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WDVA Receives National “Pillars of Excellence Award” for Statewide Veterans Mental Health Program

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) was awarded the Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award today for its Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP). The award, which recognizes outstanding programs that support veterans, was presented to WDVA Secretary Mary Kolar at the 2020 National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) Mid-Winter Conference today.

VORP is a comprehensive, coordinated outreach, treatment and recovery support program that brings together government and community resources to eliminate barriers for veterans who are struggling.

“We’re making a difference in our communities with this innovative program,” WDVA Secretary Mary Kolar said. “There are many instances where the VORP outreach team has helped to prevent suicide, homelessness, or the loss of a job. We’ve helped hundreds of veterans successfully complete treatment programs, and we’ve stood by them as they’ve received medical services and as they’ve healed and recovered. Then, we’ve provided them with the tools they need to be successful after.”

The hallmark of VORP is its reliance on WDVA staff’s direct contact with veterans in need, focusing first on developing a trusting relationship. VORP outreach and recovery coordinators work as case managers, each assigned to a specific geographic region. They work with veterans wherever they are located, including shelters, motels, and uninhabitable areas such as streets, rail yards, cars they call home, or remote forest and river bank areas throughout Wisconsin.

VORP outreach and recovery coordinators build vast regional networks of community partners across the state that offer a broad array of programs and services. They work with key local partners including housing programs, mental health and substance use services and veteran organizations to help participants obtain stable housing, connect to proper healthcare and ensure that healthcare is continual and effective.

Since April 2018, VORP has assisted over 1,000 participants with life-sustaining services. More than 1,500 connections to community resources have been made while VORP provided over 3,000 direct services including emergency housing, transportation, financial assistance and treatment for those unable to obtain substance use disorder rehabilitation through the VA health system.

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