in the community. Peer recovery support, trauma based care and the Critical Time Intervention Case Management Model are the primary focus of the second pilot site.

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### Statewide Rollout

A community roundtable and planning session was held on November 18, 2013 in Pinellas County and facilitated by LTC Yesenia Roque representing the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington D.C. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss statewide mobilization and organization of agency, institutional and organizational initiatives serving service members, veterans and their families into a comprehensive, coordinated, easily-accessible, user-friendly and sustainable network. Community stakeholders included the VA, Pinellas County Housing Authority, Veterans Peer Support Specialists, Pinellas County Jail staff and community service providers.

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### Key Stakeholder Involvement

The JDTR Project Director left the program with only 6 months left out of a 5 year grant and a new Project Director will be winding down the grant. There have been many changes in leadership at the state level recently, but the Statewide Veterans Advisory Council continues to meet and work on coming up with strategic plans to address the growing needs of Florida veterans and their families. More than 12% of Florida's population are veterans and that percentage is growing larger and larger. Florida leaders are well aware of the growing needs of veterans and their families and appear to be committed to finding solutions for this special population.

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### Leadership and Organizational Changes at the State Level

The Florida Certification Board is developing six webinars building on the experiences of both pilot sites. These webinars will be offered statewide. Subject matter areas will include: Lessons Learned- Evaluation, Lessons Learned- Providers, VA Benefits and Services, Services Coordination for Veterans, Preparing to Meet the Needs of Returning Veteran, and Peer Specialists. The JDTR program is responsible for training (and Certifying) 89 Veteran Peer Specialists. The Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association has provided webinars on: Complex Trauma and Addiction: Making the Connection and Secondary Traumatic Stress Exposure: The Perils of Trauma Work.

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### Training

Legislation was recently passed authorizing the chief judge of each judicial circuit court to establish a Military Veterans and Service Members Court Program for veterans convicted of a criminal offense who suffer from a mental illness, traumatic brain injury, substance use disorder, or psychological problems as a result of military service.

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### Policy Changes

The majority of roll out activities include the expansion in Pinellas County, growth of veteran treatment courts across the state, state certification for veteran peer support, and a new option in the state to feature a "V" on veteran's driver licenses. The Department of Children and Families, Office of Consumer Affairs has been modified to "Consumer, Family, and Veterans Affairs". A new Veterans Liaison position has been created in DCF. The Statewide Veterans Advisory Council was created to help veterans and their families to achieve a quality of life that supports their military heritage and secures a promising future. The council is committed to developing a Strategic Action Plan that can withstand the inevitable changes in public agency and private organizational leadership.