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NJ Employment, Homeless & Education Committee
National Employment Commission
Past State Commander
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2021- 2022 POSITION PAPER & VISION

"The Mission of The American Legion's Department of New Jersey's Veterans Employment, Homelessness & Education Committee, is to take actions that affect the economic wellbeing of veterans, including issues relating to veterans' education, employment, home loans, vocational rehabilitation, homelessness, and small business."

1. Core Mission –
 - a. Employment for veterans and spouses
 - b. Veteran Homelessness
 - c. Education (GI Bill)
2. Cause & Effect behind our Core Mission is four-fold: mental health issues and possibly leading to suicide, unemployment, homelessness & criminal justice involvement.
3. Employment – The recent average of unemployment for Gulf War II era veteran men and women is 5% (this time last year 9%). Admittedly this is somewhat palatable compared to the national overall rate of 7% but we still pursue opportunities, publish, and encourage all Posts and Counties to pursue veteran unemployment on a local level. Statewide career fairs will be reconsidered if we see an upward trend of unemployment, and by industry.
4. Veteran Homelessness – This has become our ongoing Vision because of the documented need of our at-risk and homeless veterans and their families. Our strategy includes the following tactics:
 - a. Traditional indoor Stand Downs – We have served 490 at risk veterans at our 3 – ACRSD (Atlantic City Regional Stand Downs), serving at least 8 counties. Respective services included VA clinical and benefits; claims, housing, employment, legal and other associated "products", with 465 providers and volunteers. Our 4th is scheduled for September 8, 2021, with an estimated 175 veterans attending.
 - b. Mobile Stand Downs - When we realized we could not have the traditional Atlantic City Regional in-house event because of COVID, we developed a methodology wherein we take all respective services to known homeless veteran

- areas. We were able to serve 250 veterans, assisted by 245 volunteers and service providers. 5 events were completed, serving about 50% of New Jersey.
- c. "Local" Stand Downs – This is our 2nd design to combat veteran homelessness. We conducted 3 events and will continue throughout central and north Jersey. These events served 90 veterans with 130 service providers and volunteers assisting.
 - d. "Drop-off" scenario wherein we provide local Posts with clothing and other resources for our "needy" veterans, planning ongoing.
 - e. Affordable Housing Symposiums – We have conducted 2 sessions to help educate 110 developers, property managers and others regarding available vouchers, tax credits and veteran related services. Direct interaction especially with developers will continue.
 - f. Large Corporations Partnerships – Continue to engage Fortune 100/500 NJ corporations to explain the homeless veteran tragedy and remedies to curtail and end this calamity, with their assistance for the above tactics and other larger scale housing projects. Our ongoing partners include Walmart, L'Oréal and NJM Insurance Group.
5. Veteran Suicides – I and as a member of the NJ Veterans Service Council, and the Wilmington VA Medical Director, realized the need for total NJ coordination of public and private agencies and organization to combat this tragedy. Therefore, I designed and authored the KOVA (Keep Our Veterans Alive) Strategic Plan to address this statewide need. It outlines, summarize, and provides immediate and long-term actions and guidance to combat the ongoing epidemic of veteran suicides in New Jersey. All VSO's have signed-on as "Champions", the 3 VA's that serve NJ, as well as many County Prosecutors, NJ State Parole Board, NJ Casino Control Commission, NJ Reentry Corporation, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and many others.
 6. Atlantic City Air Show – The Chairman was asked again to coordinate and manage "Veterans Row" on August 18, 2021, from 1100 – 1600. There will be 19 veteran related service providers at "show Central". Post 61 and Atlantic County Commander Pat Tatum will be the lead for the Legion tent, supported by Bernie Kofoet, EH&E Vice Chair.

Please contact me for all questions and comments.

Note: See [American Legion - Department of New Jersey \(njamericanlegion.org\)](http://njamericanlegion.org) for ongoing accomplishments, current and planned activities, and other resources.