

PA DOC Veteran Services

Serving Those Who've Served



▶ Veterans Services – By The Numbers



- PA DOC – largest veteran employer (state agencies)
 - 4,700 veteran staff in facilities
 - 400 veteran staff in parole field services
- Incarcerated Veterans
 - 2,200 incarcerated veterans
- Reentrant Veterans
 - 1,600

Veterans Service Mission

- Engage every new veteran employee
- Connect veteran employees and those incarcerated/reentrants with services
- Use prior service as a foundation for positive change within the veteran inmate population
- Working to positively impact veteran reentry success



Veteran Identification - Staff



Identify Veteran Staff When Entering the Workforce

- Office of Administration (OA) new hire report
- Confirmation of veteran status in the Employee Self Service (ESS)
- Annual military recognition campaign

▶ Veteran Identification - Inmates



Identify Veteran Population at Classification or PV Reception

- Self-Report
- VA SQUARES (Status Query and Response Exchange System)
- DPRIS (Defense Personnel Records Information Retrieval System)
- National Archives

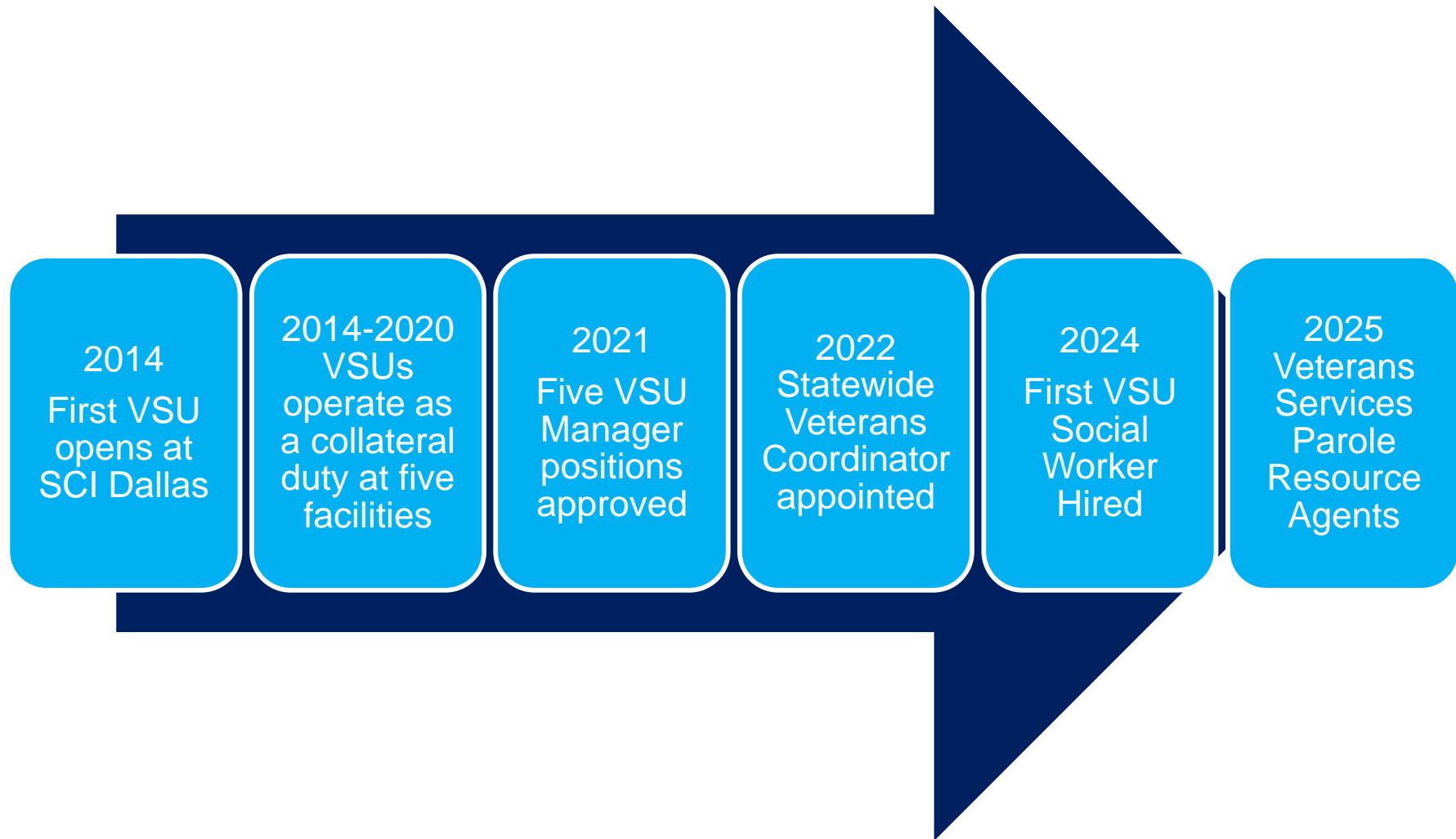
Veteran Services Team



- Statewide Veterans Coordinator
- Veteran Service Unit Managers
- Veteran Service Unit Social Workers
- Facility Veteran Coordinators
- Veteran Resource Parole Agents



Veterans Services Timeline



Veteran Services Structure

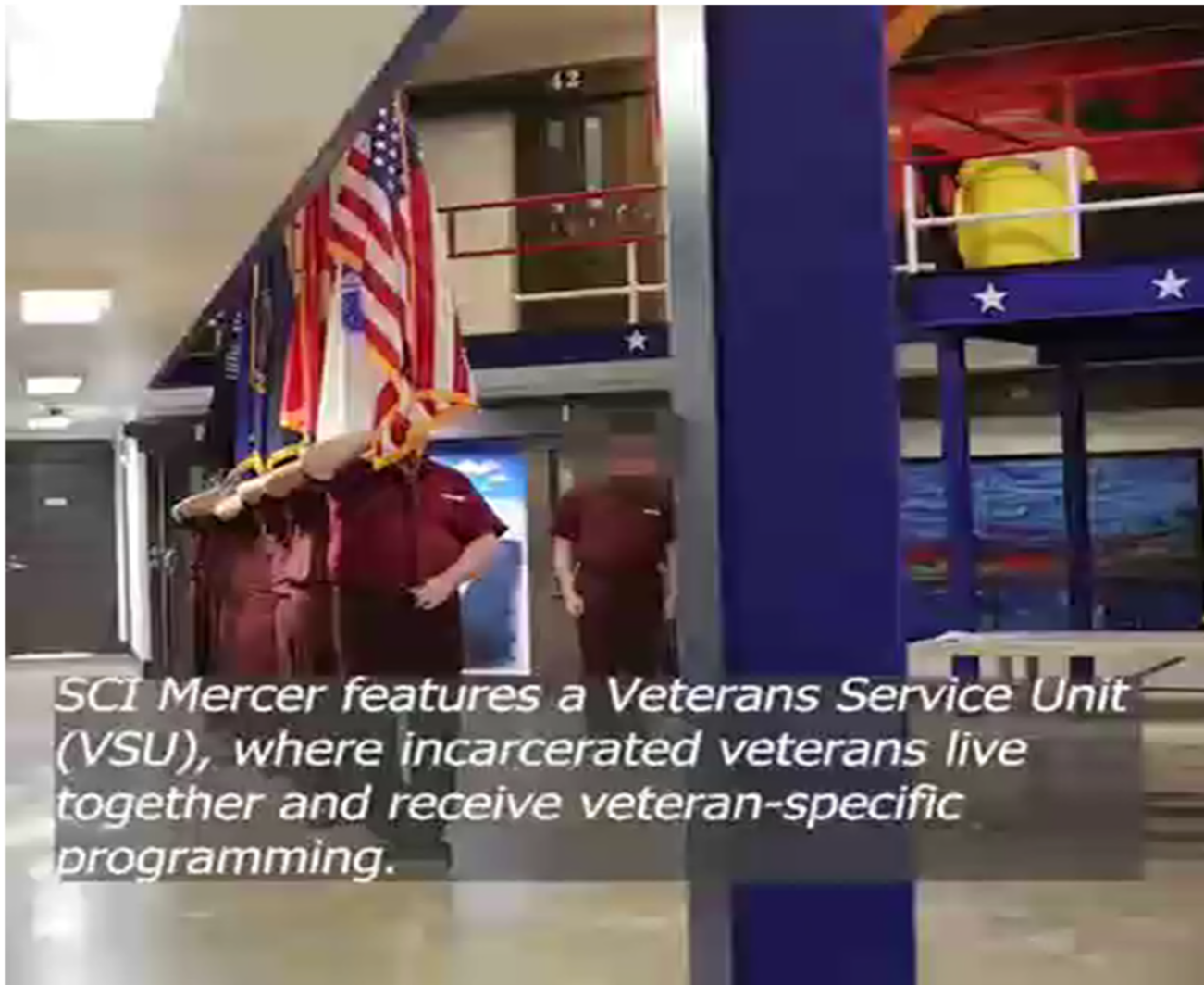
Agency Level

- Statewide Veterans Coordinator
 - Supervises Veterans Service Managers
 - Point of Contact for Facility Veterans Coordinators
 - Liaison between PA DOC and Veterans Agencies

Facility Level

- Veterans Service Manager
 - Manages facility Veterans Service Unit
 - Liaison between facility staff/incarcerated and Veteran Agencies
- Facility Veterans Coordinators/Resource Agents
 - Assists staff, inmates, and reentrants with veterans services

▶ Veteran Service Units (VSU)



SCI Mercer features a Veterans Service Unit (VSU), where incarcerated veterans live together and receive veteran-specific programming.



Veteran Service Units (VSU)



- VSUs
 - Therapeutic Community Model
 - Programs to address:
 - PTSD
 - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
 - Mental Health/Substance Use
 - Housing

Veteran Service Units (VSU)

- VSUs
 - Unit Manager
 - Case Manager
 - Psychologist
 - Drug and Alcohol Treatment Specialist
 - Corrections Officers
 - Parole Agent
 - Social Worker



Veteran Service Units (VSU)

- Staff and peer led programs and workshops:
 - Workforce development
 - Life skills
 - Reentry
 - Self-help
 - Structured leisure
 - Service-connected claims



- Specialized Training for Facilitators
 - Staff
 - Incarcerated Veteran

Veteran Service Units (VSU)



SCI Dallas



REENTRY SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

VSU Community Activities	
Orientation	Participants receive information regarding what services are available and how to access them. Conducted on the VSU within a couple days of arrival.
STARS	The STARS (Straight Talk About Real Stuff) meeting serves as a house meeting for the veteran residents of the VSU, meeting every other Friday on the block at 1545. During this meeting, information is passed along to VSU residents about important VSU and facility events occurring during the week.
Ceremonies	The VSU plans and carries out Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies to honor the service of our members as well as all who have served the United States Military.
VSU Train-the-Trainer Platform	
Reentry Peer-Mentor Training	This training is made a requirement for residents wishing to become Reentry Peer-Mentors to aid VSU reentrants, as a mentor, in identifying the reentry challenges of finding employment, securing housing, obtaining healthcare and maintaining treatment as well as other quality of life activities that they may be interested in pursuing.
Facilitator Training	This training is made a requirement for residents wishing to facilitate reentry workshops and groups on the VSU in order to ensure consistency, while maintaining a high degree of standardization in the delivery of reentry workshop information.
STARS Facilitator Training	This training is a requirement for any resident wishing to participate in the STARS meeting. Participants will receive training on disseminating information effectively in front of a large audience.
Public Speaking	This workforce development / life skills workshop is very helpful for VSU residents who wish to develop the skills of public speaking. Workshop participants receive 40 hours of instruction, through lectures, demonstrations, handouts and practical application exercises, on all aspects of public speaking.
Member Sponsor Training	This training is made a requirement for residents wishing to facilitate substance abuse self-help groups on the VSU in order to insure consistency in the delivery of these services.
Motivational Speaker	This four-day training shows participants how to create and deliver impactful, dynamic and motivational presentations using the Ty Howard 5-step method.
Workforce Development Platform	
Resume Builder	The vast majority of incarcerated veterans, when released from prison, will have to reenter the workforce to support themselves. This 11-session workshop is designed

- VSU Platforms
 - Developed by VSU teams and participants
- VSU Newsletters



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SCI-Muncy Women Veterans... Who they are and why their service makes a difference for all.

W. Nicholas, SCI-Muncy Superintendent

For women, the inherent ability to overcome obstacles, barriers and roadblocks is what becomes in-grained in us at birth. This ability serves us through life's endeavors and undoubtedly led to women veterans' desire to serve their Country...No small feat for any anyone, let alone a woman.

When looking back and evaluating whatever "life challenge" brought them to SCI-Muncy, the obstacles for these women veterans did not end. In 2018, with the continued commitment to assisting veterans in our charge, the DOC identified the importance of expanding their mission to those of women veterans, and thus the concept of a VSU at SCI-Muncy was formed. While the official Grand Opening Ceremony for the VSU, on G Unit, occurred on 8/31/18, in keeping with "obstacles, barriers and roadblocks," institutional constraints occurred. As time went on, it was evident that for program success, re-location was imperative and as such, in October 2019, the VSU was officially moved to I Unit. Despite SCI-Muncy Administration's commitment to get this program "off the ground" for the benefit of the women who served, another roadblock (COVID) arose in 2020 resulting in the dis-banding of the VSU as a community.

Superintendent on page 2

Not Your Average Family

Ms. Brucklacher, VSU Manager

As I sit here pondering about what to write in the first Muncy VSU Newsletter, I can't help but think about how far we have come. Muncy's VSU is the smallest in both size and numbers, but has shown more heart than I could have ever imagined. As you might imagine, housing females has its own challenges, but housing female veterans poses its own set of unique circumstances.

To assume that we are like most women is your first mistake. For a woman to serve in the military, she needs to be willing to step outside of the societal norms and take a



Pennsylvania
Department of Corrections

Veteran Service Units (VSU)



- Incarcerated Veteran Service-Connected Disability Exams
 - VA providers evaluate onsite
 - Over 230 exams in 2025
- Fundraising
 - Over \$11,000 raised by incarcerated veterans
 - Plus food, clothing and item donations
- Holiday Outreach



Veteran Service Units (VSU)

- Incarcerated Veteran Eligibility Criteria
 - Verified military service (any discharge, any amount of time in service)
 - Be within 48 months of potential release
 - Six months without a serious (Class I) misconduct
 - Compliant with or motivated to complete standardized programming
 - Psychiatric Review Team Recommend (SMI)
 - Some lifers and long-term veterans placed for program fidelity and sustainability



▶ Veteran Service Units (VSU)



SCI Dallas VSU



- First VSU
 - Established 2014
- Ceremonies
 - Memorial Day
 - Veterans Day
- Shining Light Academy
- “The Duffel Bag”
- Veteran X



SCI Houtzdale VSU – “Patriots”



- Established 2016
- Color Guard
- Morale/Welfare/ Recreation Team
- Veterans Home Card Program
- “The Patriot Times”
- Service Dog Program
- Shark Tank



➤ SCI Mercer VSU – “Overcomer’s Hall”

- Established 2017
- Mercer County Veterans Treatment Court
- American Legion Post 110
- Veteran X
- “The Veterans Voice”



SCI Muncy VSU – “Iron Angels”

- Established 2018
- Greenhouse
- Victory Garden
- Crocheting for a Cause
- Shining Light
- “Beyond the Boots”



SCI Phoenix VSU – “Veterans for Change”

- Established 2018
- Philadelphia Veterans Treatment Court
- VVA Chapter 466
- Veteran Fitness
- “The Bugle”



Veteran Resource Parole Agents

- Established in Summer 2025
 - VRA in each parole office
 - Forming partnerships
 - Quarterly support group
 - Partnerships with VSUs and RSOs



Veteran Staff Services

- “Welcome Aboard”
- Military Recognition Campaign
- Buddy Checks
- Staff Veterans Intranet Page
- Staff Outreach Events



Results

Staff

- Monthly Averages - 2025
 - Staff assisted by VSU teams: **105**
 - “Buddy Checks” by VSU teams: **49**
 - Events held by VSU teams: **4.7**

Incarcerated Veterans/Reentrants

- Monthly Averages - 2025
 - Veterans housed on a VSU: **602**
 - Number of misconducts per VSU: **0.6**
 - VA Compensation and Pension Medical Evaluations: **34**



Results

Staff

- More than 300 staff assisted with service claims
 - Clinton County Office has closed 99 staff claims
 - Increased annual award payments by over \$1.8M
 - 25 staff outreach events in 2025
- “Wills for Heroes”
- Military Buyback (SERS)

Incarcerated Veterans/Reentrants

- SFC Robert J. Fike American Legion Post #110
- Veterans Court Mentors
 - Mercer and Philadelphia Counties
- Victory Garden
- Shining Light Academy
- VVA Chapter 466



Staff Testimonials

- *“...I wasn’t fine. I knew it and everyone around me knew it. What I didn’t know was that I was fully covered by the VA for my medical and mental health care. I should have known, but it just wasn’t something that I realized...Mr. Carrington connected me with VA Reps... In the end I was enrolled in the VA and receiving the medical and mental health care that I needed, from a service system that uniquely understands veterans.”*
- *“The VSU provides a specialized unit where a defined demographic can get access to resources that cater to their specific needs. PTSD group therapy, VA benefit processing assistance, basic comradery; all things these men experienced when serving their country.”*
- *“...Everyone has a life story and Veterans in general share a common connection between one another. This connection promotes increased staff participation in the community...This opens staff up to the concept that people can and do change their lives.”*



➤ Incarcerated Veteran Testimonials

- *“The Veterans Service Unit (VSU) offers a wide range of workshops and programs led by external facilitators, all of which have been instrumental to my rehabilitation, as well as my mental and emotional well-being. One of the most significant positive impacts I’ve experienced is a noticeable reduction in my stress levels.”*
- *“As a 71-year-old individual with 49 years of incarceration, I am deeply grateful for the compassionate staff and Corrections Officers who genuinely understand and support the mission of the VSU. While no program is without its challenges, living in a unit exclusively for veterans has been a profoundly positive experience—one that far surpasses my time in the general population.”*
- *“The biggest thing that has changed for me is my mental health and my ability to take responsibility. My PTSD and nightmares will no longer dictate my way of life. This I contribute to the staff, the programming geared towards Veteran’s needs, and the motivation the unit and program give me to succeed.”*



Questions?



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