



# Supporting Florida's Veterans

**Florida's United Ways urge the 2020 Florida Legislature to increase support for Veterans regarding peer support, education and housing.**

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## BACKGROUND

- Many veterans face major challenges transitioning back into civilian society and may have service-related health issues that can severely impact their family and work lives.
- Transition challenges include reconnecting with family and re-establishing family roles, becoming part of the community, entering the civilian workforce, college (perhaps for the first time) or returning to a job and trying to catch up, adjusting to a different pace of life and work, and creating structure and adjusting to providing basic necessities (e.g., food, clothing, housing) previously provided by the military.
- Veterans also suffer disproportionately from post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, homelessness, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, and other health and behavioral health issues.

## WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

- Veterans comprise 20% of national suicides, with approximately 22 veterans dying by suicide every day. Military service members, veterans, and their families are a growing community exposed to traumatic events. Involvement in combat that causes losses and fears; injuries associated with combat; repeated deployments and/or relocations; and military sexual violence which often goes underreported.
- In the United States, about 10% of the homeless population are veterans. Among this group, three out of four experience mental and/or substance use disorders. In Florida, there are 4,552 homeless veterans.

## THE PROBLEM

- There is not a standard system for veteran's to transfer for military experience to college credit throughout Florida, leading many veterans to repeat courses or spend an extended time in school before entering the workforce.
- There is not a coordinated entry system for veterans and their families to access services. When veterans request help, it is imperative that they speak with a peer and receive a warm handoff to increase their likelihood in being successful in their search for housing, behavioral health services, legal assistance, healthcare access, knowledge of their benefits and access to employment.
- There is not one database in which veteran serving agencies can transfer referrals, monitor outcomes, eliminate duplication of services and ensure transparency and accountability.

## UNITED WAY'S REQUEST:

**Florida United Ways urge the 2020 Florida Legislature to:**

- **SUPPORT** creation of a centralized portal and peer support referral network through 2-1-1.
- **SUPPORT** addition of language in the Military and Veterans Active Duty charter to standardize transfer of college credits.