

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the United States flag waving on a tall pole against a clear blue sky. The flag is positioned diagonally, with the top left corner near the top left of the frame and the bottom right corner near the bottom right. The flag's stars and stripes are clearly visible. A dark blue rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text.

LAKSHORE REGIONAL ENTITY

VETERAN NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

FISCAL YEAR 2025
SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

The Veteran Navigator (VN) role was established to connect veterans and military families of all branches, eras, and discharge types to various federal, state, and local resources. These resources are designed to provide comprehensive support for issues related to mental health; substance use disorders, housing, and other unique circumstances that may impact veterans.

Since the LRE's VN program began in fiscal year (FY) 2017, the regional VN has actively engaged veterans and military families throughout the region. This engagement has provided crucial support and empowered community partners to address their needs.

The VN role includes four primary functions: outreach, support, referral network, and expertise. This report provides information about activities within each function.

1. Success Stories	page 3
Highlighted success stories for each quarter FY25.	
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Engage in outreach activities to reach veterans. Work with individual veterans to assess their needs, connect them to services, and address challenges that may negatively affect their health and well-being.	
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Establish a robust referral network to assist veterans in accessing services and support to meet their needs.	
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SUCCESS STORIES

Quarter 1

- Helped a homeless veteran get connected with mental health services, peer support, and a veteran service officer after escaping a domestic violence situation with her five children.
- Assisted a homeless veteran with resources to find a job, transportation to that job, and peer support.
- Coordinated with a homeless veteran to get a better-paying job and obtain resources to obtain permanent residence.

Quarter 2

- Worked with a suicidal veteran to successfully receive inpatient mental health and additional resources needed to achieve a better quality of life.
- Coordinated with over 7 homeless or facing homelessness veterans with housing, financial, and benefit resources, all resulting in housing and benefit connections for acquiring permanent residence.
- Supported a female disabled veteran who went from a 0% to a 100% disability rating, which helped her go from homeless to owning her own home.

Quarter 3

- Aided a family member who was a power of attorney holder for a veteran who suffered a sudden stroke. Was able to provide resources for a new home, VSO, VA healthcare enrollment, legal (divorce/child support), SSDI, faith-based resources, and caregiver benefits for the family member.
- Facilitated with eight veterans who were currently or within 30 days of being homeless, to get connected with SSVF for housing or a mortgage lender to obtain a VA home loan.

Quarter 4

- Helped a homeless veteran with his elderly, diabetic mother get a hotel/food within a few hours after being turned away by other services.
- Was able to get trees removed that were causing damage to an elderly veteran's roof, furthering mental health stress – est cost of tree removal \$3700
- Navigated a veteran and family whose porch and ramp collapsed. The house was also not insulated. Was able to help with repairs and ways to help reduce utility costs to improve the budget, reduce stress, and improve mental health.

OUTREACH

The VN participates in community events and collaborative groups that allow them to connect with veterans in the community. This outreach aims to raise awareness through the VN and to interact with veterans to increase their comfort level by contacting the VN for support. These events often raise funds to support veteran needs.

Throughout FY 25, the VN participated in 106 community outreach events for veterans. Some examples are as follows:

Quarter 1

- Allegan County Veteran Stand Down Event - Connected with 22 veterans and community partners to discuss upcoming events and resources for veterans.
- Kent County Vietnam Veteran Group – Connected with 20 veterans and advocates to discuss the VN services and other resources available at the fair.
- Muskegon County Veteran Services Group - Connected with 15 veterans to discuss the VN services and network with other community partners.

Quarter 2

- Grand Valley State University Resource Fair - Connected with 14 veterans during a fundraiser for scholarship funding for veterans killed in action to put their children through college.
- Muskegon County Vietnam Veteran Event – Connected with 16 veterans and active service members at a community engagement event.

Quarter 3

- Armed Forces Thanksgiving Luncheon—Connected with 36 veterans and attended a community event honoring those who served or are still serving.
- United Way Awards Ceremony for Veterans – Connected with 8 veterans in the presentation of their award.

Quarter 4

- Ottawa County Veteran’s Standdown Event - Connected with 60 veterans for an event that provides resources and benefit connections.
- Kent County Homeless Veterans’ Stand Down – Connected with 55 veterans for an event that provides resources to prevent veteran homelessness.

SUPPORT

The primary role of the VN is to provide individualized support to veterans and military families. The VN works with individual veterans and military families to assess their needs, assist them in connecting to services, and help them address challenges that negatively affect their health and well-being. In addition, the regional VN works with the local VNs at HealthWest and West Michigan Community Mental Health Services to coordinate services as appropriate.

During FY25, the VN provided services to 108 veterans, providing services to residents from every county in the region. Below are some specific categories needing support and navigation to applicable resources.

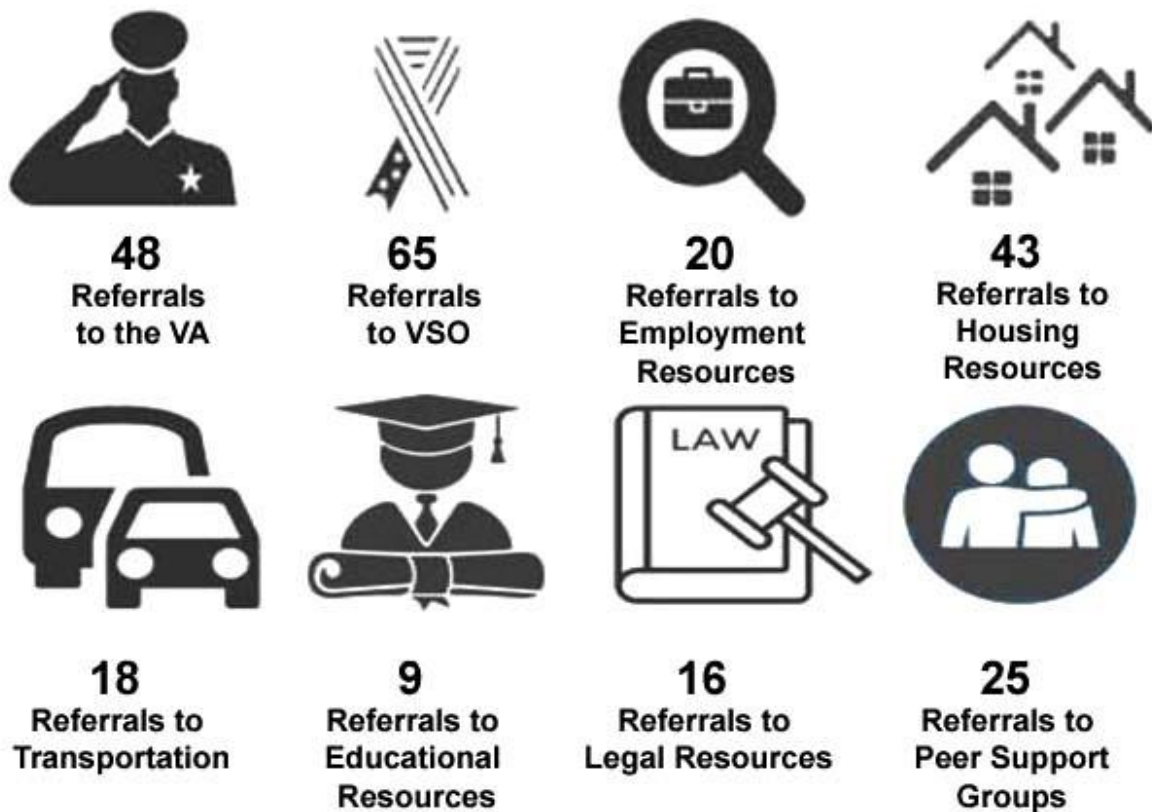
County	#Served	Male	Female	MH Challenges	SUD Challenges	Unemployed	Homeless	Suicidal Ideation
Allegan	14	13	1	11	0	3	1	1
Kent	57	45	12	42	12	20	11	21
Muskegon	10	6	4	10	3	7	3	4
Ottawa	22	21	1	15	3	5	5	5
Lake	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	1
Mason	2	2	0	1	2	0	0	1
Oceana	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total:	108	89	19	82	20	36	20	33



REFERRAL NETWORK

To support veterans and their families in accessing support and resources, the VN works to identify, review, and build relationships with organizations that can support the needs of veterans and military families. This includes establishing strong working relationships with publicly funded systems for behavioral health services, other local providers of services such as housing and transportation, and developing partnerships with volunteer groups that support veterans. These relationships allow the VN to coordinate warm-handoff referrals to services and increase the referrals to the VN for additional support from these organizations.

During FY25, 61% of individuals served were self-referred to the VN Program. Top referrals made by the VN during FY25 included:



RECOMMENDATIONS

The VN seeks to understand local military families' needs and service gaps to determine programming priorities. Based on data collected for veterans served during FY25, the following issues have been identified for consideration:

Outreach for Female Veterans

In FY25, female veterans comprised 22% of individuals served through the VN program within Region 3. Today, women account for more than 11% of the veteran population, a figure projected to grow to nearly 18% by 2040 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [VA], 2023).

Need for Housing Resources

The VN program was challenged with finding appropriate housing resources for the 39% of veterans served. Recommendations were made to veterans to various organizations depending on their housing needs, such as the need for home repairs, shelter, ramps, or financial help with bills.

Identify Military/Veteran Family Resources

The VN reported requests for information on caregiver support resources. Additionally, the VN provided emotional support for veterans navigating complex relationships between spouses or with family. Recommendations we made to help identifying organizations specializing in relationships and fostering a referral process for relevant resources.

Relationships with Veteran-specific organizations

This year, partnerships with V.E.T.S. and Team Rubicon provided additional support for individual veterans. For example, these organizations have provided services and volunteers to repair veterans' homes. The veteran purchases the items needed to do the tasks, then the organization provides volunteers to come to the veteran's home to provide minor maintenance repairs on their home.

ABBREVIATIONS

- LRE – Lakeshore Regional Entity
- VN – Veteran Navigator
- VA – Veteran Affairs
- VSO – Veteran Service Officers
- MH – Mental Health
- SUD – Substance Abuse Disorder