

# **DVA Secretary Kolar: Statement regarding investment in veterans mental health services in Gov. Evers' budget**

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MADISON – Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Secretary Mary Kolar thanked Governor Evers for his commitment to increasing access to critical mental health support and case management services for veterans in his 2021-23 budget. The Governor's budget will expand the Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP) to support more veterans who may have a mental health condition or substance use disorder, as well as invest in a suicide prevention and awareness campaign targeted at traditionally underserved veteran populations.

"I thank Governor Evers for his continued commitment to providing critical services such as mental health support for veterans," WDVA Secretary Mary Kolar said. "Our Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program has helped to prevent suicide, homelessness, or the loss of a job. By developing trusting relationships with at-risk veterans, we've been able to help veterans successfully complete treatment programs and access critical medical services, as well as provide the tools veterans need to be successful."

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. The hallmark of VORP is its reliance on staff's direct contact with veterans in need, focusing on first developing a trust relationship that leads to coordinating and delivering wrap-around services in collaboration with community partners.

Regional VORP coordinators build vast 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 mental health support, and ensure that care is continual and effective. In less than three years, VORP has assisted over 1,000 participants with life-sustaining services.

VORP is a nationally renowned program that was awarded the Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award for outstanding programs that support veterans in 2020 by the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs.

Earlier today, Gov. Tony Evers announced his 2021-23 budget will invest more than \$150 million critical mental health services for Wisconsinites and invest in kids and families, farmers, veterans, those with substance use disorders, uninsured or underinsured Wisconsinites, and those experiencing mental health crises.