

PROMISE Center News

A Collaboration between VA Hospice and Palliative Care (HPC) and the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP)

D.C. Staff Creates Handbook for Veterans and Families

*By Joy Laramie, Nurse
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It's never easy to approach the topic of the "business" associated with a loved one's death. Benefits, funeral planning, organ donation...it can be an overwhelming process, especially when combined with the grief associated with the loss of a loved one.

Helping Veterans and their family members to navigate these issues is an important part of providing end of life care. The Decedents' Affairs Officer is an important member of the Team and is a valuable resource with extensive knowledge regarding these

issues.

At the Washington, DC VAMC, the Palliative Care Team is in almost daily contact with our Decedents' Affairs Officer. Over the years, members of the Palliative Care Team became more familiar with the questions commonly asked by Veterans and their families as they worked to "get their final affairs in order". It became clear that while some chose to delay decisions and planning, many were relieved to have information in advance so that they knew what would be needed, and were able to avoid surprises in the process.

In an effort to help, the Palliative Care Team and our Decedents' Affairs

Officer collaborated on a handbook that could be provided to Veterans and their families, which address the most common concerns and questions. It includes: Frequently needed phone numbers such as the various Regional Offices; Information regarding issues such as cremation, Organ/anatomical donation, Autopsy, and Burial in a Veteran Cemetery; Picking up personal belongings, Obtaining copies of the Death Certificate, and suggests some important questions to ask a Funeral Director.

The handbook is provided to Veterans and/or family members as requested, or when it is deemed appropriate by the Team.

Oklahoma City VA to host training for all disciplines on 11/27

Starting November 27th from 5:30-7:00 PM CST, the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center is going to offer ELNEC for Veterans (End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium for Veterans) free to everyone. This training focuses on care for Veterans at end of life and is geared for all disciplines (not just nursing). The 8 module training consortium will be presented by physicians, psychologists, nurses, social workers and others and is available to VA staff and potentially community hospice programs through their local Hospice Veterans Partnership. Each module will be taught twice a month as to allow everyone ample opportunity to attend.

ELNEC for Veterans Modules:
Module 1: Introduction to Palliative Care for Veterans
Module 2: Pain Management
Module 3: Symptom Management
Module 4: Ethics
Module 5: Cultural Considerations
Module 6: Communication
Module 7: Loss, Grief & Bereavement
Module 8: Final Hours

Contact Matt Earnest at matthew.earnest@va.gov for more information. Staff can participate via Microsoft Live Meeting.

Visit the VA PROMISE Center website at :

<http://www.cherp.research.va.gov/PROMISE.asp>

Data Inquiries:

Do you have questions about your data? Would you like your data presented differently? Are there additional data you would like to see? Please contact our Data Manager, Dawn Smith, at dawn.smith2@va.gov.



The Comprehensive End-of-Life Care PROMISE Center, Philadelphia VAMC. Copyright (C) 2012 Department of Veterans Affairs. All rights reserved

The Implementation Center Recognizes Excellence

By Diane Jones

The Implementation Center is pleased to recognize VA staff who exemplify excellence and dedication to increasing Veterans' access to high quality hospice and palliative care that is comprehensive in scope and seamless in delivery. The following stories represent a small sample of the many ways VA staff are reaching beyond their goals to meet the needs of Veterans and their families.

VISN 1: Congratulations to Dr. Patrick Daly and Melissa Thompson, RN, who were recently honored with an I CARE Award for demonstrating excellence as champions of hospice and palliative care (HPC) in VISN 1. They led a major expansion of palliative care consultations and dedicated hospice beds; helped facilities improve Bereaved Family Satisfaction scores; and disseminated palliative care education to hundreds of VA staff throughout VA.



Left to right: Melissa Thompson, Dr. Pat Daly, Dr. Michael Mayo-Smith, Network Director

Oklahoma City VA Medical Center: Kudos to Matt Earnest, RN, BSN, CHPN, who developed an ELNEC for Veterans training program open to VA and community hospice staff through their Hospice-Veteran Partnership. Each of the eight ELNEC for Veterans modules will be taught twice a month and will be broadcast via Live Meeting for those unable to attend.



Kathleen Hayes, RN

Dayton VA Medical Center: On Thursday, November 8, 2012 at the National Museum of the United States in Dayton, Ohio, Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor and Thomas N. Moe, Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, inducted 15 members of the Class of 2011 into the Hall of Fame, including Colonel (Retired) Kathleen Hayes (Dayton VA Medical Center), a Shelby County United States Army Veteran and Army Reserve Operation Iraqi Freedom. Among many other achievements, she is recognized for her leadership role in founding and co-chairing the Ohio Hospice-Veteran Partnership. Kathleen also serves on the Board of Directors for the American Veterans Heritage Center in Dayton; she is an active member of the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA), a life member of the VFW and AMVETS, a Board Member of the Midwest Center for Home, Hospice & Palliative Care Education and a member of the American Legion. She also serves as a volunteer nurse on Honor Flights to Washington, D.C. for Shelby County Veterans.

VISN 18 and Phoenix VA Medical Center: A big round of applause goes to Maureen Dicker, VISN 18 Program Manager and Betty Rodgers, MSN, RN, CHPN (Phoenix VAMC) for expanding the number of hospices participating in VISN 18 HVPs to 77. In the Phoenix area alone 57 hospices have joined the local HVP and 2 hospices have reached We Honor Veterans Level 4. VISN 18's HPC program included HVP in their FY12 strategic plan; monthly conference calls were held to review facility plans as well as discuss ideas and challenges. VA staff invited community hospices to "brown bag" meetings Phoenix where they are discussing better ways to communicate across venues and planning educational events to train each other. Two participating hospices drove over 150 miles to attend the meetings.

Please contact Lyndella Talamanco at lyndella.talamanco@va.gov if you would like to be added to the BFS-ICARE, HVP Workgroup, Palliative Care Pharmacists, or PC-ICU e-mail groups or to be given access to the CELC Implementation Center SharePoint. Regular notices will be sent to these email groups announcing the agenda and link for each Live Meeting. Relevant resources and educational materials will be disseminated as they are developed or identified.

We Honor Veterans: Hospice Professionals on a Mission To Serve

By Gwynn Sullivan, Director, Access, National Hospital and Palliative Care Organization



WE HONOR VETERANS

We Honor Veterans (WHV) is a national hospice provider awareness campaign conducted by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The campaign focuses on respectful inquiry, compassionate listening and grateful acknowledgment to better serve our nation's Veterans at the end of life. Since its inception, over 1600 hospices across the United States have enrolled as WHV Partners.

WHV also provides educational tools and resources for hospices, state hospice organizations, Hospice-Veteran Partnerships and VA facilities to:

- Promote Veteran-centric educational activities,
- Increase organizational capacity to serve Veterans,
- Support development of strategic partnerships, and
- Increase access and improve quality of care.

Why WHV?

Veterans and their families deserve the best quality end-of-life care and services – and every hospice in the country is caring for Veterans, whether they are aware of it or not.

Since most Veterans are not enrolled in the VA healthcare system, many may not be aware of their VA hospice benefits. Given that there are many more hospice providers than VA facilities, partnerships established through WHV can facilitate communication, collaboration and coordination of care and benefits for Veterans across VA and community care settings. Ultimately, the goal is to honor Veterans' preferences at the end of life, which can best be accomplished by working together.

What can VA Staff Do?

A key component of the campaign is to promote, encourage and support successful and sustainable VA-hospice relationships. As the single largest provider of healthcare in the nation and the preeminent experts on caring for Veterans, VA facilities have the opportunity to partner with hospice providers as they care for Veterans and their families at the end of life. Specifically, VA staff can:

- Get to know WHV Partners in your community,
- Review WHV resources (see below),
- Collaborate with the state hospice organization and community hospices to form a regional or statewide Hospice-Veteran Partnership,
- Invite community hospices to attend EPEC, ELNEC and other education/training programs,
- Include community hospices in health fairs at your facility or other community events, and
- Share best practices with other VA staff and your community partners.

Online Resources

- Hospice and VA Working Together: Relationship Building Suggestions
- Hospice-Veteran Partnership Toolkit
- Free Online Courses
- And Many Others!

More information about **We Honor Veterans**, Partners and Veteran-centric education and activities can be found at www.wehonorveterans.org or contact veterans@nhpco.org.



Please email Laura.Scott@va.gov with PROMISE

newsletter submissions