

MAC



Veterans Affairs Department: Contracting Model and Transition to One-Stop

MAC Annual Conference – September 24, 2012
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County of Ottawa



History

- Soldier's and Sailor's Relief Commission until 2006
 - State Statute of 1899
 - System - Lack of Administration and Oversight
 - Excessive and Inappropriate Expenditures
 - Very Little Coordination in Community



History

- Shift to Veterans Affairs Committee in 2006
 - State Statute of 1953 – Improved Structure
 - County Commission appoints and has seats on committee
 - Still functionally had volunteer coordinators, only limited administrative assistance from County
 - Calls for Emergency Assistance to Committee Members at Home
 - Growing Recognition of Gaps and Needs for Veterans

Study and Recommendation in 2010

- Problems Identified
 - Growing Needs of Veterans
 - Shrinking State Funding
 - Insufficient to Have Volunteer Coordination

- Recommendations
 - Pilot - \$25,000 for Staffing
 - Higher Level Administration
 - Move Towards One-Stop
 - Performance Measurement



VETERANS AFFAIRS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

HISTORY & INTRODUCTION

In 2006 the Board of Commissioners acted to create a Veterans Affairs Committee and an associated Department of Veterans Affairs following concerns regarding the then Soldiers and Sailors Relief Commission. Both structures are authorized by state law as a means to administer county programs and funding for veterans. It was determined that a Veterans Affairs Committee, under the direction and control of the Board of Commissioners and County Administrator, would bring greater attention to the needs of veterans, better organize and administer county programs for veterans, and lead to greater public accountability in the area of appropriate county veterans services and funding.

VETERAN SERVICES BROADLY DESCRIBED

The structure and funding for veterans services and benefits can best be described as being complex. As outlined below, many different organizations are involved in the funding and provision of services to veterans.

There are four primary organizations that provide direct services and benefits to veterans;

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA)
- Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (MDMVA)
- Ottawa County Veterans Affairs Committee (OCVAC)
- Veteran Service Organizations, such as;
 - Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
 - Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)
 - AMVETS (American Veterans)
 - American Legion

Funding for these organizations comes from four primary sources;

- The federal government provides direct benefits to individuals and also grants to veteran service organizations. The direct benefits for individuals are accessed through claims filed directly to the USDVA. In Michigan the USDVA employees are all based in the Detroit area.
- The State of Michigan funds two state veterans' homes, one of which is the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans. There also is the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund (MVTFF), which provides emergency financial assistance for certain expenses to veterans that meet certain criteria. The MVTFF has its own separate committee in our county that approves applications, but checks are distributed through the County from funds provided by the State. The expenditures for this

Contract Model

- Opportunity: recently retired employees of DHS form LLC to bid on work
- Basic Terms of Contract: \$2,083 month, 20 hours per week, county office and support, duties and goals
- Monitored by Administrator's Office and Veterans Affairs Committee

AGREEMENT FOR VETERANS SERVICES

This Agreement is made this ____ day of January, 2012, by and between the County of Ottawa, a Michigan Municipal Corporation, with a principal place of business at 12220 Fillmore, West Olive, Michigan 49460, ("Ottawa County") and Social Services Resources LLC, with its principal place of business at 11720 24th Avenue, Marne, Michigan 49435, ("the Contractor") with reference to the following facts and circumstances:

- A. Ottawa County provides various services to veterans of the county as coordinated by a Veterans Affairs Committee and County Administration.
- B. Ottawa County wishes to work with the Contractor to evaluate current programming and to develop a Department of Veterans Affairs with expanded programming to provide services to veterans in Ottawa County.
- C. The parties have developed this Agreement to outline the responsibilities of each party.

WHEREFORE THE PARTIES AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

I. General Provisions

A. Agreement Period and Termination

- i. This agreement shall be in effect from April 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011. It may be renewed up to two (2) additional one (1) year terms, at the option of Ottawa County on terms to be requested by the parties.
- ii. Ottawa County may terminate this Agreement at any time, on thirty (30) days written notice. The Contractor may terminate this Agreement with thirty (30) days written notice, with the additional responsibility that a



Early Returns

- Improvements to Burial Assistance Program
 - Had not been enforcing \$40,000 asset limits
- Agreement with State for Administration of Michigan Veterans Trust Fund
 - One access point to apply for emergency assistance, administered by professionals with decades of experience
- Coordination and Communication in Veterans Community
 - Website and connections with veterans groups
 - Local media and cable programming



What Are We Measuring

- MVTF Applicants and Payments Approved
- County Emergency Applicants and Payments Approved
- Burial Assistance Applications and Payments Approved
- Applicants Assisted With other Community Resources and Amount of Redirected Expenditures
- Veterans Served by Visiting VA Service Officers and Claims Submitted
- Net County Cost and Net Veteran Assistance



Largest Value

- DHS Background and Expertise ... Connections to Other Resources
 - Administrative expertise in interviewing veterans
 - Extensive knowledge of knowing other community resources to bring to bear
- Office and Support to State/Veteran Organization Counselors
 - Office Environment with Scheduled Appointments ... Efficiency
 - Tracking the Increased Number of "Supported" Appointments



The Future?

- Continue to Review Pilot Project
 - Contract Model ... Is It Still Working
- Track Progress of Key Statistics
- Legislative Initiative ... Responsibility for Federal Claims
 - Backlog and Delay at Detroit Federal Offices
 - Funding for More Counselors to Process Federal Claims