

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 995 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY KAUFER, HILL-EVANS, PICKETT, BROOKS, FREEMAN,
POLINCHOCK, CIRESI, HOHENSTEIN, WEBSTER, JAMES, CONKLIN,
WHEELAND, GILLEN, SAINATO, RYAN, DELLOSO AND GUZMAN,
MARCH 23, 2021

SENATOR STEFANO, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, IN
SENATE, AS AMENDED, NOVEMBER 9, 2021

AN ACT

1 Amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania
2 Consolidated Statutes, in Department of Military Affairs,
3 establishing the ~~Veterans' Outreach and Support Network~~
4 ~~Program~~ PA VETCONNECT PROGRAM. <--

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Title 51 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated
8 Statutes is amended by adding a section to read:

9 § 714. ~~Veterans' Outreach and Support Network Program~~ PA <--

10 VETCONNECT PROGRAM.

11 (a) Establishment.--The ~~Veterans' Outreach and Support~~ <--
12 ~~Network Program~~ PA VETCONNECT PROGRAM is established. <--

13 (b) Participants.--The program may include FEDERAL AGENCIES, <--
14 State agencies, county directors of veterans' affairs, ~~veterans~~ <--
15 ~~service organizations, the healthcare provider community~~

16 VETERANS' SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, ACCREDITED POSTSECONDARY <--

17 EDUCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS, THE HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

1 COMMUNITY, BUSINESSES and nonprofit organizations.

2 (c) Purpose.--The program shall:

3 (1) Improve the health and well-being of veterans and
4 the families of veterans through REFERRALS, community <--
5 engagement and consistent network communication.

6 (2) Organize participants under subsection (b) to
7 cooperate with network partners to provide for proactive
8 solutions to address the problems faced by veterans when <--
9 transitioning from military service to civilian life.

10 (d) Requirements.--Program requirements shall be determined
11 by the department and information shall be disseminated to the
12 greatest extent possible on how to best navigate and utilize
13 available resources to improve the health and well-being of
14 veterans and the families of veterans.

15 (e) Duties of department.--The department shall develop the
16 program, which shall contain a mission statement that shall be
17 clearly communicated to network ADVOCATES, partners and <--
18 participants under subsection (b). The department shall:

19 (1) Coordinate with other State agencies, county <--
20 directors of veterans' affairs, veterans service
21 organizations, the healthcare provider community and non-
22 profit organizations, identified by the department, that
23 provide programs and services to veterans and the families of
24 veterans.

25 (2) Provide a Welcome Home to Pennsylvania packet to
26 participants.

27 (3) Provide information regarding programs, resources,
28 training opportunities, veteran service organizations and
29 services available to be utilized by family and friends of
30 veterans who can regularly interact and offer outreach and

1 support for veterans.

2 (4) Coordinate with county directors of veterans'
3 affairs by providing information of veterans who request
4 support through the Veterans' Registry.

5 (5) Utilize the address found on the copy of the
6 veteran's DD214 forwarded to the department by the United
7 States Department of Defense to contact the veteran to send
8 out the welcome packet to participate and join our veteran
9 network.

10 (1) COORDINATE WITH FEDERAL AGENCIES, STATE AGENCIES, <--
11 COUNTY DIRECTORS OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS, VETERANS' SERVICE
12 ORGANIZATIONS, ACCREDITED POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL AND
13 TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS, THE HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COMMUNITY,
14 BUSINESSES AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, IDENTIFIED BY THE
15 DEPARTMENT, THAT PROVIDE PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES, REINTEGRATION
16 OUTREACH AND RELATED SERVICES TO VETERANS AND THE FAMILIES OF
17 VETERANS.

18 (2) PROVIDE WELCOME HOME TO PENNSYLVANIA INFORMATION TO
19 RECENTLY SEPARATED SERVICE MEMBERS.

20 (3) PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING PROGRAM INITIATIVES,
21 RESOURCES, TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, VETERAN SERVICE
22 ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE TO BE UTILIZED BY
23 INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS WHO SUPPORT VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES
24 AS VOLUNTEERS AND OFFER OUTREACH AND SUPPORT FOR VETERANS.

25 (4) COORDINATE WITH COUNTY DIRECTORS OF VETERANS'
26 AFFAIRS BY PROVIDING INFORMATION OF VETERANS WHO REQUEST
27 SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL AND STATE BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS.

28 (5) COORDINATE WITH VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICERS FROM
29 VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICER GRANT PROGRAMS OR OTHER VETERANS'
30 SERVICE OFFICERS TO ASSIST VETERANS IN APPLYING FOR FEDERAL

1 VETERAN BENEFITS.

2 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.