

## GERALD SIEREN

Goes to work every day with one mission: **Assist Veterans in need.**

As a Marine Corps Veteran, Sieren not only has a service mentality, but the experiences he gained during his military service help him bond with and gain the trust of Veterans who need mental health or substance use services. He works as the Region 11 coordinator of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program.



*“If this program had existed when I was in need, it would have helped me from so much loss. Now, I use my past personal experiences with Veterans. Knowing where they are, and of the help they need gives me that edge to connect and make easy transitions.”*

Gerald Sieren

Sieren started as a VORP coordinator in 2015 in the La Crosse area, but has since moved to southeastern Wisconsin. Because he is formerly homeless and has suffered from mental health issues, Sieren said that he knows how things can be for in-need Veterans.

Coordinators like Sieren work throughout the state to connect Veterans to community services and provide case management and support with a special focus on treatment and recovery. He has an office, but rarely sees it as he spends

his day working directly with Veterans throughout his region, which includes Green, Rock, Walworth, Racine, and Kenosha counties.

A big part of Sieren's job as a VORP coordinator is building relationships with those in the community and working with them to better serve Veterans. He often collaborates with County Veterans Service Offices, Veteran service organizations, local government agencies, community nonprofits and others. Building those

relationships opens the door for Veterans to also receive individualized wrap-around services such as housing, food, clothing, furniture, education, and employment.

“I appreciate knowing that once I provide Jerry with a Veteran's contact information, he will make contact with them in a matter of hours rather than days,” Rock County CVSO John Solis said. “His promptness shows our Veterans their needs are taken seriously, and resources are being accessed to meet

those needs.”

Recently, Sieren met a homeless Veteran living in Lake Geneva. The Veteran, who served in Iraq, is disabled due to a car accident and was living in his vehicle with his wife and three children. He was not enrolled with the USDVA’s healthcare system at the time.

Sieren met with the Veteran at the CVSO office in Walworth County, and immediately came up with a plan. He enrolled the Veteran in the VA healthcare system and filed a claim. The Veteran made an appointment for mental health for his PTSD, and Sieren connected him with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for housing, and got him a fuel card to get to his appointment.

Today, the Veteran is receiving non-service connected pension and filed his claim for PTSD with the VA. He was awarded a housing voucher, and found housing in the Beloit area. His children are in school, and he’s actively going to the VA Medical Center for treatment.

The WDVA’s Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program started out as a pilot program in 49 counties in 2014 and recently expanded to all 72 counties in Wisconsin. Since the program’s inception, coordinators have helped about 500 Veterans obtain mental health services, substance and alcohol treatment, and other supportive services.

If you know of a Veteran in need, contact Sieren at 262-225-7636.

### **Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program**

The Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP) connects Veterans to community services, provides case management and support, with a special focus on treatment and recovery.

### **VORP staff work with community partners and professionals to provide assistance and connection to:**

- Mental Health Services
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Financial Assistance
- Housing and Utilities
- Claims and Benefits Assistance
- Employment and Education
- Transportation
- And many other services

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**John Solis**

*Rock County Veteran Service Officer*