VETERANS HEALTH & WELLNESS COLLABORATIVE

VHWC DISPATCH

September 2026

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.

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CORE TEAM UPDATE

This September marks 25 years since the attacks of September 11, 2001, a day that forever changed our nation and the lives of countless service members, veterans, military families, and communities.

As we remember the nearly 3,000 lives lost on 9/11, we also recognize the generation of Americans who answered the call to serve in the years that followed. For many veterans and their families, the impact of September 11 extends far beyond a single day, shaping decades of military service, deployments, sacrifice, transition, and life after service.

This anniversary reinforces the importance of ensuring that those who served and those who supported them have access to the resources, relationships, and systems needed to thrive. Our work continues across our 2026 priority areas of Housing Insecurity, Oral Health, Suicide Prevention, and Transition, with an emphasis on building partnerships that strengthen the health and well-being of Michigan veterans and their care partners.

As always, we invite you to share updates, events, and opportunities with our network. Your engagement continues to strengthen support systems for veterans and their families across the state. To stay informed, join our listserv. Contact us at ihp.vhwc@msu.edu if you have questions or suggestions for activities.

SPOTLIGHT:

The Fallen and Wounded Soldiers Fund

Founded in 2006, the Fallen and Wounded Soldiers Fund (FWSF) is a Michigan-based nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting service members, veterans, and their families. FWSF describes itself as a “financial emergency room” for Michigan’s post-9/11 veterans, while also maintaining discretionary funds that allow the organization to assist veterans from other eras when needs arise.

The organization was founded at a time when many post-9/11 veterans were returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan and facing



lengthy waits for VA disability ratings and compensation. FWSF helped bridge that gap by assisting with essential living expenses until veterans began receiving their benefits. Today, the organization continues to respond to veterans' changing needs, including those who are unable to work because of service-related health conditions, such as illnesses associated with burn put exposure, or who are navigating the VA disability re-rating process.

FWSF's flexible assistance can help address immediate needs such as housing, utilities, medical expenses, transportation, and other essential bills. The organization can also provide support during periods of extended medical treatment or other circumstances that create unexpected financial hardship.

FWSF's is an all-volunteer organization, with board and committee members serving without financial compensation. The organization reports that 97% of donations go directly toward helping veterans in need. Since its founding, FWSF has distributed more than $8.3 million in assistance to more than 4,000 Michigan veterans.

As we recognize the 25th anniversary of September 11, FWSF's work highlights the lasting needs of the generation that answered the call to serve in the years that followed and the importance of continuing to support Michigan veterans and their families long after they return home.

For more information or assistance, contact Dr. Lynn Phillips at lynnphillips@FWSF.org.

UPDATES: 2026 PRIORITY AREAS

Let our team know about upcoming events and we will share that information with our network. Organizations needing help for their event should also reach out so we can put those requests in front of others who may be in a position to help.

Housing Insecurity: We are working on a webinar encouraging landlords to rent to veterans. If you have content or speaker recommendations, please forward names and email addresses to ihp.vhwc@msu.edu.

Oral Health: We welcome ideas for partnering with current dental and hygiene training programs to help expand access to oral health services for veterans. If you have any contacts or suggestions, please send them our way.

Suicide Prevention: We are looking for opportunities to support suicide prevention trainings and educational offerings across Michigan. Let us know of programs, trainings, or webinars you come across.

Transition: We are seeking input on financial literacy offerings that strengthen housing stability, as well as screeners or tools that can better connect transitioning service members and veterans to resources. Please share programs, contacts, or tools that we should explore.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

Webinars:



Webinars can be hosted by VHWC for statewide viewing. Email ihp.vhwc@msu.edu to introduce yourself, your idea(s), or make referrals to subject matter experts. Our staff is available to arrange for technical support and promotion through the VHWC network.

Events/Programs:

We are looking for those who have an interest in participating in creating podcasts for more informal and targeted discussions. We would record these for later listening. If you have an interest in hosting or participating with this, reach out to us. Also, let us know about your upcoming events for veterans! These are also listed on the Resources and Events tab of our website to boost engagement.

- **7th Annual Walking with Warriors Summit**- 10/29/26 from 8:30AM-3:00PM at Washtenaw Community College, 4800 East Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48105. Hosted by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), this free summit will spotlight veteran resources across Michigan and feature agencies and organizations finding effective and creative ways to meet veterans' needs. Attendees will have opportunities to network with Veteran Navigators and Veteran Peer Support Specialists and hear from programs serving Women Veterans, Justice Involved Veterans, Tribal Veterans, and the THRIVE project. A light breakfast and full catered lunch will be provided at no cost to attendees. Register here!

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Subscribe at our website and share with your networks.
- Participate 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.

"Even the smallest act of service, the simplest act of kindness, is a way to honor those we lost"

-President Barack Obama

