



JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERANS NETWORK

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About the JIVN

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a network of community, local, state, and federal partners that identifies and develops innovative and holistic approaches to assist justice-involved veterans.

VISION STATEMENT

The Justice-Involved Veterans Network identifies processes and best practices, helps create public awareness, and works to improve the lives of veterans caught up in the criminal justice system.



"Good Morning San Quentin" by Stephen Worrell, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

JIVN Network Meeting in San Francisco

On February 8-9, 2017, the Justice-Involved Veterans Network (JIVN) met in San Francisco, California, for a two-day meeting that included:

- A site visit and overview of veterans programming at [San Quentin State Prison](#)
- An overview of the [San Francisco County Jail's COVER](#) program for veterans
- A panel discussion with the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#)
- A panel discussion with local judges from veterans treatment courts in San Francisco and Santa Clara County

JIVN is sponsored by the [National Institute of Corrections \(NIC\)](#).

As a center of learning, innovation and leadership that shapes and advances correctional practice and public policy, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) devotes a portion of its focus to the critical needs of justice-involved veterans. Our goal for the JIVN is to ultimately improve outcomes for veterans throughout the continuum of criminal justice.



DAY 1

On day 1 of the meeting, members of the JIVN were divided into groups and assigned to site visits at San Quentin Prison and the largest of three facilities that are part of the San Francisco County Jail.

Back row: Emilio Rojas, John Darcy, and prison staff; front row: Cindy Booth, Sabrina Seronello, Leslie Currier, Diana Williams, James Harms, Tim Jeffries, Ron Davis, Steve Emrick, Ronald Taylor, Mary Donovan, Tony Stines, James Basinger, Madeline Tenney, and prison staff



San Quentin State Prison Site Visit

BY DEANNE BENOS

There are approximately 3,800 inmates of five security levels currently housed at San Quentin prison, of which 2,500 are engaged in programming. An estimated 350 are veterans. On Wednesday, February 8, 2017, members of the JIVN participated in a listening session with inmates and staff engaged in prison-based support programs for veterans, including:

- [Veterans Healing Veterans from the Inside Out](#)
- The Veterans Group of San Quentin
- [Marin Shakespeare](#)
- The Prison Yoga Project

Veterans Healing Veterans from the Inside Out is a peer-to-peer support group for incarcerated veterans that was founded at San Quentin in 2012 by incarcerated Marine Ron Self. Self said he was inspired to create the program as a result of his personal challenges coming to terms with the complex trauma he experienced during more than a decade of intensive combat. The program was established with the support of Jacques Verduin, the founder and executive director of Insight-Out, and Mary Donovan, the program's current executive director. As of today, the program's total enrollment is about 50 to 60 incarcerated veterans at any given time, including 5 to 6 groups of 12 participants each that run for an average of 12 months.

Ron Self helped lead the JIVN listening session with approximately 20 inmates. During the listening session, inmates reported to the group that they found they needed support in “unpacking” trauma through the Veterans Healing Veterans program and a network of other services made available to them throughout the facility. Most of the veterans stated that one of their greatest challenges upon release from prison will be locating affordable housing, although several have been able to coordinate with George Kennedy of the VA’s Menlo Park Division, which helps veterans prepare for transition back to the community by providing links to resources, including housing.

The listening session was conducted in the prison chapel and was followed by a brief tour of the grounds of the institution. It was graciously facilitated by a team of San Quentin staff and volunteers including:

- Warden Ron Davis
- San Quentin Community Partnership Manager Steve Emrick
- Veterans Healing Veterans Founding Executive Director Mary Donovan
- Madeline Tenney and Diana Williams of The Veterans Group of San Quentin
- Founding Executive Director of Marin Shakespeare Lesley Currier
- Director of Facilitation and Mentorship, Veterans Healing Veterans, Emilio Rojas
- VA Menlo Park Division Counselor George Kennedy

San Francisco County Jail “COVER” Program

BY BERNARD EDELMAN

A program of the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department, Community of Veterans Engaged in Restoration or “COVER” is designed for veterans in jail either awaiting trial or sentencing or serving a short sentence of a year or more. Seventeen veterans were housed in a 48-bed pod in the 720-bed jail, although because of overcrowding throughout the California correctional system, some older non-veteran inmates were housed in the pod as well. In similar facilities in other jurisdictions, the pod might be on a single floor, wing, unit, or dorm.

The pod is a well-lit place, with military service banners and Old Glory festooning the cinderblock walls where veterans, regardless of their character of discharge, are provided with an opportunity to address their issues for successful reintegration into society after serving in the military and its aftermath.

COVER provides in-jail/post-release case management services funded by the sheriff’s department and supported by a dozen supporting agencies and community groups. Perhaps chief among them is [Swords to Plowshares](#), founded more than three decades ago by Vietnam veteran Michael Blecker.

During JIVN’s visit, Ron Perez of Swords to Plowshares (and formerly on the board of directors for Vietnam Veterans of America) led a group



JIVN members visiting Captain Paulson and Alison Riker from the San Francisco County Jail COVER Program (left to right: Bernard Edelman, ret. General Butch Tate, Glenn Watson, Greg Crawford, Chief Blair Myhand, Nicholas Stefanovic, Alison Riker, Raul Banasca, Elizabeth Burek, Judge John DeMarco, Captain Kevin Paulson)



discussion among eleven veterans with varying lengths of stay, including one who had been in the pod for one day to another who had been in the pod for a reported 32 months. The veterans were remarkably transparent in discussing the nature of the crime that landed them in jail as well as the virtues of being housed with other veterans. One of the younger veterans, in fact, told how he looks up to some of his older comrades who help him navigate through his time in lock-up.

According to the jail, these veterans pose few, if any, behavioral problems, unlike inmates housed in other areas. They look out for one another in a manner harkening back to the bond formed between troops in a combat zone. Some even make their beds with hospital corners.

Housing veterans in this manner makes it easy for a VJO, a Veterans Justice Outreach worker from the VA, to meet with individuals, helping them with benefits, setting up appointments for them when they get out, and linking them to services in a continuum of care when they are released from confinement.

“

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.

— George Washington

”

DAY 2

Bay Area VA Health Care Systems Dialogue

BY JOEL ROSENTHAL, PH.D.

On February 9, 2017, six staff members representing the two Bay Area VA health care systems, San Francisco (SFVA) and Palo Alto (PAVA), joined JIVN for an informative panel presentation and dialogue. Panel members included:

- Jessica Blue-Howells, LCSW, National Coordinator, Health Care for Reentry Veterans
- Diana Nicoll, MD, PhD, Chief of Staff, SFVA
- John Johnson, LCSW, Health Care for Homeless Veterans Justice Programs Coordinator, SFVA
- David Grillo, LCSW, Homeless Outreach and Veterans Justice Programs Coordinator, PAVA
- George Kennedy, Health Care for Reentry Veterans Specialist, PAVA
- Jenna Ferrara, LCSW, Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist, SFVA
- Matt Stimmel, Ph.D., Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist, PAVA

The proceedings were moderated by network member Joel Rosenthal, Ph.D., National Training Director, VA Veterans Justice Programs.

To begin, each panelist offered network members a topic for discussion warranting the network's attention. Additional topics covered during the panel included the VA panel's perspective on the provision of services to justice-involved veterans and the associated critical collaboration between the VA and justice system partners.

The panel discussion also highlighted the VA's extensive continuum of health care and benefits, the complementary services available through community providers, and the continuing shared challenge in ensuring that all justice-involved veterans are afforded needed care and treatment. The VA's targeted and extensive range of services for justice-involved veterans was also addressed.

Questions of the panel by network members revolved around the use of Veterans Reentry Search Service (VRSS), a veteran identification system. Jessica Blue-Howells said that "VRSS is providing a much better opportunity to be able to identify all veterans to be able to provide services to."

The panel also addressed the means of easing the transition from active duty to civilian life and strategies for the provision of both benefits assistance and healthcare to veterans during their time of incarceration.



“

To see veterans in the court when they are released and to see the joy they experience is...why I have been able to be an advocate.

— Diana Nicoll,
MD, PhD, Chief of Staff, SFVA

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CALENDAR

September 2017

26 Austin, Texas

27 San Antonio, Texas

Panel Discussion with Local Judges from San Francisco and Santa Clara County Veterans Treatment Courts

BY JOEL ROSENTHAL, PH.D.

Following the first panel discussion with Bay Area VA health care systems, network members heard from and dialogued with Bay Area Judges Jeffrey Ross, JD, San Francisco County Veterans Justice Court, and Stephen Manley, JD, Santa Clara County Veterans Treatment Court. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Joel Rosenthal. Based on their extensive experience with a variety of collaborative treatment courts, both Judges were spirited in their assessment of the role of Veterans Treatment Courts and a variety of related issues.

They also provided suggestions to the network regarding topical areas of attention, which included addressing the needs of veterans who are not eligible for VA services. Judge Manley reported that “the fact [an offender] is not eligible for the VA is not relevant at all . . . This collaboration and this willingness to keep working with anybody is what makes the difference.”

The panel further discussed the critical importance of increased capacity for residential treatment both within the VA and in the community more generally. Judge Ross says, “rarely, but occasionally, I have had someone in jail as the only safe place for him because there were not enough beds.” Judge Ross also cited a need for the development of an effective and useable risk/needs assessment tool for justice-involved veterans.

Additional topics included the essential role of Veterans Treatment Courts, integration of care and treatment across the continuum of justice with emphasis on the shared responsibilities of the VA and community justice partners, and the role of reentry courts in serving justice-involved veterans.

Questions of the judges by network members revolved around how to address barriers to establishing a Veterans Treatment Court, the importance of mentors in these courts, and the feasibility of a well-developed risk assessment tool to differentiate the extent of risk across domestic violence cases.

JIVN Member in the Spotlight

Chief Blair Myhand has 23 years of experience as a local law enforcement officer. He has spent the past 12 years working in Apex, NC, where he pioneered veteran crisis intervention training (CIT) to teach law enforcement officers from around the country how to respond to veterans in crisis out in the community. Myhand is also a U.S. Army veteran and has served in the Army National Guard with two combat deployments: one to Afghanistan from 2004-2005 and one to Iraq from 2009-2010.

Myhand is now a charter member of the Justice-Involved Veterans Network (JIVN), sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections. The



Veterans Treatment Court Panel Discussion (left to right, Judges Jeffrey Ross and Stephen Manley, Moderator Dr. Joel Rosenthal)

JIVN includes law enforcement representatives in the network to be inclusive of the entire continuum of criminal justice. “Law enforcement is usually the first to come into contact with the veteran,” Myhand says, “and we often determine the path they are set upon in the criminal justice system. We can either take a step to prevent recidivism when possible, or we can simply dump the veteran into a system that is not always prepared to effectively deal with them.”

The veteran CIT class relies heavily on reintroducing military veteran police officers on what it is like to be a veteran of the U.S. military. “We familiarize [officers] with veteran-specific issues stemming from difficulties following military service,” Myhand says. “I hope that, together with JIVN, we can encourage other law enforcement agencies to adopt this program as an effective approach to working with veterans who are in crisis out in the community.”

The class covers topics such as substance abuse disorders, homelessness, combat trauma (PTSD, TBI, etc.), anniversary dates and survivor’s guilt, and veterans treatment courts.

When asked about his role in the JIVN, Myhand says, “I see a group of people who are committed to serving the veterans who served us. These folks dedicate time apart from their paying jobs to make a difference in people’s lives. More importantly, they all recognize that the need is bigger than any one of us individually. They all see how successes at the local level can have a greater impact in the lives of the justice-involved veteran when implemented in other areas....I am honored to be included as part of this network. In the end, I hope I can say that I had a hand in making a difference and in building something that lasts far beyond us all.”

The JIVN held its first official network meeting in February 2017. Of the group, Myhand says, “The challenge is the same as with any individual program: keeping the momentum going. If we continue to throw a shovel of coal into the oven then the steam will build and the engine will continue to roar.”

NIC Veterans Initiatives

The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) partnered with author and JIVN member, Bernard Edelman, to develop a white paper on veterans treatment courts (VTCs) and to bring awareness to the unique issues of justice-involved veterans. [*Veterans Treatment Courts: A Second Chance for Vets Who Have Lost Their Way*](#) and its executive summary were officially released in [a live webinar event on May 17, 2016](#). *Veterans Treatment Courts* served as a platform for NIC to pursue other veteran specific initiatives, including a [live national broadcast](#) bearing the same name as the white paper and a survey of veterans treatment courts.

Additionally, NIC has partnered with the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Center for Court Innovation to develop the first set of screening tools and a case planning protocol specific to veterans that factors in the complexities of war trauma. These tools are currently being pilot tested in three jurisdictions: Billings, MT; King County, Seattle, WA; and Tampa, FL.



Chief Blair Myhand,
Clayton, N.C. Police Department



*Veterans Treatment Courts:
A Second Chance for Vets
Who Have Lost Their Way*

Veterans Compendium Project

NIC is looking to extend the veterans treatment court white paper project to include more of the continuum of criminal justice, from arrest, to local jail, and then on the back end of the criminal justice system with prison and reentry.

NIC is working collaboratively with JIVN members to identify promising and innovative practices (e.g., specialized housing and veteran-specific programming) in local jails and state prisons and how the VA interacts in both settings, assists with benefits, promotes continuity of care, and links veterans to services (e.g., treatment, education, and housing).

NIC staff and consultants have visited the San Francisco County Jail “COVER” program and San Quentin State Prison as part of this initiative. NIC will visit local jails in Cuyahoga County, Cleveland, OH; Orange County, FL; and King County, Seattle, WA, as well as additional prisons sites, including Stafford Creek Correctional Facility in Aberdeen, WA; Edinburg Correctional Facility at Camp Atterbury in Indiana; and one additional site to be determined. From these visits, NIC will highlight promising practices for veteran-specific programming in a white paper projected to be released in early fiscal year 2018.



In December 2016, NIC officially established the Justice-Involved Veterans Network (JIVN). The JIVN is a cross-divisional effort between the NIC community services, jails, and prisons divisions in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The network is inclusive of the continuum of criminal justice and ultimately looks to identify gaps in services and improve outcomes for veterans.

RESOURCES

The Justice-Involved Veterans Network (JIVN) is sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. To learn more about the JIVN and NIC-sponsored veteran specific initiatives, please click [here](#).

[National Institute of Corrections \(NIC\)](#)

[Justice-Involved Veterans \(NIC\)](#)

[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#)

[The Bureau of Justice Assistance \(BJA\)](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\), Veterans and Military Families](#)

[National Center for PTSD](#)

[Justice For Vets](#)

[Vietnam Veterans of America](#)

JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERANS NETWORK (JIVN)

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