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## **In Less Than One Year 500 Veterans Enrolled in WDVA Program That Helps At-Risk Individuals**

### ***Governor Evers Budget Proposal Includes Eight Permanent Positions, \$1.5 Million to Make Mental Health Project Permanent***

CHIPPEWA FALLS – Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Secretary-designee Mary Kolar announced today that in less than one year, the WDVA has enrolled over 500 veterans in the *Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP)* that provides case management and support, as well as connects veterans to community services, with a special focus on mental health and substance abuse treatment and recovery. Governor Tony Evers’ 2019-2021 budget proposal seeks to make the VORP, which was funded by the Legislature as a project in April 2018, a permanent program.

“The work that the VORP does in this state fills a gap in terms of case management for veterans with mental health, substance abuse, and other treatment needs,” Secretary-designee Kolar said.

Since April 2018, in addition to the services provided by the WDVA, *more than 550 veterans have been served by over 1,200 community connections*, wrap-around services provided by community partners such as housing, food, furniture, child care, legal assistance, education, training, employment, and more. All who have served in any component of the US Armed Forces including those that have previously served and continue to serve in the National Guard and Reserve are eligible for services under VORP.

“This is a unique program in that our VORP coordinators throughout the state don’t wait for veterans to come to them,” Kolar added. “Rather, our coordinators know their communities well and know where to find needy veterans, sometimes even under bridges, in railroad yards, along rivers and many other locations. Once our coordinators have made contact with a veteran, they are able to utilize our program resources, while also pulling in other community resources we may not have, to assist that veteran.”

Governor Evers has proposed permanent continuation of the VORP, providing the WDVA with eight permanent Regional Veterans Outreach and Recovery Coordinator positions, supported by a clinical coordinator to serve all 72 counties in Wisconsin. The proposal includes \$1.5 million to pay for program costs such as private mental health or substance abuse treatment and the transportation to those appointments.

The VORP began as a pilot project in 2014 that focused on assisting homeless veterans with substance abuse problems in rural areas. At the conclusion of the federal grant period, given the program’s success, the WDVA sought to expand the program to all of Wisconsin, ultimately receiving temporary funding from the Legislature in April 2018.