VRSS

Veterans Re-entry Search Service

Mya Jenkins, LISW-S
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System
Healthcare for Reentry Veterans/HCRV/prison reentry
10701 East Blvd
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-701-3580

VA | **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

Purpose

- At the request of former Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA), Eric Shinseki, the Homeless Program Office developed an automated system called Veteran Re-entry Search Service (VRSS) to locate Veterans who are currently incarcerated in federal, state, city and county correctional facilities, or who are represented as defendants on court dockets.

- VRSS is a Web-based tool that allows VA to offer its criminal justice partners an improved method of identifying Veterans within their inmate populations. It also allows VA to conduct more targeted, effective outreach in these settings.

- VRSS is part of the VA's major initiative to End Veteran Homelessness
  - Incarceration is the most powerful predictor of homelessness
  - Ending Veteran Homelessness is an urgent and enduring priority for VA

- The system is designed to enable outreach specialists involved with VA's Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans (HCRV) program (prison populations), and Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) ("front end" jails and court populations) program to identify Veterans as early as possible and get them linked to VA services upon their release. Both programs are focused on preventing homelessness among justice-involved Veterans.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

Purpose, cont

- To identify justice involved individuals at the earliest possible time
- Goal of connecting with resources and interventions to support Veterans
- Criminal justice partners include not only correctional facilities such as jails, prisons and detention centers but also entities within the court system such as pre trial services, probation, prosecutors and public defender offices

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

Background

- Historically, efforts to identify Veterans in criminal justice settings have relied on self-reporting ("Did you serve in the U.S. military?").

- For a variety of reasons, Veterans may not self-report (shame associated with being involved in the criminal justice system; individual beliefs/understanding of what it means to be a Veteran

- The Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that 7-8% of the U.S. prison and jail populations are Veterans.
    - Example– California Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation houses about 100,000 prisoners. By self-reporting, 2.7% inmates identified themselves as Veterans. Using VRSS, 7.7% of inmates were determined to have a record of military service. That five percent difference = approximately 5,000 previously unidentified inmates.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

What is VRSS?

- VRSS is an online tool that allows external users (prison, jail, and court staff users) to identify the individuals in their facility who have a record of military service.

- VA checks against records of U.S. military service in the VA-DOD Identity Repository (VADIR)

- VRSS checks for any record of military service and not just VA eligibility.

- List posted to the VRSS web portal for download by correctional staff and Veterans Justice Programs staff

- Schedule uploads as needed

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

VRSS-What does it do?

- Helps identify individuals in the criminal justice system who have served in the U.S. military

- Provides correctional facilities with accurate information on Veterans within their institutions

- Enables VJP Staff to engage with Veterans

- Accelerates Veteran enrollment and reduces delays in accessing VA services post release

- Enhances collaboration between VA, correctional institutions and other Veteran service organizations

VA | **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**
Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

VRSS-How does it work?

- Requesting access to and using VRSS is done through https://vrss.va.gov

- An external user logs into VRSS and uploads a file with basic information on their population (prison/jail inmates, or criminal defendants).

- After allowing 2 hours for processing, the user receives a result file that identifies those individuals included in the original uploaded file who have a record of military service.

- Matches are identified through a query mechanism that checks the record against the VA DoD Identity repository (VADIR), the VA's copy of the DoD's Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS).

- At the same time, another version of the results file is sent to the VA VJO or HCRV specialist responsible for the facility/geographic area.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

Uploaded files contain:

- First Name
- Middle Name
- Last Name
- Suffix Name
- SSN Social Security Number
- Date Of Birth
- Gender
- Prisoner ID Number
- Cell Location
- Facility Name or Court Name for your location
- Facility ZIP Code
- Facility State
- Parole Date
- Release Date- Actual or projected release date

Results: Who gets what?

- CF/CS User (court, jail, prison): PIDs (user-assigned unique identifiers) only – no names or other identifying information

- VJP User: name, DOB, SSN, discharge status, number of days active duty service (all pulled from VA copy of DoD personnel records)

- Why?
    - An individual's Veteran status is not protected information, so when asked whether someone served, VA can answer yes or no.
    - However, VA cannot provide VRSS users with names other identifying information without a Veteran's express permission – even though that information was included in the user's submission file

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

VJP Staff receives

- The VJP specialist is able to receive more detailed information including Character of Discharge and Number of Days of Active Duty Service (the 2 pieces critical for determining eligibility for VA healthcare and benefits). However, VRSS cannot definitively confirm a Veteran's eligibility for VA services.

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

Row	Last Na	First Na	Middle	SuffixN	SSN	Date of	Gender	Prisone	Cell Loc	Facility	Facility	Facility	Military	Parole Da	Release D	Days of S	Qualifying	Service Co	...ected Disability
2093									C3E0013	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A		20440417	967	N	N	
2094									C3E0004	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A	20431203	20431203	1580		Y	
2484									B2E0011	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	B		20400416		N		
2490									C3E0022T	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A		20280223	590	N	N	
2495									C4W0008	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	B		20300308	0	N	N	
2496									A1W0023	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A		88880101	89	N	N	
2497									B1E0007	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	B		88880101	0	N	N	
2498									C3W0024	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A	20400807	20400807	31	N	N	
2504									A1E0012	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A	20240701	20240701	84	N	N	
2505									A2N0019	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A		20231223	1273	Y	N	
2506									ZOTC14	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	H		20260107	0	N	N	
2509									C4E0001	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A			242	N	N	
2510									C3W0006	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	E	21510201	21510201	690	N	N	
2512									C3E0006T	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	B		20330127	948	N	N	
2513									A2E0007	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	E	20380216	20380216	422	N	N	
2514									C4E0012	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A		20250304	1461	N	N	
2519									C3W0014T	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A	20270430	20270430	3106	N	N	
2520									A1W0013	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	E	20240201	20240201	814	N	N	
2524									B4S0011	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	B		20340127	134	N	N	
2525									C3E0021	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A		20270422	1461	N	N	
2528									B4N0023	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	B		20260607	448	N	N	
2529									C3E0003	TOLEDO C	OH	43608	A	20510417	20510417	1857	Y	N	
2533																			
2534																			
2535																			
2536																			
2537																			
2538																			

22 of 2531 records found

10-3-23

Benefits to VJP Staff

- Enables VJP staff to prioritize outreach activities.

- Provide better veteran identification to increase Veterans treatment dockets implementation and enrollment

- Some Veterans can be pre-registered prior to face-to-face contact.

- Facilitates access to remote data from other medical centers.

- Allows VJO Specialists to proactively collaborate with correctional staff on community-based referrals.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

VRSS: New User Quick Guide

- 1. Visit https://vrss.va.gov

- 2. Agree to the Terms and Conditions and click to Login

- 3. Click "Register a New Account"

- 4. Choose your Facility Type a. Correctional Facility b. Court System

- 5. Enter your First Name, Last Name, Email Address, and Phone Number

- 6. Choose your Correctional System Type: a. Federal b. State c. County d. Municipal

- 7. Or Choose your Court System Type: a. Federal b. State c. Statewide (ex. Administrative Office of the Courts) d. County e. City/Municipal

- 8. Enter your desired Username and Password

- 9. Click "Create Account"

- 10. You will receive an email asking to verify your account sent to the email address used to register.

- 11. Click the link to verify your account and sign-in to begin using the VRSS system.

- If you encounter any issues during this process, please contact the VRSS Help Line: 1-800-983-0935 Monday-Friday, 7AM – 5PM (CST) Please have your Name, Username, and account information ready for the

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

Summary

- Within the criminal justice system, attempts to identify individuals with military service should be done early and often.

- Without this identification, we miss the opportunity to integrate services and resources tailored to this population.

- VRSS can be implemented within many points along the sequential intercept model.

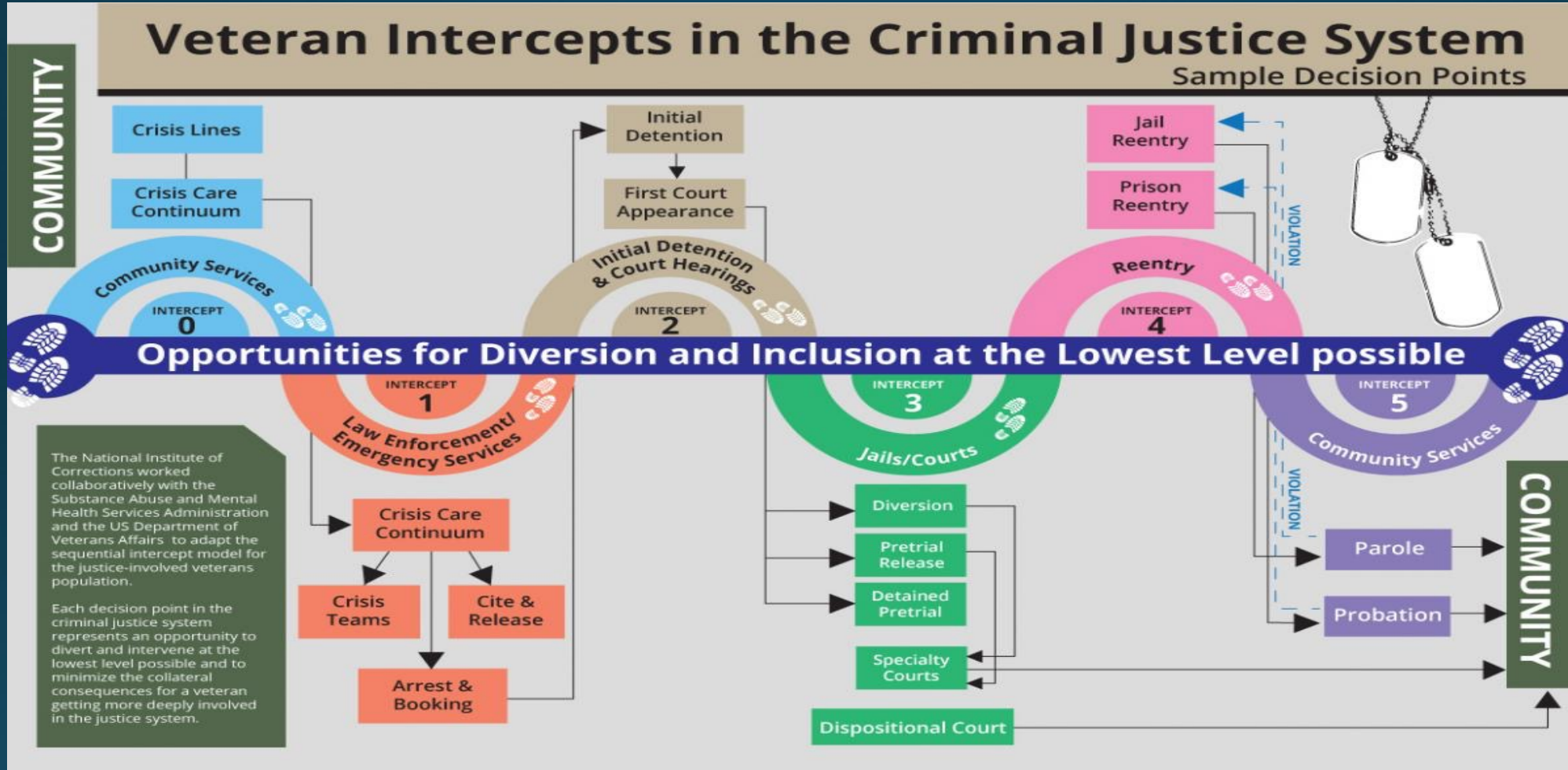- As of 9/30/23, there were a total of 455 local jails and state prison systems using VRSS.

Sequential Intercept Model & VRSS

Veteran Intercepts in the Criminal Justice System
Sample Decision Points

COMMUNITY

Crisis Lines

Crisis Care Continuum

Community Services
INTERCEPT 0

Initial Detention

First Court Appearance

Initial Detention & Court Hearings
INTERCEPT 2

Jail Reentry

Prison Reentry

Reentry
INTERCEPT 4

VIOLATION

Opportunities for Diversion and Inclusion at the Lowest Level possible

INTERCEPT 1
Law Enforcement/ Emergency Services

INTERCEPT 3
Jails/Courts

INTERCEPT 5
Community Services

COMMUNITY

The National Institute of Corrections worked collaboratively with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the US Department of Veterans Affairs to adapt the sequential intercept model for the justice-involved veterans population.

Each decision point in the criminal justice system represents an opportunity to divert and intervene at the lowest level possible and to minimize the collateral consequences for a veteran getting more deeply involved in the justice system.

Crisis Care Continuum

Crisis Teams

Cite & Release

Arrest & Booking

Diversion

Pretrial Release

Detained Pretrial

Specialty Courts

Dispositional Court

VIOLATION

Parole

Probation

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

Summary

- VRSS_FINAL_4K_TEXT.mp4

- https://youtu.be/DKilRc8prBc?si=S-Yfy44UOW7129TW

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System