

For Immediate Release

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News Release

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Erie VA's Behavioral Health Services Expand to Rural Areas

Erie, PA (10/12/10) - Erie VA was the first in the nation to launch a new program that combines behavioral health intensive case management with homeless outreach for Veterans living in rural counties. This new Enhanced RANGE, or Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement, program provides these services to Veterans who were previously underserved due to their rural location and lack of available community programs.

The aim of this program is to allow Veterans with serious mental illness to recover and maintain their functioning in the community in which they live. In addition, the program provides services to Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

“We feel the program has enhanced the care of some of our most deserving and at risk Veterans,” says Erie VA’s Chief of Staff Dr. Anthony Behm. “The quality of life aspect that this program adds to these Veterans is really immeasurable. We fully appreciate the need for the program and are grateful to have it.”

The Enhanced RANGE program team, which includes one nurse and two social workers, has already expanded behavioral health services in the rural Pennsylvania counties of Warren, Venango and Crawford.

Since the Enhanced RANGE program started this past February, 21 Veterans have enrolled in the program, 596 encounters were logged, 25 Veterans were provided with direct homeless-related assistance, and dozens of homeless outreach visits have been made to both individuals and community organizations.

Services provided include individual and group counseling, crisis planning and intervention, family support and education, social skills training, physical and mental health care coordination, medication management assistance, assessment and monitoring, housing referrals, and multiple weekly visits with Veterans, community contacts and clinics.

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The Enhanced RANGE team also works closely with Erie VA's Homeless Coordinator, the Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD/VASH) Coordinator and caseworker, and the Compensated Work Therapy's Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist.

“In my opinion, the RANGE program has been a Godsend,” says one Veteran enrolled in the Enhanced RANGE program. “They have helped me in every aspect of my life. They've helped me to improve my mental health through medication and counseling. They've helped me in my self-confidence, positive thinking, social skills, personal appearance, self-esteem, education and much more. If it were not for this program, I don't know where I would be today.”

The Enhanced RANGE program has proven to be an immeasurable asset to rural Veterans and will continue to ensure that Veterans, regardless of location, have easy access to needed physical and mental health care as well as services for the homeless.

Veterans interested in the Enhanced RANGE program may call 814-860-2038 for more information.

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