# **Detailed Lean Improvement Project Report**



For the June 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014, reporting period

**Agency name:** Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs

**Improvement project title:** Incarcerated Veteran Work Release Reentry (Pilot in Pierce and Cowlitz Counties)

**Date improvement project initiated:** In April 2014, a team consisting of WDVA and Department of Corrections (DOC) administrator's travelled to Baltimore, MD, to represent Washington State at a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) sponsored Technical Grant conference to discuss issues surrounding Justice Served Veterans and how best the justice system can address this population.

**Summary:** A committee was formed and a multi-agency process map was developed prior to implementing a work release pilot in two counties, Pierce and Cowlitz, as of October, 2014. WDVA sponsored the creation of a process map detailing an offender's progression through the prison system in an effort to understand the complexities of incarceration prior to release.

The first WA Justice Served Veterans Symposium was held September 23, 2014, in Olympia to meet the requirements of the SAMHSA Technical grant. Presenters at the symposium included Henry J. "Hank" Steadman, Ph.D., President of Policy Research Associates (PRA), who is internationally known for his research in the areas of interfacing behavioral health and criminal justice systems and violence among people with mental disorders, Judge Brett Buckley who is currently the Presiding Judge at Thurston County District Court and also serves as Presiding Judge for Thurston County Mental Health Court and Thurston County Veterans Court, and Judge Vance Peterson, Presiding Judge at the Spokane County Veteran's Enhanced Treatment Court. In attendance were DOC, WDVA, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Mason County Court, Clark County Court, WSU researchers, law enforcement, and veteran nonprofit organizations.

#### **Details:**

<u>Description of the problem</u>: Transition from prison to community is proven through research to be a struggle for many offenders. Work release is the target location for the pilot as the federal VA considers work release to be in the community and the individual is no longer an offender, thus, eligible to apply for all of their earned veteran's benefits and entitlements.

The aim of this pilot is to demonstrate through purposeful attention to those veterans releasing to work release in the target counties, that there can be an impact on successful reintegration to the community. A hurdle for DOC is convincing an offender to consider work release since it is not free to the offender (a daily rate of \$13.50 a day is required per DOC Policy). The aim is to activate as much of the offenders federal benefits while in work release so that the \$13.50 won't be a burden on the offender. Secondly, educating veteran offenders to the advantage of working with a Navigator while in work release who is knowledgeable

## **Detailed Lean Improvement Project Report**



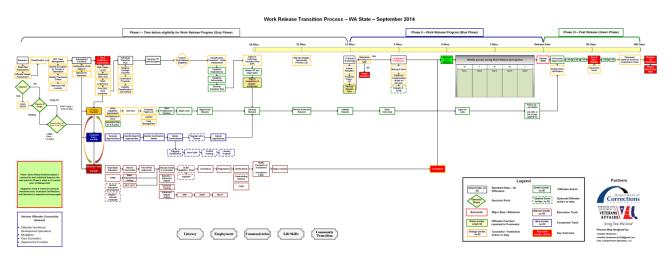
For the June 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014, reporting period

to the nuances of the Veteran Benefit Administration and familiar with county resources for veterans can be extremely advantageous to their reentry to either of those two counties.

<u>Description of the improvement</u>: The WDVA hired a Navigator to work all three work release locations in an effort to have an expert in veteran's benefits and knowledge of the community, all in an effort to ensure successful transition back to the community. The DOC provided space and assistance to the WDVA navigator and through this collaborative effort, veteran offenders are getting assistance with their military benefits and issues relating to employment, housing, and other reentry hurdles faced by offenders leaving prison. DOC is making a concerted effort to identify veterans offenders more upstream in the prison environment to ensure that they are getting the programming and necessary certifications completed before entering work release.

<u>Specific results achieved</u>: It's too soon to provide any specific data due to the infancy of the pilot. However, veteran offenders are getting the information about the pilot and for those who have Pierce or Cowlitz County as their country of origin are encouraged at 18 months prior to release to consider a request to go to work release for reasons that there is a dedicated Navigator at those sites to help with reentry needs and concerns as it relates to their military service.

Optional: Copy of Process Map



**How we involved customers or stakeholders in this effort:** The committee consisted of:

**Department of Corrections**: Field Administrator, Education Administrator, Program Administrator, Work Release Program Administrator, Veteran Service Manager, Management Analyst, Classification Manager, and Correctional Industries

## **Detailed Lean Improvement Project Report**



For the June 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014, reporting period

**WA State Department of Veterans Affairs**: Assistant Director, Program Managers, Incarcerated Veterans Program Coordinator

**Federal Partners:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Puget Sound Health Care System (VHA)

Community Partners: Goodwill, Centers for Excellence, and WorkSource

**Other State Agencies:** Employment Security Department, and Health Care Authority Office of Program Integrity (Veterans Benefit Enhancement/PARIS Projects)

#### **Contact persons:**

Ray Switzer, WDVA Program Manager – <u>Ray@DVA.WA.GOV</u>
Teri Herold-Prayer, DOC Veteran Service Manager – <u>taheroldprayer@DOC1.WA.GOV</u>