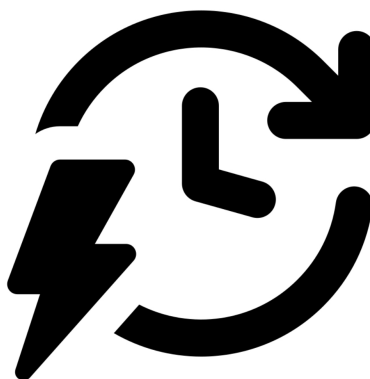


Veteran's Crisis Response Team



Commander's Outreach Initiative

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Commander's Outreach Initiative + Habersham County Co-Responder Program

Integrated Framework for Veteran-Centered Crisis Response

Prepared by:

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Background

In November 2024, a critical incident involving a recently discharged veteran revealed the urgent need for a coordinated response protocol between law enforcement and Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) in Habersham County. The peaceful resolution of that crisis, made possible in part by informal collaboration, served as a catalyst for developing the Commander's Outreach Initiative.

Shortly after, Commander Jim Morgan met with **Chief Adams**, who was concurrently working to implement a **county-level Co-Responder Program**. The opportunity to align these two efforts into a unified crisis response model now presents itself.

Overview: Commander's Outreach Initiative as a Second Responder Program

Mission Statement:

To build a collaborative framework between law enforcement and local Veteran Service Organizations that ensures timely, compassionate, and culturally competent support for veterans in crisis.

Role Within Co-Responder Framework:

The Commander's Outreach Initiative functions as a **veteran-focused second responder layer**, activated when an incident involves a current or former service member.

Shared Goals Between Programs

Co-Responder Program	Commander's Outreach Initiative
De-escalation & crisis intervention	Veteran peer support & familiarity with military culture
Mental health diversion from jail/hospital	Connection to VA services, peer groups, and housing options
Continuity of care after incident	Ongoing VSO engagement & reintegration assistance

Integrated Response Model

1. Notification Protocol

Law enforcement agencies are provided with a contact list of designated VSO Commanders (American Legion, DAV, VFW). Upon determining that an individual in crisis is a veteran, officers notify the appropriate Commander for follow-up.

2. Second Responder Engagement

A VSO representative reaches out to the veteran within 24-48 hours of the incident to:

- Conduct a wellness check
- Provide emotional support and peer connection
- Offer resource referrals (VA, housing, transportation, mental health)

3. Cross-Training & Education

- Law enforcement receives training on veteran-specific behavioral challenges (PTSD, TBI, military-to-civilian transition)
- VSOs receive guidance on law enforcement procedures and safety protocols

4. Joint Resource Network

A shared database or reference sheet of veteran-specific services, VSO contacts, mental health partners, and county resources is developed and distributed.

Sample Response Scenarios

Welfare Check on Veteran:

Police respond to calls of erratic or isolated behavior. Officers confirm veteran status and notify a VSO Commander. The veteran receives a follow-up visit from a peer-support-trained VSO member.

Public Disturbance / Homeless Veteran:

A disoriented veteran is located in a public space. Law enforcement provides immediate safety and alerts VSO reps, who assist in securing shelter and connecting to VA housing.

Domestic Crisis Involving Veteran:

Family members report suicidal statements. Officers de-escalate and transport the individual safely. Within 48 hours, VSO connects the veteran to treatment and begins long-term support plan.

Benefits of Integration

- **Stronger Outcomes for Veterans:** Personal follow-up from veteran peers increases trust, treatment acceptance, and follow-through.
- **Enhanced Law Enforcement Efficiency:** Officers can offload post-incident engagement to trained community partners.
- **Improved Community Trust:** Public sees active collaboration to support veterans, not criminalize them.

Next Steps for Habersham County Implementation

1. **Draft and Approve MOU** between Habersham County law enforcement and participating VSOs
2. **Designate Commander Liaisons** from American Legion Post 84, DAV Chapter 15, and VFW Post 7720
3. **Develop Officer Quick Reference Cards** with VSO contacts and protocol flow
4. **Conduct Joint Training Sessions** in veteran crisis response
5. **Evaluate Outcomes and Refine Protocols** every 6 months

Contact Information:

American Legion Post 84

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Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7720

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Disabled American Veterans Chapter 15

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Veteran Crisis Response Guide

Key Steps for Outreach Teams:

1. Recognize Warning Signs: Isolation, risky behavior, or suicidal idealization.
2. Approach with Care: Use a calm, empathetic tone in a non-threatening environment.
3. Start the Conversation:
 - "I'm here to help. What can I do?"
 - "Have you thought about hurting yourself?"
4. Engage Support Systems: Involve VSO commanders and provide resources such as the Veterans Crisis Line (988, press 1).
5. Follow Through: Ensure ongoing support and check-ins with the veteran.

Conclusion

The Commander's Outreach Initiative represents a vital step toward a proactive, unified response to veteran crises. By fostering collaboration between law enforcement and VSOs, this program can save lives, build trust, and provide the care our veterans and their families deserve.

For More Information:

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Veterans Crisis Response Team Intake Form

Personal Information:

Name:

Date of Birth:

Address:

Phone Number:

Disability Rating:

Emergency Contact:

Name:

Relationship:

Phone Number:

Current Situation:

1. Law Enforcement Involved? Yes/No
2. Briefly describe the nature of the crisis:
3. Current Location:
4. Safety Concerns:

Medical Information:

Medication (if any):

Medical Conditions:

Military Background:

Deployment History:

PTSD Diagnosis (if applicable):

Access to VA Services:

Responder/Observer Information:

Name:

Center	Address	Phone
Macon Clinic	5398 Thomaston Road, Suite B Macon, GA 31220	478-476-8868
Macon Vet Center	750 Riverside Drive Macon, GA 31201	478-477-3813 Or 877-927-8387
Marietta Vet Center	40 Dodd St., Suite 700 Marietta, GA 30060	404-327-4954 Or 877-927-8387
Newnan Clinic	39-A Oak Hill Ct. Newnan, GA 30265	404-329-2222
NE Georgia/Oakwood Clinic	4175 Tanners Creek Drive Oakwood, GA 30542	404-728-8210
Savannah Clinic	325 West Montgomery Crossroad Savannah, GA 31406	912-920-0214
Savannah Vet Center	321 Commercial Dr Savannah, GA 31406	912-961-5800 Or 877-927-8387
St Marys CBDC	205 Lakeshore Point St Marys, GA 31558	912-510-3420
Stockbridge Outreach Clinic	175 Medical Blvd. Stockbridge, GA 30281	404-329-2222
Valdosta CBDC	2841 N. Patterson Street Valdosta, GA 31602	229-293-0132
Waycross CBDC	515B City Blvd Waycross, GA 31501	912-279-4400

Role/Relationship to the Veteran:
Observations:

North Carolina U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
Charles George VAMC - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
1100 Tunnel Road, 28805-2087, Asheville, NC 28805
828-298-7911

Franklin CBOC - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
647 Wayah St, 28734, Franklin, NC 28734
(828)369-1781

Georgia Department of Veterans Service
185 Scoggins Drive, Demorest, Georgia 30535
(706) 894-1049 OFFICE
(706) 778-0063 FAX
john.giddens@vs.state.ga.us
www.veterans.georgia.gov

SAFETY PLANS WORK

There is Hope.



- 1** Write 3 warning signs that a crisis may be developing.

- 2** Write 3 internal coping strategies that can take your mind off your problems.

- 3** Who/What are 3 people or places that provide distraction?
(Write name/place and phone numbers)

_____	Phone _____
_____	Phone _____
_____	Phone _____

- 4** Who can you ask for help? (Write name/place and phone numbers)

_____	Phone _____
_____	Phone _____
_____	Phone _____

- 5** Professionals or agencies you can contact during a crisis:

Clinician _____ Phone _____

Local Urgent Care or Emergency Department:

Address _____ Phone _____

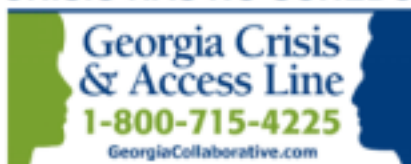
Text or call 988 or chat 988lifeline.org

- 6** Write out a plan to make your environment safer.
(Write 2 things)



988
SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

A CRISIS HAS NO SCHEDULE



Help is available 24/7 for problems with developmental disabilities, mental health, drugs, or alcohol.



Provided through the Georgia Collaborative ASO



Chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat • Text 838255

Confidential support is available 24/7.

RESOURCES

VA Medical Centers and Outpatient Clinics in Georgia

Center	Address	Phone
Albany Clinic	814 Radford Blvd., Building 7000 Albany, GA 31701	229-446-9000
Athens Clinic	249 Highway 29 North Athens, GA 30601	706-227-4534
Atlanta Vet Center	1800 Phoenix Boulevard, Building 400, Suite 404 Box 55 Atlanta, GA 30349	404-370-3864 Or 877-927-8387
Fort McPherson/ East Point CBOC	1701 Hardee Ave., SW Atlanta, GA 30310	404-321-6111 x 2222
Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center	950 15th Street Downtown or 1 Freedom Way Uptown Augusta, GA 30904	706-733-0188
Richmond County (Augusta)	2050 Walton Way, Suite 100 Augusta, GA 30904	706-729-5762
Austell VA CBOC	2041 Mesa Valley Way Austell, GA 30082	404-329-2222
Blairsville CBOC	1294 Highway 515 East, Suite 100 Blairsville, GA 30512	404-329-2222
Brunswick CBOC	1111 Glynnco Parkway, Bldg. 2, Suite 200 Brunswick, GA 31525	912-261-2355
Columbus Clinic	1310 13th Avenue Columbus, GA 31901	706-257-7205
Atlanta VA Medical Center	1670 Clairmont Road Decatur, GA 30033	404-321-6111
Decatur Clinic	755 Commerce Drive, 2nd Floor Decatur, GA 30030	404-417-5200
Carl Vinson VA Medical Center	1826 Veterans Blvd. Dublin, GA 31021	478-272-1210
VESN7: VA Southeast Network	3700 Crestwood Parkway, Suite 500 Duluth, GA 30096	678-924-5700
Perry Outreach Clinic	2370 S. Houston Lake Road Kathleen, GA 31047	478-224-1309
Lawrenceville Clinic	455 Philip Blvd, Suite 200 Lawrenceville, GA 30046	404-329-2222
Lawrenceville Vet Center	930 River Centre Place Lawrenceville, GA 30043	404-728-4195 Or 877-927-8387