

VHWC DISPATCH

December 2024

FOUNDATION

The VHWC brings together parties to build or expand pathways through which Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and their care partners optimize health and wellness outcomes.

CONTACT US

VHWC
c/o 965 Wilson Road
A522 East Fee Hall
E. Lansing, MI 48824
517-432-4325
ihp.vhwc@msu.edu
<https://vhwc.msu.edu>

CORE TEAM UPDATE

Welcome to the December edition of the Veterans Health and Wellness Collaborative (VHWC) newsletter. As we near the end of our first year, we are excited to share the progress we've made. This newsletter will continue to provide updates on our work and highlight opportunities for involvement. We are pleased to showcase the dedicated organizations and individuals contributing to the success of our mission through the **VHWC Advisory Council Spotlight**.

As we reflect on the activities of 2024, we are proud of the steps taken to solidify the VHWC's role as a supportive network for organizations serving SMVF (Service Members, Veterans, and their Families). This year, much of our work was focused on ensuring that the VHWC's efforts complement, rather than duplicate, the important work already being done across Michigan. Through discussions with our Advisory Council, we've solidified our mission to serve as an organization that supports other organizations in carrying out their vital work.

In the coming months, we will be refining our focus on priority areas identified by Advisory Council members. For these priority areas, we acknowledge four key actions in which we can provide support to influence positive change. Priority areas for initial activity were endorsed at the December Advisory Council meeting: these areas included **physical and behavioral health**, particularly to support existing efforts focusing on suicide prevention and oral health. An additional priority area was **health-related social needs (HRSN)** through supporting the transition period from military to civilian environments and addressing housing insecurity. The VHWC will act through community engagement, education & training, advocacy, and research & evaluation where requested. Small groups will be

convened to refine specific activities in 2025.

We remain committed to expanding the network of partners and collaborators. We invite you to stay connected through future editions of the newsletter, visit our website for the latest updates,

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There may be benefits and resources available to help you through your current situation.

Call 1-800-MICH-VET or visit Michigan.gov/MVAA

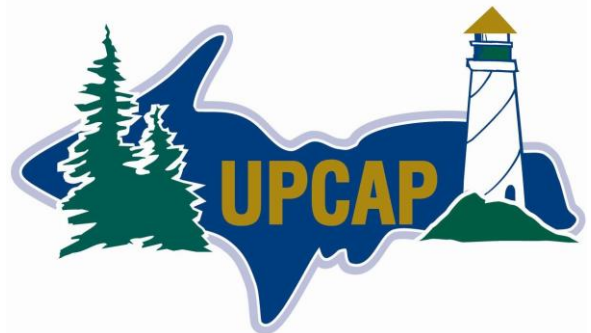


and subscribe for VHWC news. We encourage you to contact us if you are interested in learning more about how to participate with us. If you're interested in joining the VHWC Advisory Council or want to explore ways to get involved with specific projects, be sure to subscribe on our [website](#).

On behalf of the Advisory Council and Administrative Core Team, we honor all who have served and extend our gratitude for your dedication to our country.

VHWC ADVISORY COUNCIL ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT:

We are proud to feature the Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress ([UPCAP](#)) and the Upper Peninsula Veterans Community Action Team ([UP VCAT](#)) for ongoing commitments serving veterans and their care partners. UPCAP and UP VCAT are represented by veteran Frank Lombard, MSW.



Since 1961, UPCAP has been dedicated to fostering *“the development of the human, social, and community resources of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan”* to continuously improve the lives of residents. UPCAP further supports a regional collaborative of over 200 veteran service providers as the backbone organization and fiduciary for the UP VCAT. The UP VCAT network works to support a no wrong door approach to providing supports to the 15 county region's veterans and families. UP VCAT's affiliated service providers work together to facilitate entry to service and resource availability.



UPCAP and UP VCAT have current initiatives focusing on access to and advocacy for oral health services. Additionally, addressing homelessness or housing insecurity experienced by veterans is a focal area. Notable past services included distribution of food and gas cards to over 2100 veteran households valued at over \$275,000. Food as Medicine and Fresh Food Programs are currently operational and available for veteran referrals. To learn

more or explore collaboration opportunities, contact Mr. Lombard at lombardf@upcap.org.

PROGRESS REPORT: 2025 PRIORITY THEMES/AFFINITY GROUPS

Priority theme areas were discussed at the December Advisory Council meeting. The bulk of responses identified physical and behavioral health as the #1 priority followed by health-related social needs, connection to resources, and raising awareness. VHWC efforts will be identified through small group discussion on topics of suicide prevention, oral health access, and transition supports. The types of efforts will generally involve supporting community engagement, education

& training, and advocacy. Organizations that are offering interventions to impact these topics may receive assistance with evaluation activities if they are interested.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

Webinars: The recording from the first webinar held on Veterans Day, 2024 entitled *Resilience in Service: Honoring the Strength of our Veterans* is available [here](#).

We are looking to build a speakers bureau to provide content for future webinars. Our goal is to host 1-2 hour sessions every few months. Whenever possible, we will seek continuing education approvals to enhance the value of these events. Please contact us if you are interested in delivering online content on health and wellness topics of interest to veterans and/or care partners. You can contact us at ihp.vhwc@msu.edu to be included on the speakers bureau list. Please identify “Speakers Bureau” in the subject line and provide the topic/content that you could present as well as your contact information.

Events: Events being hosted by VHWC stakeholders are publicized on the [Resources and Events tab](#) on our website. We are pleased to promote *Mental Health First Aid* trainings scheduled for January, 2025. These sessions scheduled in Regions 4, 5, 7, and 10 are being sponsored by the Hope Network and Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. Information and registration is available on the Resources tab or [here](#).

If organizations are looking to advertise an event or obtain assistance with hosting events, VHWC partners may be able to help. Send your event information and/or requests about the nature of support or help needed to ihp.vhwc@msu.edu and we will share it with our networks.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Are you passionate about improving veteran and care partner health outcomes and wellness in your community? The VHWC offers various ways to engage in our work:

- Subscribe at our website to make sure you receive the latest updates and information and share this content with your networks.
- Stay informed about the latest developments by participating with Advisory Council or subcommittee activities.
- Volunteer your expertise: Whether you have ever served in the military, are a health care professional, community leader, or advocate, your input can make a difference.

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” John F. Kennedy
