

The background of the entire page is a stylized, wavy American flag. The stars are white on a light blue field, and the stripes are red and white, curving across the page.

# MA Hospice Veteran Partnership

Community Hospice  
Bereavement Services  
For Families of Veterans

Directory

January 2010

# Massachusetts Hospice-Veteran Partnership

*Improving end-of-life care for veterans*

## **MHVP Community Hospice Bereavement Service for Families of Veterans**

The Massachusetts Hospice-Veteran Partnership (MHVP) was founded in 2004 as a coalition of VA facilities and community hospice programs working together to ensure that excellent care at the end of life is available for U.S. veterans and their families. MHVP is pleased to announce an exciting new collaboration between community hospices and VA Medical Centers to provide an option for families of veterans for bereavement care. Within this pilot, community hospices have volunteered to open their existing **community bereavement support programs** to family members of veterans upon referral from a VA Medical Center.

To date, 23 Massachusetts hospices from around the state have agreed to participate in the **MHVP Community Hospice Bereavement Service for Families of Veterans**. They will be listed as a resource in a directory provided to professional staff at VA Medical Centers and posted on the Federation's web site at [www.hospicefed.org](http://www.hospicefed.org).

Bereavement coordinators at participating hospices will have attended or will commit to attending a training program offered by MHVP called "*Wounded Warriors*" to familiarize them with the unique needs of veterans at the end of life. This training program has been offered a number of times over the past two years, most recently on May 6, 2008 at the regional MHVP meeting at the Brockton VA. Future viewings are scheduled for September 24, 2008 at the Northampton VA and at the Federation's fall conference on October 29-30, 2008. Depending on the need and interest, other viewings can be arranged by calling the Federation.

VA Medical Centers may identify family members in need of bereavement support and refer them to a participating hospice by calling the Bereavement Coordinator as listed in the Directory. At this time, referrals will only be made if the veteran died of natural causes. The veteran's family member(s) will then become part of the hospice's regular community bereavement support program. There is no charge to the family for this service.

Please feel free to call Rigney Cunningham, Co-Chair, MHVP and Executive Director of & Palliative Care Federation of MA at 781-255-1848 if you have any questions.

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# Massachusetts Hospice-Veteran Partnership

*Improving end-of-life care for veterans*

## FACT SHEET

### *What is the Massachusetts Hospice-Veteran Partnership?*

Established in January, 2004, the MHVP is a coalition of VA facilities, community hospice programs and other community organizations working together to ensure that excellent care at the end of life is available for U.S. veterans and their families. HVP is a national program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospice and Palliative Care Initiative.

### *What is the purpose of MHVP?*

The purpose of MHVP is to provide leadership, technical assistance and program development recommendations aimed at:

- Improving veterans' access to hospice and palliative care across all sites and levels of care so that the veteran is able to receive hospice care at the time and place of need.
- Strengthening the relationship between community hospice agencies and VA facilities
- Providing information to veterans about hospice care and other end-of-life options

### *Why is the VA partnering with community hospice programs?*

Although improving end of life care is a priority of the Department of Veterans Affairs, there are many veterans who are not receiving their care within the VA health care system. About 75 percent of health care is provided to veterans outside the VA health care system by providers in the community. It is important that all health care providers understand the complex needs of veterans at the end of life.

### *Why are the needs of veterans at end of life different from any one else?*

As human beings, we share some common experiences as death approaches. However, veterans may have even more complex needs, especially combat soldiers and POWs who have faced the grim realities of death in a very dramatic way. Veterans may also be coping with unresolved grief or survivor guilt having witnessed traumatic deaths and injuries that may color how they come to terms with their own death.

### *What kinds of activities can be expected from the MHVP?*

- Mutual education and training programs
- Outreach to veterans with information about hospice care and other end-of-life services
- Identification of barriers to access to hospice and other services

### *How can I find out more about MHVP?*

For more information, contact co-chairs Rigney Cunningham (tel. 781-255-1848 or E-mail: [hospicefed@aol.com](mailto:hospicefed@aol.com))

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